



Institute for Strategic
Research

Publisher

**Institute for Strategic
Research
Expediency Council**

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ISSN: **2008-8221**
eISSN: **2717-3542**

Publication
**Information for
Strategic Research**

Biannual of Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs

36

**Vol. 13 - No. 2 - Issue. 36
Summer and Autumn 2022**

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Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs (IRFA) achieved the highest scientific grade from the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology of Iran since 22 February 2012. Articles Published in this Journal are Indexed at the Islamic World Science Citation Center (ISC).

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Price: 300000 Rials

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The abstract view of Erdogan's Muslim Brotherhood and the change of Türkiye's strategies in the Middle East¹

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Abstract

This article first examines Erdogan's intellectual views against the background of his Muslim Brotherhood and then analyses the reasons for the change in Turkish strategies in the Middle East. The Middle East has always played an important role in the regional security strategies of Turkey and the Erdogan government. In the last two decades, Erdogan's special perceptual psychological characteristics as well as his personality and ambitions have led to the strengthening of Turkey's position in the Middle East region. In 2021-2023, Turkey faces new economic, security and domestic challenges that need to be analyzed. In this article, we have analyzed this topic using secondary data in an explanatory-analytical way. The main question is: What influence does Erdogan's Muslim Brotherhood have on Turkey's strategic policy in the Middle East region?

The results of the study show that Erdogan's personality cult and the Muslim Brotherhood's desire to lead the Islamic world have led to the promotion of Turkey's position in the Middle East region on an abstract level. On a concrete level, this has led to a chaotic domestic political and economic situation as well as national security crises that have forced him to adopt a new policy towards Middle Eastern countries, particularly Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Erdogan's new policy is in contrast to his policy following the developments in the Arab world. The evolution of Erdogan's views in the Middle East promises a return to the principle of "zero problems with neighbors".

Keywords: Erdogan, Turkey, Middle East, Justice and Development Party, Muslim Brotherhood and foreign policy.

E-ISSN: 2717-3542 / Center for Strategic Research / Biannual of Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs

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10.22034/IRFA.2024.433732.123

1. This article is an excerpt from the doctoral thesis of the International Relations Department of the Faculty of Law, Theology and Political Sciences of the Islamic Azad University, Department of Science and Research, entitled "Relations between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Justice and Development Party in Promoting Turkey's Middle East Policy".

Introduction

With the founding of the Justice and Development Party, Turkey clearly distanced itself from the Western-orientated principle of the Kemalist tradition and attempted to become an important and influential player in the Middle East region. Turkey's Islamist Justice and Development Party attempted to create a strong political and security presence in the Middle East with a paradigm shift in foreign and security policy after failing to become a member of the European Union.

Comparing the AKP's Middle East perspective with the policies of other Turkish parties from a few decades ago, this unprecedented engagement and presence in the Middle East, together with Turkey's shift away from its Western orientation in the 2010s, draws attention to factors related to Islamic identity. The Justice and Development Party leads. Undoubtedly, part of this change is rooted in the relationship between this party and its first person with the Muslim Brotherhood movement.

The association of some political and religious parties and movements in Turkey, especially the Justice and Development Party, with the Muslim Brotherhood movement has a long history. Turkey has long been a venue for international meetings of the Muslim Brotherhood. There are examples of an ideological affinity between the Justice and Development Party and the Muslim Brotherhood, which is referred to as the Turkish branch of the Brotherhood. In fact, it seems that the political parties belonging to the Justice and Development Party under the leadership of Najmuddin Arbakan have more overlaps with the Brotherhood's worldview.

The developments in the Arab world in 2010, which led to currents close to the Muslim Brotherhood coming to power in Egypt and Tunisia, were, from the point of view of the Justice and Development Party, the concept of its civilizational and cultural expansion, and this was an opportunity to strategically shape its relations with the new governments. But later, with the fall of these currents from the power pyramid in Egypt and Tunisia, Turkey's regional strategy was disrupted and shifted from solving problems with its neighbors to neo-Ottomanize and direct and indirect security interference in the Arab countries of the Middle East. Tensions in relations with Egypt and at one point with Saudi Arabia, military interventions in Syria and northern Iraq are among the consequences of this policy.

With his policy of neo-Ottomanize, which emphasizes the

moderation of secular tendencies, Erdogan is striving for a more active foreign policy in the form of Turkey's political, economic and cultural influence in the countries of the former Ottoman Empire. However, the Turkish president faces many challenges on this path. These include opposition from domestic political parties, the chaotic economy with high inflation, the war in Syria, opposition from rival Islamic countries in the region, particularly Iran and Saudi Arabia, and opposition from Israel. Other countries in the Middle East also do not accept Turkey's influence and interference in their sovereign framework.

Now, the new internal developments in Turkey, including economic problems and increased inflation, as well as the pressure of public opinion and rival parties, have reduced the implementation of Erdogan's neo-Ottoman thinking and brought about a greater willingness to cooperate in the challenging security environment of the Middle East.

All these cases have posed a challenge to Turkey's policy in the Middle East in the last two years, which has convinced Erdogan, who is changing his behavior that the causes of these changes need to be explored and investigated in more detail, and that is the main aim of this article. Based on this, the main question is what impact Erdogan's Muslim Brotherhood has on Turkey's strategic policy in the Middle East region?

The answer to this question, given in an explanatory-analytical way using secondary data, is that the cult of personality and the desire of Erdogan's Muslim Brotherhood to lead the Islamic world has led to the promotion of Turkey's position in the Middle East region on an abstract level, while on a concrete level it has led to a chaotic domestic political and economic situation and national security crises that have forced him to adopt a new policy towards Middle Eastern countries, especially Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

1. Theoretical framework

There are different points of view when analyzing foreign policy and international issues. Some views are macroscopic, i.e. they emphasize the system and structure of international power and the influence this system has on countries' foreign policy decisions. The opposite views, called micro views, focus on the national government with specific geographical boundaries and examine the foreign policy behavior of a political entity.

The political behavior of any government is based on a number

of different factors that are brought together with different priorities and ultimately lead to a decision. There are various studies that deal with certain types of decision-makers and decision-making institutions as factors influencing the foreign policy decision-making process. There are expert analysts who have discovered a wide range of social, economic, cultural and psychological processes that have significant effects (constraining and empowering) on the foreign policy behavior of societies.

There are other analysts who focus on political processes and establish a link between a country's foreign policy and changes in public opinion, the activities of the mass media and the characteristics, backgrounds, trends and coherence of the elites. Some other analysts following the decision-making approach have focused their attention on motivational variables, roles and organizational variables that act as determinants of foreign policy within governments (Rosna, 1966, p. 16).

Decision-making in foreign policy can be viewed from the perspective of political psychology and international relations. Political psychology studies the political behavior of elites. This discipline leads us to take a closer look at individuals and people who are effective in politics. Moreover, with the methods of this science, it is possible to understand the general perception or capture the tendencies of political groups (Donald, Vas, 2018, p. 4). In their psychological model, "Janis" and "Mann" believe that the key to understanding decision making is that humans are emotional beings. "Government officials who make important decisions that affect the fate of the country are subject to a higher degree of self-restraint. We have seen situations where they are constantly striving to achieve their desired outcome while being extremely concerned about the high cost and possibility of defeat (Janis, Mann, 2017, pp. 44-45). In this interpretation, the primary motivation of political decision-makers is not to maintain the stability of the epistemological and logical method of decision-making. Rather, they are responsible for creating a kind of compatibility between the emotional conflicts that determine decision-making.

In Rosna's continuity model, the independent variables are: the type of power, the economy, the culture and the society, while he considers the dependent variables to be the individual, the role, the society, the government and the international system, with the type of government also being an intermediate variable. In forecasting foreign policy, Rosna is not only concerned with specifying internal variables, but rather with showing the role of each variable in the

foreign policy process. According to him, the degree of influence of each of the four internal factors and the international environmental factor in the design and implementation of foreign policy varies from country to country. The five variables of James Rosena's commitment model are:

- 1) Personality variable of the decision maker (individual): is the exclusive characteristic of the decision maker that encompasses all aspects of the decision maker. Rozna believes that individual characteristics are more pronounced in underdeveloped, newly independent and small countries that lack organized roles and bureaucratic symbols, and generally in societies where leaders are less influenced by public opinion and influential groups (Rozna, 1971, p. 108). Considering this variable, Rozna naturally believes that one person's decisions differ from another person's decisions in the same situation due to their different abilities and attitudes (Neack¹, Jude², 2005, p. 9).
- 2) The role variable and the scope of the decision-maker's authority: The role variable can be interpreted as follows: The idea that the government, the government or an individual thinks that it should act, the role is defined as the behavioral characteristics that result from the actor's political responsibility, and any person filling such a position is expected to behave similarly. We can view the role as the interaction between the individual and the political system and the expectations that said system places on the individual. Although the role may limit the individual's room for maneuver, such a role is assumed and performed on the basis of the individual's personality traits (Rozna, 1971, p. 108).
- 3) State bureaucracy variable: State variable in the sense that it refers to the structural aspects of the state. The complex structure of the government, the relationships between the governmental organizations and finally the experts and professionals within the same formations elaborate and present the proposals and general lines of decision-making in foreign policy, and no decision-maker is able to make a decision without these considerations. Among the government variables, some factors restrict foreign policy, while other factors expand the proposed options. The interaction of the three branches of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, including the structure of government, affects

1 Neack

2 Jude

foreign policy (Rozna, 1971, pp. 108-109).

- 4) Society or social variable: Values, ideologies, influence and interest groups and other things are among the propositions addressed in the variable society. Of course, these factors are contradictory in traditional and modern societies. In modern societies, for example, there are certain parties and formations that influence both domestic and foreign policy.
- 5) the variable of the international system (system or environment): In addition to internal factors, the foreign policy of governments is also influenced by external factors. The most important external factor affecting foreign policy is the international system, which effectively controls the decision-making process of governments. The interaction between governments and the interacting system is in fact two-sided; better said, every action of governments is confronted with the reaction of the whole system; this reaction can both accelerate and restrict the achievement of foreign policy goals (Rozna, 1970, pp. 108-109). Rozna believes that the characteristics and behavior of any social system at any point in time is the product of cultural tradition and the changing internal and external environment. In other words, the activity of decision makers is influenced by records, cultural norms, and historical traditions, internal and external demands. Therefore, the assumptions that should guide any attempt to understand the foreign policy of a government or a group of governments can be listed as follows:
 - The pursuit of "power" is definitely an important motivation for governments and regimes. Just as there is such a motivation for "security", these two issues are related but different. In many cases, the first goal is (to gain power) (Nonneman¹, 2005, p. 18).
 - There is no single "national interest", but a series of "national interests";
 - Governments are not uniform pillars. Rather, they are made up of different people and groups with different interests that may or may not fit into the national mould;
 - Between interests and politics there is a decision-making process that depends on the type of government, the administrative system including "bureaucratic politics" and the personality and ideas of the decision-makers;
 - Foreign policy is often about internal issues: the pursuit of

1. Nonneman

"power" and "security" is probably first and foremost an internal matter;

- The significance of the perceptions of decision-makers is not only related to political or material interests. Rather, their perceptions about the nature of regional or international politics and their own identity and role, as well as the perceptions of their government, also feed into policy-making. As the constructivist school believes, such perceptions at the collective and individual level probably even contribute to shaping the nature of the regional and international systems in which these states operate;
- Governments and decision-makers must confront specific external challenges and opportunities, both in their immediate environment and in the fabric of global political and economic relations. These challenges and opportunities range from the more specific and one-off to the broader and long-term impacts (Nonneman, 2005, pp. 8-9).

Therefore, the levels at which the governments of the Middle East find themselves must be managed or responded to simultaneously. The methods of this management will change over time. This is because the relative importance of these three levels in shaping foreign policy may change with developments at the state, regional and global levels. A fourth possible environment or "quasi-environment" in the regional system can be added to these levels: This quasi-environment is the immediate surroundings of the states, such as the subsystem of the Persian Gulf, the Maghreb or the Nile Valley (Nonneman, 2005, p. 12). In this environment, too, transnational issues require a realistic calculation of power. Indeed, it can be said that these constraints make the foreign policy calculations of the Middle East regime more complicated than those of other governments. In the Middle East, policy makers must therefore balance internal and external pressures in the decision-making space created by the main situation of threats and opportunities.

2. Erdogan's policy after the changes in the Arab world

Since 2003, Recep Tayyip Erdogan has sought to gradually transform Turkey into a great power, in the tradition of Turkish leaders of the past (from the late Ottoman sultans to Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey). But he has opted for an unconventional model (in contrast to Turkey's recent history). Whereas the late Ottoman sultans brought Turkey under the rule of the West in order

to restore their global influence. Erdogan's goal is to expand Turkey as an independent power first in the Middle East and then globally (Cagaptay, 2021, p. 7). To this end, he is trying to balance Turkey's foreign policy in the regional and international spheres. In addition to the westernized image and western orientation, the policy of looking eastwards and paying attention to the Middle East gave Turkish foreign policy a balanced image (Gözen, 2006, pp. 10-11).

Since the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, this country has pursued a policy of non-interference towards its neighbors in the Middle East, which is clearly due to the country's westernization policy and its preference for the principle of secularism, as well as Turkey's domestic and foreign policy changes (Tekin, 2005, p. 5). The result of this change of vision was the adoption of a new foreign policy that contradicted Turkey's traditional policy and led Turkey to become increasingly interested and active in the regional issues of the Middle East. Ahmet Davutoğlu, the architect of this new foreign policy, believed that Turkey's strategic depth is the result of historical and geographical depth (Davutoğlu, 2014, p. 130). Turkey, as the only country with historical experience in Middle East issues, should take the initiative. He considers this action important both for the future of the region and for the preservation of Turkey's territorial integrity. Davutoğlu believes that Turkey can only become a regional power by maintaining good relations with all areas and all its neighbors due to its location in the middle of several geopolitical areas such as the Middle East, the Islamic world, the West and Central Asia. The above policy has been referred to as the policy of zero problems with neighbors (Davutoğlu, 2014, p. 130).

Following these foreign policy developments, Turkey took a special place not only among the countries of the Middle East, but also beyond the geographical borders of the Middle East. Over the past decade, Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East has pursued several objectives: Deepening economic relations with increasing interdependence, classifying sources of military power, increasing cooperation with governments (macro diplomacy), building direct relations with parties and groups (micro diplomacy), emphasizing democratization and the role of leadership in intercultural dialogues (Tekin, 2005, p. 6). With the success of the Justice and Development Party, Turkey's image among Muslim nations became much more positive and its first person, Erdogan, gained a special position. Even the pan-Arab newspaper Al-Quds al-Arabia claimed: "Erdogan is more Arab than the Arabs" (Rubin, 2010, p. 16). During

the developments of the Arab world in the region, Turkey tried to present itself as a model of middle and developed Islam with the support of the United States. But we should not forget that the turmoil in these Arab countries was caused more by the internal structural problems of these countries than by any external component, and any successful model could only be answered based on the internal needs of each country (Tucci, 2012, pp. 7-8).

Over time, Turkey's different and somewhat contradictory positions towards developments in Tunisia, Egypt and Syria (support for popular protests) and developments in Libya, Bahrain and Yemen (support for the status quo and established political regimes) have increased internal criticism of the Erdogan government's Middle East approach and how to deal with the spread of the popular uprisings in the Kurdish regions in the domestic political dimension and the emergence of serious doubts about the true nature of the foreign policy of the statesmen of the Justice and Development Party. Erdogan's support for the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliated Islamists in various Arab uprisings stemmed from his ideological beliefs and his general desire to expand Turkey's influence throughout the Middle East as a regional hegemon within the former Ottoman Empire. While trying to improve economic and cultural relations with the former Ottoman countries and create new spheres of influence, Erdogan sought to create a new identity consisting of different religious and ethnic identities of the former Ottoman Empire.

3. The history of relations between the Justice and Development Party and the Muslim Brotherhood

The founding of the Justice and Development Party marked the beginning of a new period in relations between Turkey and the Muslim Brotherhood, which can be divided into three phases: Conflict, openness and interdependence: In the first term of the Justice and Development Party, which took control of Turkey when Erdogan was elected prime minister in 2003, it held completely different positions to the Muslim Brotherhood. For the first time, the Justice and Development Party showed a desire to form a coalition with secular and liberal elites in Turkey. In foreign policy, it orientated itself towards the policy of the United States and focused on Turkey's efforts to join the European Union and to enter into Islamic alliances and coalitions with Muslim countries. Moreover, in its early years, the Justice and Development Party constantly reassured foreign observers that it was committed to secularism and

maintaining good relations with Israel. Obviously, this attitude was at odds with the ideology of the founder and later leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Justice and Development Party, which were Islamist but secular (Ayyash, 2020, pp. 4-5). In fact, before the 2011 revolution, the Muslim Brotherhood saw the Justice and Development Party model as a threat to itself and feared that the Brotherhood's young members would adopt similar ideas. For Muslim Brotherhood leaders, for whom loyalty and organizational cohesion were more important than anything else, recognition of the Justice and Development Party's success in government was an implicit endorsement of the success of an Islamist splinter movement that supported the Brotherhood's narrative that this organization had a monopoly on righteous resistance endangered. In October 2009, Rafiq Habib, a Christian advisor to Muhammad Mahdi Akef (the seventh leader of the Muslim Brotherhood), described what Erdogan presented not as "damaged secularism" but as "damaged Islam" (Habib, 2009, p. 3). This situation changed rapidly in the following years. The initial period coincided with the Arab Spring and the culmination of the sovereignty of Ahmet Davutoğlu's ideas in Turkey's foreign policy system. In 2011, Tariq Ramadan, the grandson of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, declared that "democratic Turkey is the model of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt." He believed that Turkish Islamists are an inspiration for Islamists in the Middle East; in particular the various branches of the Brotherhood, which were "the greatest direct beneficiaries of the Arab Spring" (Tas, 2022, p. 722). The Muslim Brotherhood's electoral successes and later its victory in the presidency strengthened relations between Turkey and Egypt. The movement constantly emphasized the political and religious similarities with Erdogan. Morsi assured Egypt's international partners that its relations with Israel would not change. The involvement of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Justice and Development Party had significant economic opportunities for both political entities. Erdogan and the Justice and Development Party became the closest international allies of Morsi and the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party.

During this period, Turkey regarded the Brotherhood movement as a trump card in its diplomatic variables. Erdogan considered cooperating with the Brotherhood movement and trying to expand Turkey's communication network by relying on Islamic organizations led by the Brotherhood as a way to restore Turkey's true identity. With this mentality in mind, Erdogan, while fully

supporting Davutoğlu, facilitated the purge of Kemalist diplomats from the structures of the Foreign Ministry. This period also saw the first fundamental differences within the ruling party, which were accompanied by the complete purge of Abdullah Guel. Furthermore, during this period, a serious sympathy for the Brotherhood movement and various organizations associated with this movement emerged in Turkish Islamic society.

Even after the crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood following the coup in Egypt in 2013, the reorganization and logistical efforts to strengthen the Muslim Brotherhood's international community were led from Istanbul. Members of Turkey's Justice and Development Party, including Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, continued to support the Brotherhood in various forms, such as granting asylum to wanted Brotherhood members. This closeness is based on the common interest of Erdogan and the Brotherhood to return Turkey to the "era of Islamic rule" and the view that this movement protects the "Islamic Ummah", and shows the Turkish government's support and adherence to the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood in this country and other countries in the region. The ultimate goal of Turkey's Middle East policy change after the Justice and Development Party came to power was to gain authority, especially over neighboring Islamic countries. The developments in the Arab world since 2010 have created a great opportunity for Turkey to rethink its role in the Middle East and gain a special position to develop its political model. Turkish politicians hoped that other Arab countries, like Turkey, would try to create moderate Islamic governments modelled on the Justice and Development Party. Turkey saw these developments as an opportunity to restore its historical role and position. This issue culminated with the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Ennah(z)da in Tunisia. Accordingly, the Arab Spring marked a new stage in bilateral relations.

Contrary to the earlier perception of the Justice and Development Party as a splinter movement that embraced Western secularism, the Brotherhood at least strategically used the popular discourse of the "Turkish model" to politically legitimize itself in the face of accusations.

What makes the Justice and Development Party attractive to Egyptian Islamists is its success. The successive electoral victories of the Justice and Development Party and its ability to remain in power embolden the Muslim Brotherhood. Instead of winning the elections, the Muslim Brotherhood needs factors to successfully

stay in power; because, as in the 2012 elections, getting votes is not a problem. The 2012 elections and the events in Egypt until the fall of Mursi have shown that the Brotherhood's biggest concern is what it should do in the government to stay in the power structure. In this way, the Justice and Development Party was a good model for regional governments due to the implementation of democracy and good governance, a dynamic economy and an active foreign policy. The above factors enabled Turkey to build a positive image among the Arabs (Bekaroğlu, 2016, pp. 10-11). But still, not everything was attractive about the example of the Justice and Development Party. Secularism in Turkey's political structure was one of the things that contradicted the Muslim Brotherhood's fully Islamic approach.

During his two decades in power, Erdogan was able to reshape the Turkish economy (which many saw as an economic miracle) and, most importantly, curb the ambitions of the army; a case that the Muslim Brotherhood leaders in Egypt were unable to realize when they were in power. Monica Marks believes in the potential impact of Erdogan's policies on the Muslim Brotherhood: "What you see in Turkey is a regime that looks very powerful, at least at first glance. It uses the discourse of democratic legitimacy to defend a policy that is undemocratic in many ways. That is very seductive" (Ayyesh, 2020, pp. 13-14).

Turkey, with all its advantages and disadvantages, has ambitiously tried to take the lead in the region. Turkey's disadvantages are obvious: compared to Iran's military might, Saudi Arabia's money and Israel's level of development, it lacks hard power. This limits Turkey's ability to pursue an independent foreign policy and strengthen its negotiating position. On the other hand, Turkey has certain advantages, including the fact that it is the heir to the Ottoman Empire and is considered a stable (Muslim) democracy in the Middle East. However, these advantages can potentially become a handicap for Turkey (Bekaroğlu, 2016, p. 13). The neo-Ottoman activity of Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East met with nationalist reactions among the Arabs, which failed due to the combination with other problems and potentials of Turkey.

While support for the Muslim Brotherhood initially had no place in Erdogan's foreign policy and the Kemalist approach took precedence, Erdogan had been instinctively inclined towards the Muslim Brotherhood since his youth, and this instinct to help and protect the Muslim Brotherhood became the real starting point and linchpin of his policy in Syria and Egypt (Özkan, 2019, p. 7).

Erdogan's relationship with the Brotherhood is not at the height of his pan-Islamist vision. Rather, it intensified when it was more inclined towards the nationalist foreign policy discourse. But in a symbolic turn, after the failure to resolve the Kurdish issue in 2015, he supported the new nationalist order of the Brotherhood's Justice and Development Party, namely "One homeland; one mode; one flag; one nation" changed its direction (Tas, 2022, p. 726). Erdogan's latest policy is a silent admission of the decline of political Islamism and an acknowledgement of its regional limitations. The serious signs of this change in Erdogan's approach to the Brotherhood in the Middle East are examined below.

3-1. The state of domestic politics and the economic crisis

Turkey's institutional structure has always acted as a moderating variable in the Justice and Development Party's Middle East policy. While governments are composed of diverse and competing actors, the centralization and personalization of political power in contemporary Turkey has eliminated systems of checks and balances, traditional actors and pushed foreign policy towards centralization and personalization at a faster pace. This process reached its climax with the transition of the parliamentary system to the presidential system in 2018 (Tas, 2022, p. 726). Government-society relations are among the other moderating variables that affect the government's ability to respond appropriately to external pressures and opportunities. While Justice and Development Party elites can generally utilize Turkey's power potential, society (social cohesion) and elites can determine the level of support and accountability for foreign policy goals. In this respect, the ruling alliance between the Justice and Development Party and some extreme nationalist parties and the populist expansionist slogan has influenced the foreign policy of this country. According to Erdogan, the cross-border military operation could stimulate the important principle of "rallying around the flag" in Turkish society and increase public support for his government's policies, at least in the short term, and serve as a distraction in the successive economic crises that he too has been suffering from for some time with the declining popularity of his presidency and Turkey's shaky economy (with high inflation).

Turkey's economic data point to a catastrophic situation that is exacerbated by a flawed economic experiment. Erdogan believes that the solution to inflation is to make money cheaper. In 2021-2022, he tested his theory and acted in contrast to other central

banks that try to curb inflation by raising interest rates. From September 2021, he lowered his key interest rate by ten per cent to 9 per cent (Economist, 2023, p. 2).

Even before the catastrophic earthquake of 7/8 in Turkey, Erdogan had to deal with many crises. His unorthodox approach to the economy led to exponential inflation of up to 85% in the years 2022-2023 (Figure 1). At the same time, his government is facing accusations of corruption, bribery and disunity. Erdogan has unbalanced the Turkish economy with his proposed economic model. The economic goal of Erdogan's model, namely flourishing investments, current account surplus, strengthening the lira and price stability, has failed in all four cases and has not achieved its goals, and Turkey is moving towards a devaluation of the lira and a tightening of economic conditions.

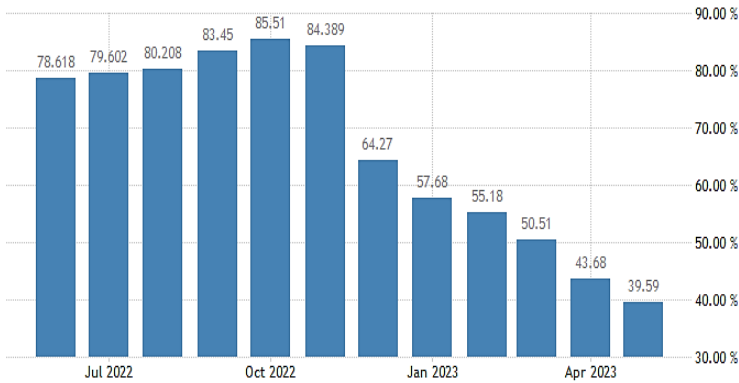


Chart 1: Inflation rate in Turkey from June 2022 to May 2023.

Erdogan's motivation to change his foreign policy behavior is essentially economic. Erdogan hopes to attract foreign capital to Turkey by easing tensions with wealthy Arab countries that have distanced themselves from Turkey over the past decade due to its neo-Ottoman policies.

Faced with the highest inflation of the last 20 years, the Turkish president has turned to foreign policy to lead his economy out of recession. Erdogan has turned to ideological enemies in the Middle East in the hope that their investments can revive inflation and the falling lira and reduce unemployment.

Turkey's economic interactions with Middle Eastern countries may not end the competition that still exists in areas such as Syria, Egypt and Libya, but they do suggest that Turkey will be more pragmatic in changing its neo-Ottoman policies.

3-2. Libya, Egypt and Syria

Political Islam has penetrated Turkey less than Erdogan wished. But Turkey under Erdogan's leadership saw the developments in the Arab world between 2010 and 2012, which shook the Middle East, as an opportunity to export its political Islam. In addition to Egypt, Turkey supported Brotherhood parties and other Islamist groups in Libya, Syria and Tunisia. Erdogan and his then foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, wanted to accelerate the collapse of the old regional order and strengthen Turkey's influence on the new order (Economist, 2023, p. 5) Erdogan began the regionalization process with a new fantasy for the Middle East. He suddenly brought into play the Koroğlu Turks in Libya, whose names had never been mentioned before, but who came onto the scene during Ankara's cooperation with the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Libyan Government of National Accord¹, declaring: "In Libya, the Koroğlu Turks are a remnant of the Ottomans and they are under threat of ethnic cleansing. Haftar² is also trying to destroy them, since they exist throughout North Africa; one of our main tasks in Libya is to protect the grandchildren of our ancestors" (Erdogan, 2020, p. 2). Erdogan wanted to use this issue to create a military basis for forcing Turkish concessions in the Horn of Africa. In this way, the Justice and Development Party is relying on the power of the Muslim Brotherhood branches rather than a deeper shared history to reshape the region. Ankara's closeness to the Muslim Brotherhood has led to it gaining influence in areas of the Arab world that previously had no place in Turkish politics. The identity of the Muslim Brotherhood is not only a political lever, but also provides a religious legitimization for Turkey's interventionism. This was especially true when Turkey's support for Hamas surpassed that of Arab leaders on the Palestinian issue, which resonated strongly with the Arab population.

The victory of Mohamed Morsi in the 2012 presidential elections in Egypt and the leadership of Ennah(z)da in the transitional government of Tunisia after 2011 were the culmination of this project. Turkey also supported the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Justice and Development Party³ in Libya and exerted pressure on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to legalize the activities of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and hold free elections (Yeşilyurt,

1. Government of National Accord (GNA)

3. Justice and Construction Party (JCP)

2017, p. 72).

At the end of the summer of 2011, after the United States had called on Assad to step down, Ankara also wanted Assad to be deposed. At the time, this issue led Erdogan to believe that he had Washington's unconditional support to fully intervene in Syria. Having worked with the United States and other NATO allies to overthrow the Gaddafi dictatorship in Libya (albeit after an initial setback), Erdogan believed that co-operation in Syria against Assad was also possible (Chapatay, 2021, p. 118). But this policy in Egypt, when Abdel Fattah al-Sisi came to power and in Syria two years later; it ended when Russia intervened to support the Assad regime (Economist, 2023, p.5).

Turkish and Egyptian sources, including Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the former leader of the Muslim Brotherhood and spiritual leader of the movement, claim that Erdogan had warned the Muslim Brotherhood of General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's intentions months before the military coup. Nevertheless, the history of Turkey, which experienced four military coups in the second half of the 20th century, did not encourage the Muslim Brotherhood to imagine parallel consequences for its behavior in Egypt. In the two years between the revolution and the military coup, the Muslim Brotherhood insisted on the exceptional status of the Egyptian military and had no concerns that military officers (including el-Sisi) might attempt to overthrow the democratically elected president. As Egyptologist Amy Austin Holmes describes, the "coup from below" was a surprise to the Muslim Brotherhood, and most Muslim Brotherhood leaders and rank-and-file members had no idea that the army might turn against them (Holmes, 2021, pp. 233-238). As diplomatic channels failed and the Muslim Brotherhood's rising star faded (especially with the fall of Morsi), Ankara adopted a proxy war strategy to deal with major setbacks on various fronts with the help of Muslim Brotherhood networks. In Syria, for example, Turkey supported Filaq al-Sham, an armed group linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, which joined the Turkish military's Operation Euphrates Shield together with Ahrar al-Sham in 2016. In 2018, Erdogan also supported the National Freedom Front, which is led by Brotherhood-affiliated groups, political Salafists and nationalists, to rebuild and unite Islamist nationalist armed groups in Idlib (Yüksel, 2020, p. 142). And by strengthening this proxy architecture, Istanbul increasingly became the transnational center of the Brotherhood's activities. In foreign policy, making yesterday's mistakes can be the main cause of

current and future problems and impose a heavy price on the country. The ideological views of Erdogan's Muslim Brotherhood on Egypt and Syria have made Turkey pay a heavy price.

It is clear that the goal of the Erdogan-led Development and Justice Party was to overthrow the regime of Bashar al-Assad. But today its goal is to preserve the territorial integrity of Syria, because the Turkish government has come to the conclusion that the separatists in Syria have become a threat to Turkey's territorial integrity. The Turkish military authorities regard the restoration of relations with Syria as acceptable and desirable. Erdogan, the President of Turkey, is now serious about resuming relations with Syria, because Turkey's national security and territorial integrity are at stake. In the short term, reconciliation with Syria has more to do with Turkey's domestic politics than with strategic calculations. Recap Tayyip Erdogan has long called on the Assad regime to take concrete steps to support the return of the 3.7 million Syrian refugees currently residing in Turkey (Schiavi, 2023, p. 10).

Now Turkey, under the leadership of Erdogan, is improving relations with Egypt as well as Syria. This matter will inevitably lead to a change in Erdogan's Brotherhood policy; however, he will not sever his ties with the Muslim Brotherhood. The connection with the Muslim Brotherhood has increasingly become a burden in Turkish foreign policy; to reconcile with influential Arab countries and show their goodwill in this regard; in 2021 the Turkish authorities asked Brotherhood TV stations in Istanbul to tone down their criticism of the military-dominated Egyptian government.

To this end, in mid-summer 2021, the Muslim Brotherhood stopped the activities of some of its centers in Turkey on the direct orders of the Turkish authorities and also evacuated its headquarters in Istanbul and imposed new restrictions on "Yahi Musa" and "Ala Samahi", the leader of the Hasm movement. Applied in Turkey, which are being persecuted internationally (Mecdi, 2021, p. 1). Due to continued pressure from the Turkish government, several critical Arab journalists left Istanbul, and the Muslim Brotherhood's most popular satellite broadcaster, Mokamlin, closed its offices in Turkey in March 2022 (Tass, 2021, p. 2). The Turkish government's current closeness to the al-Sisi government has worried many Muslim Brotherhood exiles and prompted them to consider immigrating to another country such as Malaysia.

Turkey has also announced in a message to Egypt that it has suspended the granting of citizenship to some members of the Muslim Brotherhood. Egypt is also demanding the immediate

withdrawal of military advisors and elements affiliated with Turkey from Libya, and Ankara is asking Cairo for more time to withdraw these advisors and elements. According to Saleh Mutlu Şen, the Turkish chargé d'affaires in Cairo, Erdogan has invited Al-Sisi to Turkey on 17 June 2023 in order to clarify many issues (Mutlu Şen, 2023, p. 5). Al-Sisi and Erdogan had a brief meeting last year after years of strained relations between the two countries during the Qatar-hosted World Cup in Doha and with the efforts of Qatar's Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani. The Egyptian president also congratulated Erdogan following his victory in the Turkish presidential elections in May 2023. However, it seems that Erdogan is at a fateful crossroads. On the one hand, he does not want to sever his relations with the Muslim Brotherhood because of his long history and the expenses and investments he has made for this movement over the years, and on the other hand, he wants to cooperate with Egypt due to internal problems and hand over the perpetrators and those who were responsible for planning the assassination of the Egyptian attorney general on the condition that they receive an appropriate punishment.

What is certain, however, is that Erdogan is not prepared to abandon the Muslim Brotherhood, at least not at the present time. The visit of Osama Jamal, the Secretary General of the Council of Muslim Organizations of the United States, a Muslim Brotherhood figure, and his accompanying delegation in May 2022 came at a time when Erdogan was taking steps to normalize relations with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Syria and Israel. It seems that his government's moves to stop the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood in Turkey are more tactical in nature than a strategic reform to gain satisfaction in Cairo, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi (Buzkurt, 2022, p. 3). But in the end, Erdogan chooses the second path according to Turkey's national interests, and this path will lead towards rebuilding the image of the Justice and Development Party, which was destroyed by the neo-Ottoman policies.

3-3. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates

Turkey on the one hand and Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates on the other supported the opposing sides in the recent crises and conflicts in the Middle East, each trying to strengthen their ideology and influence. They waged a proxy war. This is because Turkey supported the political Islamists close to it, and Saudi Arabia and the UAE were determined to discredit and destroy them. Therefore, the Islamists of the Justice and Development Party

also threatened the kings of the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

To neutralize Turkey's policy, the United Arab Emirates supported Abdel Fattah al-Sisi militarily against Mohammed Morsi (Muslim Brotherhood); they also supported Khalifa Haftar, the Libyan leader against Turkey who supported political Islamists in Tripoli. The UAE even softened its stance towards Syrian President Bashar al-Assad against the Turkish-backed rebels in Idlib, Syria (Vohra, 2022, pp. 1-2).

But due to the conditions explained above, Erdogan is reconsidering his policy of brotherhood in the Middle East. One of the reasons for Turkey to push for the normalization of relations with countries such as Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates is the very weak position of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in the current situation. One Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated government after another has fallen, from Egypt to Sudan to Tunisia, and the Muslim Brotherhood as a whole has experienced catastrophic failures with its autocratic responses to the Arab uprisings.

The Muslim Brotherhood itself is also affected by the conflicts and internal friction in the two camps in London and Istanbul. According to many Arab countries in the Persian Gulf, the Muslim Brotherhood is generally on the wane and its potential power as a threat to the security of the regimes of these countries has greatly diminished. For this reason, the Muslim Brotherhood seems to have lost the value that Erdogan once saw in it. In addition to the systemic drivers of Turkish foreign policy, internal challenges and the strong need for capital from the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf give Erdogan more motivation to repair the broken relations with these countries (especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE) (Tas, 2022, p. 735).

Conclusion

While the ideological links of the Justice and Development Party with the Muslim Brotherhood cannot be ignored, Turkey's grand strategy and the Brotherhood's role in it mainly follow the motivations and systemic limitations predicted in the material structural perspectives of power; Erdogan, as the first decision-maker in Turkey's power structure, cannot ignore this. In the current situation, where on the one hand the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood is declining in the Arab countries of the region and on the other hand Turkey is facing economic problems, Erdogan is trying to restore relations with the countries with which he has lost

relations by supporting the Muslim Brotherhood. Despite the conflict between Erdogan's Turkey and several Arab kingdoms of the Middle East, the change in this country's Middle East policy is logical due to the economic turmoil in Turkey. But for Erdogan, the distance between competition and regional co-operation is determined only by the need to hold on to power.

The cult of personality and the desire of Erdogan's Muslim Brotherhood to lead the Islamic world on an abstract level have led to the promotion of Turkey's position in the Middle East region. On the concrete level, this has led to a chaotic domestic political and economic situation as well as national security crises, forcing him to adopt a new policy towards Middle Eastern countries, especially Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Erdogan's new policy is in contrast to his policy following the developments in the Arab world. The evolution of Erdogan's views in the Middle East promises a return to the principle of "zero problems with neighbors".

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Analyzing the Implications of the Iran-Saudi Arabia Agreement through the Lens of Defensive Realism

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Abstract

There is no doubt that with the normalization of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia after a long period of tension, one of the key results of this agreement is its impact on the security relations between Iran and the Arab world. At the center of it, Iran and the Persian Gulf are of particular importance. Yemen, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq have always been the scenes of indirect confrontation between these two regional powers. But the question is, what is the reason for these tensions? What effect has the agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia had on the continuation of this cold war, and more importantly, what effect will this informal understanding have on the economic, political, and security-military dimensions of Iran and other Persian Gulf countries? Some believe that the tensions between the two countries are caused by the endangerment of the oil-economic interests of these countries; others believe that this fear is caused by the possible increase of Iran's influence in the region; and in the opinion of others, the Arabs are worried about America's tendency towards Iran and perhaps less attention from the United States to them. But perhaps these reactions can be explained in the form of defensive realism, and according to "Taliaferro," one of its four main assumptions, i.e., the "security Dilemma," uses every action of a government to increase its security. The competitor is considered a hostile action. The following article tries to answer this question by assuming that the agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia, was a factor that caused the security dilemma in the relations between the Arab world and Iran, both before and after it was achieved. What will be the situation of the security dilemma in the Persian Gulf after the agreement between the two countries? Using the descriptive-analytical research method, the article investigates the different dimensions of the security dilemma in the relations between Iran and other Persian Gulf countries and analyzes the position of the agreement between Tehran and Riyadh and the consequences of this historical agreement in the region.

Keywords: Iran, Saudi Arabia, Agreement, Security Dilemma, Persian Gulf.

E-ISSN: 2717-3542 / Center for Strategic Research / Biannual of Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs

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 10.22034/IRFA.2024.430813.1229

Introduction

The peace agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia was finally reached on Friday, March 10, 2022, in China. After years of tension, the governments of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reached an agreement to normalize relations between the two countries with the mediation of the People's Republic of China. The Iranian delegation, headed by Admiral Ali Shamkhani, former Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, met and discussed with the Saudi Arabian delegation headed by Mosaed bin Mohammad Al-Aiban, Minister of Interior and National Security Advisor. After five days of negotiations, the two sides reached several agreements. Relations between Tehran and Riyadh, as two important and influential countries in the process of regional equations, have been interrupted for seven years. Therefore, the restoration of relations between the two countries is very important; In such a way that only a few hours after the announcement of the agreement, the important regional and extra-regional countries and many groups and parties in the regional countries took a stand, and this shows that the issue and agreement are very important.

No official document has been released regarding the terms of their contract. In a joint statement, they only announced that the two countries want to resolve various disputes through dialogue and diplomacy in the atmosphere of brotherhood. They also recognize the principles and objectives of the United Nations Charter, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and various international conventions and norms. (Keynoush, 2023) Their agreement included the re-establishment of diplomatic relations and the opening of embassies in both countries. This agreement also emphasizes respect for sovereignty, and there will be no interference in each other's internal affairs. Iran and Saudi Arabia will also implement the security cooperation agreement signed in 2001 and the general agreement in 1998 to strengthen cooperation in economic, technical, scientific, cultural, sports, and youth fields.

The establishment of relations between the two countries happened when Iran sought de-escalation with its neighbors and Saudi Arabia changed its foreign policy direction in favor of diplomacy instead of confrontation. In recent years, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have moved to reduce tensions with most of their regional rivals by focusing on economic development.

The most important issue in the region is the revival of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Although one of the effects of

restoring relations with Saudi Arabia could be that other Arab countries also take steps toward restoring relations with Iran, this agreement can have many effects on the region. For example, in Lebanon, it can have a positive effect on solving the internal problems in Lebanon, the Syrian issues, the return of this country to the Arab world, and a kind of normalization between the Arabs. But what this research will deal with is the investigation of the mystery of security in the region after the Tehran-Riyadh agreement.

Assuming that the Tehran-Riyadh agreement will have wide-ranging regional effects, this research seeks to answer the question: What is the reason for the Arabs' concerns about Iran? And what will their possible reactions be to this agreement? These questions will be addressed through an examination of the "security dilemma" approach, which is one of the four main assumptions of defensive realism.

1. Theoretical Framework: Defensive Realism

Before delving into the security dilemma, it is essential to discuss two categories: offensive and defensive realism. From the point of view of offensive realism, in which "Fareed Zakaria" and "Mearsheimer" are the most important representatives, the principle is that countries have an aggressive nature and any increase in military power can cause threats to others. Mearsheimer not only acknowledges the enigma surrounding security but also contends that it embodies the fundamental principles of defensive realism. He argues that offensive realism advocates for bolstering military might to potentially invade other nations in safeguarding their own country's interests (Mearsheimer, 2006: 71).

Therefore, in this type of realism, the act of aggression is carried out, the balance of threat is no longer formed, and the threat perception, balance of threat, and mystery of security are presented in defensive realism. Defensive realists argue that governments do not have an inherent tendency toward aggression. This point of view allows the use of military power only for the defense of the land. The mystery of security has been proposed by defense realists. From Taliaferro's point of view, defensive realism is based on four assumptions, which include the delicate structure of power, the field of domestic politics, the mental perceptions of leaders, and finally the mystery of security (Brown & Coté, 2004: 79). In his view, the mystery of security arises when a government's actions to enhance its own security inadvertently diminish the security of others. Defense realists argue that simply increasing military capabilities

does not guarantee security. The problem is that absolute security is not possible except by becoming a global hegemon, and because the probability of reaching such a position is small and the establishment of a world government will mean the end of international politics, governments always seek security. and they will face the security problem (Moshirzadeh, 2011: 133). Perhaps the biggest difference between offensive and defensive realism is the same concept, the mystery of security (Tang, 2008: 458).

The idea of the security dilemma was proposed by John Hertz in the 1950s. From Herz's point of view, in this case, countries try to strengthen their security, and this action is considered a defensive action, while other countries consider it threatening (Herz, 1950: 161). According to "Wheeler" and "Booth, " the security crisis arises when the military procurement of one country creates insoluble uncertainty in the mind of another country as to whether this procurement is only for defensive purposes or offensive purposes. What emerges from this situation is that one country's efforts for security are often a source of insecurity for another country. Governments find it very difficult to trust each other and often look at the goals of others in a negative light. Therefore, the military procurement of a country causes the competition of neighboring countries. It is interesting that, in the end, even though governments take measures to increase their security, they do not feel more secure (Bailis and Smith, 2018: 348).

The lack of trust and uncertainty among countries in the international arena is hampered by the lack of a central government in the international system. The basis of the security problem or mystery is the hostility of the countries toward each other and their lack of awareness of each other's intentions. This concern and pessimism exist even between friendly countries and the United States because today's friends may turn into tomorrow's enemies due to the change of minds and people. Therefore, in the international system, the principle is based on suspicion and mistrust, unless it is proven otherwise, and this is where credibility becomes objective and necessary. Achieving complete trust in the field of international relations may not always be feasible. However, suspicion and pessimism between countries can be mitigated through the adoption of strategies and security measures. This matter becomes even more important and necessary, especially for countries that, rightly or wrongly, are recognized as unreliable and unrecognizable (Dehghani, 2011: 473). The center of traditional concern is related to the military threat. Many believe that the

military threat is still the main threat to a government (Reiter & Gärtne, 2001: 147).

a military threat is the most understandable and tangible threat to a society (Rabiei, 2013: 140) because it is directly related to the material existence of a land, and wars of aggression make the importance of military security more obvious. Military security is considered an influential topic for both the government and the nation. Irrespective of which country the threat is from, even if the threatening country is perceived as a weak country, the fear of insecurity has always focused on military security. Military actions often pose a threat to governmental institutions. Moreover, military measures not only impact the government's protective functions but also influence diverse social and individual interests, which may be more resilient than governmental structures. Therefore, usually, military threats have the highest priority in the national security plan (Buzan, 2000: 141-142).

From Buzan's point of view, military security is related to the two-level mutual effect of countries' offensive and defensive capabilities and their perceptions of each other's intentions. In this regard, it can be mentioned that it is difficult to distinguish between offensive power and defensive power, and due to the subjective nature of security, even an effort to expand defensive power can cause insecurity and pessimism in a country that has strong power. A fundamental similarity among all security theories is their focus on the concept of "threat." From the point of view of "Luther Brock," what ultimately defines security is an "existential threat." From Buzan's point of view, the threat should be evaluated objectively. An objective threat assessment is not simple unless the existing threat is clear, such as border threats (ibid). On the other hand, the perception of the threat by the countries is based on personal evaluations and the definition of specific borders for the threat. From Buzan's point of view, security threats are the instigator of anxiety policies, where the norms and standard procedures to ensure the security and survival of a government are ignored by other governments (Harris, 2008: 46-47).

During the formation of the security dilemma, two types of countries exhibit contrasting actions of two types of countries: small countries that have less military and confrontational power, and larger countries that have higher power. Based on this distribution of capabilities, small countries try to stand against the threat in the form of various agreements or cooperation based on a common goal, and larger countries try to avoid a preventive war against themselves.

2. The Islamic Revolution's Impact on Arab Perceptions of Iran

A revolution, occurring at the national level, also has deep transnational implications. In *The Anatomy of Revolution*, Crane Brinton argues that all revolutions throughout history sought to spread their message and bring it to other people in the world (Brinton, 2012: 208). The occurrence of revolutions often intensifies the perception of threat between the revolutionary government and its neighbors, potentially heightening the likelihood of short-term conflict (Walt: 1996: 144). The security of the Persian Gulf has been influenced by foreign powers for over 500 years. Today's situation mirrors historical patterns, characterized by the emergence of imperialist hegemony led by the United States. This hegemony seeks to maintain naval superiority, ensure stability, and forge alliances with key regional countries (Potter, 2009: 7). The region is also politically and militarily unstable. Four important wars have taken place in the last 30 years, namely the wars of Iraq with Iran (1980), Iraq with Kuwait (1990), and the international coalition with Iraq (1991 and 2003), which is evidence of the instability of the security situation in this region. It is important and strategic (Czulda, 2006: 1).

Historically, Iran's relations with its southern Arab neighbors have not been very good. What has caused temporary exceptions is the understanding of the needs of the neighborhood by some governments, such as Oman (Jaafari Valdani, 2011: 35). When the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council was formed on May 28, 1981, with apparently economic goals, it was obvious to the analysts that the formation of this council was a reaction to the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. A revolution that, with the idea of issuing a revolution and with anti-Western and pro-independence slogans, sounded a big alarm for the conservative and dependent countries of the Persian Gulf. Many experts consider the most important reason for the emergence and formation of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council to be the feeling of threat and insecurity of the Arabs protecting the work of the Persian Gulf from the events of the Islamic Revolution and the policies of the Islamic Republic to export and expand it in the region (Walt 1998: 292-Biglin, 2005: 126). It can be said that this issue was a reaction to increase one's security in the situation of a sense of security vacuum, which deepened with the start of Iraq's imposed war against Iran and gained more serious dimensions with the financial aid of these countries, especially Saudi Arabia, to Saddam Hussein. Of course, with the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, the strategic composition

in the region changed, because one side of the political triangle, which was very effective in regional affairs, suddenly disappeared. Traditionally, Iraq was considered a counterweight between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and it was considered an obstacle to the expansion of the influence and dominance of these two countries in the region (Toensing, 2007: 14). Arab countries, since their inception and throughout their relatively short histories, have consistently harbored doubts, or more accurately, security concerns, towards Iran. When the government under the full support of the West, the Pahlavi government, was at work in Iran as the "police of the region, " and with significant military purchases, it was practically considered the undisputed power of the region, and when the Islamic revolution was victorious in Iran, and its repercussions (including the occupation of Masjid al-Haram by Shiites) terrified the Arab countries of the region. In this regard, Professor Abdullah Al Shiji from Kuwait University considers the Iranian plan to be a combination of "threat, cooperation, and domination of the Persian Gulf" and "the member countries of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council are the only witnesses of the conflict between Iran and the United States over the domination of the Persian Gulf..." (Al Shayji, 2009). Of course, in the meantime, we should not neglect the role of historical, religious, and ethnic factors in these concerns and the doubtful and competitive view of Arabs towards Iran. Factors such as Arab-foreign or Shia-Sunni views. Given the close proximity of governments in this region, as highlighted by Buzan and Waiver (2003: 190), coupled with the Persian Gulf governments' heavy reliance on oil revenues, there exists a significant dependence on security measures in the area (Bellamy, 2008: 244). Patterns of friendship and enmity in the Persian Gulf are also affected by ethnic and religious factors. "Shirin Hunter" considers these two factors to be the most important factors of tension in Iran-Arab relations from the 17th century until today (Hunter, 2010: 186).

3. JCPOA and Reaction of Persian Gulf Arab States

Before the start of nuclear negotiations between Iran and the West, the country's nuclear program was always a source of concern for countries in the region, especially Saudi Arabia and the Zionist regime. The heads of these countries explicitly called nuclear Iran a threat to the region by accusing Iran of trying to obtain nuclear weapons, threatening the security of the Middle East, and pushing this region towards an arms race. However, the nuclear agreement between Iran and the 5+1 group, which is referred to as the JCPOA,

made important international players more flexible in their approach to Iran's nuclear program and concluded that an agreement can be reached through effective negotiations. Hossein Kalout, one of the researchers at Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center in the Iran Project, summarizes the reaction of the Arab world in three distinct groups, and we will continue to examine these three groups and their views on the JCPOA.

- Pro-Saudi Bloc: This group includes Saudi Arabia, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, Jordan, and Morocco. From the point of view of this group, this agreement returns Iran to the international community and allows it to freely pursue its regional policies through its affiliated groups in the region.
- Pro-Iran Bloc: This group includes Syria, and Iraq, Hezbollah—an important part of the political mainstream of Lebanon, and a part of the political mainstream of Yemen. The group accepted the agreement with open arms. These countries thought that this agreement would have a positive effect on their hopes and capabilities in the region. In addition, they believe that the West had no choice but to negotiate, and the reason for this is Iran's power.
- The Neutral: This group includes North African countries such as Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Sudan. The group views this agreement with a mixture of satisfaction and concern (Perkovich, 2014).

These three groups were formed based on the views of the Middle East countries on the West's nuclear agreement with Iran. Each country looks at this agreement based on its geopolitical and economic power, as well as its regional interactions. The reactions of these three groups of Middle Eastern countries are shown separately in the following map:



For example, Egypt is not militarily dependent on Saudi Arabia, and therefore, in response to the JCPOA, it can take a different path than Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, Sissi, the current president of Egypt, is trying to strengthen relations with the Saudis to strengthen the domestic economy of Egypt (Mohseni, 2015: 22). In the atmosphere of the Arab uprisings in the Middle East, a kind of cold war, the relations between Iran and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council were formed. This tense atmosphere in the midst of achieving the nuclear agreement became more intense with the reactions of the leaders of the Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia, to the possible agreement (Lynch, 2011: 55). For example, we can point to the reaction of "Walid bin Talal," the son of Talal bin Abdulaziz and grandson of Abdulaziz Al Saud, the founder of Saudi Arabia, in an interview with the Wall Street Journal, who claims: "Washington shot itself in the foot in the agreement with Iran." Also, a few days later, Saudi Arabia's ambassador in London, Prince Mohammed bin Loaf bin Abdulaziz, called the talks with Iran "pacifying" [to reduce Iran's anger] and indirectly threatened that Saudi Arabia would use weapons if necessary. (Gause, 2013). Also, "Adel al-Jubeir" in an interview with Al-Arabiya clearly states that "the release of billions of dollars from Iran's blocked wealth should be of concern to everyone" (Atroushi, 2015: 221) conveys a clear message, and that message is nothing but the feeling of fear of the Saudis about the end of Iran's twelve-year nuclear crisis. The visit of the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia and Qatar to Europe and America amid negotiations and consultations with their

European allies is a good expression of these concerns. Of course, it should be noted that after the nuclear agreement on August 3, 2015, "Khalid Al-Attiyah, " the then-foreign minister of Qatar, called the JCPOA the best option among the available options at the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council meeting (Einhorn & Nephew, 2015: 44). Arabs were worried that the nuclear agreement had been made at the cost of their long-standing and friendly relations with the U.S. Many experts believe that the tension between Iran and Saudi Arabia will increase in the region, at least in the short term (Mohseni, 2015: 32). For example, the event that led to an increase in tension and finally the termination of relations between the parties after the events of Hajj in 2015 and an Embassy tension between two is an example of this. This increase in tension exists for two reasons. First, as Iran's main regional rivals, Saudi Arabia and Israel were only able to express their concerns about Iran's nuclear capabilities during the nuclear negotiations. It is undesirable (Katz, 2014). To some extent, it can be expected that the future of the region depends on how the United States manages the common interests of Iran and the Arab countries (Mohseni, 2015: 27).

Views on regional security after the Iran nuclear deal are contradictory (Washington Post, 2015). Some regional experts believe that Iran is trying to disarm the Middle East and is trying to draw the attention of world powers to Israel's nuclear power within the framework of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Others believed that Iran could use nuclear weapons. This view could have devastating consequences for the region as a result of a cold war between Iran and its Sunni rivals in the region. In addition, an arms race between Iran and Saudi Arabia, caused by a kind of pessimism and a mysterious security dilemma, was very likely to show power and dominance in the region.

4. Iran-Saudi Arabia Agreement: Consequences and Challenges

Since King Salman came to power in 2015, Riyadh has backed away from the hostile foreign policy adopted by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. This country reconciled with Turkey, reconnected with Syria, and supported the ceasefire in Yemen, but left the most difficult and perhaps most important issue for last. Saudi Arabia surprised the world by announcing an agreement to normalize relations with Iran. The Cold War between Iran and Saudi Arabia has affected almost every conflict in the region. Therefore, the end of this Cold War could have strong consequences for the region.

Since 2015, Saudi Arabia has faced a large number of missile and drone attacks by Ansarullah, which has been raised as a major national security challenge for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia hopes to protect its borders and critical infrastructure from the Ansarullah attacks by signing an agreement with Iran to restore normalcy. Also, long-term peace with Iran is necessary to achieve the goals set by Saudi Arabia based on the 2030 vision. The long-term military conflict in Yemen is an obstacle to achieving such goals. Therefore, the agreement with Iran is a practical action by Saudi Arabia in terms of national security and economic development.

On the other hand, by restoring diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia, Iran expects to receive support from the countries in the region regarding its nuclear issue. The agreement with Saudi Arabia will help strengthen Iran's relations with other members of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, especially Bahrain and the UAE. This agreement is also an immediate relief for Iran's economy.

If this agreement is fully implemented, it has the potential to significantly improve the situation in Yemen. The end of Saudi military operations in Yemen and restraint by the Houthis can significantly reduce armed violence in this country. It can also significantly improve the human condition and help rebuild the country's economy. Immediately after the announcement of this agreement, the government of Yemen and the Houthis started negotiations on the exchange of prisoners in Geneva. But at the same time, local factors independent of Iran and Saudi Arabia may continue to create tension in this country. In their vicinity, the maritime security environment in the waters around the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea can be improved as a result of increased cooperation between the two countries.

The situation in countries like Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq may not improve soon. Iran has the upper hand in these countries and has created its sphere of influence during decades of political and economic interaction. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia does not have the privileges that Iran has in these countries.

4-1. Yemen

Yemen has been one of the countries that suffered the most from the differences between Riyadh and Tehran. In 2014, the two countries supported opposing factions in Yemen's civil war. Subsequently, in 2015, a Saudi-led coalition intervened to combat Ansarullah, also known as the Iran-backed Houthis, who had seized control of

Yemen.

Faras Maksad, a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute in Washington, D.C., and a professor at George Washington University, emphasized the significance of the Yemeni conflict for both countries. Hossein Ibish, a senior resident researcher at the Persian Gulf Institute in Washington, DC, suggested that Iran might leverage its influence over Ansarullah to seek a resolution to the war. He stated, "There is a high possibility that Tehran has pledged to exert pressure on its allies in Yemen to end the conflict, but the underlying agreements remain undisclosed." (CNN, 2016)

4-2. Lebanon

Lebanon is currently suffering from a crippling financial crisis. Saudi Arabia, once the country's closest ally, has largely separated its path from Lebanon due to dissatisfaction with the influence of Iran-backed Hezbollah in the country. Both Hezbollah and Lebanon's interim prime minister, Najib Miqati, praised the Saudi-Iran deal, with Miqati calling it "an opportunity for the region to breathe and look to the future." However, analysts argue that the Iran-Saudi deal does not guarantee that Lebanon's relations with Riyadh will automatically improve its situation. Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan said that Lebanon needs the "friendship of the Lebanese people" to improve Lebanon's situation, not "the rapprochement of Iran and Saudi Arabia." Firas Maksad said: "Lebanon is not the priority of policymakers in Riyadh at the moment (Meena, 2018: 14).

4-3. Iraq

Iraq, which hosted several rounds of talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia, quickly welcomed this reconciliation. Analysts say that reconciliation between Iran and Saudi Arabia is in Baghdad's favor because, since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003, this country has become the arena of competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Ehsan al-Shammari, professor of politics at Baghdad University and head of the Iraqi Political Thought Center, added: "Iran has used Iraq to increase pressure on Saudi Arabia in all fields, including political, economic, and especially security." He claimed that due to the great influence of Iran in Iraq, Baghdad has lost the opportunity to improve relations with Saudi Arabia and potentially make large investments in this country. Al-Shammari said that Saudi Arabia will ask Iran to control some of its allies in Iraq, especially militia groups that Riyadh sees as a security threat.

However, he claimed that this interpretation could be just a dream because Iran sees Iraq as a puppet state and Tehran's allies in the Iraqi parliament want to maintain their interests with Tehran (Neuman, 2019)

The agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran will also have consequences for US-Saudi relations. Although the United States and Saudi Arabia are strategic partners, and Saudi Arabia is an important regional ally of the United States in West Asia, normalizing relations with Iran at a time when nuclear negotiations have failed suggests a difficult path ahead for bilateral relations.

While the United States has traditionally practiced a policy of divide and rule, pitting one country against another, China has successfully brought Saudi Arabia and Iran together through mediation. With this, China intends to shape the perception of the international community about its image and role as a neutral and benevolent actor in the turbulent Persian Gulf region.

The closeness of Saudi Arabia and Iran will affect relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia. Although Saudi Arabia and Israel do not have formal diplomatic relations, they have had indirect talks in recent times. After the Ibrahim agreement, which led to the normalization of relations between the UAE and Bahrain with Israel, there is much speculation about Saudi Arabia joining the Ibrahim agreement. Israel wants Saudi Arabia to join the Ibrahim Pact.

However, the restoration of the Saudi Kingdom's relations with Iran has dealt a severe blow to Israel's ambitions. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has attributed the success of the agreement to the failure of President Joe Biden's regional policy and the policies of the previous administrations of Yair Lapid and Naftali Bennett. Israel's relationship with the Persian Gulf Arabs remains challenging as the region's geopolitics continues to expand faster than expected.

China's mediation between Saudi Arabia and Iran shows a significant change in the current situation in regional geopolitics in West Asia. China has been acceptable as a mediator for Saudi Arabia and Iran, as both countries have strong relations with it. China has supported Iran on many issues, including the nuclear issue. In 2021, they signed a comprehensive 25-year long-term agreement under which China committed to invest about \$400 billion in various sectors in Iran. China has also ignored US sanctions and continued to buy oil from Iran, and there have been regular meetings between the two countries at the highest levels.

Saudi Arabia has also established strong economic ties with China. Saudi Arabia is the largest exporter of oil to China. There is a convergence of interests between the two over China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, where both have pledged to work together. Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Riyadh in December 2022 and held talks with the leadership of Saudi Arabia and the leaders of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council. In 2022, China exported billion to Saudi Arabia. During the last 26 years, the exports of China to Saudi Arabia have increased at an annualized rate of 14.3%, from \$904 million in 1995 to \$29 billion in 2022. In 2022, Saudi Arabia exported \$48.7 billion to China. During the last 26 years, the exports of Saudi Arabia to China have increased at an annualized rate of 20.4%, from \$392 million in 1995 to \$48.7 billion in 2021 (OEC.world, 2022).

In addition, the agreement brings China to the Persian Gulf region as an interested actor in regional security and as a geopolitical challenge to the United States. Making Saudi Arabia's foreign policy decisions regarding Iran mediated by China is a ploy for the United States. Although China has traditionally maintained its relations with the countries of the Persian Gulf mainly on trade and energy issues, it has recently made statements on regional security issues in the Persian Gulf. At the first meeting of the heads of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council and China for cooperation and development in Riyadh in December 2022, President Xi expressed his interest in contributing to the regional security of the Persian Gulf by supporting and cooperating with the countries of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council. China's successful mediation seems to be the beginning of a new era of Chinese influence in the Persian Gulf. If it can maintain its presence in the US-dominated Gulf, it will be a real litmus test for China.

This proximity controls the growing gap between the two regional powers. Despite Iran and Saudi Arabia's optimism, there are still several challenges facing them. First of all, to what extent Iran can address Saudi sensitivities and concerns about the peaceful nature of its nuclear program is a big question. Second, much also depends on the success of the agreement to create a protective shield for Saudi Arabia against the Ansarullah attacks. Third, Iran is concerned about the extent to which the deal will help end its isolation, facilitate nuclear negotiations, and lift sanctions imposed on it. If the key concerns of both countries are not addressed after the implementation of the agreement, there is a possibility that the situation will go back to the way it was before.

5. The Impact of the Tehran-Riyadh Agreement on the Security Dilemma in the Persian Gulf

Nevertheless, a significant outcome of the agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia will be the alleviation of security uncertainties in the Persian Gulf region. According to Jervais's definition, "the security dilemma refers to a situation in which a state's actions to increase its security, including military security or establishing political or military alliances with other states, can lead to similar actions by other states as the answer should lead" (Jervis, 1978: 221). An answer can be political, economic, or security-related.

But as stated, it seems that the executive political reflection of the agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia is more colorful than its other aspects, and this understanding will lead to the reduction of the "security mystery" in the Persian Gulf. There is no doubt that the Tehran-Riyadh agreement reduced regional threats, made the possibility of war weaker, and generally increased the security of West Asia, and now, according to Jarvis's definition of the security dilemma, we should witness the reduction of the security dilemma in the region.

The actions of governments in the shadow of the intensification of the security dilemma can include the creation of military alliances and coalitions (like what we saw in the Yemen war), conducting more military maneuvers in the Persian Gulf, increasing military budgets, and perhaps giving more help to Sunni and anti-Shiite militias in the region. It would be like Al-Qaeda, Al-Nusra, and ISIS. These measures will be largely removed from the policies of regional governments in order to reduce tensions.

After the victory of the Islamic revolution in Iran (and even before that), the Persian Gulf countries saw themselves trapped in a vacuum of security suspicion towards Iran. Meanwhile, Iran has repeatedly stated that it has never interfered in the internal affairs of the Persian Gulf countries. Even before the election of Mohammad Khatami in 1997, Tehran carried out the most confidence-building measures in the Persian Gulf (Potter, 1996). Former President Rafsanjani and then Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati tirelessly promoted this idea. In the "Dialogue of Civilizations" policy under Khatami's policy, there were unprecedented measures of regional cooperation, such as mutual visits and mutual contacts. This confidence-building period remained silent in Ahmadinejad's government and caused the strengthening of pessimism in the Persian Gulf countries and, as a result, their defensive position towards Iran (Parsi & Rydqvist, 2011: 26). Saudi Arabia has always

had a "security doubt" in comparison with Iran. A doubt is called "falling into a trap" or "being ignored" in international relations (Weitsman, 2014: 62). One day they will try to fill this void by forming the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, and one day they will support radical anti-Shiite groups. The comprehensive Western sanctions against Iran due to what was called an attempt to achieve nuclear peace, and Iran's staying away from the international arenas may have created a good opportunity for the Arabs to spend some time in a higher security position than Iran, but with the implementation of JCPOA, the fear of Iran's power became visible to them again. It is at this time that we witness the publication of a letter by 130 Arab thinkers regarding what Iran's "Safawi plan" is, with the aim of "capturing the Middle East." Thinkers who accuse Iran of arrogance (Gulf News 2015).

In this regard, "Gori Gaus" from the "Saban" Center for Middle East Studies uses the concept of the "Strategic Dilemma" of Riyadh (Gaus, 2013) and states that Washington's efforts of the past decade in the region have only strengthened its power and influence. Iran is leading in the Middle East, and the closer relations Washington and Tehran have, the more worried Riyadh will feel and the more vital it will feel to maintain its alliance with America. In his recently published book "Security Conundrum in Political Coalitions" by Cambridge University, Glenn Snyder examines the concept of "security conundrum" as a destructive aspect of monarchical regimes. He defines it as follows: "Even if a country does not intend to attack another country, one side cannot be sure that the other side's intentions are entirely peaceful or will forever remain peaceful." Snyder then points to the reactions of the other party in the direction of accumulating power in three cases: firstly, the creation of arsenals; secondly, territorial expansion, and third, the formation of coalitions. It is not a secret that today, the oil-rich countries along the Persian Gulf have a large arsenal of Western weapons, and they are trying to magnify their power through their media and blackmailing the Western media. Countries, especially Saudi Arabia, are America's main political and military partners in the region (Snyder, 2014: 495). It can be predicted that another reaction that the Saudis will take in the face of the "security dilemma" in the region is the all-round support and strengthening of the takfiri groups, and maybe by using them, they can balance the weight of the developments in the region that have shifted towards Iran in the past years. He can change for his benefit.

Conclusion

According to what was said, the existence of a kind of "security mystery" in the region and among the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia and Iran, has a long history. The mystery of security is one of the most important concepts used in the approach of realism, especially defensive realism, which means the military actions of a country with any purpose and threatening perception by other actors, which subconsciously creates competition between countries; usually, the neighbor becomes a border. What is considered a competition between regional powers in the Middle East originates from the uncertainty of the players in this region towards each other and each other's actions. At the top of this uncertainty from the point of view of the member countries of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, especially Saudi Arabia, is the increasing influence of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the region, which forces this country to react. The findings of the present research show that with the study of the agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the security uncertainty between the Arab countries in the Persian Gulf and Iran, the support of the Persian Gulf countries and Saudi Arabia at the head of Takfiri-terrorist groups with anti-Shia ideology, guiding them in the direction of their policies, including their entry into the countries of the axis of resistance, including Lebanon and Syria, which is supported by the Islamic Republic, as well as the introduction of groups such as Al-Qaeda to Yemen, to counter the rise of Shiites, the attack of ISIS on the soil, Iraq and the occupation of a large part of that country's territory will be reduced to weaken the Iraqi Shia government, which was all defined in the form of a "security dilemma." It seems that the diplomatic apparatus of the Islamic Republic of Iran should take measures to win the trust of this country by building trust among the Persian Gulf countries and by repairing its relations with countries such as Saudi Arabia. The agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia is a positive move to break the deadlock in relations between the two countries, but many things depend on maintaining the momentum gained as a result of the negotiations. In addition, difference between them are numerous and complex. It is relatively easy to continue cooperation on non-controversial issues such as bilateral trade, investment, culture, etc., but establishing cooperation on security issues takes time and requires more negotiations and trust between the parties.

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Iran's Look East Strategy: Sino-Iran Rapprochement and the Indian Perspective

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Abstract

In the wake of the US withdrawal of the Iran nuclear deal, or JCPOA, and the re-imposition of sanctions, Iranian policymakers came down gradually in favor of cooperation with the East, chief among them China, culminating in the signing of a 25-year Iran-China agreement and the adoption of Iran's Look East Strategy in 2021. Considering the changing flux in Iran's diplomacy toward regional cooperation and ever-increasing Sino-Iranian rapprochement, the main question of this contribution is about the effect of Sino-Iranian rapprochement on India, one of Iran's biggest Asian trading partners. The main hypothesis states that Sino-Iranian rapprochement has led India to expand the scope of its connectivity projects through Iran, throwing a spoke in the wheel of China's Belt and Road Initiative in South and Central Asia. Constructivist Institutionalism (CI), developed by Hay, was adopted as the theoretical framework. The methodology used for this research is based on qualitative methodology and discourse analysis to focus on Iran-India relations in the context of Iran's Look East strategy. Our findings indicate that Indian policymakers are following the Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam principle in their engagement with Iran, seeking to increase Iran-India ties in the face of Chinese competition with long-term strategic and security deals. As part of India's civilizational role in Central Asia and as a response to growing Chinese footprints in the region, India has undertaken certain concrete measures, such as the institutionalization of the India-Central Asia summit on a multi-lateral framework and the inclusion of Iran's Chabahar port in the International North-South Corridor. The research findings reveal that the corporation remains the weak link in the chain of the state-temple-corporate complex of the Hindu nationalist BJP in relation to Iran. India is also set to lock in cooperation with Iran through long-term strategic deals, institutionalizing security cooperation, and strengthening private sector participation in the Chabahar project.

Keywords: Chabahar port, Indian policy, Connectivity, Energy, Hindu Nationalism.

Introduction

In emancipating itself from punitive sanctions re-imposed following the U.S. withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear Deal, known as JCPOA, Iran began enhancing its ties with the East. Though implying a geographical notion, under the newly elected Iranian president, Ebrahim Raisi, the East assumes wider semantics, encompassing the opposite camp to the perceived Western hegemony, including anti-American Venezuela and Nicaragua in the western hemisphere. Therefore, Iran's "Look East" strategy has elements of a continuation of Iran's anti-Americanism. In Iran's Look East Strategy, China has emerged as the preferred partner for Iran, considering the former's increasing global economic and diplomatic clout and its souring relations with the West. Under President Raisi, Iran successfully joined the Eurasian security alliance, known as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), as well as the block of emerging market economies (BRICS). It goes without saying that China figures prominently in both groupings and sees itself as the natural leader. However, there is another dimension to the Sino-Iranian rapprochement, which involves examining the relations between India and Iran. Iran's ever-increasing ties with China will have a direct impact on India, Iran's close partner, which is heavily involved in the development of Chabahar port and the International North-South Corridor (INSTC). Besides, India's close ties with the West-its strategic ties with the U.S. as a bulwark against China in the Indo-Pacific region-have put India in an awkward position vis-à-vis Iran. In fact, in both the SCO and BRICS, Sino-Indian rivalry has intensified in the wake of the 2021 Sino-Indian border skirmishes, the deadliest in decades, and the consequent downward spiral of ties, to the extent to which there were rumors of India's opposition or at least a lukewarm reception of Iran joining the BRICS. This contribution seeks to assess the impact of Sino-Iran rapprochement on Indo-Iranian ties from an Indian perspective. In the continuation, the theoretical framework and the literature on the subject will be presented, and lastly, the Indo-Iranian relations in the context of Sino-Iran rapprochement will be analyzed.

1. Theoretical framework: Constructivist Institutionalism

We will approach India-Iran relations under Iran's "Look East" strategy through the lens of constructivist institutionalism (CI) developed by Hay, where the institutions are supported by ideational foundations, affecting the way institutions are developed (Clift & McDaniel, 2021); institutions in their turn shape the

traditions and realm of ideas, and the interaction between the two is mutual and reinforcing. On the other hand, traditions are slow to change, while institutions are prone to change. This suggests a delay between changes in institutions and traditions, leading to a mix of both and differences between how institutions are planned and how they actually function in the real world, influenced by culture and traditions. (Guiso et al., 2016: 8). Hence, just as distinctive national traditions and cultures shape the formation of institutions, state actors' behavior is influenced by both institutions and the dynamic interaction between institutions and traditions. This understanding of the behavior of state actors, just as Barnett points out, informed by traditions and institutions, makes the cultural resources—the underlying norms, values, and symbols of society—part of the arsenal accessible to actors to push and enforce their policies (Michael, 2018: 62). In our contribution, we will consider the foundation of foreign policy under Narendra Modi and its Hindu self-conscious informed basis. To do so, we employ Nanda's "State-Temple-Corporate Complex" concept as a resulting hybridization of secular and neo-liberal reformed institutions under the force of Hindu traditions. Here, the flexibility and tolerance of Hinduism lend themselves to forming a power axis among the corporate elites, Hindu leaders, and the state in India. Therefore, India's response to the Iran-China rapprochement will be done by resorting to the core traditions and further hybridization of India-Iran institutions, most notably the one for cooperation in Chabahar and INSTC. The adopted methodology is qualitative, which was carried out through analyzing the official documents, discourses, and statistics on Iran and India relations.

2. Literature Review

A vast body of academic literature has been available on Indo-Iran relations. Some of the academic research has been focused on India's role in the nonalignment movement and Soviet ties in opposition to Iran-American ties before the advent of the Islamic revolution. In the book "The Non-Aligned Movement: Genesis, Organization, and Politics," Jürgen Dinkel delves into the history of the Non-Aligned Movement since its inception as a special reaction of the Global South to changing global orders, and sheds light on breaks and continuities in the history of globalization, and analyses from the Global South perspective; India's role in the movement as well as Iran's reaction to it are further investigated (Dinkel, 2018). Furthermore, Iran-India ties have been examined in light of the

increasing U.S. bearing on India-Iran ties as India is gradually shifting toward the U.S. in the post-Cold War era. In the book "India-Iran relations: Progress, problems, and prospects," Ashwarya touches upon the cold-war era India-Iran relations and Soviet and U.S. influences thereupon, exemplified in the Baghdad Pact and the Pakistan issue, the non-aligned movement factor, Shah's dalliance with Islam, India's wars and Iran's response, and the initiation of economic ties in the 1960s; she also looks into the containment policy towards Iran after the Islamic revolution, enhanced by punitive sanctions over the Iran nuclear issue, and its effects on the India-Iran relations. She highlights India's balancing act, epitomized in exemptions obtained from the U.S. for India's connectivity project in Chabahar port (Ashwarya, 2017). In the article "The dynamism of Iran-India relations: 1979–2009," Tisheyar examines the India-Iran relationship in terms of energy cooperation, the gas pipeline prospect in particular, Iran's ties with Pakistan as a legacy of the Cold War era, and the strengthening of Indo-U.S. ties (Tisheyar, 2011). India-Iran ties are further analyzed in light of China's Belt and Road Initiative. In their article titled "Iran and India on the Silk Road: Challenges and Prospects of Economic Cooperation in the Belt and Road Initiative," Tisheyar and Noorafkan analyze how China's Belt and Road Initiative and Iran's desire to enhance its relations with China impact the bilateral ties between India and Iran. It concludes that Iran and India can expand and pursue their economic interests by cooperating in projects related to the BRI while deepening cooperation in both Chabahar port and the International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC); they further emphasize the importance of elevating ties in terms of security cooperation, increasing economic integration, and establishing non-dollar payment mechanisms (Tisheyar & Noorafkan, 2021). In the article "Geopolitics of Ports: Factoring Iran in India's Counterbalancing Strategy for the 'Sino-Pak Axis'," Iran's role in India's foreign policy calculations vis-à-vis the Sino-Pak axis is assessed. The authors conclude that given China's CPEC and Gwadar strategies and its relations with Iran and Pakistan, India's increasing involvement in the Chabahar port and new momentum in Chabahar Port infrastructure development are paramount concerns for both when it comes to connectivity, and Iran's active response to India bespeaks some shared geopolitical and geostrategic interests (Singh & Singh, 2019). There is also a growing body of research focusing on increasingly strategic ties between India and U.S. as well as India's so-called "multi-

alignment." In the article "India's vision of world order: multi-alignment, exceptionalism, and peaceful co-existence," India's view of the world order and its role in it are explored. It is concluded that India pursues its own world-order policy where the interdependent future world order will be polycentric, with emerging world powers coming from different political systems, cultural traditions; hence, India pursues a policy of multi-alignment, seeking partnerships with all, while avoiding too close a relationship with particular countries or groupings (Wojczewski, 2017).

3. Indian Foreign Policy During the BJP Rule

Since Narendra Modi came to power, India's foreign policy has drawn on Hindu conceptualizations of the world and politics. Three different but connected concepts seem to dominate India's framing of developments in its immediate and wider neighborhood: i) the Tri-Guna philosophy; ii) Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. The concept originates from ancient Vedic Atharveda, where nature or matter is described using three types known as gunas: Sattva (representing white, knowledge, and happiness), Rajas (representing red, activity, and pain), and Tamas (representing dark, resistance or inertia, and confusion) (Rajpurohit & Satpathy, 2018: 3). The Gunas have the following features: 1) They act together and can never be found in isolation; the predominance of one guna determines the final type. Though countries, as likened to individuals, have a dynamic interaction of the three gunas, there is one predominant guna in each of them. Since India's immediate neighbors are directly linked to her, the Tri-Guna philosophy is mostly applied to them. While Pakistan remains a "tamasic" country, with terrorism and violence directed against India, China is increasingly seen as a "rajasic" country, i.e., having expansionist ambitions. In the aftermath of 2021's Galwan valley clashes between Indian and Chinese troops at the Himalayan border, India's Prime Minister speech at the place of the clashes was filled with references to the ancient Hindu Mahabharata battle (the sattvic Krishna and Arjuna's army against Rajasic Karna and his army) and the expansionist nature of Chinese engagement with India. In the words of Indian Prime Minister Modi, "the era of colonial expansion is over... the world is devoted to development and is welcoming the open competition for development" (full text: PM Modi, 2020). The wider neighborhood and beyond, however, are mostly conceptualized through Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, i.e., literally, the whole world is one family. The philosophy of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" aims for

world peace by embracing the entire world as one family, irrespective of caste, class, ethnicity, gender, and all kinds of divisive forces (Rajpurohit & Satpathy, 2018: 3). Therefore, India's relations with Iran and the Middle East in its neighborhood first policy and the subsequent "Act East" and "Link West" policies are governed mostly by the Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam principle.

4. Iran's Look East Strategy

With the adoption of Iran's Look East Strategy by the newly-elected Ebrahim Raisi government, however, Indian policymakers are increasingly wary of losing their hard-won gains in the region. Though Iran had signed the 25-year China Agreement under the previous regime of moderator Rouhani, the policy was seen as too much of a tilt toward the East and China, in particular by some factions of the population, and its implementation was under doubt. However, with President Raisi coming to power, the very first big foreign policy change was the clear pivot to the East, and China figures prominently in its success. Iranian policymakers saw China as a reliable development partner because China remained the biggest buyer of Iranian oil despite the sanction regime (Fan, 2022). Though Iran has remained interested in India's policy toward the development of Chabahar port and has sought to assure India that it is a reliable connectivity partner, there are now serious doubts looming large on the project as China is seen as much more influential in the region, considering the fanfare with which the implementation of the Iran-China 25-year China Agreement was celebrated and Iran officially became a part of the Chinese BRI. Among Iranian policymakers, there are some good reasons why they have chosen to have China as the preferred country in their Look East Strategy, ranging from access to technology to the economic and political weight of China to China's soft power and rivalry with the U.S. (Majidi et al., 2022: 34).

4-1. Chabahar Port in India-Iran Relations

India, under Narendra Modi, looks at Iran beyond the lens of geopolitics. In the ruling BJP party's manifesto 2014, it was highlighted that India, as the most ancient civilization of the world, has a much bigger role to play and that "Indian civilizational continuity with other civilizations" and parts of the world is stressed (EK Bharat Shreshtha, 2014: 1); such a civilizational frame to India's *raison d'être* and global mission makes Iran-India ties much more significant. Furthermore, Iran plays a significant role in

connecting India to Central Asia, which is considered India's extended neighborhood with traditional people-to-people and civilizational connections. Moreover, the Indian vision under Narendra Modi is not just limited to political diplomacy but also includes economic, scientific, cultural, political, and security interests. Considering the state-temple-corporate complex, Indian foreign policy actively seeks to highlight Indian cultural and religious contributions, whether through support for building Hindu temples in Bahrain or state visits with a religious dimension. The importance of both civilizational and cultural dimension can be observed in India-Iran relations through Modi's visiting the Sikh Gurdwara in Tehran as symbolic act with religious connotations during his official visit to Tehran in 2016 as well as commemorating "Chabahar Day" on 4 March 2021 on the margins of the Second Edition of the International Maritime Summit 2021; on the technical side, the Indian Ministry of Shipping offered 40% concessions on the coastal transport of cargo and vessel-related charges handled through Shahid Beheshti Port in Chabahar and it seems steps taken to strengthen infrastructure development have seen the fruits with significant increase in the number of operations handled through Chabahar port (Singh, 2021). In May 2016, the Indian government allocated \$500 million for developing Chabahar, which is only about 70 km from the Pakistani port of Gwadar, developed by Chinese investments under the Belt and Road Initiative (Wagner & Tripathi, 2018: 3). Despite India investing hundreds of millions of USD in the Chabahar port, progress has been slow due to Iran's nuclear-related sanctions regime. The ongoing U.S. sanctions regime makes it impossible for India's private sector to participate in Iran's energy and port development plans in Chabahar, a handicap especially since the promotion of corporate India in foreign acquisition of ports has become the centerpiece of Indian government policy with India's private investment in Haifa and Greek ports recently (Greek Media Reports Say, 2023). Therefore, the weak link in the state-temple-corporate complex in India's dealings with Iran is the corporate and private sections, negatively affecting Narendra Modi's policy toward Iran and Chabahar in particular.

Despite this, India, informed by both ideational aspects such as cultural affinity and civilizational links as well as practical ones such as connectivity and intelligence gathering, a tamasic country connected to terrorism, has continued its engagement in the Chabahar project and INSTC. Though a member of QUAD,

essentially a grouping to contain an aggressive China in the Indo-Pacific region with heavy U.S. involvement, India considers herself an emerging power in a "multi-polar world," thus shaping the global agenda in the 21st century is part of the civilizational mission of India, as it is read in the ruling BJP 2019 manifesto (Bharatiya Janata Party Sankalp, 2019: 38). India follows the Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam principle in her dealings with Iran and the U.S., setting its bilateral relations with Iran according to its broader ambitions as a world power. In fact, the BJP 2019 manifesto highlights that Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam serves as the basis for India's global cooperation, in particular with friendly countries and neighbors such as Iran (Bharatiya Janata Party Sankalp, 2019: 38).

Regarding connectivity, India regards Iran as the connecting bridge to Eurasia and Central Asia in particular. Besides the Chabahar project, INSTC, a project originally conceptualized between Iran, India, and Russia to shorten the trade route between India and Europe, has formed the second link between Iran and India. What is more, Chabahar, at a close distance from Pakistan's Gwadar port, provides an ideal platform to monitor and gather intelligence on Pakistan's military and naval positions in the restive Baluchistan province of Pakistan. India's positive contribution to the local Baloch people in the region through the Chabahar project would stand in contrast with the China-led CPEC on the other side of the border in Pakistan. India claims that CPEC in Pakistan's restive Baluchistan province has negatively impacted the local population's livelihood through i) deteriorating environmental issues, ii) a lack of promised economic benefits, and iii) local opposition to giving land to the project. In fact, there has been an upsurge of Baloch attacks on the Chinese engineers and Pakistani military in the region.

The multi-billion-dollar investments by China in different sectors, from the mineral industry to ports and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), have accentuated the feeling that Chinese involvement is primarily of an exploitative nature. The local population perceived the copper and gold mining project by Chinese mining giants in Chagai District negatively (Jetly, 2021). From India's perspective, Pakistan has been securitizing the Baloch people as posing an existential threat to its sovereignty that needs to be dealt with, and the Pakistani military has sought Chinese cooperation (Jetly, 2021). While the Baloch problem is developmental in essence, and mainly related to poverty and unemployment in the region, Pakistan has made the Baloch problem

a security issue instead and has sought Chinese collaboration for security measures devised to take control of the region. On the other hand, India has been using cultural and civilizational links to the local population in order to frame its participation in the Chabahar port as developmental and "sattvic" in essence. Drawing from the state-temple-corporate complex, India has responded to the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in its immediate neighborhood by actively developing cultural links, investing in infrastructure, and establishing a corporate presence in the Chabahar port. This move positions Chabahar as a competitor to Pakistan's Gwadar port and directly connects India to its wider neighborhood in Central Asia.

India also views Iran as an influential actor in Afghanistan, especially among the Farsi-speaking and Shiite populations in Afghanistan. Therefore, India is actively seeking to cooperate with Iran in Central Asia in order to enhance its own role in its extended neighborhood; this has become more urgent considering the recent NATO-hastily and prematurely pulled-out withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Taliban returning to power as de facto Pakistan's proxy and product of its intelligence services' design to counter Indian interests in the region (Shustov, 2022). As one of the Indian experts in the Observer Research Foundation puts it, interest convergence over Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia has given a new strategic impetus to India-Iran relations, as evidenced by both New Delhi and Tehran's efforts to expand cooperation on the Chabahar Project under the "Afghanistan Reconstruction Initiative" (Singh, 2021); Afghanistan remains the mainstay in Iran-India relations. For India, the US's withdrawal creates many challenges, such as Pakistan's funding, training, and military support for the Taliban and Afghanistan becoming a refuge for home-grown militant groups such as Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohamed (Singh, 2021). . In fact, taking concrete steps on international forums against countries and organizations supporting terrorism is highlighted in the ruling BJP 2019 manifesto with the goal of establishing a "Comity of Nations against International Terrorism" (Bharatiya Janata Party Sankalp, 2019: 38). Given that both Iran and India have encountered shared security challenges originating from Pakistan and Afghanistan, it becomes increasingly probable that the Chabahar project will serve as a natural platform for cooperation in combating terrorism.

4-2. China's Role in Iran's Infrastructure Development

Competition in Iran's infrastructure development has been high

between India and China. Chabahar port is considered complementary to India's western ports, bringing about an infrastructure boom in sea terminals, railways, and roadways, while big Indian companies are well equipped to win contracts to build rail and road projects from Chabahar port to other parts of Central Asia (Kulkarni, 2020). In the second phase of the Chabahar project, India intended to build a 628-km rail link to Zahedan on the Afghanistan border, which would then be connected to Kabul via Zaranj and Delaram. However, after Iran's pivot to the East and its closer cooperation with China, things have changed for the worse for India. China is increasingly being prioritized in infrastructure projects; in fact, it is claimed by many Indian experts and advisers close to the government that a section of the 25-year strategic partnership deal with China states that Tehran will provide Chinese companies with the first preference to bid on any new, stalled, or uncompleted oil and gas field development and petrochemical projects that would endanger Indian investment in Iranian assets (Devendra, 2020).

India's tentative exclusion from the rail network project linking Chabahar port to Afghanistan became a heated debate in India. When Iran decided to start working on the Chabahar-Zahedan rail project on its own, technically dropping India from the project, an aide to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpaee opined that growing Iran-China ties and Chinese economic influence on Iran led to such exclusion (Kulkarni, 2020). The leader of the Congress Party and the opposition to Modi's BJP party also castigated Modi's government in terms of losing a wider geopolitical game to China when he reacted to India's exclusion from the Chabahar rail project by saying that "India's global strategy is in tatters. We are losing power and respect everywhere, and the government of India has no idea what to do" (Modi government's foreign policy, 2020). Making Chabahar a party to China's BRI would be a huge loss for India, as Chabahar's main point of attraction was to serve as a counterproject to the BRI (Singh, 2021). The complementary vs. competitive debate regarding Chabahar and Gwadar is an essential one for India.

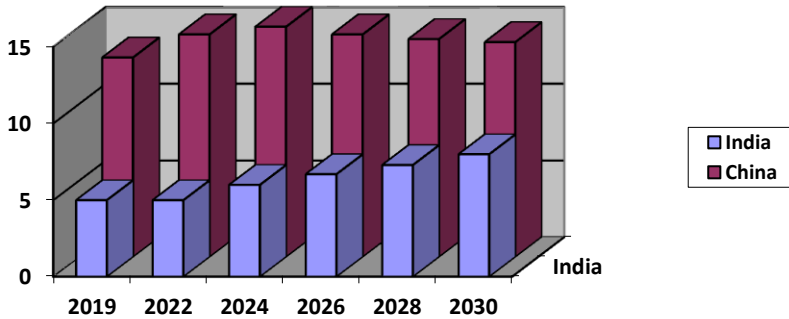
5. De-hyphenating Iran's Chabahar Port from Sanctions-Impacted Oil and Gas Sector

The now abandoned but highly sought-after Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline (IPI) project could have been a game changer for New Delhi. Despite its initial enthusiasm, India left Iran in the cold after successfully negotiating with the USA to enter the nuclear group

while not being a party to the non-proliferation treaty under the former Indian prime minister, Manmohan Singh. Though the US's role in thwarting the IPI has been mostly highlighted, the Chinese position is important as well (Cohen et al., 2008). Such an ambitious project would have increased New Delhi's influence in Iran and the Persian Gulf by becoming a reliable and long-term buyer of Iranian gas, while Pakistan would be put into a long-term relationship with India, a loss for China. Therefore, the IPI project has been opposed by both the US administrations out of fear of Iran's new economic lifeline and by Chinese authorities because of the increasing Indian influence on both Pakistan and Iran (Verma, 2007). Things have changed since Iran joined the BRI under the new Look East strategy, as Iran has even floated the idea of an Iran-Pakistan-China (IPC) gas pipeline project, technically replacing India with China (Iran ready to export, 2019). However, Indian diplomats increasingly emphasize Iran's geostrategic location and connectivity role, leaving the energy opportunities in the dust. In fact, India managed to keep Iran's Chabahar Port project outside the purview of U.S. sanctions by arguing for its use in connectivity-only projects, carrying non-sanctioned goods to and from Afghanistan and Central Asia; technically, de-hyphenating sanctions hit the oil and gas sector from the Chabahar project. This is despite the fact that not only India was interested in the development of Chabahar port for connecting to Central Asia, but more so in setting up an LNG terminal at Chabahar port to import natural gas from Iran and investing in oil and gas as well as petrochemical and fertilizer projects; such expectations can be read in the oil minister's written reply to a question in Lok Sabha (India's Lower House) stating such energy projects "can be either in joint venture between Indian and Iranian public sector companies or with private sector partners" (India Vying for LNG, 2016).

Therefore, India's de-hyphenation politics have spilled over into Iran's energy and connectivity politics. De-hyphenation, a stratagem advocated by Indian diplomatic circles, means dealing with two countries in an independent manner, ignoring the complexities of their relations with each other (Tellis, 2008). De-hyphenating Iran's energy and connectivity role can be identified by the emphasis India's External Affairs Minister, Jaishankar, puts in his Chabahar Day address when he clarifies, "It was during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Iran in 2016 that a trilateral agreement to establish an international transport and transit corridor was signed by India, Iran, and Afghanistan... to ensure the unhindered flow of

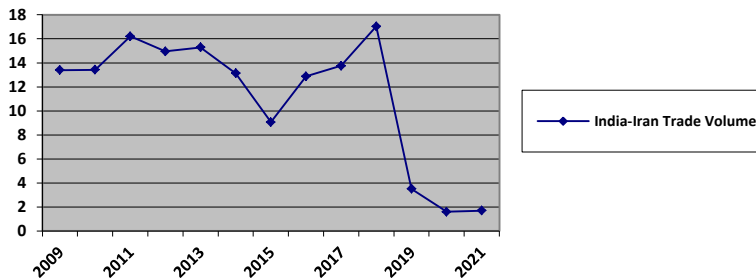
commerce throughout the region and to create a safe, secure, and reliable route to trade initially with Afghanistan and thereafter with Central Asia as a whole" (Address by External Affairs Minister, 2021: 2). Another explanation for such de-hyphenation of Chabahar's energy and connectivity dimensions can be found in the emphasis the government of India has put on neighboring countries through its "Neighborhood First" policy, where accelerating regional coordination in India's neighborhood is stressed. Therefore, we are witnessing a hybridization of an Indian mainstay policy of de-hyphenation and a newly found neighborhood-first policy in relations with Iran. Through such a scheme, India has been successful in continuing to cooperate with Iran on the Chabahar port while engaging with the U.S. to project her power to wider Asia and the Middle East. Having multiple links to the resource-rich Middle East is vital for India, as India's growth in oil and gas consumption is set to overtake that of China (see Figure 1).



Resource: (India set to surpass, 2023)

Figure (1): Projection of China and India's Oil Demand up to 2030 (million barrels per day)

To protect its energy security, India has diversified its portfolio of oil import destinations, including the Persian Gulf countries, Iran, and Iraq. Before the U.S. unilateral withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, Iran had consistently been a significant source of oil for India. In fact, India was the second-biggest consumer of Iranian oil in 2010 (Omidi & Noolkar-Oak, 2022: 26). While India tried to find ways to bypass the U.S. sanctions, such as the rupee-rial mechanism for trade and crude oil and the designation of Indian small banks not exposed to the U.S. market for trade, the trade between India and Iran has plummeted in the wake of the U.S. re-imposition of sanctions (see Figure 2).



Source: (India and Iran Trade, 2023)

Figure (2): Total Trade between India and Iran: 2009-2021 (in US billion dollars)

As Indian foreign policy perceives Iran and Central Asia through the lens of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, India is set to deepen relations with Iran as well as Central Asia. Considering India's vision for its place in the region, it has begun looking at undertaking concrete measures in its relations with Central Asian Republics (CARs) through Iran. Increasing India-CARs engagement was the basis for the institutionalization of the India-Central Asia summit, providing a multilateral instead of bilateral framework as well as deepening cooperation on Afghanistan (Bhattacharya, 2022). India considers Central Asia as its extended neighborhood, thereby trying to fill the vacuum left by Russia due to a protracted war in Ukraine. India has also included Chabahar Port in the INSTC so as to increase its engagement with CARs and Iran (India wants Chabahar Port, 2022). While still interested in having an IPI gas pipeline project with Iran, India is reviving interest in the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project at the same time (Fazl-e-Haidar, 2023). By engaging CARs in the INSTC and Chabahar ports and floating the IPI and TAPI projects, India is deepening its footprint in Central Asia and Iran, providing incentives for Iran not to water down the Chabahar project by towing it to the BRI.

There are some emergent factors potentially insuring the speedier development of the project: the Russia-Ukraine war and Iran's joining the BRICS. In the aftermath of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, INSTC has gained momentum since it acts to bypass U.S. sanctions for both Iran and Russia. Iran's membership in BRICS could also facilitate financial transactions between New Delhi and Tehran thanks to the New Development Bank (NDB) and future plans on utilizing an alternative to the Belgium-based SWIFT

financial messaging service for transactions between member states (Azimi, 2023). Overall, India looks at the Chabahar port not as an isolating maritime and economic endeavor but rather as a geopolitical response to pressure from China and its BRI partner Pakistan. As the chief of the RSS, a Hindutva movement close to the ruling BJP party, Mohan Bhagwat stated, "Our western and northern borders are not so safe... Our soldiers have to remain awake, and we (citizens) also have to remain awake" (India progressing, but northern, 2023). Though without naming them directly, it was a reference to Pakistan and China; therefore, India perceives Iran's Look East Strategy through the lens of its rivalry with China and Pakistan and wants to ensure its own place through a long-term strategic deal.

5-1. Locking in Trade and Connectivity with Iran through Long-Term Strategic Deal

India is further looking to make a long-term deal with Iran on the Chabahar port. Such a long-term strategic deal between India and Iran can tick the balance of power in the region into India's side through the following: 1) establishing a strategic partnership with Iran, including security cooperation; 2) closing the door for good to any China-linked project involving Chabahar; 2) developing the Chabahar Free Trade Zone and encouraging investments by Indian companies in the free zone; 3) negotiating for the Indo-Iran Bilateral Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA), in the absence of Iran in the WTO, so as to diversify trade portfolios by including sectors such as manufacturing, services, pharmaceuticals, and mutual investment promotion. In fact, India is doubling down on its efforts to convert Chabahar into a trade and investment hub for India and its businesses in the regions through the operationalization of the Free Trade Zone in Chabahar, which would be a boost to India's corporations and make them relevant in the state-temple-corporate complex, in particular the base support of corporate India. Furthermore, a strategic partnership would provide long-term Iran-India cooperation on the matter of terrorism, directly aimed at Pakistan. Besides, internationalization of the Indian Rupee through its financial transactions for trade with Iran has been facilitated by the launch of a system for the settlement, billing, and payment of exports and imports in Indian Rupees (INR) initiated by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) (Bonesh, 2023).

6. India's Western Connection within the Concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

Iran, under the Look East strategy, is building upon the successful Chinese mediation between Iran and China and the regional detente to put forth a regional forum and framework for cooperation between both sides of the Persian Gulf. While India welcomes such trust-building measures between Saudi Arabia and Iran, India is carving out its own role in the region, underpinned by the West Link initiative. Considering Indian interests and increasing trade in the region, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi introduced the "Link West" initiative to improve ties with the area. Not only has India expanded ties with friendly countries in the region, but India has also sought cooperation with countries previously known to follow a pro-Pakistan foreign policy, such as Saudi Arabia. In addition to deepening security ties with Arab countries in the region through strategic partnerships, India is also increasingly forthcoming about its relations with Israel, leaving behind the pro-Palestinian tendency. While the attacks in India's financial capital, Mumbai, in 2008 and trade and technology cooperation have drawn the two closer, there is a clear factor of multi-alignment in the form of vasudhaiva kutumbakam in India's approach to the region. The significant Indian diaspora in the Persian Gulf region further supports these efforts. The emphasis of the ruling BJP on the Indian diaspora as an asset to further India's role in the region is distinguishable through mobilizing programs such as the Bharat Gaurav campaign in the BJP 2019 manifesto (Bharatiya Janata Party Sankalp, 2019: 38).

Moreover, India has been involved in putting together new institutions informed by the ruling BJP imagination of the India story as the major civilizational comeback and supported by Hindu nationalism and corporate India; a flexible and issue-specific mini-lateral framework instead of big and rigid multilateral agreements has been the prime choice of New Delhi in the region, such as the likes of I2U2 (India, Israel, the U.S., and the UAE) (Taneja, 2023). Through such mini-laterals, India will be able to engage in the wider region without committing to any hard alliance with the U.S. or any other country in the region. Besides, the informal nature of such mini-laterals will signal to Iran that India is still committed to its independent foreign policy and engagement with Iran at Chabahar port.

Cooperation with the U.S. also led to a breakthrough with the G20 announcement of the coming of age of the India-Middle East-Europe economic corridor (IMEC). The project is set to build a

railway and, later, digital and electric cables, as well as a clean hydrogen pipeline, from India to Europe via Jordan and Israel (Merchant, 2023). India, in its rivalry with China for the lack of hedging in the region, sees the IMEC as a formidable alternative to China's BRI for participating small regional states such as Jordan and the UAE. Through continuing engagement with Iran in Chabahar port, on the one hand, and a mini-lateral framework as well as maritime military cooperation with regional powers and closer India-U.S. ties, on the other, India is building on its civilizational narrative of the Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam principle. The latter is translated into tolerance toward apparently contradictory paths and relations.

Since small regional states, like the UAE and other states in the Persian Gulf, are deepening their ties with a constellation of powers in a bid to hedge the political risks of a limited relationship with any one of the powers, mini-laterals are flexible and informal mechanisms with manageable political costs while simultaneously strengthening their ability to navigate through great power competition (Saraswat, 2023).

Thus, India is playing its cards close to its chest, not showing a complete commitment to any power in the region. On the other hand, India is betting on, several factors that can play a spoiler in Iran-China relations, which include: 1) the US factor: Iran is expanding its relations with China due in part to U.S. sanctions, while Chinese companies are wary of getting caught in U.S.-Iran rivalry and slapped with sanctions; 2) limited progress in trade and economic relations between the two, which would be dwarfed in comparison with China-Arab states located in the southern shores of the Persian Gulf; 3) not favorable Iranian public opinion about China, reminiscent of Cold War understanding of communism and notions of "Godless" and "evil".

Indian policy-makers in fact count on such anti-China sentiments as fertile ground for Indian and Western discourses such as "debt trap" and Chinese "neo-imperialism" (Singh, 2023b: 19). Such reservations about the potential of Iran-China relations are further shared by some analysts in Iran as well with negative implications including: 1) Chinese cultural influence in Iran and possible new socio-political fragmentation in Iranian society along the line of previous anglophile and Russophile ones, with the inception of a "sinophile" interest-group in Iran; 2) asymmetric dependence thanks to an isolated Iran seeking closer ties with China and economic gap between the two; 3) creation of a new "China Town" in Iran and

Chinese "intra-group" solidarity norms; 4) Iran becoming a wild card in hands of China for balancing its relations with the U.S.; 5) Iran self-limiting herself in its military and political games in the region out of considerations for China and Sino-Arab ties (Mir Mohammadi, 2023: 12). In the wider region, the Sino-Iran partnership and its regional consequences, such as the recent China-brokered détente in relations between Tehran and Saudi Arabia, would, in India's view, only increase Tehran's dependence on Beijing in its conduct of foreign policy. This will lead to a narrowing of options for Tehran in its regional dealings, resulting in a drift away from its revolutionary principles and eventually loosening its grip around its proxies in the region (Devendra, 2020). Considering such internal resistance to an all-out alliance between Iran and China, India is expanding its ties in areas of low sensitivity, such as the connectivity project, as a means to gain influence in Iran and Central Asia.

Conclusion

Given Iran's impetus for regional cooperation and the ongoing Sino-Iranian rapprochement, this contribution aims to explore the impact of the Sino-Iranian rapprochement on India, which stands as one of Iran's largest trade partners in Asia. The main hypothesis states that Sino-Iranian rapprochement has led India to expand the scope of its connectivity projects through Iran, throwing a spoke in the wheel of China's Belt and Road Initiative in South and Central Asia. The results indicate that Indian policymakers are seeking to de-hyphenate the energy cooperation with Iran from the connectivity projects. Furthermore, as a response to growing Chinese footprints in Iran and Central Asia, India has undertaken certain concrete measures, such as the institutionalization of the India-Central Asia summit in a multi-lateral framework, the inclusion of Iran's Chabahar port in the International North-South Corridor, and connectivity to Central Asia. Under the Modi leadership, civilizational and cultural links between Iran and India have come to the fore with symbolic acts such as commemorating Chabahar Day. Informed by the state-temple-corporate complex, India has responded to the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in its immediate neighborhood by developing cultural links, corporate engagement, and investments in infrastructure in Chabahar port as a competitor to Gwadar port in Pakistan. This development aims to connect India directly to its wider neighborhood in Central Asia.. In the spirit of neighborhood first policy and in view of Iran and India's

common security challenges emanating from Afghanistan and Pakistan, India is looking to lock in cooperation with Iran through a long-term strategic deal, opening up the possibility for security cooperation and aiming directly at Pakistan. India, in response to increasing Chinese engagement in the Persian Gulf, is carving out its own role in the region, namely the West Link, underpinned by the big Indian diaspora in the region, and the Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam principle, boosted by the cultural-corporate link. Furthermore, through a mini-lateral framework, maritime military cooperation with regional powers, and closer India-U.S. ties, on the one hand, and the development of the Chabahar project in Iran, on the other, India is building up on her civilizational narrative of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam in the form of tolerance toward different apparently contradictory paths and relations.

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"Crimes Against Humanity and Genocide": The Plight of Rohingya Muslims and Iran's Stance

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Abstract

The Rohingya people are the native inhabitants of Arakan (Rakhine) land in Myanmar and have faced a series of crimes by the Myanmar army and government. Based on the norms and regulations of international and customary international law and the principles of international criminal law and considering the incidents that occurred against the religious minority group of Rohingya Muslims, the continuous violation of human rights and the occurrence of the crime of genocide by the Myanmar government are a matter of fact. There are numerous examples of deliberate actions that illustrate the government's efforts to eradicate the Rohingya community, as well as intentional measures that incur international responsibility for the Myanmar government. Iran has raised three specific stances regarding the Rohingya Muslim crisis.

The major question of the research is to evaluate the occurrence or non-occurrence of violations of international criminal law, the crimes of genocide, and crimes against humanity by the Myanmar army and government against the Muslim minority in Rakhine State. Iran's stance on the issue is one of the priorities in our question.

Based on the principles of international law, the hypothesis emphasizes the occurrence of crimes against humanity and genocide. The purpose of the research is to examine one of the important cases of violation of Muslim rights in today's world that has not been noticed by international legal societies. It attempts to briefly discuss Iranian perspectives on the issue. The analytical-descriptive research method is based on official documents and undeniable facts, especially the documents issued by the International Criminal Court.

Keywords: Myanmar Muslims, Crime of Genocide, Crime Against Humanity, Iran, Humanitarian International Law.

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The occurrence of bloody internal international conflicts in the last few decades in the world, especially in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, led to the establishment of two international courts to punish crimes in these territories, and finally, with the adoption of the Rome Statute for the establishment of the ICC, the issue of the prevention and punishment of international crimes such as genocide and crimes against humanity has again been in the focus of the legislative and legal circles of the world community.

The Rohingya people are the native inhabitants of Arakan (Rakhine) land in Myanmar and have faced a series of crimes by the Myanmar army and government. Based on the norms and regulations of international and customary international law and the principles of international criminal law and considering the incidents that occurred against the religious minority group of Rohingya Muslims, the continuous violation of human rights and the occurrence of the crime of genocide by the Myanmar government are a matter of fact. There are numerous examples of deliberate actions, which prove the governmental steps to eliminate the Rohingya group, and deliberate measures, which cause the international responsibility of the Myanmar government.

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Although the Myanmar government is not a member of the International Criminal Court, it is responsible for its behavior and policies in terms of customary international law (or mandatory law). The Court believes that due to the membership of Bangladesh in the Court and the commission of the crime of "forced immigration and

forced deportation of Rohingya Muslims" from Myanmar to Bangladesh, the Court acquires jurisdiction over the actions of the Myanmar government. The purpose of the research is to examine one of the important cases of violation of Muslim rights in today's world that has not been noticed by international legal societies. It tries briefly to discuss Iran's stance on the issue. The analytical-descriptive research method is based on official docs and undeniable facts, especially the documents issued by the International Criminal Court.

Literature Review

Regarding the situation of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, several works have previously been published in English, some in Persian.

Mousavi and his colleagues (2014) have taken a more or less brief look at the phenomenon of genocide in international criminal law and committing crimes against Muslims in Myanmar (Mousavi and colleagues, 2015: 7). Mousavi has focused well on the elements of the crime of genocide only in the form of three axes, although the elements of the mentioned crime are more than three (Mousavi, 2014).

Majid Afraz (2016), in a legal note entitled "Investigation and Analysis of the Criminal Responsibility of the Myanmar Government in Relation to the Massacre of Muslims in the Light of International Law," discusses the international responsibility of governments and the international responsibility of the Myanmar government based on customary and imperative international law. (Afraz, 2016: 1).

Kazemi Forushani and his colleagues (2018) discussed the situation of Muslims in Myanmar from the perspective of human rights at the "New Findings of the Humanities and Social Sciences" conference in Budapest (Kazemi Forushani and colleagues, 2018: 60). He emphasizes that the only way to deal with the crimes committed against the Muslims of Myanmar is to enter the Security Council of the UN and request the International Criminal Court to deal with them.

Shorafei al-Mohaneh (2019) discusses the dimensions of the Rohingya resident rights issue according to the literature of international criminal law. He states that the only way that the International Criminal Court can deal with the violation of the rights of Myanmar Muslims is by resorting to the prohibition of deportation and forced relocation (Almuhana, 2019: 45).

In its summary report (2020), the Global Justice Center raises the issue of the investigation of the International Criminal Court in the

issues of Bangladesh and Myanmar and specifically evaluates the action of the court's prosecutor based on the order confirming the jurisdiction of the court dated November 14, 2019. (Global Justice Center, 2020: 1).

Rahela Sadat Mousavi Ajaq has also briefly analyzed the category of genocide in Myanmar with the subject of human rights in the "Research Journal of Human Rights" (Sadat Mousavi Ajaq, without date: 36). The focus of her discussion is the conflict between the policies and actions of the Myanmar government and the principles of human rights.

Nozar Shafiei and his colleagues (2018) looked at the general performance of the UN institutions in relation to the genocide crisis in Myanmar and concluded that the UN institutions have only had a recommendatory approach to the issue of crimes against humanity and genocide of the Rohingya people (Shafii, 2018: 142).

"The Association of Physicians for Human Rights" (2019) has documented the incidents and consequences of the 2017 operation against the Muslim people of the region in a report. The report points out a wide range of human rights violations by the Myanmar government (Physicians for Human Rights, 2019: 4–5).

Lucas Alcici and his colleagues (2021) analyze the issue of deportation and displacement of the Rohingya people from the perspectives of international criminal law and international law. According to them, it is only from the point of view of the category of forced displacement that violations of the rights of Rohingya Muslims can be evaluated and proven (Alcici and Colleague, 2021: 116).

Gomez (2020), like Alcici, has made the crime of deportation and forced displacement of Rohingya Muslims by the Myanmar government the focus of his discussion and claims that the Court should redefine the severity of the crime of forced displacement as an example of human rights violations (Gomez, 2020: 188).

Ronan Lee (2019) introduces the Myanmar government's citizenship law as a state crime that can be dealt with by the International Criminal Court (Lee, 2019: 242).

Each of these works has elaborated on some dimensions of the issue. A few works suffer from the weakness of legal discussion, and others lack comprehensive political analysis. The strength of this research is its comprehensive legal and political view, along with updating the data.

1. Conceptual Framework

1-1. Genocide Criminalization: A Historical Perspective

The criminalization of actions against human groups from the point of view of international law was first proposed in 1933 by Raphael Lemkin at the World Conference on the Unification of Criminal Law in Madrid, and these types of actions were interpreted as barbaric crimes. The first international legal document that used the word genocide was the indictment of October 18, 1945, against German criminals at the Nuremberg Tribunal, and so it was included among the crimes against humanity (Rajai Bagh Siyabi, 2011: 163).

In 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations officially approved the Convention on the Prohibition and Punishment of Genocide, and this document is considered a legal pillar for punishing the crime of genocide in the international arena. With the approval of most governments, it became enforceable as a domestic law. Since the judicial procedure is considered one of the sources of international criminal law, therefore, the procedure of the international courts for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda is effective for explaining and interpreting these crimes. Article 4 of the Statute of the Yugoslavian Court, Article 2 of the Statute of the Rwandan Court, and Article 6 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court are among the other constituents of the legal element of the crime of genocide. In general, today, genocide is one of the crimes that is part of customary international law and obliges all countries that are not members of related conventions to implement its provisions.

1-2. Genocide

Genocide, the Latin term used in 1944 by Raphael Lemkin to describe the cruel acts of Nazi Germany's criminals against the Jews, is composed of the Greek word "genos," which means nation, class, race, and generation, and the English word "cide," which means to destroy and kill. Lemkin interpreted genocide not only as mass killing through the "destruction of a national or ethnic group," but also through a coordinated plan of various actions in order to destroy the basic foundations of the life of a national group with the aim of destroying the group itself (Rajai Bagh Siyabi, 2010: 163).

From the perspective of international criminal law, genocide includes a series of criminal actions that are usually carried out on a large scale with the intention of destroying all or part of the target

groups (Tayeb, 2005: 70). According to Article 4 of the Statute of the ICC, genocide means any of the following acts that are committed with the intention of destroying all or part of a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group in terms of these titles:

- A. Killing members of a group
- B. Severe damage to the physical or mental health of the members of a group
- C. Deliberately placing a group in inappropriate living conditions that lead to the deterioration of all or part of that group's physical abilities
- D. Imposing measures to prevent births in the group
- E. Forced transfer of children from one group to another.

On the other hand, in the text of Article 2 of the Convention "Prohibition and Punishment of Genocide"¹ approved in 1948, genocide is defined as a set of actions that are similar to the text of Article 4 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court.

This definition of genocide is exactly repeated in paragraph 3 of article 4 of the Statute of the former Yugoslavia, paragraph 2 of article 2 of the Statute of the Rwanda Tribunal, and article 6 of the Statute of the International Criminal Court.

1-3. Crimes Against Humanity

Crimes against humanity are specific acts committed intentionally by a state, or on behalf of a state, as part of a widespread or organized policy, usually against civilians, in times of war or peace. A crime against humanity is different from a war crime because a war crime is usually a single, isolated act committed by soldiers, while a crime against humanity is committed in furtherance of the policy of a government or organization. The violent nature of such acts is considered a gross violation of human rights.

Crime against humanity was first raised as a legal charge at the Nuremberg Trials. Since then, other international tribunals, such as the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, and the International Criminal Court, as well as domestic courts, have prosecuted crimes against humanity. The legal standards for crimes against humanity

1. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG), or Genocide Convention, is an international treaty that criminalizes genocide and requires states not to commit it. This convention was the first legal document to codify genocide as a crime and the first human rights treaty that was unanimously approved by the United Nations General Assembly on December 9, 1948 (G.A. Res. 260.1948).

have been formed mainly through the evolution and development of customary international law. Unlike war crimes, crimes against humanity may be committed both during wartime and during peacetime (De Guzman, 2011: 6).

Crime against humanity does not refer to isolated and scattered incidents by a few people, but it is realized when committing widespread crimes is part of a government's policy. Crime against humanity has a broader concept than genocide. In the crime against humanity, it is not necessary to target a specific group, but in general, a civilian population, including political groups and others, may be the target of these crimes. In a crime against humanity, unlike genocide, the intent of the perpetrator to destroy all or part of the target group is not a condition (Varleh, 1999: 59).

According to Article 7 of the Statute of the ICC, crimes against humanity are defined as the following acts committed in a "widespread" or "organized" attack against a "civilian population" and with "knowledge of that attack":

1. Murder; 2. Suppressing; 3. Being enslaved; 4. Migration or forced displacement of the population; 5. Imprisoning or creating any other form of severe deprivation of physical freedom that is against the fundamental rules of international law. 6. Rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced sterilization, and any kind of sexual violence similar to them; 7. Harassment of any group or any specific gathering for political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, or sexual reasons (mentioned in paragraph 3) or any action listed in this paragraph or any crime subject to the jurisdiction of the court based on the criteria that are at the level universally recognized as unacceptable by international law; 8. Enforced disappearance (persons); 9. Apartheid; 10. Other similar anti-human acts are done intentionally with the intention of causing great suffering or serious injury to the body or physical or mental health.

2. The General Situation of the Rohingya Muslim Minority

In 1948, the country of Burma (Myanmar) gained its independence, but even before independence, the inhabitants of this land faced the problem of ethnic conflicts. In terms of demographic structure, on the one hand, the majority of the population are Burmese, who make up almost two-thirds of the total, and on the other hand, there are over 144 different ethnic groups, all of which make up another third of Myanmar's population (Ziaur, Rahman, and Jhensanam, Anusara, 2018).

The Muslim area of Arakhin is located in a narrow coastal strip between the western highlands of Arakan and the Bay of Bengal, which is very suitable for agriculture and one of the main rice production points, but the area has great difficulty traveling to other parts of Myanmar, and so it is easier for the people to travel to Bangladesh (Mofazli, 2012: 72).

Arakhin, with an area of about 37,000 square kilometers, shares borders with Bangladesh and India. Muslim people make up the absolute majority of the population of the state, although a minority of Buddhists also live in the same state. The capital of the state is Arakhin, and the city of Sitoh is located in the north. The waterways leading to Arakhine were paved by the arrival of Islam in the region and its adjacent coastal areas in the late 7th century AD by Muslim Arab merchants and sailors, and since then, a large number of Arakhine residents have converted to Islam (Mofazli, 2012: 73). Today, the Rohingya ethnic group is a Muslim population whose historical and ancestral roots and cultural ties are located in the state of Arakan along the borders of Myanmar and Bangladesh (Zarni, Cowley 2014: 682).

The population of Rohingya people was estimated to be over 1 million people before the 2017 developments that led to their deaths and massive displacement (Council on Foreign Relations, 2018).

3. Crimes Against the Rohingya People

Among Myanmar's ethnic minorities, the Rohingya people have been subjected to the violent actions of Buddhist extremists more than other ethnic groups (Shafi'i and Salimi, 2018: 146). In Myanmar, indigenous groups are targeting Muslims, yet the Myanmar government fails to respond to such massacres and has even deprived Muslims of their citizenship rights (Rustai & Arashpour 2015: 73).

The victims of the massacre in Myanmar comprise the 7% Muslim minority of the total population of Myanmar, who have either been displaced from their homes and sought refuge in neighboring countries or have been killed. To date, the UN human rights system has taken significant measures to prevent the continuation of crimes.

3-1. Violence Against the Rohingya

Despite the fact that the Rohingya Muslim people have lived in Myanmar for many centuries, the nationalist extremists in Burma have denied the existence of an identity called Rohingya and called

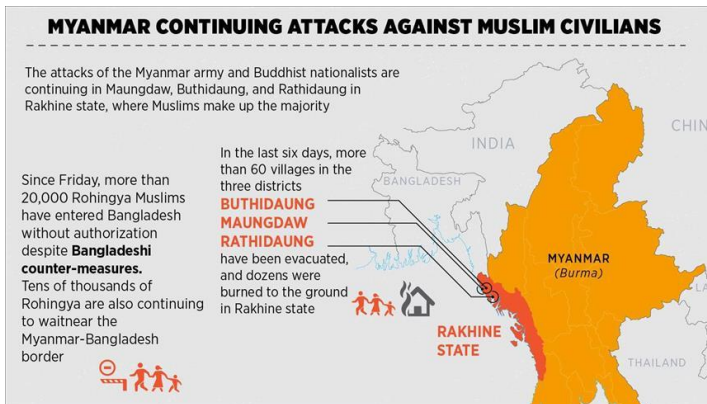
them immigrant groups who have migrated to Myanmar from other lands. Therefore, since the mid-1940s, these people have been continuously insulted, discriminated against, violated, and isolated by military governments.

There are reliable sources that say Rohingya Muslims lived in Rakhine State before the independence of Myanmar from British colonialism in 1948 and even before the colonial era. In fact, Rakhine State in Myanmar was the ancestral home of Rohingya Muslims. However, the extreme nationalist Buddhists strongly oppose this opinion and call the Rohingya people illegal immigrants who migrated from East Bengal to Rakhine during the period of British colonial rule over Burma or after the independence of Burma and Pakistan in 1947–1948 (Chan, Zahn 2005).

Today, the total population of Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State is more than one million people, most of whom live in three urban areas of Northern Rakhine State and are stateless (Szep, Marshall, 2013). In the 1970s and especially in 1978, during what is called Operation Dragon, more than 300,000 Rohingya were killed, injured, and displaced (Selth, 2018).

The Human Rights Center of Ireland, in its 2010 report, states that due to the evidence of the crime of deportation or forced transfer, the first mass migration of the Rohingya people that attracted the attention of the international community was the mass migration from North Arakan state to the newly independent state of Bangladesh. It was in 1978, during which about 220,000 Rohingya people were displaced on the border of Bangladesh (Irish Center for Human Rights 2010: 91).

In 1982, the Myanmar government removed the Rohingya people from the circle of citizenship by enacting the Citizenship Law, and they became stateless. According to the mentioned citizenship law, original citizenship is considered only for people who have the possibility of proving their origin and residence before 1842.



Map (1): Attacks Against Muslim Civilians (31 August 2017)

The regulations were formulated in such a way that the Rohingyas are practically unable to provide acceptable documents to prove their Burmese citizenship, so they are not recognized as one of the national races of Burma (Shafiei & Salimi, 2018: 146). By referring to the state of statelessness, the government deprived Muslims of an important part of human rights regulations and discriminatory measures against them, such as forced labor, preventing employment in government centers, collecting taxes for the birth of every Muslim baby, expropriating property and preventing them from owning land in Myanmar, being deprived of health and educational services, being prevented from university education, non-issuance of identity cards and passports, and enforced migration (Shafiei & Salimi, 2018: 147).

These limitations can be categorized into five topics:

- 1- Denial of citizenship and citizenship rights: In 1982, a law was passed that revoked the citizenship rights of the Rohingya Muslim majority in Burma. According to the law, about 135 ethnic groups out of 144 ethnic groups in Myanmar were granted citizenship, but 9 ethnic groups, including the Rohingya (4% of the country's population), who are Muslims, were denied the right to citizenship (Martin & others, 2017: 12).
- 2- Deprivation of the right to participate in the elections and representation in the parliament: In 2015, the then president of Myanmar, "Thein Sein," banned and canceled the temporary identification cards (white cards) that were in the possession of a large number of Rohingya and allowed them to vote in the elections. Therefore, the Election Commission did not allow the

Rohingyas to participate in the 2015 parliamentary elections.

- 3- Deprivation of the right to study and work in governmental centers.
- 4- Movement restrictions: Rohingyas in rural areas are not allowed to move from one village to another without the permission of local authorities.
- 5- Restrictions on marriage and prohibition of changing religion through marriage: In 2015, the Myanmar Parliament approved the "Race and Religion Protection Law," which was probably aimed at the Burmese Muslim population, especially the Rohingya. The aforementioned regulations prohibited religious marriages and conversion to Islam through a marriage contract without the government's permission (Martin and others, 2017: 12).

The policy of changing the use of lands and villages to model villages throughout Burma and intensifying the militarization of these areas has led to an increase in the confiscation of Rohingya Muslim lands (Rustaei and Arashpour, 2015: 57). The increase in the militarization of North Arakan State since 1994 made the necessity of a land confiscation policy legal for the construction and maintenance of military facilities. Rohingya refugees are often forced to participate in the construction of military facilities and even adjust the cultivation of their farms to the needs of the Burmese military (International Federation of Human Rights 2000: 23-24).

The second massive migration of Rohingya people to Bangladesh took place between May and March 1992. (Human Rights Watch 1996: 12).

In 2003, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution on the human rights situation in Myanmar, which for the first time mentioned several international conventions, including the Convention on the Prohibition and Punishment of Genocide and the 1949 Geneva Conventions. The resolution expressed concern about the systematic violation of human rights in Myanmar. Since 1991, the United Nations General Assembly has passed several resolutions regarding civilians, children, and armed conflicts and has expressed concern about the human rights situation in Myanmar (Omid Zamani, 2017: 93-95).

The special rapporteur of the United Nations, Rajsoomer Lallah, in his January 2000 report pointed to the factors that led to the mass exodus of Rohingya Muslims from Burma, which are

- 1- Not having citizenship and not enjoying national rights;
- 2- Restrictions on movement and travel;

- 3- Forced labor and forced labor for the army;
- 4- Forcible cutting of food, extortion, and arbitrary collection of taxes;
- 5- Confiscation of land or obligation to relocate residence;
- 6- Creation of deliberate restrictions on food distribution in parallel with high prices (Lallah 2000: 14).

In a 2012 report, Genocide Watch classified Myanmar as one of the countries at high risk of genocide due to violence and other crimes committed against the Rohingya (Sentinel Project, 2013).

Since the violence of 2012, more than 140,000 people have been displaced in camps in Rakhine State, the majority of whom are Rohingya Muslims. The United Nations has considered approximately 36,000 Rohingya Muslims and other Muslim communities in Rakhine State to be really vulnerable and in need of immediate humanitarian assistance (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2013: 3-4).

According to the report of another special rapporteur of the UN Human Rights Council, Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, in many areas where ethnic minorities live, forced displacement has been a part of their living conditions. Therefore, in June 2012, widespread violence against the Rohingya Muslims began, which caused the third wave of their escape from their place of residence in Arakan state. According to the report by Human Rights Watch, 77 people were killed and 109 were injured following the beginning of riots and violence in various cities of Rakhine State in June. 4,822 houses and 17 mosques were burned down (Human Rights Watch 2013: 21).

In 2017, the High Commissioner for Human Rights mentioned the conditions governing Rakhine State as a form of "ethnic cleansing" (UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2017). A human rights institution announced that it has collected more than 80 statements from Rohingya men and women who witnessed ethnic cleansing operations in 40 villages in northern Rakhine State. In these testimonials, it was mentioned that the agents of the Myanmar military forces have killed civilians, including infants and children. As per the report, military forces burned men alive and killed women and children both at close range and from a distance. Survivors from some villages recounted soldiers tearing women's clothes, committing rape, and beheading the victims (Shafi'i & Salimi, 2018: 149).

In a 56-page report on the conflicts in Myanmar, Human Rights Watch states that Myanmar's security forces did not protect Muslims against Buddhists and even launched a violent military

campaign against the Muslim population. The report clearly states that the Myanmar authorities are directly responsible for the crimes against the Rohingya Muslim minority, including mass killings, rape, forced arrests, and the burning of residential and commercial areas of the Rohingya minority. The report adds that satellite images show that at least 288 Rohingya villages were destroyed from August to November 2017 (Human Wacht, 2017).

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Hussain, stated during the detailed report he published in 2017 about the crimes committed against the Rohingya Muslim minority, and at the 36th session of the Human Rights Council that the organized violence against the Rohingya minority in Myanmar is a clear example. It is a racial settlement (Shafi'i & Salimi, 2018: 150).

On March 13, 2018, Adama Ding, the UN advisor on the prevention of genocide, reported that based on the information received, the Myanmar government plans to get rid of the Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State and possibly even destroy them, if this is proven, it is considered a crime against humanity and a form of genocide (Shafi'i & Salimi, 1398: 152).

On August 25, 2017, the Myanmar government started a cleansing operation against the entire Rohingya population (Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, 2018: Paras 32-33). As a result of this operation, nearly 725,000 Rohingya fled from Rakhine to Bangladesh until mid-August 2018 (Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, 2018: Paras 32-33). The operations included rape and sexual assault of women, burning villages, killing, depriving civilian women of food and water, and preventing medicine from reaching the victims (Almuhana, 2019: 48).

The Myanmar government has legalized its security operations against the Rohingya, claiming that these operations were of a counter-terrorist nature against the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army. Referring to paragraph 2 of Article 12 on September 6, 2018, the Hague Court confirmed its jurisdiction to review the case as one of the parties to the lawsuit, Bangladesh, is a member of the court (Decision on the Prosecution's Request, 2018: para. 72).

The Prosecutor of the ICC has made several statements about the Rohingya crisis, first relying on international law, such as the violation of the Rohingya's right to return to Myanmar, which is a customary international law. This principle guarantees the right of displaced people to return safely to their place of residence (Request for Authorization of an Investigation Pursuant to Article 15, 2019:

paras. 71 & 75).

The court prosecutor believes that if the crimes of war against the officials of the Myanmar government are predicted, it does not warrant legal action, and it is a conceivable issue regarding the occurrence of crimes against humanity (Almuhana, 2019: 66). Actions such as taking children from their mothers and throwing them into the river or the fire area during forced migration are examples of crimes against humanity (Request for Authorization of an Investigation Pursuant to Article 15, 2019: Supra Note 12).

On November 14, 2019, the Third Trial Chamber of the International Criminal Court issued a ruling on the authorization of an investigation into the situation in Bangladesh/Myanmar (ICC. No. ICC-01/19, 2019).

According to this ruling, the prosecutor's office has the authority to investigate the occurrence of the alleged crimes. The subject of the petition is the commission of war crimes against the Rohingya people during their deportation from the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the People's Republic of Bangladesh. They have been charged with a crime against humanity.

The prosecutor's innovative interpretation of the crime against humanity in the case of forced deportation allowed the court to react to the crimes committed against members of the Rohingya. In the judgment of September 6, 2018, Trial Chamber 1, significant findings are made regarding the elements of the crime of forced deportation, most of which are confirmed in the final judgment of November 14, 2019 (ICC. No. ICC-RoC46(3)-01/18, 2018).

Through its review in 2019, the Court's division held that "persecution" and "other inhumane acts" were crimes that could fall within the court's jurisdiction in the Rohingya case. According to Article 7 (1)(h) of the statute of the court, the persecution of any group or group due to discriminatory behavior committed in connection with any other crime under the jurisdiction of the court is a crime against humanity (Bazzar, 2022: 52).

On the other hand, on November 11, 2019, the Gambian government, with the support of 57 countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and on behalf of the Rohingya Muslims, filed a lawsuit against the Myanmar government in the International Criminal Court against the Myanmar government's action of committing the crime of genocide. He complained about the ethnic-religious minority group of Muslims in Myanmar (Danish Shahraki & Mardani, 2018: 51).

According to international jurisprudence, if ethnic cleansing has

the intention of genocide, it can include some prohibited acts listed in Article 2 of the Genocide Convention. Also, if the forced transfer of the population is accompanied by conditions that lead to the total or partial death of the transferred population and the intention to destroy the group can be proven, it is considered genocide. Considering that the actions of the Myanmar government to cleanse the Rohingya Muslims have been carried out with the aim of extermination, this includes killing members of the group, inflicting serious physical or mental injuries, creating restrictions on reproduction, and deliberately imposing conditions that lead to the physical destruction of the group. In fact, genocide is the most serious crime taking place in Burma. (Danesh Shahraki & Mardani, 2018: 52).

Of the five examples of the crime of genocide, which are explicitly explained in Article 2 of the 1948 Convention on the Punishment and Prevention of the Crime of Genocide, the first four acts include intentional killing, harming the soul and body of the victims, imposing difficult living conditions in such a way as to destroy the physical destruction of all or part of the group, and preventing the birth of the group, which have been committed by the Burmese rulers in the ethnic cleansing operation of the Rohingya Muslims (Zarni & Alice 2014: 129).

Based on conclusive evidence and relying on the Genocide Convention, the Rohingya people have been victims of gradual genocide operations since 1978. According to "William Schabas," we are dealing with an area where the term genocide can be used. When we see that actions are taken to prevent birth, people's identity is denied, and their right to live is denied, these are all warning signs that show using the word genocide is not inappropriate (Al Jazeera 2012).

4. Iran`s Stance on the Issue

Iran has raised three specific stances regarding the Rohingya Muslim crisis: First, it is the duty of the international community, especially the United Nations, to confront these types of humanitarian rights violations, which have the nature of crimes against humanity. Second, to protest against the double policy and double standards of the Western countries, which have remained silent regarding this type of crime against the Rohingya people. The third stance announced by Iran is Iran's readiness to send immediate humanitarian aid to the Muslim group and invite Islamic countries to participate in this action.

Ex-Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has constantly warned about the continuation of the ongoing crackdown on Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, urging the international community and the United Nations in particular to take swift action to end the crisis. In a letter to UN Secretary General António Guterres published on Friday, September 8, 2017, Zarif warned, “It is expected that the United Nations act swiftly and undertake all necessary measures toward addressing international concerns about the deteriorating situation in Myanmar.” He added that UN support for deescalating the violence, ensuring the dispatch of humanitarian assistance to the people in need, and finding a sustainable solution to the crisis is essential, and the body must act immediately (Defence.pk, 2017).

The ex-Iranian foreign minister has also pointed to his previous January letter to the UN chief about the violence against the Rohingya Muslims and once again drew attention to the “alarming situation” of the Rohingya Muslim community in Myanmar¹ (Defence.pk, 2017).

Iranian Vice President Massoumeh Ebtekar also slammed the international silence on crimes against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, “Double standards are the most prevalent challenge that human rights advocacy faces today. Why silence before crimes against Rohingya Muslims?” (Ebtekar, 2017) Her post was in response to Myanmar’s de facto leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, who claimed on Wednesday that “a huge iceberg of misinformation” was spreading about violence in western parts of the country.

It should be noted that Iran's assistance to the Rohingya Muslims has a longer history. Mahmoud Safari, the Consul General of Iran at Hyderabad on August 3, 2012 delivered a check for the sum of Rs. 65,000 to the Confederation of Voluntary Organizations (COVA), which works with UNHRC, that would help the refugees. Safari, addressing the Rohingya Muslim refugees, strongly condemned the persecution of Muslims in Myanmar.

Expressing deep regret for the failure of the world to react appropriately to the genocide of Myanmar's Muslims in Rakhine State, Iranian official urged the international community to condemn the genocide in its strongest sense and come forward for the help of the victims.

1. In the letter addressed to Guterres on January 6, 2017, Zarif demanded international action to stop rights violations against the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, saying the plight of the Rohingya has caused international concern.

He also urged the government of Myanmar to find a fair and just solution to the current unrest, which includes a permanent solution for the hundreds of thousands of stateless Rohingya that live in makeshift refugee camps. Safari assured them of all possible assistance.

Speaking on the occasion, Musfa Fazlulrehman, Spokesperson of Myanmar Refugees, appreciated Iran's solidarity with the Rohingya Muslims and thanked for the help extended by the government of Iran as a priority (IRNA, 2012).

Conclusion

From the perspective of international law documents and literature, including mandatory and customary law, numerous related conventions, and the provisions of the International Criminal Court Statute, the tragedies that occurred in Myanmar are examples of the crimes of genocide and crimes against humanity.

In this regard, the undeniable activities of the Myanmar government in ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya minority have a significant connection with the issues of genocide and crimes against humanity in customary international law and international criminal law. Ethnic cleansing is the organized, forced removal of ethnic, racial, or religious groups from a certain territory by a more powerful group.

Considering that Myanmar is not a member of the court, the International Criminal Court can deal with this issue in all aspects if the Security Council refers to it. However, since the Security Council in today's conditions does not apply the necessary sensitivity to human rights issues in the world, especially Muslims, or does not consider it an example of the situation jeopardizing international peace, it is not possible to pursue the issue through the Security Council for the time being.

Since 2019, the International Criminal Court has tried to declare the actions of the Myanmar government against the Rohingya Muslims as example of a crime against humanity, with a new interpretation of the issue of deportation and forced migration and citing Bangladesh's membership in the court.

In the current situation, while the Security Council will not enter the fight due to its political considerations, it is the duty of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and its member countries to seriously raise and follow up on the issue with international institutions, especially the Human Rights Council, and at the same time with innovative methods such as sanctioning Myanmar

regarding the non-realization of the rights of Muslims.

Iran's main effort is to align, first of all, the international community and then the Islamic countries to prevent these types of crimes against the Rohingya Muslim people.

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Analyzing Representations of Iran in Selected Works of the Austrian Institute of Iranian Studies: A Postcolonial Perspective

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Abstract

Iranian studies, a facet of Orientalism, have long intrigued Western academia. This research explores the alignment of the Institute of Iranian Studies (IFI) of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW) with Edward Said's Postcolonial Theory, questioning if IFI's work mirrors Said's views on the colonial roots of Orientalism. The research posits that the IFI's undertakings neither manifest a colonial inclination nor align seamlessly with Said's theoretical framework. To substantiate this claim, four seminal publications from the IFI were subjected to a directed content analysis based on constructing a research category matrix, influenced by Said's postcolonial paradigm (Orientalism). In this framework, there are four main areas: politics, society, culture, and religion. Within each area, there are six opposing concepts: similarity-difference, equality-inferiority, internal convergence-divergence, external convergence-divergence, progress-backwardness, and freedom-despotism. The findings suggest that the IFI's selected works portray Iran in a predominantly positive light across all domains. Thus, it appears that the IFI's 21st-century scholarly contributions diverge from Edward Said's postcolonial critique of Orientalism, with distinct differences in approach and perspective. However, considering Said's critique primarily targets the works of English-speaking Orientalists from colonial powers, the conclusions of this research don't necessarily counter his theory. It suggests caution in generalizing Said's framework to German-speaking Orientalists, or more specifically, to the outputs of the IFI.

Keywords: The Institute of Iranian Studies (IFI) of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW), Iran-Austria Relations, Iranian Studies (Iranology), Orientalism, Edward Said, Representation.

Introduction

In recent decades, the humanities have witnessed transformative shifts in the portrayal and understanding of various civilizations and cultures. Edward Said's seminal postcolonial theory, which critically delves into the essence of Orientalism and its representations of Eastern cultures, has been central to this evolution. Through his analytical lens, Said unveiled consistent Western narratives and imagery that painted the East, offering a counter-narrative to traditional Orientalist interpretations.

Within this vast landscape, Iranian studies, sometimes termed Iranology, stand out as a crucial subset of Orientalism. This research probes into the academic endeavors of the Institute of Iranian Studies (IFI) at the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW), scrutinizing them from Said's postcolonial perspective. The pivotal question guiding this investigation is: How do the 21st-century publications of the IFI resonate with, or depart from, the postcolonial narratives, particularly as delineated in Said's critique of Orientalism?

Our hypothesis posits that the works emerging from the IFI might not consistently align with Said's postcolonial framework. Such a possibility challenges Said's assertion that Orientalism predominantly serves the colonial ambitions of Western powers. This introduces a nuanced take, prompting a reevaluation specifically in light of the IFI's scholarly contributions.

To validate this hypothesis, we employed a directed content analysis of four key IFI publications. This approach is anchored by a research matrix, inspired by Said's postcolonial constructs, that categorizes representation into specific domains and dichotomies. The ensuing sections explore these representations in depth, providing a thorough analysis and interpretation of our discoveries.

1. Literature Review

The field of Iranian studies has a complex history intertwined with Orientalism and intercultural dynamics between Iran and the West. This review examines existing literature related to evaluating Iranian studies in Austria through a postcolonial theoretical lens. It first provides background on Orientalism and its implications based on Edward Said's influential work. Next, it surveys the current literature landscape, identifying notable contributions and gaps related to the topic. Situating the work of the Institute for Iranian Studies (IFI) at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, the review then summarizes relevant academic and anecdotal sources. Finally, it

discusses the German context and additional references to situate the analysis within broader critiques of Orientalism before recapping the goals of this study.

1-1. Orientalism and Its Implications

The concept of Orientalism has been pivotal in framing Eastern versus Western worldviews. Edward Said's seminal 1978 work *Orientalism* critically analyzed this phenomenon, arguing that it often serves as an instrument of Western colonialism and power over the 'Orient.' Within this context, the development of Iranian studies in the West carries particular significance. Evaluating the field through a postcolonial lens provides an opportunity to assess potentials for perpetuating or challenging Orientalist biases.

1-2. Literature Panorama and Research Gaps

Investigations into evaluating Iranian studies in Austria via postcolonial theory reveal a significant research void. In Persian literature, Ghasemi (2015) offers a basic descriptive overview of Iranian studies in Austria without in-depth critical analysis. In English, Fagner (1987) provides a solitary review of Iranian studies in German-speaking areas from the perspective of a former institute head. Schmitt's (2013) German paper is the sole academic contribution discussing Iranian studies in Germany and Austria. However, its analytical depth is limited.

Additionally, Ghaderi (2018) offers a postcolonial analysis of English-language textbooks in Iran, arguing they reflect anti-imperialist discourses that challenge Orientalist representations. He examines the role of postcolonialism in Iranian studies, suggesting it has empowered Iran's multicultural society. This underscores the theory's relevance and applicability to the Iranian context.

Furthermore, Lewis & Churchill's (2009) memoir provides an insider's perspective on the evolution of Western Middle East scholarship. The reflections contrast with and supplement Said's theoretical framework.

This study aims to help fill the gaps in evaluating the IFI through a focused postcolonial examination. The additional sources stress the importance of considering historical and social contexts that shape representations over time.

1-3. Institute for Iranian Studies: An Overview

Established in 2002, the IFI serves as Austria's exclusive center for Iranian studies. As the only institute in Austria dedicated to the

interdisciplinary study of Iran, spanning linguistic, historical, and cultural perspectives, the IFI was selected due to its central and specialized role in advancing Iranian studies within the country.

The IFI promotes diverse academic, educational, and cultural initiatives related to Iran. Key figures include Florian Schwarz, renowned for publications on Iranian linguistics and historical periods like the Mongol era. Major projects include “Wine Culture in Iran and Beyond” (2014), exploring Iran’s wine history over three millennia.

Despite the IFI’s pivotal contributions, few studies have critically analyzed its work through a postcolonial lens. This significant gap underscores the importance of the present analysis, as findings can elucidate implications for perpetuating or challenging Orientalist paradigms within the institute’s scholarly outputs.

1-4. Core Academic Sources

Schwarz’s “Political Crisis and Cultural Transformation in Mongolian Iran” (2012) provides an important historical analysis of 13th–14th century Iran. It exemplifies substantive scholarly contributions by IFI researchers. Limited direct study of the institute’s output underscores the need for deeper investigation through a postcolonial lens.

1-5. Anecdotal Sources and Insights

The media features extensive interviews and commentaries by figures like Rastegar (2006, 2014), a former IFI scholar and a University of Vienna faculty member. His writings deliver insights into the institute’s growth and Iran-Austria cultural relations. While not academic, these offer useful perspectives to complement scholarly analysis.

1-6. Situating in German Context

Schnepel et al.’s (2011) anthology with essays by Orientalists merits attention. Notably, Klemm (2011) links Shiite and Iranian studies, while Escher (2011) reinterprets ‘East’ geographically, providing valuable context. Wiedemann’s (2012) critiques also add nuance.

1-7. Concluding Remarks

In closing, this review synthesizes existing literature while revealing gaps that help motivate the present study. Moving forward, analysis will concentrate on applying postcolonial theory to better

understand the modes of Iranian studies practiced at the IFI since its 2002 founding. Findings can elucidate implications for perpetuating or challenging Orientalist paradigms.

2. Research Methodology

This study employs a modified version of the deductive category application method, as proposed by Philipp Mayring (2000). This approach falls under the umbrella of directed content analysis. Here, the researcher sets specific concepts ahead of time and then analyzes predetermined texts and documents based on these pre-defined concepts. The comparison between the set concepts and the texts under analysis allows the researcher to determine whether those concepts are present or absent within the texts (Catanzaro, 1988: 440).

Central to this study is Edward Said's Postcolonial Theory of Orientalism, which critically examines the portrayal of the East in Orientalist literature. Drawing upon this theory, we developed a research category matrix, outlined in the theoretical framework section. This matrix encompasses four representational domains: politics, society, culture, and religion. Within each domain, we employ six dichotomous concepts for differentiation: Similarity-Difference, Equality-Inferiority, Internal Convergence-Divergence, External Convergence-Divergence, Progress-Backwardness, and Freedom-Despotism.

Our primary data sources are four seminal works from the Institute of Iranian Studies (IFI) of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW), spanning publications from 2002 to 2022. We subjected these works to a directed content analysis based on the research category matrix. Each representation within these works received coding according to the dichotomous concepts. This coding facilitates a methodical evaluation of Iran's portrayal across the domains of politics, society, culture, and religion.

Once all the data underwent coding, we organized and interpreted them to discern an alignment pattern. This pattern reveals the degree of compatibility between the IFI's academic contributions and Said's postcolonial discourse. Using this pattern, we tested our research hypothesis concerning the IFI's scholarly endeavors' alignment with Said's postcolonial theory.

Finally, our research culminates by assessing the alignment pattern and extracting insights about the resonance between the IFI's academic pursuits and Said's postcolonial critique of Orientalism. We discuss the implications of our findings, situating them within

the broader postcolonial dialogue and emphasizing the unique perspectives of German-speaking Orientalists and the IFI's outputs. Overall, this study enriches the understanding of Iran's representation within postcolonial contexts and delineates the IFI's role in this discourse.

3. Theoretical Framework

Central to this study is Edward Said's Postcolonial Theory, which serves as the foundation for the research category matrix employed to systematically dissect the representations of Iran in selected publications of the Austrian Institute of Iranian Studies (IFI).

Said's pivotal work, "Orientalism," underscored the West's skewed representation of the East, often perpetuating the narrative of Western superiority and Eastern inferiority (Bullock et al., 1999: 617). He emphasized that these images weren't mere mirrors of Eastern realities but were constructed within the confines of Western perspectives (Hall, 1997: 24). As Said states, "it is perfectly possible to argue that some distinctive objects are made by the mind and that these objects, while appearing to exist objectively, have only a fictional reality" (Said, 1978: 55). He contended that these portrayals, particularly by Western orientalist, were far from neutral; they were imbued with bias, often furthering colonial ambitions. As Said argues, "if such truth reserved for itself the right to judge the Orient as immutably Oriental in the ways I have indicated, then liberality was no more than a form of oppression and mentalistic prejudice" (Said, 1978: 107). He emphasized that these images weren't mere mirrors of Eastern realities but were constructed within the confines of Western perspectives. As Said states, the Orient was not "simply there only as a fact of nature" but rather "a system for citing works and authors" constructed by the West (Said, 1978: 23).

3-1. Matrix of Research Categories

Drawing inspiration from Said's postcolonial insights, we devised a research category matrix to enable a structured analysis of Iran's portrayal in the chosen works.

The matrix is organized with four representational domains along the rows and six dichotomous concepts spanning the columns: Domains:

- Politics addresses governance structures, legislation, leadership, and their overarching influence.
- Society captures demographics, living standards, societal

relationships, economic scenarios, and class hierarchies.

- Culture highlights ethos, values, norms, artistic endeavors, and other intangible societal attributes.
- Religion centers on the religious and spiritual facets, with an emphasis on Islam, Shiism, and Zoroastrianism.

Concepts:

- Similarity vs. Difference: Explores portrayals of Iran in terms of its resemblance to or divergence from the West.
- Equality vs. Inferiority: Evaluates whether Iran is depicted on par with or inferior to Western nations.
- Internal Convergence vs. Divergence: Probes the unity or divisions within Iran across various dimensions.
- External Convergence vs. Divergence: Examines Iran's external interactions and alliances.
- Progress vs. Backwardness: Assesses depictions related to Iran's progression or perceived regression.
- Freedom vs. Despotism: Investigates portrayals of Iran in terms of liberty or autocratic rule.

The matrix's detailed structure can be found in Table 1.

This matrix forms the analytical backbone for the directed content analysis of the chosen texts. By coding the textual data based on this matrix, we can systematically analyze and compare Iran's representations across domains and concepts. Recognizing patterns within this coding allows us to discern how closely IFI's academic works align with or stray from Said's postcolonial critique of Orientalism.

4. Data Analysis

4-1. Open Coding

Using directed content analysis and the research category matrix, this study codes and analyzes four works by the Austrian Institute of Iranian Studies (IFI). The goal is to examine how Iran is represented in these works and compare it with Said's postcolonial theory. As Said argues in his seminal text, Western representations of the Orient have historically been dominated by narratives of Western superiority that place the East in a subordinate position. He notes that "Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West" (Said, 1978: 204). The analysis covers four thematic domains: politics, society, culture, and religion.

4-1-1. Analysis of the book "The 'River of Fire' and the 'River of Molten Metal'"

This book by Antonio Panaino (2021) delves into eschatological concepts in Christianity and Zoroastrianism, the religion of ancient Iran, and compares them with Islam. The author underscores the Zoroastrian belief in Ahura Mazda's universal mercy as a doctrinal novelty in ancient Iranian culture. He compares it with Christian and Islamic perspectives, highlighting shared religious motifs. For example, religious scriptures in all three faiths refer to rivers of fire or molten metal that may serve to purify or punish souls.

The author adopts historical and theological approaches to juxtapose Christian and Zoroastrian ideologies and explain the cultural and religious influences on their similarities and differences. The book aims to provide a detailed analysis of apocalyptic concepts and imagery in the two religions, with a sporadic focus on Islam as well, facilitating a richer comprehension of these intricate notions.

To decipher the representation of Iran and its associated images in this book, 61 initial codes that had the most relevance to the components of the research category matrix were analyzed. The results are summarized below:

- **Political Representation Domain:** Panaino portrays Iran as somewhat backward (-) and despotic (-), but does not comment on its equality/inferiority to the West or political similarities/differences. He believes Iran's political cohesion declined post-Islam, leaning towards divergence (-). He also depicts pre-Islamic Iran as aligning (+) with external political influences but diverging (-) from Western and global perspectives in modern times.
- **Social Representation Domain:** Panaino commends ancient Iran for its advancements (+) in the scientific, philosophical, and artistic realms. He emphasizes its elite society's contributions across various sectors and underscores Iran's congruence (+) with neighboring societies, like the Greeks and Christians, reflecting intellectual and cultural exchanges.
- **Cultural Representation Domain:** The book paints Iran as a culturally progressive nation (+), having imbibed multiple foreign cultural elements over its history. It underscores Iran's profound convergence (+) with other cultures, including Christian, Greek, Syriac, and Egyptian, while occasionally hinting at its perceived inferiority (-) to Western culture.
- **Religious Representation Domain:** Pre-Islamic Iran is depicted as

embracing a free (+) and advanced (+) religious milieu rich in historical and theological discourses. Panaino elaborates on Iran's religious convergence (+) with faiths like Christianity and Hellenism and its divergence (-) across various religious phases.

4-1-2. Analysis of the book "Prices, Wages, and Standards of Living in Safavid Iran"

The book "Prices, wages, and living standards in Safavid Iran: An Investigation into the Accounting Books of Wollebrand Geleynssen de Jongh (1641–1643)¹" was written by Roman Siebertz (2013) and published by the Austrian Institute of Iranian Studies. It is a research study that analyzes the economic and social achievements of the Safavid era, focusing on prices, wages, and living standards during this period.

The author uses the detailed and reliable ledgers of Wollebrand Geleynssen de Jonghs, a Dutchman who headed a factory in India, as the main sources to investigate various numerical data, prices, and wages in Safavid Iran. These ledgers were recorded between 1641 and 1643 and provide an in-depth insight into the economic and social conditions at that time.

The research aims to help better understand the economy and lifestyle in the Safavid era. The author examines the economic impacts on people's lives and the fluctuations and changes in prices and wages over time in the Safavid period.

The book also explores the representation of Iran and the mental images associated with it in four thematic domains: political, social, cultural, and religious. The author analyzes 67 primary codes that had the most connection with the components of "the matrix of research topics" and summarizes them as follows:

- Political domain: The author portrays Iran as a free (+) and advanced (+) country in political and economic fields. He shows how Iran improved its welfare and wealth levels, used its natural resources and geopolitical advantage to regulate its trade and financial exchanges, and responded to political and economic issues according to time and place conditions. He does not discuss Iran's convergence-divergence with neighboring countries and Europe in political dimensions.
- Social domain: The author depicts Iran as a highly advanced (+) society in geographical, historical, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic

1. Preise, Löhne und Lebensstandard im safavidischen Iran; Eine Untersuchung zu den Rechnungsbüchern Wollebrand Geleynssen de Jonghs (1641–1643)

fields. He shows how Iranians fluctuated between divergence (-) and convergence (+) with their neighboring societies, such as Ottoman, India, China, and European states, according to social conditions. He also portrays Iran as socially divergent (-), mainly due to class differences.

- Cultural domain: The author considers Iran as a very advanced (+) cultural unit that preserved many of its cultural elements throughout its history. He also examines how Iran experienced some degree of divergence (-) with the West in some cultural issues.
- Religious domain: The author only refers to one case of divergence (-) between Islam and Christianity in this domain.

4-1-3. Analysis of the book "Under Two Lions: On the Knowledge of Iran in the Republic of Venice (1450 - 1797)"

The book "Under Two Lions: On the Knowledge of Iran in the Republic of Venice (1450–1797)," written by Giorgio Rota (2009), analyzes the knowledge and awareness of Iran in the Venetian Republic during a period of years between 1450 and 1797 and how the Venetian Republic understood and perceived Iran and its culture in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

The author examines the sources available in Venice related to Iran, including the reports of travelers, merchants, and ambassadors who traveled to Iran. These sources shed light on the image that the Venetians had of Iran and its people, including culture, politics, economy, and diplomacy. The author also studies the history and cultural, social, and economic relations between Iran and the Republic of Venice. He explores the ways of knowledge transfer in this period of history between these two regions and the important role of trade, diplomacy, and culture in interactions between Iran and Venice.

The book highlights the importance of knowledge and information exchange for developing culture and trade between Iranians and Venetians and emphasizes the role of these exchanges in shaping an image of Iran in Venetian eyes.

The book also explores the representation of Iran and the mental images attributed to it in four thematic domains: political, social, cultural, and religious. The author analyzes 63 primary codes that have more connections with components of "the matrix of research topics" and summarizes them as follows:

Political domain: The author portrays Iran as an advanced (+) and convergent (+) country with the West in political and

diplomatic fields. He shows how Iran maintained its level of sovereignty and power during the Safavid era and was convergent (+) with neighboring countries and European ones. He also shows how Iran responded appropriately to political and diplomatic issues according to time and place conditions. He shows how Iran was similar (+) to the West and takes it as a model. He also depicts Iran as politically inferior (-) to the West in some cases, although he also emphasizes their equality as much.

- **Social domain:** The author identifies Iran as an advanced (+) society. He shows how Iran was convergent (+) with its neighboring societies and beyond them and had social exchanges with them. Although he has mentioned similarity (+) between Iran and the West in one case, he believes in social dissimilarity (-) between Iran and the West more than their equality.
- **Cultural domain:** The author portrays Iran as having an advanced (+), convergent (+) culture with neighbors and other societies, similar (+) to them, as well as similar (+) to Western culture.
- **Religious domain:** The author introduces Iran as religiously convergent (+) with others and similar (+) to Western religion, although he has paid less attention to religion in Iran.

4-1-4. Analysis of the book "Ottoman-Safavid Relations 1545–1550: The Fall of Abbas Mirza"

The book "Ottoman-Safavid Relations 1545–1550: The Fall of Abbas Mirza"¹ written by Walter Posch (2013), is a historical study of the rivalry between two regional powers in the sixteenth century. The author examines the cultural and political relations between Iran and the Ottoman Empire in a critical period of the history of both countries, using various sources.

The author shows how relations between the Ottoman and Safavid empires in the sixteenth century were fraught with tensions and conflicts for reasons such as border issues, religious differences (Sunni and Shia), and power struggles. He also explores the role of third parties such as Uzbeks, Circassians, Tatars, Georgians, and Europeans in Ottoman-Safavid affairs. He pays attention to the influential role of Abbas Mirza in shaping the events of that period.

The author tries to examine the roots, causes, and consequences of Abbas Mirza's downfall by studying credible historical sources and documents. He also considers the impact of this event on relations between the two empires and the subsequent changes.

1. Osmanisch-safavidische Beziehungen 1545–1550: Der Fall Alkâs Mirzâ

The book also explores the representation of Iran and the mental images attributed to it in four thematic domains: political, social, cultural, and religious. The author analyzes 62 primary codes that have more connections with components of "the matrix of research topics" and summarizes them as follows:

- **Political domain:** The author portrays Iran as a free (+) and relatively advanced (+) country in terms of politics. He shows how Iran maintained its independence and power during the Safavid era and was both convergent (+) and divergent (-) with neighboring and European countries. He shows how Iran competed with the Ottomans, fought prolonged wars with them, and occasionally cooperated, making peace with them.
- **Social domain:** The author depicts Iran as a backward (-) society. He also considers Iranian society more divergent (-) than cohesive in terms of social convergence-divergence.
- **Cultural domain:** The author pays minimal attention to cultural Iran. Of the two codes related to this domain, he refers to Iran's advanced (+) culture in one case and to cultural divergence (-) within Iran in another case.
- **Religious domain:** The author introduces Iran as religiously free (+) and externally convergent (+), but he believes more in religious differences and divisions denoting internal divergence (-) than in religious cohesion. He equally refers to religious similarity (+) and dissimilarity (-) between Iran and other countries.

4-2. Axial Coding

In total, 253 codes pertaining to the 48 cells of the research category matrix were extracted from the four selected scholarly works of the Austrian Institute of Iranian Studies, whose details are provided in Table 1.

Table (1): Themes of Iranian Representation in Selected Institute Works According to Research Category Matrix

Theme & Representation Direction		Representation Domain				Total	
		Politics	Society	Culture	Religion	+/-	The sum
Bipolar Concept	Aspect/Code						
Similarity-Difference (with the West)	Similar (+)	2	1	2	1	6	7
	Different (-)	1	0	0	0	1	
Equality-Inferiority (with/from the West)	Equal (+)	3	2	1	0	6	16
	Inferior (-)	3	5	1	1	10	

Theme & Representation Direction		Representation Domain					
		Politics	Society	Culture	Religion	Total	
Bipolar Concept	Aspect/Code					+/-	The sum
Internal Convergence-Divergence	Convergent (+)	9	6	1	5	21	47
	Divergent (-)	12	5	2	7	26	
External Convergence-Divergence	Convergent (+)	9	11	13	18	51	68
	Divergent (-)	5	5	2	5	17	
Progress-Backwardness	Progressive (+)	32	30	14	10	86	100
	Backward (-)	6	6	0	2	14	
Freedom-Despotism	Free (+)	9	2	0	2	13	15
	Despotic (-)	1	1	0	0	2	
Total	Positive	64	52	31	35	183	
	Negative	28	22	5	15	70	
	The sum	92	74	36	50	253	

The top three findings from the above table, including the state of Iran's representation in the institute's four thematic domains, its approach in portraying Iran within the six dichotomous categories, and Iran's overall depiction in the selected scholarly works of the Austrian Institute of Iranian Studies, are demonstrated in Figures 1 to 3, respectively.

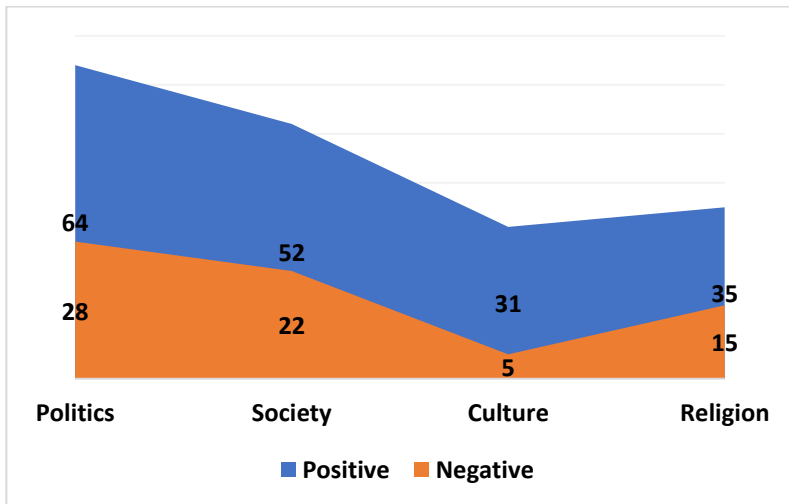


Figure (1): Status of Iranian Portrayal Across Four Thematic Domains

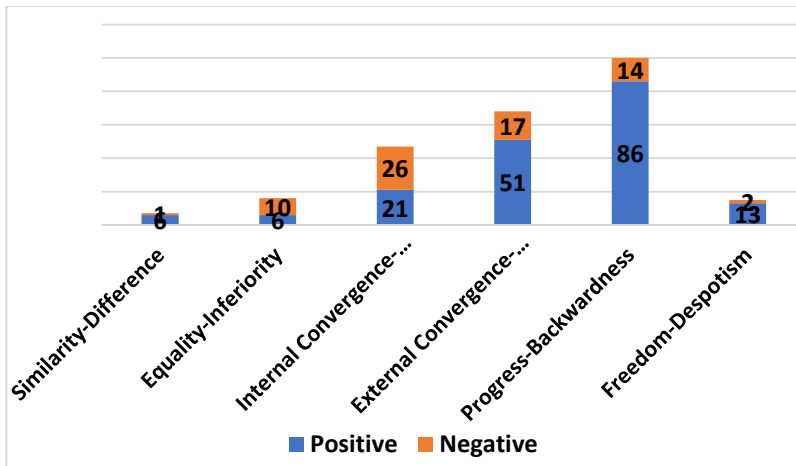


Figure (2): Status of Iranian Representation in the Six Bipolar Concepts

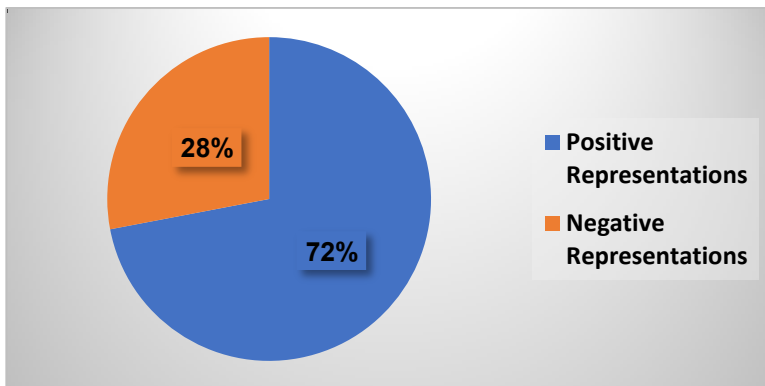


Figure (3): General Representation of Iran in Selected Research Works from the Austrian Institute of Iranian Studies

5. Research Validation

This article has utilized the following three strategies to increase the validity of the research:

- a. Member checking: The researcher presented his opinion on the process of data analysis and research reporting to several professors and experts with knowledge and experience in

conducting thematic analysis research and refined the results according to their feedback. These modifications were mainly in the selection and alteration of the titles of some categories and their subordinate concepts.

- b. Peer review: The open coding process was shared with two professors, and students and their perspectives were used to refine the coding process. Also, the text of some interviews was coded in parallel by them as evaluators, and due to the 67% average match between the codes extracted by the evaluators and those extracted by the researcher, the research results can be considered valid. The alignment of the direction (positive or negative) of the codes extracted by the researcher with the evaluators' average was 96%.
- c. Triangulation: The researcher tried to provide reliable generalizability of the findings by selecting all authored books of the institute that were accessible.

6. Research Findings and Analysis

The representations of Iran in the works of the Austrian Institute of Iranian Studies provide a complex set of perspectives across four thematic domains and 12 value categories and their corresponding relationships. Among the four thematic domains, the political domain contained the highest number of codes. This indicates that the authors of these works were more interested in the political and historical aspects of relations between Iran and the West. In any case, the number of codes related to the political domain is not more than three times the number of codes in the cultural domain, which received the least attention.

The focus on political representation compared to social, cultural, and religious representation occurred in both positive and negative dimensions. This means that Iran's political dimensions, regardless of whether they portray (similar to the West, equal to the West, convergent with the West, internally convergent, progressive, or free) or a negative image (different from the West, inferior to the West, divergent from the West, internally divergent, backward, or despotic), were more prevalent in the Institute's selected works. However, the weight of positive images in portraying politics and government in Iran is markedly more prominent than the negative aspects.

In the three domains of social, cultural, and religious representation, although the number of explicit or implicit

references is less than in the political domain, the weight of positive images is heavier. So much so that more than three-quarters of Iran's cultural image in the Institute's research works is portrayed impartially or favorably. At the same time, the fewest codes among the four thematic domains were recorded for the cultural domain.

Overall, as shown in Figure 4, none of the political, social, cultural, and religious images of Iran in the Institute's research works were depicted undesirably.

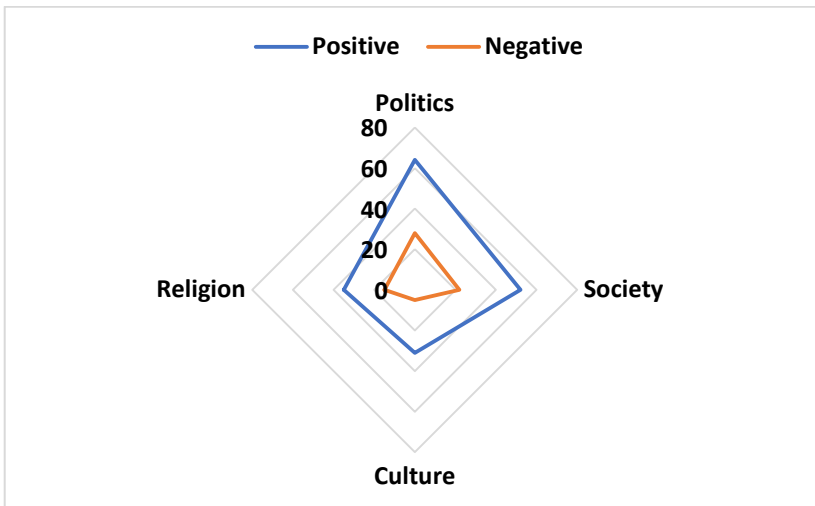


Figure (4): Assessment of Iran's Political, Social, Cultural, and Religious Image: Exploring Positive and Negative Aspects in Selected Institute Works

Logically, the 72% share of favorable or impartial depictions of political, social, cultural, and religious Iran in the Institute's research works is also reflected in the six dichotomous categories. However, some significant differences are noticeable. First, the weight of negative expressions in the two categories of "Similarity-Inferiority (with/from the West)" and "Internal Convergence-Divergence" outweighs the positive images. Second, there is a great imbalance in addressing the categories, so that the ratio of codes related to the dichotomous category of Progress-Backwardness is more than 14 times the codes of the dichotomous category of Similarity-Difference (with the West).

The share of attention given to the six dichotomous categories in the research works of the Austrian Institute of Iranian Studies and the ratio between their positive and negative representations are shown in Figure 5.

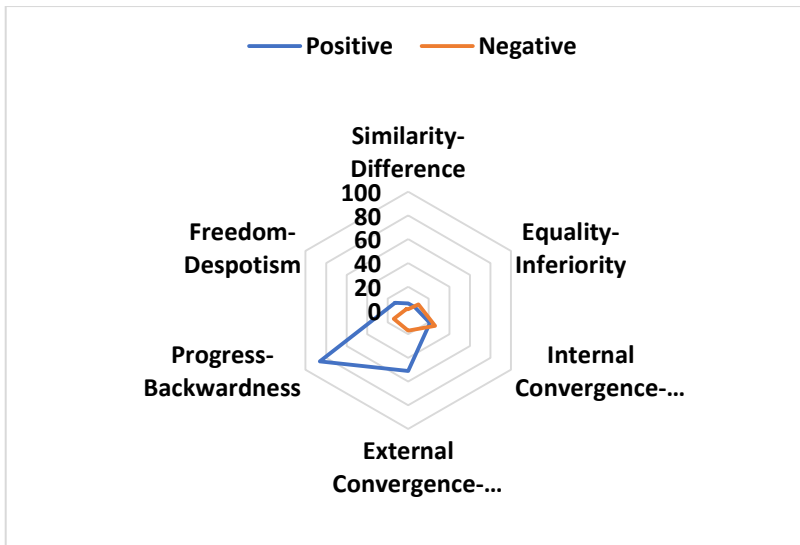


Figure (5): Weight and Direction of the Six Dichotomous Categories in Selected Institute Works

The category "Progress-Backwardness" has the highest number of codes among the six dichotomous categories, and its positive aspect (i.e., progressive) is heavier than all other positive dimensions of these six categories. The dichotomous category of "External Convergence-Divergence" also ranks second in both criteria. In contrast, although the dichotomous category of "internal convergence-divergence" ranks third in terms of total codes, the weight of its negative images outweighs the positive ones. So much so that it accounts for more than one third of all negatively marked phrases in the research works of the Austrian Institute of Iranian Studies.

With this description, despite convergence with the outside world, including neighbors and the West, in all four religious, cultural, social, and political domains (which have respectively produced the most positive images), Iran's image in terms of political and religious tolerance domestically has not been desirable. Although, when it comes to religion, religious conflicts (and not political ones) in the realm of Islam have been considered an internal rather than external issue.

The weight of positive images in the dichotomous category of "Similarity-Inferiority (with/from the West)" is also relatively less than negative ones. This means that some of the phrases and images used in the Institute's research can be interpreted as indicating the

superiority of the West over Iran. This situation can only be inferred from 10 codes, which are mainly related to social, political, and governance dimensions, with only two codes pertaining to culture and religion together.

By differentiating the aspects of the dichotomous categories, progress ranks first with 32 codes, and internal divergence (12), external convergence (9), external divergence (9), and freedom (9) rank second to fifth. This situation is illustrated in two different ways in Figures 6 and 7.

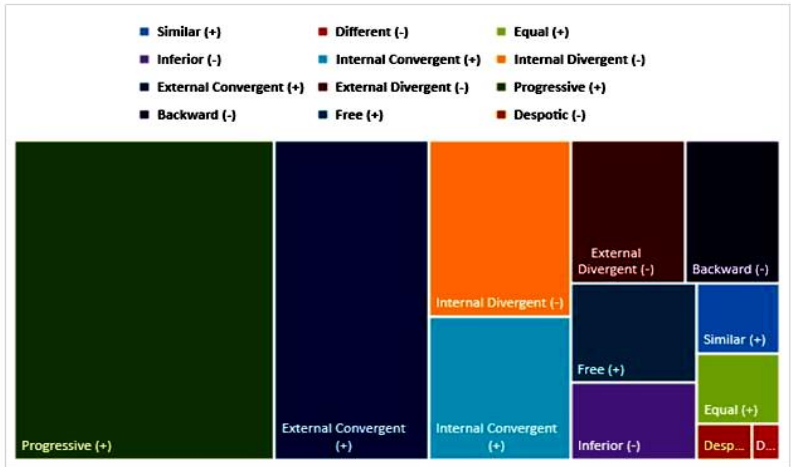


Figure (6): The Weight of Each of the 12 Categories in the Total Selected Institute Works

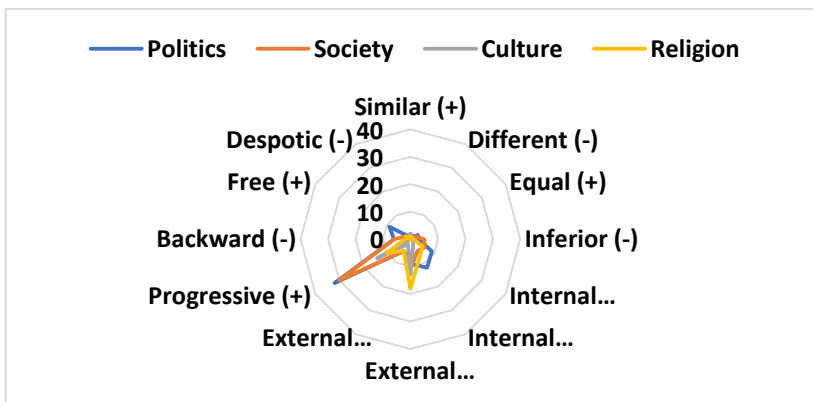


Figure (7): The Institute's Research Works: Tendencies in Portraying the 12 Categories

In summary, the representations of Iran in the selected scholarly works of the Austrian Institute of Iranian Studies provide a nuanced and predominantly positive perspective, with some hints of negative portrayals mostly related to internal political and religious divergence. The findings suggest a measured divergence from Edward Said's postcolonial critique of Orientalism, attributable to differences in historical context and geographical scope. While not directly countering Said's theory, this analysis calls for nuance in applying his framework to German-speaking Orientalists and the specific outputs of the IFI. Further research across a wider range of sources can elucidate these relationships from multiple vantage points.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate a substantive divergence between the 21st century academic contributions of the Austrian Institute of Iranian Studies (IFI) and the postcolonial critique articulated by Edward Said in his seminal work "Orientalism." Thus, the initial hypothesis proposing a lack of alignment is affirmed.

In recent years, the IFI has embraced multifaceted research orientations, with the majority not resonating with Said's theoretical perspectives. This highlights that Orientalism encompasses diverse influences, with noticeable variances between the IFI scholars' viewpoints and Said's discourse. However, given Said's focus on colonial-era English Orientalists, these contradictions do not necessarily negate his broader framework. Caution must be exercised in universally applying Said's critiques to German-speaking or Austrian Orientalists.

The results underscore the vital role of imagery and representation in dissecting cultural, political, and social dynamics. Additional research could elucidate how constructed portrayals of Iran shape its relations, especially with German-speaking nations. Analyzing other Iranian Studies institutes is also recommended to comprehensively grasp how academic contexts influence these representations.

While not directly challenging Said's theories, this study advocates nuance in applying his Orientalism critique to the IFI and German-speaking scholars. The findings reveal multifaceted representations of Iran that only partially align with postcolonial narratives. This stresses the enduring diversity of perspectives fostered through ongoing East-West academic engagement.

In summary, the research affirms the initial hypothesis of

divergence between the IFI's 21st-century scholarship and Said's discourse. The results further our understanding of how historical and geographical contexts shape Orientalism's manifestations. This contribution can inform future debates regarding Iranian studies through a postcolonial lens.

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The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Global Economy and the Emerging World Order Amid the Ukraine-Russia Crisis

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Abstract

Uncertainty, insecurity, and complexity are some of the terms defining, now and in the future, the development process of the human species on planet Earth. There is a plethora of evidence to substantiate this view. However, each epidemic has its own defining features, magnitude, and discernible impact. Societies are affected differently. The "corona crisis," resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, directly impacts the sphere of global economic (pandemonics) and political contradictions, including security issues. It is noted that the pandemic factor provoked an acceleration of confrontation between global players and strengthened the role of the institution of the nation-state. In the context of deglobalization at the transregional level, under the slogans of "strategic vulnerability" and "economic sovereignty," nationalism and "protectionism 2.0" continue to grow, and multilateral international institutions continue to weaken. Against this background, the European Union seeks to achieve competitive advantages through the de-offshoring of production, industrial policy, and the Green Deal. The article notes the deterioration of the state of affairs between Russia, China, the US, and the EU. The article reveals further trends in the strategic decoupling of the United States and its European allies and draws attention to the incentives to implement the principle of "strategic autonomy" in Brussels.

Keywords: Coronavirus, International Relations, Ukraine-Russia crisis, World Power Balance, Ukraine-Russia conflict.

E-ISSN: 2717-3542 / Center for Strategic Research / Biannual of Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs

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 10.22034/IRFA.2024.418834.1213

Introduction

By historical standards, very little time has passed since the COVID-19 coronavirus spread across the planet. But the past few years have become perhaps the most intense period in many years. Most of these trends are of a crisis nature, so the term "corona crisis," which has become widely used, is quite appropriate as the personification of the crisis state of affairs in the world through the prism of a purely medical problem. It can already be said with certainty that the reaction of the world community to the pandemic did not lead to the result that, from the point of view of common sense, could be expected. Such a phenomenon as a mass disease, especially a pandemic, is a challenge that does not stem from any socio-economic or political differences and therefore, in accordance with all the laws of life, determines the manifestation of solidarity, empathy, and the consolidation of efforts.

The new disease has quickly gone beyond the coronavirus problem, turning into an allegorical coronacrisis that has little to do with the struggle for the health of millions of people. One of its facets was the geopolitical dimension of the pandemic. In this case, we use the concept of "geopolitical" not so much in its original sense of the time of the classics of world geopolitics but as the ubiquitous designation in our time of a sharp increase in rivalry between centers of power, paying tribute to modern terminology describing the state of affairs in the world.

Today, there is not only a mass of events that, like a snowball, stuck around the fact that took place in the not-so-close December 2019 and is interesting primarily for virologists (registration of the first outbreak of an unknown virus in the Chinese city of Wuhan), but also a wave of domestic literature and expert opinions who assess the consequences of the pandemic from the point of view of the big economy and politics, international relations, global processes, not to mention country studies (Громыко, 2020).

The same can be said about the interest abroad in this topic, which began to take on a life of its own, being not only a reason for discussion but often an occasion designed to substantiate points of view on processes that took place long before COVID-19. In this article, among the many aspects of the crisis in the system of international relations, many of which received additional impetus as a result of the pandemic, attention is focused on the phenomenon of pandenomics and further corrosion in the field of hard security.

1. Advent of Pandemic

The fierce competition in the international arena is based primarily on economic reasons. The law of "the rise and fall of great powers" continues to operate in the 21st century. The pandemic dealt a severe blow to globalization, value chains, and world trade, sharply increasing protectionist sentiments and uneven development between countries and regions. It has become fashionable to talk about "economic sovereignty." COVID-19 (more precisely, the political reaction to it) only exacerbated these processes and did not cause them. The neoliberal model of globalization, whose functioning had already been clearly called into question by the Great Recession of 2008 and subsequent years, was further discredited.

The decline in global GDP in 2020, according to the summer economic forecast of the European Commission, will reach 4% of global GDP, with the EU GDP shrinking by 8.3% and the GDP of the euro area countries by 8.7% (Громько 2020). The IMF data is even more discouraging: global GDP is projected to contract by 4.9%, euro area GDP by 10.2%, the United States by 8%, and Russia by 6.6%. At the same time, the Chinese economy will show growth of 1% this year, with a sharp acceleration next year (Богачева, Ибрагимов et al., 2020). According to World Bank experts, the situation is even worse: the fall in global GDP in 2020 will be 5.2% (Громько, 2020). But this is not the most pessimistic forecast either: the OECD foresees a decline in the global economy by almost 6%, and then if there is no second wave of the pandemic (Громько, 2020).

In recent years and decades, politics and economics have become inextricably linked. The principles of the free market, the "free hand of market forces," the "night watchman state," economic equilibrium, and non-intervention of the state in economic processes are far in the past. Despite this, in Western political economy, conceptual shifts lag behind reality even more than in the field of conceptualizing international relations. The same can be said about the Western theory of international relations, which on the whole remains American-centric, or at best Western-centric, although this problem is attracting more and more attention in Russia and abroad (Byvalov; Konyshv et al., 2020, Gromyko, 2022).

The neoliberal model of globalization, born in the crucible of Reaganomics and Thatcherism and based on the ideology of the "new right," clings to its positions with all its might. In the recent past, attempts have already been made at the level of theoretical and

empirical studies to show its impasse. In defiance of it, the concepts of the "third way," stakeholderism, communitarianism, etc. were put forward. In this regard, on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, there are the names of A. Etzioni, J. Galbraith, R. Putnam, D. Marquand, W. Hutton, J. Plender, and others. However, neoliberal dominance continued in world economic thought, as did the strengthening of the positions of the world financial oligarchy. In parallel with this, indicators of social inequality were growing everywhere; there was a stratification and washing out of the middle class, which later led to the phenomenon of "new populism." One of the many striking examples: if in the 1960s, CEOs of the largest US companies were paid on average 20 times the salary of their employees, today it is 300 times.

2. The Impact of COVID-19 on International Relations

History reminds us that pandemics have had political connotations that have affected international relations in different ways. For example, the Spanish Flu (1918–1920) mentioned above did not start in Spain, as the name suggests, but in America. The first case was reported at a military base in Kansas in March 1918 (Vaughan, 1921). For political reasons, this pandemic was credited to Spain so that America could look innocent. The flu broke out during the course of WWI. As such, no country reported its cases in order to protect its political image. Since Spain was not active in the war, it was transparent in its reporting and thus reported many cases. This resulted in the disease being accredited to Spain, thus being named the Spanish Flu (Erkoreka, 2009). Other countries that were associated with this disease were China, Britain, and France. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected international relations and invoked the blame game. The game has been played before. There is no doubt that the coronavirus has both sustained and reconfigured international relations, depending on the country that is being subjected to a cogent analysis. Within this context, while some of the relations have been good and have actually been consolidated by the outbreak of this pandemic, others have worsened in instances where countries had pre-existing political differences. For ease of reference, it would be ideal to discuss these different impacts separately.

2-1. Positive Impact

It is an irrefutable fact that the coronavirus has left many countries devastated, with some even struggling to respond to it appropriately.

But it is equally true that other countries have used this tragedy to wittingly and unwittingly consolidate their international relations. Cuba, for example, has a long history of assisting other countries with medical support. This is what is referred to in the realm of international relations as medical internationalism (Hammett, 2007). Drawing from this experience, Cuba has sent out doctors to over 22 countries across the globe to lend a helping hand. One of them is South Africa, where more than 200 doctors who specialize in different areas have landed on the shores of the country. It should be noted that the plane that was dispatched by the South African government to bring the Cuban doctors into South Africa was filled with medical supplies, which the South African government gave to Cuba despite having shortages internally. In that sense, the COVID-19 pandemic has sustained relations between South Africa and Cuba.

Bilateral relations between Cuba and South Africa have deep roots. Following the decision by the African National Congress (ANC) to officially launch the armed struggle by establishing its military wing, Umkhonto Wesizwe [Spear of the Nation], on December 16, 1961, the ANC and the Communist/Socialist world came closer. This also included strong relations with Cuba, which was one of the proponents of the socialist order. In the 1980s, effective and ineffective sanctions were imposed on apartheid South Africa (Lipton 1989; Jones and Muller, 1992; Levy, 1999). Among the countries that the ANC relied on to achieve this goal was Cuba. Before assuming power in a post-apartheid state, the ANC, which was still in exile, strengthened its relations with the late Cuban President Fidel Castro. Some of the liberation fighters obtained their military training in Cuba. These relations continued until the ANC came to power in 1994. President Castro was one of the dignitaries that graced the historic inauguration of Nelson Mandela as the first President of a liberated South Africa. The warm reception he received on his arrival served as confirmation of these strong ties. During the same year (1994), Cuba opened its Embassy in Pretoria. In the following year (1995), South Africa returned the favor by opening its Embassy in Havana, Cuba. Over the years since then, the post-apartheid South African government has pursued a number of cooperation agreements with Cuba. Among the areas covered by these agreements are trade, health, and sports (Mamoepa, 2001).

Since 1994, successive presidents in South Africa have maintained good ties with Cuba. As mentioned above, one area of cooperation has been in the medical field. In fact, in 1993, two Cuban doctors established a primary health care system in

Botshabelo in Bloemfontein, which is part of the Free State Province (Hammett 2007). This gesture showed early signs that Cuba would forge strong relations with post-apartheid South Africa in the medical sphere. Indeed, in November 1995, “the first official health care cooperation agreement was signed between Cuba and South Africa by the then Health Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma” (Hammett 2007: 66). The agreement was renewed and expanded in 1997 and 2001, respectively (Department of Foreign Affairs², 2002). Many South African students have since been trained in Cuba as doctors. Previously, Cuban doctors have also come to lend a hand in South Africa. Former President Jacob Zuma traveled to Cuba for medical purposes. This was another demonstration of South Africa's embrace of Cuba's medical internationalism policy. The arrival of over 200 Cuban doctors in South Africa following the outbreak of COVID-19 demonstrates continued relations between the two countries.

While it is true that Cuba and South Africa have strong relations that date back many years and transcend the health sector, Cuba has used its strength in the medical profession to forge and strengthen relations with other countries. Venezuela is one of those countries. Under President Hugo Chavez, Venezuela had strong ties with President Castro's government. The current global pandemic has afforded Cuba the opportunity to take its medical internationalism project to more than twenty other countries across the globe. Among them are Qatar and Italy.

Other countries have also used COVID-19 to strengthen their diplomatic ties. Following its announcement that it has an effective remedy for COVID-19, Madagascar experienced good reception in other African countries such as Tanzania, Guinea-Bissau, and Congo-Brazzaville. South Africa, on the other hand, offered to assist with the medical testing of this remedy. These are some of the instances where COVID-19 has created a space for countries to interact more closely. Various countries have been sharing information, material, and financial resources, as well as expertise. For example, the US government donated 1000 ventilators to South Africa (Mngomezulu 2020). These are commendable efforts that improve and sustain international relations. But while it is true that the COVID-19 pandemic has positively affected international relations, there are instances where these relations have been negatively affected. Some examples are discussed below to buttress this assertion.

2-2. Negative Impact

Some examples show that COVID-19 has negatively affected international relations. It is, however, important to hurriedly state that some of these relationships were poor anyway, even before the pandemic outbreak. But what has happened is that they have worsened during COVID-19. For example, Cuba's good gesture or medical internationalism has not been welcomed by all countries. If anything, it has actually contributed to the further deterioration of relations between Cuba and some of the other countries. As South Africa and Qatar celebrated the arrival of Cuban doctors on their shores and gave accolades to the Cuban government (with some medical professionals and politicians disapproving of this move), America sang a different tune. President Trump's administration was critical of those countries that accepted Cuban doctors. Mike Pompeo, US Secretary of State, was quoted as making a scathing attack on South Africa and Qatar for accepting medical doctors from Cuba. He accused Cuba of "profiting from the pandemic" and appealed to other countries to refuse to accept these Cuban doctors. Pompeo complained that "we have noticed how the regime in Havana has taken advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to continue its exploitation of Cuban medical workers" (Bulled and Singer, 2020). While this accusation was coined as a demonstration of solidarity with the Cuban workforce, the reality is that the American government was simply pushing its old political agenda, which strives for the ostracization of Cuba. Since President Trump assumed office after the 2016 American election, he has reversed all the gains made by former President Barack Obama in mending the wall with Cuba. So, his actions are not new.

Another diplomatic concern is the accusation leveled by President Trump's administration against both China and Russia, accusing them of "stepping up cooperation to spread false narratives over the coronavirus pandemic." Lea Gabrielle, who is the coordinator of the state department's global engagement center mandated to track global propaganda, claimed that "even before the COVID-19 crisis, we assessed a certain level of coordination between Russia and the PRC [People's Republic of China] in the realm of propaganda." She continued to state, "But with this pandemic, cooperation has accelerated rapidly." (Mngomezulu, 2020). This was in response to a propaganda message attributed to the two countries (China and Russia), which claimed that the source of the coronavirus was a US lab located in China. According to this claim, Washington had resorted to this strategy with the aim of

killing China from within.

While this claim could not be authenticated, it was given currency by President Trump's counterclaim, which he repeated on different media platforms. He claimed that his intelligence sources told him that the virus originated from a Chinese lab. When asked by a journalist on Aljazeera if he had information to this effect, he answered the question in the affirmative. The question was: "Have you seen anything at this point that gives you a high degree of confidence that the Wuhan Institute of Virology was the origin of this virus?" His response was emphatic: "Yes, I have. Yes, I have" (Islam; Sarkar et al., 2020). When asked for more detail in this regard, President Trump argued that he was not allowed to divulge such detail.

The truthfulness of these claims is not as significant as their impact on international relations between Washington on the one hand and Beijing and the Kremlin on the other. Given the debilitating nature of the coronavirus, one would have expected global leaders to put their political differences aside and work together towards finding a cure while keeping the infection rate to a bare minimum. The war of words or the mudslinging is unfortunate and not helpful. Flowing from the above, there were reports indicating that thousands of Americans are signing a class action lawsuit against the Chinese government. China was being accused of covering up COVID-19 during its early stages in 2019. Therefore, Beijing was expected to pay out billions of dollars to compensate Americans for things such as personal injuries, wrongful deaths, property damage, and many other things linked to the COVID-19 pandemic.

What is concerning is that other countries have also, individually and collectively, contemplated suing China for large amounts of money in damages. The Jackson Society [the Conservative British Think- Tank] reported that G7 countries could sue China for no less than 3.2 trillion pounds (\$6.3 trillion) in damages. Australia alone was said to be planning a \$58 billion claim. The German tabloid Bild newspaper published what it called "an invoice" for China. Contained therein was a figure of 24 billion euros (\$41 billion) said to be for the loss of tourism revenue in March and April 2020 alone. The bill for small businesses stood at 50 billion euros (\$86 billion). In the event that Germany's GDP fell by 4.2 percent in 2020 (which is what projections said), China would be expected to compensate Germany by giving the country no less than 149 billion euros (\$255 billion) (Bild Newspaper, 20 April 2020). An open letter addressed

to President Xi Jinping of China read thus:

Your government and your scientists had to know long ago that the coronavirus is highly infectious, but you left the world in the dark about it.

Your top experts didn't respond when Western researchers asked to know what was going on in Wuhan (Genuan, 2021).

Such developments did not augur well for diplomatic ties. While it is a known fact that there is a power struggle between America, China, and Russia, one would not have expected leaders to use a deadly pandemic like COVID-19 to fight their battles for political expediency. There was another timed bomb, which was set by a study carried out by University College London (UCL). According to this study, black, Asian, and ethnic minority groups are more likely to die from COVID-19 compared to their white counterparts (Godin, 2020). The identification of Africans, Bangladeshis, and Black Caribbeans as the most susceptible groups to the pandemic could affect Britain's international relations. In fact, this study, together with the reported high numbers of deaths among African-Americans in the US compared to their white counterparts, could trigger a different debate. For example, are these groups really susceptible to COVID-19, or is it their socio-economic situation that renders them vulnerable to the virus? If the latter is the case, what is the British government (and the US government) doing to address this social inequality? These are some of the questions that bear resonance with the discussion below with regard to socio-economic inequalities in Africa.

3. International Security - Moving Back to a "World Without Rules"

The state of affairs in the world continued to deteriorate in the sphere of not only global threats to human health but also "hard" security. And this is a long-term process that can be traced with small interruptions throughout the time after the bipolarity of the Cold War era has passed into the past. The level of military violence in the world has fundamentally changed. So, in 2015–2018, there were more than 50 conflicts involving states in the world, which was even more than 30 years before. Cases of internationalization of civil wars in weak states became more frequent, and the military role of non-state actors grew [Stepanova, 2020: 24–39]. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the number of victims of international terrorism has increased manifold. As noted above, almost all the canons developed in the 1960s and 1990s have been called into question. in the fields of arms control and confidence-building

measures.

The pandemic has had a deterrent effect on military activity around the world, which cannot be said about military planning. A number of military exercises, including those in Europe, have been canceled or scaled down. There was an exchange of medical equipment between Russia and the United States; a joint statement on the "spirit of the Elbe" (Громыко, 2020) was adopted (also in July 2020, an agreement was signed between the Russian Academy of Sciences and the US National Academy of Sciences on cooperation in various areas of research related to COVID-19). Russia sent assistance in the fight against the coronavirus to several countries, including NATO members. However, mutual perception, or more precisely, rejection, and the level of distrust are such that the pandemic has only temporarily stopped the growth of confrontation between Russia and the North Atlantic Alliance.

The geopolitical dimension of the pandemic appears to be a pronounced phenomenon. Most of this is happening as a result of man-made activities and deliberate steps taken primarily by Washington. "The risk from our adversaries has not only not gone away; it has only been exacerbated by the circumstances of the pandemic," says K. Cooper, US Assistant Secretary of State for Political and Military Affairs. He was echoed by S. Fry, Deputy Secretary General of the European External Action Service: "We believe that COVID-19 has become a powerful accelerator of trends that existed before. This has heightened geopolitical tensions, especially between the US and China." (Громыко, 2020) EU representatives still continue to talk about the importance of moving towards "strategic autonomy," but at the same time, they constantly give in to Washington's pressure on China and Russia. So, in June 2020, at a meeting of EU foreign ministers and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, the Europeans went halfway to the White House, agreeing to launch a "bilateral dialogue" on China. Long before that, in March 2019, the EU declared China to be its "systemic adversary." (Cheng, 2019) The Western media are using methods against Beijing that have discredited themselves on the field of anti-Russian campaigns but nevertheless are still in demand. So, in July 2020, the British media reported that the former British intelligence agent K. Steele, who had prepared a scandalous "dossier" on Donald Trump, wrote a report now about China's "interference" in the internal affairs of the United Kingdom.

Brussels continues to sit on two chairs: on the one hand, promoting the agenda of the Global Strategy (June, 2016) and the

“defense pact,” and on the other hand, doing everything possible not to cause unnecessary irritation to Americans with its claims to independence in the political and military spheres. As for Russia, a number of EU countries are direct lobbyists for Washington to torpedo the Nord Stream 2 project. In the new national security strategy of Poland, approved in May 2020, Russia is named as the main security threat. The military doctrine of Romania, adopted in June, is drawn up in a similar vein. In the year of the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II, the European Parliament took an openly anti-Russian position on the role of our country in the liberation of Europe. A new wave of anti-Russian sentiment was raised in the EU in connection with the events in Belarus. A purely non-constructive pose was taken by the German authorities in relation to the situation around A.A. Navalny and relevant requests from Moscow.

At the same time, the pandemic has further complicated relations between the US and the EU. It was extremely painful for the White House to close the borders in March 2020 without coordination with Brussels. The interception and repurchase by Americans in different parts of the world of medical masks and equipment intended for the EU was regarded as egregious, as, for example, the US attempted in an aggressive manner to acquire the German pharmaceutical company CureVac, which was working on the invention and production of a vaccine against COVID-19.

It can be predicted that the progressive elements of deglobalization and various forms of strategic decoupling by the US and its allies will stimulate and facilitate the integration of the military-industrial complexes of the EU member states. So, if the export of French arms in 2019 as a whole decreased by 8%, then to European countries it increased to 45% of the total. Moreover, these results were achieved in fierce competition with the United States [French Arms Exports 2020]. Work continues on the implementation of the Franco-German project to create a new generation of battle tanks. In May 2020, a consortium of defense companies from the two countries began to work in this direction. It is assumed that the replacement of the German tank "Leopard-2" and the French "Leclerc" with a new model will begin in 2035.

Noting these facts, it must be emphasized that the further development of the “strategic autonomy” of the European Union is not only a political obstacle but no less a financial one, only exacerbated by the pandemic. The preliminary parameters for the new 7-year EU budget, agreed at the organization's record-breaking

summit on July 17–21, 2020, do not bode well for its Common and Security Policy. Compared to the proposals of the European Commission on the layout of the budget, the financing of foreign policy and defense programs for 2021–2027 was cut (only in terms of foreign policy programs) by 15 billion euros.

Taking into account the great variety of opinions and interpretations about the impact and consequences of the pandemic, expressed recently by specialists in Russia, Europe as a whole, and the United States, we will try to highlight the key aspects of the Corona crisis from the point of view of international relations.

First, the competition between the leading centers of power in the world is accelerating and becoming more and more fierce. Political, economic, ideological, military, and informational tools of persuasion and coercion are used, not to mention propaganda techniques and the activities of special services. Even the issue of creating vaccines against COVID-19 increases discord between states, exposing "national selfishness." The creation of a cure for this virus is turning into a topic for spy mania. In July 2020, Britain, the United States, and Canada accused Russia, this time of trying to steal information about the development of a coronavirus vaccine (Громько, 2020).

Second, one of the bearing axes of this competition is clearly the contradictions between the United States and China, with the former being the side fueling the confrontation. At the same time, the reality is that China not only successfully and quickly coped with the epidemic in general but also economically continues to significantly outpace the pace of development of the US economy and most competitors. The conflict between Washington and Beijing is not a one-dimensional phenomenon. If the political and technological disconnect between them was in full swing, then, for example, the financial ties between the two countries continued to strengthen (Dykin; Telegina et al., 2021: 8).

Third. A debate has arisen regarding these contradictions, where two conflicting opinions prevail: one suggesting that the US-China confrontation is driving towards a new global bipolarity, and the other arguing that the rivalry between the two major economies is inherently bilateral and cannot lead to a new bipolarity akin to the Cold War era for several objective reasons. Of course, it is possible to proclaim it, but it will not be a reflection of reality.

Fourth, the world economy is being pulled into the deepest recession since World War II or even the Great Depression. As this happens, indicators of social inequality are growing both at the

global and regional levels, as well as at the domestic level. The global economic downturn is a source of formidable risks but also opportunities, especially in the fields of the green economy, biotechnology, robotics, etc.

Fifth. The strategic undocking of the United States and its allies, primarily European ones, continues. A few years ago, such a thesis was a curiosity, but now it has become commonplace in the arguments of leading European politicians and think tanks on both sides of the Atlantic. “Rebalancing” (pivot to Asia) towards Asia was announced not by D. Trump but by his predecessor B. Obama, and before him, J. Bush Jr. openly disregarded the opinion of key European allies. Regardless of the outcome of the US presidential election, Europe will remain a secondary priority for Washington compared to Asia. Almost all of Washington's strategic documents, both political and military, already consider China the number one rival, which is natural given its economic power and rapid military buildup. In July 2020, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo delivered a keynote speech that effectively proclaimed a new cold war against China and claimed to be Fulton 2.0 (Pompeo, 2020).

Not only is America's former intensity of interest in Europe (as well as in the Middle East) declining, but this process is reciprocal. Only 45% of Italians, 41% of British, 40% of Spaniards, 31% of French, and 26% of Germans express a favorable opinion of the United States. Moreover, such figures are only partially correlated in Europe with Donald Trump's negative image. If this were not the case, then, for example, 52% of Germans would not oppose the presence of American troops in their country.

Sixth. Uncertainties and risks in the development of the European Union are increasing; the pandemic exacerbated its internal problems, led to a surge of eurosceptic sentiments, and sharp disagreements between member countries on a number of issues both along the north-south and west-east lines. At the same time, the Brexit drama has led to some consolidation within the bloc; the danger of a domino effect on the withdrawal of other member states from the EU is off the agenda today. This does not mean that the threat to the integrity of several states has decreased due to separatist sentiments, which are caused not by a pandemic but by much deeper reasons. For example, this applies to Belgium, where there has been no permanent government since May 2019, Spain (Catalan separatism), and, already outside the EU, Britain (separatism in Scotland and among Catholic republicans in Northern Ireland).

Seventh. Two processes are going on in parallel: the further

rapprochement between Russia and China, mainly in the political-military sphere, and the growth of confrontation in relations between Russia, on the one hand, and the United States and the European Union, on the other. In the EU, opinions on policy towards Russia traditionally differ, but the most anti-Russian countries-Poland and the Baltic states-set the tone. There is also the possibility of Germany moving into the camp of tough opponents of Russia, which was demonstrated by the events around A.A. Navalny, as well as the near prospects for the conquest of power in Germany by politicians who are opposed to any strategic cooperation with Moscow.

Eighth. The international mechanisms for coordinating interests are functioning worse and worse against the background of the desire to rely on regional integration projects, regional cooperation, state industrial policy, the principles of localization, and the deoffshoring of not only economic but also political factors. As noted above, not only is there a strategic disconnect between the United States and its European allies, but Washington is seeking to achieve an economic disconnect with China (especially in terms of trade and technology), i.e., with the world's first economy in terms of purchasing power parity.

In this situation, the institution of the nation-state, with renewed vigor, appears to be the backbone for solving both internal problems and maintaining international cooperation. The desire to renationalize foreign and domestic policies contributes to this process. The renaissance of the institution of the nation-state is led by numerous manifestations of de-globalization, which, however, have their limits. At the same time, the strengthening of the role of this institution is accompanied by an urgent need for interstate cooperation to solve trans-regional and global problems, including the collapse of the arms control system, the widespread growth of social inequality, global warming, etc. Multilateral institutions are either in a state of stagnation or are in crisis. First of all, we are talking about the WTO, WHO, OPCW, UNESCO, and the UN as a whole. This internationally recognized and universal organization is experiencing all the negative controversies among its members, especially in the Security Council.

4. Contemporary Global Risks

Risks and disasters are capable of causing enormous suffering and economic loss (Zuo and Wei, 2018). For several years, countless publications, reports, and studies have been calling our attention to

scenarios filled with risks and uncertainties. Among the most recent reports, stand out the Global Risks Report, Lloyd's City Risk Index 2015–2025, Global Catastrophic Risks, Cambridge Global Risk Outlook, Emerging Risks in the 21st Century, Natural Disaster Hotspots: A Global Risk Analysis, Global Challenges: Twelve Risks That Threaten Human Civilization, and others.

According to the Global Risks Report (Franco, Kuritzky et al. 2020), mankind is exposed to risks divided into five categories: economic, environmental, social, geopolitical, and technological. Among the thirty global risks, the "rapid and massive spread of infectious diseases" emerges. This risk includes bacteria, viruses, parasites, or fungi, and the uncontrolled spread of infectious diseases (for instance, as a result of resistance to antibiotics, antivirals, and other treatments), leading to widespread fatalities and economic disruption. Although this risk has not been permanently present within the five global risks with a higher probability of occurring and a greater impact in the last 14 reports (except the report rankings published in 2007 and 2008), the risk is still widely discussed by the experts addressed in the report.

The report has repeatedly alerted, during recent years, to the risks of epidemics and catastrophes on a global scale. In the introduction of the 2020 edition, the report signals, in the topic "health systems under new pressures," new vulnerabilities as a result of changes in social, demographic, environmental, and technological patterns, posing additional risks to the operations of health services and systems. Besides, the report underlines: "Progress against pandemics is also being undermined by vaccine hesitancy and drug resistance, making it increasingly difficult to land the final blow against some of humanity's biggest killers." The end of the section concludes: "As existing health risks resurge and new ones emerge, humanity's past successes in overcoming health challenges are no guarantee of future results."

The sensation of surprise and unpreparedness before the challenges imposed by the new pandemic seems to generate discomfort in the scientific community and among experts, who have been alerting for a long time to the possible outcome of these events.

Released by Mair (2020), a Research Fellow in Ecological Economics at the University of Surrey, he suggests, in his article entitled "How will coronavirus change the world?" that we all should question which emerging social forms come from an ethic that values care, life, and democracy. After pointing out the failures and challenges imposed on the modern economy, Mair believes in

the necessity of a new kind of economy that is completely different and capable of building a socially just and ecologically solid future.

Corlett Primack et al. published, in April 2020, a study entitled "Impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on biodiversity conservation" in the journal *Biological Conservation*, showing his preoccupation about the effects of the pandemic on world biodiversity and on our ability to protect it. Besides directing questions open to the readers, the authors of the article reached some preliminary conclusions: i) in some locations, biodiversity is benefiting from the reduction of human activities; ii) the pandemic interrupted many research projects around the world, raising concerns about the formation and training of young scientists; iii) regardless of the impacts on ecosystems and biodiversity, the pandemic has already caused an elevated number of fatalities and suffering to people all over the world, a tragedy that will eventually lead us to rethink the existing connections between health, resilient ecosystems, and human wellbeing.

Dickon Pinner, Matt Rogers, and Hamid Samandari (2020) published an article entitled "Addressing climate change in a post-pandemic world" relating pandemics to climate risk. Here, the authors indicate: i) both represent physical shocks (different from financial shocks, mainly conducted by human feeling and generally originate from within the financial system); ii) both are systemic (since their direct and indirect effects display rapidly in an interconnected world; iii) they are nonstationary (the probabilities and distribution of occurrences are changing quickly, proving to be inadequate or insufficient for future projections); iv) they are nonlinear (as their social economic impacts grow disproportionately and often catastrophically); v) are risk multipliers (exacerbating vulnerabilities not tested until then, inherent to finance and health systems and to real economy); vi) regressive (affect disproportionately the world's most vulnerable persons); vii) can't be considered a "black swan", as many experts have been consistently alerting about both. After establishing the similarities between climate risk and pandemics, the authors say: "individuals, companies, governments, and civil society should use this moment to raise awareness of the impact of a climate crisis, which could ultimately create disruptions of great magnitude and duration".

Henry A. Kissinger (2020) published the article "The Coronavirus Pandemic Will Forever Alter the World Order," reopening the debate focused on international relations, foreseeing a possible alteration of the world order and in the balance of power of the international system. Kissinger states that the leaders of the

world are engaged in an enormous crisis within their national borders, but they must understand that the disrupting effects of the pandemic know no borders. Consequently, the author understands the urgent need for global cooperation, while no country has the capacity to overcome the virus through a purely national effort.

5. Post-Ukraine-Crisis World Order

The conflict in Ukraine has led to an international economic crisis and an international political crisis—in short, to a crisis in the international political economy. Employing international political economy as the theory, the political conflict in the Ukraine armed hostilities has led to a global economic crisis (Kammer, Azour et al., 2022). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) stresses that armed hostilities in Ukraine have resulted in a major blow to the global economy, which negatively affects economic growth and leads to inflation and (Kammer, Azour et al., 2022) increased prices of consumer commodities. The toll is great in Ukraine, and unprecedented sanctions on Russia cripple financial transactions and trade, leading to a deep recession (Kammer, Azour et al., 2022). The thinktank Rand Corporation emphasizes that the conflict in Ukraine leads to slowed economic growth and a slowed recovery from the pandemic (Jenkins, 2023). As a result of the Ukraine crisis, the world is facing a deepening economic crisis. Major powers are taking sides in these armed hostilities. Emerging powers are likewise raising their voices of discontent with the status quo. Countries in the Global South are starting to air out their grievances. In short, we are in for loads of disgruntlement in the world order as we know it

6. Exploring Alternative Futures

The world is now walking on eggshells, attempting to wiggling out of the Ukraine quagmire. We are now witnessing the alignment and re-alignment of forces among global actors in response to the Ukraine crisis. Four possible alternative futures are emerging. As ideal models, they are not mutually exclusive and can coexist with varying degrees of importance at different points in time and on specific issues, all of which have implications for inclusive growth in the global economy. The four possible world futures are the following: 1) the continuance of the rule-based unipolar hegemonic stability order; 2) a return to the early post-Cold War harmony; 3) a China-Russia-led world order; and 4) the re-emergence and re-strengthening of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) (see Figure 1

below).



Figure (1): Four Alternative Futures Following the Ukraine Crisis

7. Hegemonic Unipolar International Political-Economic World System

The first alternative future points to the maintenance, strengthening, and consolidation of rule-based unipolar hegemonic stability. These rules are mostly western in origin but internationalized or globalized, including those of the United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Bank, World Trade Organization, and others. The rhetoric of democracy, human rights, and individual freedom is elemental. In an anarchic world order, power-hungry countries vie to crown themselves as the global hegemon (Mearsheimer, 2001). The world has been under the helm of a global hegemon since the collapse of the former Soviet Union in 1991 to the present. This model will remain predominant if a single hegemon continues to hold sway not only transatlantically but also globally. The lone superpower will be able to remain the sole authoritative economic, political, diplomatic, and military power in the world as a result of the confluence of superiority in technology, ideology, and access to resources (McCormick, 1990). A hegemon could also enforce its will to survive as the lone global leader through the imposition of international rules in a rules-based world order (Keohane, 1984). In this world order, we will see the continuation of the important roles that the United Nations (UN), corporate globalization, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) will play. Economic rules in this system include liberalization, deregulation, and privatization. Economic, social, and political life as we know it will continue as it is.

8. Harmonious Global System

The second alternative future points to the return of the brief period

right after the demise of the Cold War in 1991, during which almost all the countries, more or less, were engaged in friendly competition in international trade without the threat of or use of armed conflict. This nostalgia for global harmony gives room for major powers on both sides of the Atlantic, China and Russia, to engage in capitalist expansion and free trade without fear of military conflict (Ty, 2023). This alternative is unlikely to happen, as the animosity between NATO and its enemies is intensifying.

9. Eastphalian BRICS+ Global Economic and Political System

No power is forever. Empires rise. Empires fall. With the Enlightenment, France reigned supreme during the eighteenth century. Due to the Industrial Revolution, the sun never set on the British Empire. Macron asked if this is the termination of the western hegemony to which we are accustomed. This third alternative future points to the rise of China and its economic partners as an alternative center of global economic, political, and military power around which the world will have to navigate. The original BRICS countries include Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (Ty, 2023). They account for not only about 40% of the global population but also about 25% of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the world (Iqbal, 2022). It is a platform to establish multilateral relations among countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the purpose of which includes peace and security; economic, political, and cultural cooperation; and people-to-people exchanges. In short, it promotes a harmonious, prosperous, and peaceful world (Ty, 2023). As an alternative to the western hegemonic world order, BRICS provides its members with the ability to absorb the shockwaves and pressures of the corporate globalization of the Global North (Ty, 2023). New members from Asia, Africa, and Latin America are continually joining or asking to join. In this case, an economic transition is happening right under our watch. Applicants include Algeria, Argentina, Egypt, Iran, and Saudi Arabia (Pavicevic, 2022). This is the “Eastphalian” turn, which calls for the rejection of humanitarian intervention and for the return of the respect of principles of international law, including self-determination, national sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference in the domestic affairs of states, and international cooperation and goodwill. BRICS countries are working for an international economic and political order that the Global South leads, as an alternative to the present international order in which the Global North reigns supreme. Eastphalian Peace is a play with

words, specifically in reference to the 1648 Westphalian Peace Treaties, which promoted the respect of internal sovereignty and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries. However, the Global North, especially NATO, does not respect state sovereignty and noninterference in the domestic affairs of the countries of the Global South. Eastphalian Peace merely reminds and calls for the respect of Westphalian Peace, which the West does not practice vis-à-vis the Global South. Thus, Eastphalian Peace is not a novel but a renewed call to return to the basic and general principles of international law since the 1600s.

10. Non-Aligned World Economic and Political System

The fourth alternative future points to the re-emergence and restrengthening of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), composed of countries in the Global South, all of which seek not to align themselves with one or another global center of power. Many grassroots organizations in both the Global North and the Global South see the BRICS+ world system as not any better than the unipolar hegemonic world system. The unipolar hegemonic camp under NATO and the multipolar camp under BRICS+ are engaged in inter-capitalist rivalry, though some countries, such as China, are under Communist Party rule. Grassroots organizations see BRICS+ as not their preferred leaders in the emerging world order in the aftermath of the Ukraine crisis, as many BRICS+ countries are under authoritarian rule. Grassroots organizations and adherents of the non-aligned world system struggle for a green, just, and peaceful world.

Conclusion

Diverse interpretations regarding the root causes of the Ukraine crisis abound within scholarly discourse. Mainstream Western media, represented notably by NATO, characterizes Russia as the unprovoked aggressor responsible for the invasion of Ukraine. Conversely, alternative perspectives articulated by academics, politicians, military officials, and non-mainstream journalists assert NATO's culpability, positing that the alliance provoked Russia's military intervention through its hostile eastward expansion, which Russia perceives as an existential threat to its security. Additionally, peace scholars, journalists, and activists contend that none of the actors involved in the Ukraine crisis are without fault.

Various potential global orders could materialize following the culmination of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine crisis.

Firstly, the hegemonic stability of a unipolar world may persist. Alternatively, a negotiated resolution involving all major international stakeholders could bring about an end to the armed conflict, thereby enhancing global security and fostering mutual benefit, prosperity, and enduring peace. Thirdly, the BRICS+ economies, comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, might establish an alternative world order utilizing alternative currencies for foreign exchange both internally and externally. Fourthly, the dormant Non-Aligned Movement may experience a resurgence, asserting itself robustly and consolidating its position in the global economy to promote a just world order based on equitable trade practices. Each of these envisioned scenarios offers distinct pathways for inclusive growth and development in the global economy. It is important to acknowledge, however, that the actual unfolding of events is likely to be significantly more intricate. Coexistence of multiple world orders concurrently is a plausible reality.

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Examining Iran's foreign investment embargo with respect to unilateral US sanctions (A legal review from an international perspective)

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Abstract

American sanctions against Iran are one of the most extensive in terms of variety and extent . The most approved sanctions are unilateral against a country. While unilateral economic sanctions in an extraterritorial manner are considered a violation of the sovereignty of other countries in this regard.This research is done through analytical-descriptive methodGiri has studied the legal analysis of Iran's foreign investment embargo by the United States of America based on reliable research documents and international law jurisprudence. The findings of the research show that the restrictions caused by the unilateral US sanctions against Iran and the increase in investment costs can be considered as a serious obstacle to foreign investment in Iran. However, in 1991, the United Nations General Assembly strongly urged governments to end unilateral pressures. Also in the another one in 1996 called for the removal of such practices under the title "Elimination of economic pressure measures as a means of political and economic coercion".The American side in sanctioning Iran violates the principle of peaceful coexistence among governments, which requires respect for the political principles of international law, i.e. the legal equality of governments, non-interference, cooperation and friendship, respect for the independence and territorial integrity of governments among the members of the international community. This type of actions lacks legal and international validity due to the lack of legitimacy.

Keywords: Sanctions, foreign investment, international law, Iran, US.

Introduction

The importance of the issue of foreign investment and the effort to remove its legal obstacles is considered one of the most important issues for the economic and scientific growth and improvement of any country. Foreign investment is one of the most extensive and controversial legal topics. But today, many of the legal foundations of foreign investment have undergone fundamental changes, especially foreign investment is considered an international necessity. With the victory of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, in the winter of 1979, the United States of America has used this tool against Iran many times. Iran including seizure of property and assets of Iranian individuals and organizations abroad, trade sanctions on export, import and investment, knowledge and technology sanctions, oil sanctions, financial sanctions and commercial banks and the central bank, sanctions on interactions and transactions with individuals, organizations and Iranian organizations by the European Union and international organizations.

Observing the international scene reveals the fact that a certain range of countries in the Middle East faced the challenge of this have faced such sanctions, but their interaction with the phenomenon of sanctions and its impact on the process of internal learning and innovation has not been the same.

1. Research records

Furtland (2017) In a research, it has shown the destructive effects of sanctions on issues related to human rights in the target countries. The interesting thing to note in this study is that the excuse of sanctions does not have an effect on its disastrous results.

Zainli (2016) in a research entitled "Research and analysis of the human rights situation in Iran and the reasons for sanctions by the European Union against the Islamic Republic of Iran" writes: Sanctions are contrary to human rights and have had no result other than punishing the public.

In an article titled "Capital circulation in international law and the assessment of Iran's foreign investment embargo", Yaser Ziyai and colleagues have discussed the free flow of capital in line with the liberalization of world trade. This research has focused on the limitation and free circulation of capital in the international economy, the limitation and free circulation of capital in the economy in international law, foreign investment in international law: from encouragement to sanctions.

Although a lot of research has been written about the American sanctions against Iran, a comprehensive research has not yet been done on the violation of human rights due to unilateral American sanctions regarding foreign investment and its impact on Iranian citizens.

2. Research Methodology

This research intends to use analytical-descriptive methods. Obtaining reliable researches based on reliable and authentic documents of the library and the legal procedures of international law to prove whether there is a logical connection between the category of economic sanctions and the legal elements related to it in international law. In this analysis with Relying on international teachings and insisting on legal arguments of banning foreign investment in Iran and a general picture of them is presented.

3. Research literature

3-1. Boycott

Various views and definitions of sanctions are presented by different social scientists. Done, but nothing. Sometimes it happens. There is no comment. In the dictionary and political terms, the word (Sanction is equivalent to sanctioning, allowing and approving, punishment, fine and executive guarantee. Elsewhere, it has been said about this word: It means guarantee of execution or punishment, political, economic or military punitive measures that are applied through collective security system against violators of international law. It is important to mention that although there is an element of punishment in sanctions, it is not only for the purpose of creating difficult conditions for the people of the sanctioned country. In fact, its purpose is to make changes in the political behavior of the government of this country. Some people consider the most important function of sanctions to be deterrence (Zarif and Mirzaei, 1376). In order to provide a definition of the word embargo, we must separate the technical and descriptive definitions of this term. Trade regulations are restrictions imposed by national governments on international trade that appear to have the same effect as economic sanctions, but serve different purposes. Such commercial restrictions are the purposes of the definition are the commercial policy of a government, while sanctions economic, to They are used as a tool to achieve foreign policy goals. For this reason, the American government in advancing its foreign policy to economic sanctions is increasingly resorted to ((Carter, 1992).In

fact, economic sanctions mean coercive economic measures against one or more countries to change the policies of that country, or at least reflect the opinion of a country about such policies. To this Order, the term economic sanctions means civil measures that affect the transfer of goods, services or capital to a specific country. It leaves an undesirable effect and the purpose of establishing it is to punish or to force that country to adapt to the political goals of the embargoing government or to express the displeasure of the embargoing country with the actions and behaviors of that country..

In the past years, one of the main issues that different governments have emphasized on are, the need to attract capital new investors, a priority that seems to be still facing uncertainties in order to reach the implementation stage

3-2. Reasons and objectives of sanctions

Many reasons are mentioned in the justification of sanctions, which include the desire to influence the policies or even change the system of a country. Regardless of these reasons, in some cases, sanctions are established because the sanctioning country feels that it must take action and these sanctions can be less controversial. be provocative In this case, it seems like a political action If it is not effective enough, at the same time resorting to military force is considered an extreme measure. the reasons and objectives of the embargo can be provided the following form (Alikhani, 1380).

The desire to influence policies or even change the political system of a country.

Creating instability in the target country, mostly to The intention of making changes in the political system of that country. The sanctioned country should be shown that the sanctioning country condemns the actions of that country.

Warning the sanctioned country from pursuing some unpleasant policies in the future (deterrence) Reducing the military power of the target country.

3-3. Factors affecting the business environment work

Effective factors in business space Work can be divided into major categories: Legal and judicial system.

4. Discussion and review

4-1. US sanctions against Iran

From the historical point of view, the subject of unilateralism is one of the basic and underlying policies of the foreign policy of the

United States of America. In this context, George Washington, the first president of the United States in 1796, warned against the permanent alliance of the United States with other countries, based on this thinking, the United States is an exceptional country in the international arena, and this exceptionalism should be present in all aspects of its foreign policy. This supremacy thinking allows America to sell superiority over other countries and create the illusion of totalitarianism. The set of these self-made thoughts and beliefs makes the American country give itself the right to take unilateral coercive measures, such as unilateral sanctions, the military threat, high terror commanders, rank implemented military intervention and disregard for international treaties without hindrance, which definitely violates the principle of the rule of law. The formation and process of the relationship between Iran and the United States, and the influence of the United States in Iran before the Islamic Revolution, were comprehensive and had various cultural, political, economic, military, and security dimensions. For example, some companies whose majority shares are owned by American companies or investors have also been forced to comply with American sanctions. Also, many foreign countries and companies are afraid of American retaliatory measures, including limiting their access to American financial and commercial facilities. They have complied with these sanctions to different degrees (Chopani Najafabadi, 2011: 5). The first US sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran began after the embassy case. In recent years, the United States, behind the agenda of issues such as Iranophobia and Islamophobia, has been monitoring the creation of new sanctions against Iran. Therefore, after the introduction of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, he unveiled a new series of economic and political sanctions and officially sanctioned the Islamic Republic of Iran. These sanctions are in the fields of foreign investment, energy, banking relations, transportation and shipbuilding industries, etc.

In fact, the United States to prevent and block To prevent Iran from achieving its goals, it has taken the tool of sanctions to isolate Iran, and every day that passes, these pressures are added to block Iran's way to achieve its goals (Simber, 5933: 551), although the sanctions They are considered as evidence of human rights violations, but America has kept this tool against Iran. In this area as well, Israel, which pursues its own policies.

4-2. American unilateralism and violation of the rule of law

According to Martin Login, the rule of law is one of the key words of the modern era and has an inseparable relationship with the government, which is also a modern phenomenon..) Login 2013: 176) Sovereignty, like the government, has been examined from different perspectives. The principles of governance discussion are among the basic topics of political science, relations between International, international law and other fields Legal, political and even philosophy Lagbut its most important manifestation is the rule of law. In fact, the legislative bodies of the countries only have the right to enact laws within the framework of the constitution and they cannot act beyond that and issue and implement orders in a selfish manner (Bashiriyah 2016: 23). The power and supervision of the people over the executives and rulers through the renewal of elections is one of the important political consequences of the rule of law. The United States of America seeks its supremacy over world management through psychological war, soft power (military war), hard power, and unilateralism, while some countries, such as the European Union, try to get out from under This is the umbrella of American hegemony. According to Article 24 of the United Nations Charter, the United Nations Security Council is responsible, trustee and responsible for maintaining peace and security between It is international and this institution is between International law is allowed to consider punitive and sanctions measures with the aim of changing political behavior against the aggressor country if a country endangers world peace by aggression. Even the UN itself cannot perform actions outside of its legal duties as provided in the charter. We saw an example of this at the beginning of the sanctions against Iran, when America's allies in Europe, Japan, Canada, and the countries of the Persian Gulf did not support Iran's sanctions policy. Therefore, the legitimacy of sanctions has requirements without which any sanctions are not allowed and are contrary to the rule of law at the international level. It is also international.

By examining the global standards of human rights contained in the United Nations Charter (1945), excellent The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and other relevant documents which are accepted international principles, it can be claimed that if sanctions lead to human suffering and hardship, they have no justification from the point of view of international law. This issue is significant even in the case that the economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations under the terms of the organization's charter have

international consensus" (Mafi, Hodayun, 2017), The shocking report of organizations such as UNICEF and the World Red Cross regarding the endangerment of the health of the people of different regions as a result of the sanctions adopted by the Security Council and other powerful and sometimes oppressive countries depicts the depth of such disasters. On this basis, humanitarian ideas and observance of basic human rights and preservation of human dignity should be strengthened in the way of preventing harm to innocent people so that powerful and rich countries cannot cause economic damage to countries for political purposes.

4-3. Economic coercion and the principle of non-intervention

Customary international law is based on the premise that countries have the right to manage their commercial relations as they wish. It can be seen in the judgment of the International Court of Justice in the case of Nicaragua's complaint against the United States in 1986, according to which the court ruled: "In the absence of a Treaty or some kind of clear and specific legal obligation, none "A country is not obliged to continue special trade relations more than it deems expedient" (261-260).

The International Court of Justice declared that "the alleged right to intervene and economic sanctions can be nothing but the manifestation of a It is a forceful policy, a policy that has led to the most severe abuses in the past and cannot have any place in international law" (Bigzadeh, 91: 76). It has also been stated that the principle of non-intervention implies the right of every independent state to conduct its internal affairs without interference According to the Court, respect for territorial sovereignty between independent governments is one of the basic principles in international relations. The legal concept of the principle of non-interference comes from respect for the political independence of governments and their principle , which implies the free right of the people to choose their own economic system without coercion from other governments (Archaga, 1978: 112). The first manifestation of the principle of non-interference can be seen in the "Declaration on Prohibiting Interference in the Internal Affairs of Governments and Supporting Their Independence and Sovereignty" approved on December 21, 1965, which stipulates:

- No government can use or encourage the use of economic, political or any other type of these measures to coerce another government in order to subjugate it in exercising its sovereignty or guarantee any other privilege.

-Armed intervention and kidney Other forms of interference or threats made against the identity of the government or against its political, economic and cultural elements are condemned.

Professor Stern believes that economic sanctions are illegitimate only when they result in the violation of the principle of non-intervention or when they are applied without regard to the competence of the target government (p. 6) Archaga also states that it is the nature of the act of intervention that he calls it as an act of intervention. He describes inquiringly. According to international law, an economic behavior is considered as an act of intervention It is widely known that a government implements an economic strategy in order to force another government to accept its demand (Henderson, 1988: 193). Following the signing of the Declaration of Algeria in 1981 between Iran and the United States, according to Article 1 of the Declaration, the United States pledged that the policy of this country "is and will be from now on, directly and indirectly, politically or militarily in internal affairs. Iran should not interfere" (Mohbi, 1378: 288). The adverb of the phrase "from now on" is indicative of the fact that America has accepted that it has interfered in Iran's internal affairs in the past (Alikhani, 117). Also, paragraph 10 of the statement on the cancellation of trade sanctions against Iran after November 1979 does not allow the reimposition of US sanctions against Iran (Zarif and Mirzaei, 101).

4-4. Obligation to respect international laws

In human rights literature, the closest expression that describes the true meaning of the word unilateralism is "unilateral coercive measures"; This expression shows both the negative quality of one-sidedness and its harsh and force-based nature. This concept is in Resolution No. 152 issued by the Trade and Development Conference(UNCTAD) on July 2, 1983 took a more meaningful combination under the title of coercive economic measures and over time it covered not only the economic field, but also the political field. It was on this basis that in Resolution No. 197 of the 38th session of the General Assembly in 1983, the fact was explicitly recognized that some developed governments are increasingly resorting to the threat or implementation of coercive and limited measures. with the aim of exerting political pressure on developing governments. In the same resolution, it is acknowledged that coercive measures have a negative impact on the economy of developing countries and distort the process of creating peace and atmosphere of friendship between governments.

In the text of this resolution, developed governments are also requested from any limited action avoid such as blockade, ban or embargo against developing countries. This resolution until 1995 under the title "Economic measures to The title of a tool for political and economic coercion against developing countries was presented in the General Assembly, and after that, with more attention to the negative effects of such actions on human rights, the title of "Human Rights and Unilateral Coercive Measures" was proposed in the General Assembly. The important point is that simultaneously with this change of approach, resolutions from 1994 entitled "Human rights and unilateral coercive measures" were proposed in the Human Rights Commission, which were approved with 23 positive votes against 18 negative votes. In paragraph 5 of this resolution, it was clearly emphasized that basic goods, especially food and medicine, should not be used as a tool to exert political pressure. In fact, it is from this date that, in parallel with the negative economic effects of unilateral sanctions on the economy of the target countries, the harmful and negative human rights effects of the sanctions on ordinary people are also given special attention (Golshan Pajoh, 2018: 2). These sanctions in themselves violate human rights and can cause irreparable damage to the people of the countries. Some human rights such as the right to life, the right to health, the right to access information and business are denied from the embargoed countries. According to the Charter of the United Nations, governments are asked to take the necessary care in order to respect the human rights of citizens, such as raising the standard of living, creating employment, expanding economic and social affairs, public health, and respecting and observing human rights. should be taken into consideration by governments. According to Article 24 of the Charter, the Security Council must take steps to achieve the goals of the Charter. In this way, the required documents Avari like, agreement between International civil and political rights, covenant between International economic-social and cultural rights, convention between International children's rights and Geneva humanitarian conventions must also be observed. The resolutions of the UN General Assembly, although mostly not mandatory, but because of LamThe opinion of most countries of the world has considerable value. Since most of the income sources of Iran's economy are oil sales and about 80% of the cost of the country through the export of bad oil set (Seyd Mashhodi, 1390: 15) the destructive effects of sanctions can be predicted he nosed Meanwhile, patients, especially special patients who urgently need

imported drugs, are the most affected, also in Article 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates: "Every person has the right to demand order and be able to fulfill them. Real and sustainable development requires infrastructure and capital investments are appropriate and sanctions are a deterrent and deadly poison for this field. The assumption is that governments, incomes and facilities are limited and the purpose and work have many. One of the special tasks of governments' desired goals, appropriate allocation of capital and facilities of the country between the areas different and needed by the society, including in the development sector. Sanctions weaken development goals of a country, as a result, the welfare of the people will decrease, which may be faced by the people's reaction and the national security of the country is endangered from within. (Hajji Wasfi: 1383, 28 (In this regard, the seventh chapter of the United Nations Charter gives the Security Council, as an organ of collective security, the task of recognizing threats against peace or acts of aggression based on Article 39 and adopting the appropriate enforcement mechanism based on Article 41 (non-recourse to armed force) and 42 (recourse to armed force) of the Charter. The sanctions imposed by the Security Council, which are adopted based on the provisions of the seventh chapter of the Charter, are mandatory for all members of the United Nations based on Article 25 of the Charter, which is considered the basis of the international security system. In addition to paragraph 2 of article 48 of the charter, the members of the organization are committed to implementing the resolutions adopted by the Security Council. The duty of implementing the decisions of the security council is also reflected in paragraph 1 of article 24 of the charter, according to which the members of the organization, in order to ensure quick and effective action, are responsible. They entrust the maintenance of international peace and security to the Security Council and agree that the Council will act on their behalf. Undoubtedly, the sanctions of one side are contrary to guaranteeing peace and consolidating global security, social solidarity of nations, recognizing the right to free self-determination and not resorting to force in international relations in the light of the United Nations Charter. Also, contradicting the establishment of international cooperation under fair and just conditions based on the international covenant related to economic, social and cultural rights (approved in 1966), violating the right of economic development of countries according to the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of

Governments (approved, 1974: 105; Momtaz, 1376: 17-27) and is against the regulations of the World Trade Organization (approved, 1995), which The expansion and development of the multilateral free trade system orientation is at the international level.

5. Anti-sanction foreign investment support plan in Iran

In order to provide a context for the realization of foreign investment and support for real investors, especially companies and governments that have cooperated more with the Islamic Republic of Iran during the sanctions, the conclusion of a commercial and commercial contract between all executive bodies subject to Article (5) of the Law on the Management of State Services and Institutions and their subsidiaries with foreign companies and parties, in addition to general rules and regulations, are subject to compliance with the following rules:

- 1- Foreign natural and legal persons who have continued their commercial interaction with Iran despite foreign sanctions (including unilateral US sanctions), will be subject to certain exemptions and incentives, according to the executive regulations of this law.
- 2- Foreign natural and legal persons who for the first time enter into business and commercial interaction with Iranian natural and legal persons, in case of unilateral termination of the contract as a result of foreign sanctions (including unilateral sanctions America), will be obliged to pay a fine.
- 3- Foreign natural and legal persons who have so far unilaterally terminated the contract with the Iranian party due to foreign sanctions (including unilateral US sanctions), if they wish to re-establish business relations, the following must be observed in their case:
 - Payment of all financial, equipment and service losses incurred by Iranian natural and legal entities as a result of the unilateral withdrawal of the foreign party from the contract to the Iranian economy and companies (as a percentage of the company's total future contract)
 - The obligation of a foreign natural or legal person to provide a guarantee and pay a penalty in case of a decision to unilaterally terminate the contract as a result of foreign sanctions (including unilateral US sanctions).

Note-The failure to conclude a new contract does not negate the previous commitments of foreign parties to the Islamic Republic of Iran (including the release of blocked assets and compensation

for all damages and losses incurred).

4- Contracts or cooperation with the persons subject to parts 1 and 2 of this paragraph are given priority over the persons subject to part 3dflour.

5- Monitoring compliance with the requirements and good implementation of this law will be the responsibility of the Trade Development Organization. In necessary cases, upon the proposal of the highest executive authority of the relevant body in the contract with foreign parties and with the approval of the Supreme National Security Council, it is permissible to enter into a commercial contract with foreign parties without complying with the requirements set forth in this paragraph.

6- The executive regulations of this plan (including the amount and method of payment of the said exemptions, incentives and fines) were approved by the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economy and Finance within a maximum period of one month after the promulgation of this law.. The government is obliged to submit the report on the implementation of this law every three months to the economic, energy and national security and foreign policy commissions of the Islamic Parliament. (Taken from the website of the Research Center of the Islamic Council, news number: 1657556)

Conclusion

Based on research findingsRestrictions caused by unilateral US sanctions against Iran and rising costs capital Due to these sanctions, investment can be a serious obstacle to capital He said foreign investment. Unilateral economic sanctions in an extraterritorial manner are considered a violation of the sovereignty of other countries. United Nations Resolution No. 2625, which was approved in 1970, refers to the issue of countries not interfering in each other's affairs. Based on this, the member states cannot use economic pressure tools or any other pressure to force another country to comply with the sovereignty of the opposite country. In 1991, the United Nations General Assembly strongly urged governments to end unilateral pressures against each other. Also in the resolutionAnother one in 1996, under the title "Elimination of economic pressure measures as a means of political and economic coercion", called for the elimination of such practices. Paragraph 3 of this resolution requests all governments not to recognize unilateral economic measures with extraterritorial features. Actions

one America's side in sanctioning Iran violates the principle of peaceful coexistence. It requires respect for the political principles of international law, i.e. legal equality of states, non-interference, cooperation and friendship, respect for the independence and territorial integrity of states among the members of the international community. This type of actions lacks legal and international validity due to the lack of legitimacy. For this reason, in the process of international sanctions, special attention should be paid to aspects such as their legitimacy, necessity and appropriateness, as well as the impact of these sanctions on the economy of countries. Linking moral considerations and values with the idea of applying international law through sanctions and effectively monitoring them in the use of economic sanctions is essential. The current international system, due to the lack of a global authority and authority and the supervision of national governments, requires mutual respect and politeness in order to cooperate between governments. It will be a moment. While economic sanctions can be considered a part of the international enforcement system, these sanctions should not be used in isolation. The international community should be looking for a common framework to provide a universally applicable punishment system with common goals.

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Provisions of Lawsuits for Compensation for Oil Pollution by Ships Based on Iran and United States Laws: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Considering that Iran has both oil and seawater, which is the route of transportation of oil tankers, the legal system of Iran has been discussed in this paper. Also, regulations related to prevention and dealing with pollution caused by oil tankers, regulations on how to compensate for damages caused by oil pollution, filing lawsuits, and how to receive compensation due to damages are examined with comparison to American laws. Regarding Iran's laws, it can be said that this country has not passed advanced regulations domestically and independently. However, due to the international aspect of these incidents, conventions have been formulated by international organizations, and by joining them, Iran has aligned itself with the international community in this field. However, since most of its states are surrounded by the sea and a lot of oil is transported through its ports, the United States enacted legislation in this field before the international community, and the history of its legislation dates back to 1924. With its strong domestic laws, the United States has not acceded to international conventions and still considers its national laws to govern these matters. Hence, the laws of this country and its performance be set as a model for other countries that are struggling with these issues.

Keywords: Energy, Oil, Ship, Oil tanker, transportation, oil pollution, lawsuit, civil liability, damage, compensation, American rights, Iranian rights.

Introduction

In the past, it was believed that the sea recycles all the materials that are thrown into it. There was no belief in the protection of the marine environment and all the ship's waste was thrown into the sea. These wastes were naturally recycled. With the construction of bigger ships and the development of shipping, throwing non-recyclable materials, chemicals, and fossil fuels into the sea, and marine accidents that caused extensive pollution, the protection of the sea against pollution caused by ships was raised. Among the polluting sources, oil became particularly important. Several accidents that happened to oil tankers in different parts of the world caused a lot of environmental damage and these marine accidents made it inevitable to establish regulations regarding sea pollution. Oil pollution directly and indirectly threatens and destroys the sea environment and human life. Therefore, comprehensive regulations were adopted to prevent oil pollution caused by ships, such as the first category of the MARPOL Convention and its 6 annexes, the purpose of which is to prevent the pollution of the sea by oil substances caused by ships.

The second category is the oil pollution control provisions of the OPRC Convention. According to these regulations, if oil pollution occurs, the port government and the coastal government must take national measures, and the regional countries must take the necessary measures to deal with and contain the oil pollution. The third category of regulations is related to international regulations regarding civil liability and determining the amount of responsibility regarding oil pollution caused by ships, the most important of which are the CLC and FUND conventions. The government of Iran has joined all these conventions and must comply with its international requirements. In line with the implementation of these requirements and in cases where there was a need to enact a national law, the law on the protection of navigable seas and river waters against oil pollution was approved in 2010. By comparing international conventions with the provisions of this law, we notice some discrepancies, although there are similarities between national regulations and international conventions regarding civil liability. For example, in the CLC convention, the limit of liability for oil pollution that occurred unintentionally and at fault has been determined. Also, in the FUND convention, this limit of liability has been increased up to a certain amount, and ship owners are required to prepare a valid insurance policy or financial guarantee to cover these losses up to the same

limit. In Iran's law, the amount of responsibility is not limited and there is no ceiling for it. On the other hand, ship owners are required to prepare an insurance policy to compensate for possible losses or they must prepare a valid financial commitment letter, while the ceiling for the amount of the insurance policy or commitment letter is not clear.

According to the provisions of FUND and CLC conventions, the ship owner is responsible for compensation and legal claims must be filed against them. Whereas, according to Iranian law, the owner, the perpetrator, and the person responsible for the oil pollution, that is, the person who is in charge of the oil pollution, are jointly responsible for compensation. Another important issue in the lawsuit for damages is related to determining the amount of damages. If damage has been done to the property, it is possible to determine the amount of damage by evaluating the damaged property. However, the challenges related to the damage to the environment and aquatic life continue. Procedures for filing a lawsuit is another important topic that is not covered by the CLC and FUND Convention, and the law of the court will govern it. However, the conditions for filing a lawsuit are determined in Iranian law, which is in the form of a request or petition, depending on the case. After the occurrence of oil pollution, if the polluting ship is impounded and if a valid insurance or financial guarantee is given, the court will act to remove the impoundment from the ship. But the law of Iran stipulates that the polluting source will remain in custody.

This paper attempts to study the civil liability regarding sea pollution in the Iranian and American legal systems and to answer the important question of what provisions exist in these two legal systems for the responsibility of sea polluters. Then the paper finds the commonalities and differences of the regulations and came to the conclusion that according to the American regulations, the lawsuit should be brought against the ship owner or the insurer, and according to the Iranian law, the lawsuit is brought against the owner, the operator and the polluter jointly. Also, in international regulations and American regulations, if the limitation of liability is invoked, the liability will be limited, but in Iranian law, the liability is not limited. In case compensation is requested by the prosecutor or the government (Ports and Maritime Organization, Fisheries Organization and Environmental Protection Organization) by request and in case of damages by other persons, it should be according to the petition and by paying the legal fees. In the United States of America; Congress has allowed the president or the authorized representative of

the government or indigenous tribes to file a lawsuit on behalf of the nation for damages caused by oil pollution.

In the end, the authors come to the conclusion that the damages caused to people's property can be assessed, but determining the damages caused to the environment and aquatic life is still one of the most challenging cases. One of the innovations of American law is determining the damage caused to the environment and aquatic life. May it be addressed in the present research.

1. The Concept of Oil Pollution

Marine oil pollution is sometimes caused by oil leaks from marine structures during exploration and exploitation, cargo oil or ship fuel leaks in the sea, abandonment of marine structures, and invasive species caused by oil deposits in the seas. (Pourhashmi & Ekrami, 2014: 71) In fact, from clauses (5), (8), and (9) of Article 1 of the International Convention on Civil Liability for Compensation for Damages Caused by Ship Fuel Oil Pollution, it can be inferred¹ that fuel oil pollution means pollution caused by spilling any hydrocarbon oil of a ship in the territorial sea of a country, which is used for steering or propulsion of the ship, as well as caused by any event causing pollution damage with a serious and imminent threat. Naturally, oil pollution is not caused only by spilling fuel oil from a ship in the territorial sea of a country. A major part of it can happen outside the territorial sea and it is not caused by the fuel oil of the ships, but due to exploration and exploitation, oil leakage from the oil cargo of the ships, etc (Agha Seyed Jaafar Kashfi & Zavyi Sham Esbi, 2021: 109-110). The International Convention on Preparedness, Response, and Cooperation against Oil Pollution in 1990 provided a more comprehensive definition of oil and considers it to include crude oil, fuel oil, diesel oil, and lubricating oil. (Najafi Esfad & Darabinia, 2019: 95). The second paragraph of Article (2) of the current convention interprets "oil pollution incidents" as incidents that have the same origin and lead or may lead to oil spills and the marine environment or coastlines with the interests of one or more countries, threaten or may threaten and requires emergency action or other immediate response. The amendment protocol of this

1. Agha Seyed Jaafar Kashfi, Mona, Zavyi Sham Esbi, Mahnaz, Analyzing the efficiency of the response preparedness protocol and regional cooperation in combating oil pollution accidents (Otao Protocol) in protecting the environment of the Caspian Sea from oil pollution, Journal of Legal Research, No. 43, Fall 2019: pp. 109-110.

convention was also approved and provided a more complete definition of oil and it means any stable mineral hydrocarbon oil such as crude oil, black oil, heavy diesel oil, and oil, whether it is carried as a commodity in a ship or is available in the fuel tanks of the ship. The interpretation of the Marine Oil Pollution Control and Prevention Law approved by England in 2005 is more accurate. This law defines oil as any liquid hydrocarbon or alternative liquid hydrocarbons, including soluble or non-solvent hydrocarbons or alternative hydrocarbons that are not normally found in the liquid phase at standard temperature and pressure, whether from plants or animals or mineral deposits or obtained from their combination. Taking into account the cases listed in the above protocol, this law includes any oil spill in the sea, including fuel oil, cargo oil, oil resulting from exploration and exploitation activities, etc. Therefore, what is considered oil pollution in the sea is any kind of oil and oil material that has leaked into the sea and caused the pollution for any reason. It seems that the Law on the Protection of Navigable Seas and Rivers against Oil Pollution in Article (1) provides the most comprehensive and complete definition of oil pollution and sources of oil pollution and defines it as an oil leak or spill of oil materials from ships, oil tankers or platforms and oil facilities.

2. The Concept of Compensation for Damage Caused by Oil Pollution

In the glossary of international law, compensation is defined as: "Mechanisms for compensation and restoration of a damage including all actions that are carried out for the benefit of a government or an international organization to compensate for the damage it has suffered". According to the definition provided in the encyclopedia of international law, "Compensation is the obligation to act to compensate and repair the damage of a violation of an obligation." Paragraph 1 of Article 235 of the Convention on the Law of the Sea approved in 1982 states that governments are obliged to fulfill their obligations regarding the protection and care of the marine environment and are responsible for compensation for damages caused based on international law. The civil liability convention in paragraph 6 of article 1 defines and stipulates oil pollution damage as: "damage or loss caused outside the ship as a result of pollution caused by the exit or discharge of oil, regardless of the location of this exit or evacuation, provided that the payment of compensation for the damage caused to the environment, except for the loss of profit resulting from said damage, is limited to

reasonable measures that have been taken or will be taken to correct the situation, as well as the cost of preventive measures, loss and the damage caused by these actions". If all the conditions and elements of civil liability are met, the injured party has the right to ask for compensation for all the damage that has happened to them. The cause of the damage (polluters) is also required to compensate for the damage they caused. The goal of every legal system is to first prevent damage to the society of its territory, and then, in case of damage, to protect the victims on the one hand and to deal with the perpetrators of the damage on the other hand. International environmental law is no exception. In the practice of governments as well as the process of the doctrine of international law, the obligation to compensate damages is considered one of the fundamental principles of international relations. It has been emphasized in this principle that if a government violates a legal rule or an international obligation, it must compensate for the abnormal effects and losses caused by it, and the mechanism of international responsibility is the guarantor of this principle.

3- Iranian and American regulations regarding Oil Pollution

3-1. Iranian regulations

One of the domestic and national laws passed in 2010 to prevent and deal with oil pollution is the "Law on the Protection of Navigable Seas and Rivers against Oil Pollution". This law, consisting of twenty-five articles and ten notes, was approved by the Islamic Council. According to the aforementioned law, polluting the waters under the rule and supervision of the Islamic Republic of Iran with oil or petroleum substances caused by leakage or discharge from ships, tankers, all fixed and floating facilities, including platforms, artificial islands, oil tanks, and underwater pipes is prohibited on the beaches or in the water. According to paragraph A of Article 1, pollution or polluting is the discharge or leakage of oil or oil substances or the balance of water of ships or tankers in the waters subject to this law. The subject waters of this law are those of the Law on Marine Zones approved in 1993 and the waters under the government's control in the Caspian Sea and navigable rivers. Polluting sources that are subject to this law include ships and oil tankers, whether they are intact, damaged, sunken, or in the process of being sunk, or being built, repaired, scrapped, and broken up in construction or repair centers on the coasts or in the waters subject to this law. Also, all fixed and floating facilities, including platforms, artificial islands, oil tanks,

and underwater pipes on the coasts or in the waters subject to this law, are considered among polluting sources in paragraph B of Article 1. In this law, oil means any oil liquid or mixture that contains oil, such as oil fuel, oil sludge, waste materials, and oil waste, all types of oil products and their derivatives. A ship is any type of sea-going vehicle, whether it is powered or towed in some way. Also, an oil tanker is any ship that is designed and built from the beginning for transporting or storing oil, and the oil is transported in it without packaging, or after some time its structure is changed and adapted for the above purpose. Petroleum facilities are fixed or floating equipment used in the exploration, extraction, production, loading, and transportation of petroleum materials such as platforms, oil tanks, pipelines, and artificial islands. The provisions of this law regarding how to prevent pollution are valid until multilateral agreements are signed with the countries of the region. If an agreement is signed with the countries of the region and approved by the Council, these regulations will not be effective.

According to this law, the Fisheries Organization (concerning aquatic life), the Environmental Protection Organization (concerning the damages caused to the marine environment), the Ports and Maritime Organization (concerning the pollution to the port facilities and the costs of dealing with the pollution and cleaning up the pollution), and private individuals can file civil liability lawsuits. The lawsuit for compensation stated in this law has certain characteristics. The applicant of this lawsuit can be the prosecutor or one of the institutions of the Ports and Maritime Organization, and the Environmental Protection and Fisheries Organization. In a compensation lawsuit, the court issues an order to satisfy the demand without receiving possible damages and only by examining the evidence. Ports and Maritime Organization, Fisheries, and Environmental Protection are the representatives of the government in international lawsuits regarding the crimes related to this law and the claim for damages resulting from the damages. Also, the collected amounts will be deposited into the treasury account and 100% of it will be allocated to the relevant institutions in the next year's budget. Among these organizations, the only organization whose damages can be determined and calculated is the Ports and Maritime Organization. In the case of the other two bodies, as well as in the case of damages to private individuals, there is no precise regulation. In case of oil pollution, the ship, oil tanker, or any vessel that has caused pollution will be seized by the military or law enforcement forces as a polluting agent

according to paragraph 2 of article 13 of this law until the judicial authority decides on the continuation of the seizure or its removal. Also, all the people who were involved in the process of oil pollution will be jointly and severally responsible.

A. Differences between Iran's domestic law (Sea and River Protection Law, etc.) and international conventions

The purpose of international conventions is to support international trade and international transportation of goods. The provisions of these conventions include ships of a specific capacity, while the domestic law covers all ships or vessels of any capacity. In international regulations, if the damage caused by oil pollution does not include intentional or willful cases, there is a limitation of liability, while in domestic regulations there is no limit of liability. The scope of implementation of international conventions is different from domestic regulations. According to Iran's maritime zones law, domestic law is applicable in waters under jurisdiction and competency, while international conventions are related to Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

B. Similarities between Iran's domestic law (law on the protection of seas and rivers, etc.) and international conventions

In domestic laws and international regulations, there is an obligation for the ship owner to compensate for the damage caused by the pollution. (Asadzadeh, 2015: 25) The owner of ship must have a valid financial commitment letter or financial guarantee. The ship owner must have a valid financial guarantee and the flag state and port state are obliged to issue a certificate that the ship has a valid financial guarantee. When the ship has this valid financial guarantee, it means that the government is also responsible for its statements. Without having these valid financial guarantees, in any case, it is not possible to move the ship and the PC should not be issued. Therefore, without a valid financial guarantee, the ship can't travel at all. Some of these guarantees are mandatory, that is, they are mentioned in international or national regulations, while some are optional. The benefit of these guarantees is, firstly, to compensate for the damage suffered, and secondly, if the ship is seized, the owner of the ship can hope for its release by depositing a fund. Regarding international regulations, these guarantees are 1) Marine insurance policies, and 2) P&I Club coverages.

3-2. American regulations

According to the reviews of American law, unlike other countries, it is one of the progressive countries in passing domestic laws to combat marine pollution. This country has enacted various laws at the state and federal levels to control the reduction and prevention of sea pollution, especially pollution caused by ships, for the waters of its region. (Wood, 1975)

A. Oil Pollution Act of 19241

This act was the first federal law specifically intended to regulate the discharge of oil from ships into coastal waters of the United States. At that time, the law governing oil pollution in general was not much different from other countries. (De La Rue & Anderson, 1998: 8) In this law, the discharge of oil, whether as fuel or cargo, was prohibited and considered a type of offense, and those who violated this prohibition were punished with a fine of \$500 to \$2500 or imprisonment from 30 days to 1 year. On the other hand, in this law, there were no regulations regarding water protection in other ways.

B. Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1948 (Federal Water Pollution Control Act)

In 1948, the United States Congress passed the Federal Water Pollution Control Act.² The purpose of this law was to increase the quality of water resources and create a national policy to prevent, control, and reduce water pollution. (33 U.S.C.§1005 (1964) at 466 (b).) It can be said that this law was one of the first regulations to enter the discussion of prevention, control, and reduction of water pollution and protection in the domestic regulations of the United States. (33 U.S.C.§466(a) and (b). De la Rue, C. and Anderson, C., 1998, p9.) The main focus of this law was to increase water pollution prevention plans by the government and local official bodies. This law was extensively amended in 1972 due to its shortcomings in the field of pollution control.

1. Act of 7 June 1924, Pub. L. No. 68-238, 43 Stat.604, codified at 33 U.S.C. §431-437, repealed by the Water Quality Improvement Act in 1970.

2. Act of 30 June 1948, Pub. L. No. 80-845, 62 Stat.1155, originally codified at 33 U.S.C.§466(a)-466(g), but substantially amended and renumbered by Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972 and Clean Water Act Amendments of 1977.

C. Clean Water Act 1966¹

This law, which was passed in 1966, was an amendment to the Oil Pollution Act of 1924. For the first time, this law established provisions for civil liability arising from oil pollution at the level of the United States federal law. (De la Rue, & Anderson, 1998: 9) In terms of geographic scope of application, the Oil Pollution Act of 1924 extended the prohibition of oil discharges on adjacent coastlines as well as the sea over navigable waters of the United States. (33 U.S.C.§433(a) (Supp. IV, 1969)) According to this law, anyone who discharges or permits the discharge of oil from a vessel into or on the navigable waters of the United States must immediately remove the pollution caused by such action in the above-mentioned geographical areas. In case of no action, the government itself would collect and clean the contaminated areas. Then, to compensate for the expenses they had incurred in this regard, they would fine cash the perpetrator as much as is reasonable, (33 U.S.C.§433(b)) and in addition to that, a fine was also considered for the guilty person.² This fine is up to \$2,500 in fines and imprisonment for one year for the person who violates the law, and up to \$10,000 for the ship. This law limited the cases of liability only to leakage caused by willful or gross negligence.³ It did not work, because most of the causes of oil pollution involved ordinary negligence. Also, although this law had stipulated the provision of compensation for the costs of cleaning up the pollution as a result of the oil spill, it did not provide any provisions for obtaining damages as a result of the oil pollution for the private victims.⁴

D. Water Quality Improvement Act (1970)

The American government, aware of the dangers caused by oil, which was fueled by the Torrey Canyon incident, developed domestic laws without seeking the membership or approval of international conventions in this field. The result of these efforts

1. Pub. L. No. 89-753, 3 November 1966, 80 Stat. 1252

2. In Oil Pollution Act of 1924, 33 U.S.C.§434, it was originally provided that violators were subject to a fine of \$500 to \$2500. In its 1966 amendment, 33 U.S.C.§434(b) the penalty was maximum \$10,000

3. In 33 U.S.C.§432 (3), “discharge” was defined as any “grossly negligent or willful spilling, leaking, pumping, pouring, emitting or emptying of oil”. For a critical analysis of the Clean Water Restoration Act 1966, see Kiern, L., Liability, Compensation and Financial Responsibility under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990: A Review of the First Decade, *Tulane Maritime Law Journal*, Vol.24, 2000, p502

4. For criticism in this respect, see, inter alia, De la Rue, C.and Anderson, C., 1998, p 9.

was the adoption of the Water Quality Improvement Act (WQIA) in 1970.¹ The WQIA imposed strict liability on the operator owner and charterer of a vessel from which oil was discharged. In fact, according to section 11 of this law, the government covers the costs of pollution cleanup. The restoration of natural vulnerabilities was also covered, which is considered one of the innovations of this law.² However, no provision has been made regarding the compensation of damages to private individuals. The amount of fine that was determined for each ton of polluting substances was equal to 100 dollars. However, with this limitation, the total amount of damages paid should not exceed \$14 million. The same provision in the 1969 CLC convention is 125 dollars per ton of polluting substances with the condition that it does not exceed \$14 million in total. Of course, with this stipulation, this amount of limitation was not respected only in pollution caused by intentional fault, and all costs related to oil pollution must be paid by the perpetrator.³ While the WQIA law was criticized for not establishing comprehensive regulations to deal with water pollution, this law created a framework for responsibility that served as a model for subsequent laws in the field of oil pollution.

E. Amendments to the 1972 Federal Water Pollution Control Act

This law is an amendment of the 1948 law, which mainly refers to the introduction of water quality standards, although some articles of this law also discuss the responsibility system. The amendments made to the 1948 Act include: establishing a framework for regulating the discharge of pollutants into the waters of the United States, allowing the EPA to implement pollution control plans such as setting effluent standards for industry, maintaining existing requirements for defining quality standards water for all surface water pollutants, obtaining a permit to discharge any pollutant from a point source into navigable waters where it would be illegal to do so without obtaining a permit, and devising a plan to address critical problems caused by from non-local source pollution.

1. Pub.L.No.91-224, codified at 33 U.S.C. §1161 et seq. It has amended the FWPCA and repealed the Oil Pollution Act of 1924.

2. For the comments on WQIA 1970, see Jones, W., Oil Spill Compensation and Liability Legislation: When Good Things Don't Happen to Good Bills, *Environmental Law Reporter*, Vol. 19, 1989; Straube, M., Is Full Compensation Possible for the Damages resulting from the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill? *Environmental Law Reporter*, Vol. 19, p10338-10350

3. FEDERAL WATER POLLUTION CONTROL ACT [As Amended Through P.L. 107-303, November 27, 2002], § 11 (f) (1).

3-2-1. The United State's Innovative Method in Developing Regulations to Prevent and Deal with Oil Pollution

The United States regulations have a significant impact on maritime safety standards around the world by applying technologies and operational standards. Their provisions are an innovative and effective way to prevent marine pollution and restore damaged natural resources. Also, the relatively rigid financial requirements imposed on maritime transport ensure that such losses do not go uncompensated. While debt and financial responsibility laws are not new in other countries, the United States has a longer history of enforcement and applies its laws more broadly.

In the definition of natural resource damage, Natural Resource Damage (NRD)¹ is defined as physical damage to land, fish, wildlife, habitat, air, water, groundwater, or other resources. Physical damage can take many forms but usually relates to an adverse change in the health of an environment or population of species and the underlying ecological processes on which they rely. Legally, the definition of NRD is limited to resources owned, controlled, or managed by federal, state, or other governmental entities, including foreign governments, and damage to private interests is not considered natural resource damage under US law. However, the definition of natural resources is not limited to government resources, and accordingly, damages to natural resources or private property can lead to NRD claims.

Oil pollution compensation in US environmental regulations relies heavily on polluter liability as the causative agent of the loss and also to fund environmental compensation. Imposing liability after it has occurred is a hallmark of the American approach to regulation. Other countries use tort liability to compensate for damages, but no country repeatedly imposes liability on the private sector. Liability for environmental damages under US common laws and environmental statutes is very heavy and places the full burden of environmental costs on the polluter. This burdensome liability serves the distributive goals of reparation by providing compensation to victims and serves society by creating financial incentives that lead to desirable levels of deterrence (Landes & Posner, 1987). The primary law governing US oil spills is the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA). The Act contains a set of

1. Global Compensation for Oil Pollution Damages: The Innovations of the American Oil Pollution Act- James Boyd-September 2004. Discussion Paper 04-36-Resources for the Future.

requirements designed to improve the safety of oil transportation vessels and facilities, including technology and reporting requirements. This law also requires operators to compensate three broad categories of costs:

- 1- response and clean-up costs,
- 2- damage to private property, and
- 3- damage to public natural resources.

The first is to create liability for damage to public natural resources. Liability for Natural Resource Damage (NRD) is the most distinct and complex aspect of compensation. Other types of compensation-cleanup and response costs and private property damage-are more common and easier to calculate in other legal systems. Cleanup and response costs are the costs of minimizing oil spills and removing pollution from waters and shorelines. Property damage is damage to property, other property, or income.¹ These types of damages are fairly conventional and easy to calculate, as they can easily be calculated in dollars. Natural resource damages are a new aspect of compensation law. In particular, NRDs require the government to calculate the social losses caused by damages to indirect resources or traded in markets. Without private property and trade, there is no clear way to obtain the social value of damages (for example by inferring them from prices). For this reason, the liability of NRD is controversial and raises many legal and technical issues.

A second distinctive aspect of OPA is its approach to cleanup and restoration funding. As a precondition for operation, OPA needs to ensure the desired financing. These requirements are similar to compulsory insurance or minimum capital and are designed to ensure that. The OPA also includes an oil spill trust fund designed to pay for costs that cannot be immediately recovered from the private sector. Ships can be liable for damages including NRDs in several states. In addition to OPA specifically, the Clean Water Act (CWA) and the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (NMSA) provide statutory authority to collect NRDs related to vessels. The imposition of NRDs is an important innovation that addresses a global need: to restore damaged environmental services and to acknowledge that natural resources have significant economic value that must be included in damage calculations. Another important component of deterrence that deserves emulation is mandatory

1. The government can recover lost government revenue (for example, lost fishing license revenue due to damage to a fishery).

financial requirements. NRDs and financial responsibility requirements are the most distinctive in US marine spill law and are also of most value to other countries. Considering that there are many animal species in Iran, the approval of this law in the framework of national laws can significantly help to preserve and maintain these ecosystems.

3-3. Provisions of Civil Liability Caused by Oil Pollution in Iranian and American Laws

3-3-1. Convention on Limitation of Liability for Maritime Claims

The main purpose of civil liability is to fully compensate for the damage or restore the previous situation. But in maritime law, this goal is not respected, in the sense that it is possible to create limits for liability. According to this rule, the ship owner or their agent is allowed to limit their liability in the event of loss or damage to persons or things. (Izanlou & Dargahi, 2015: 522) The most important international convention in this field is the Convention on the Limitation of Liability for Maritime Claims LLMC,¹ which was approved by the Iranian government on May 25 in the Islamic Council (Iran's parliament).² Determining liability is the basis of maritime law and many related legal mechanisms. The reason is that the responsibility of the ship owner is based on pure responsibility and therefore the scope of their responsibility should be determined. For this purpose, the ship owner can rely on the limitation of liability, and this means the maximum amount of liability is determined according to the tonnage of the ship because for the ship owner to be able to cover their liability under appropriate insurance coverage, there must be accepted a limit of liability. Article 5 of the Civil Liability Convention of 1969 stipulates that: The shipowner has the right to limit their liability under this Convention to any incident, provided that the value of all of them does not exceed 59.7 SDR. Of course, there are also cases in which limitation of liability cannot be invoked. That is, the limit of liability towards the ship owner is not considered, and that is if the claimant can claim that the incident was based on the actual fault of the ship owner or their crew. The Civil Liability Convention has created a separate system for itself from the Limitation of Liability Convention and contains more restrictions than the 1957 and 1976 Limitation of Liability

1. Convention on Limitation of Liability for Maritime Claims 1976 (LLMC).

2. <https://rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/895070>.

Conventions¹ because according to Article 3 of the International Convention on the Limitation of Liability regarding maritime claims, claims arising from oil pollution are explicitly excluded from it and are not covered by the Convention.²

3-3-2. Convention on Pollution Caused by Ship Fuel Tank Oil (2001)

Civil liability conventions and other conventions are limited to oil spills from tankers that carry it as cargo, and non-cargo cases are outside the scope of these conventions. The fact that the ship carries a lot of oil as fuel does not include other types of oil, including unstable oil. These cases fall within the scope of another convention called the International Convention on Civil Liability for Damages Caused by Oil Pollution of a Ship's Fuel Tank (BUNKER). The BUNKER Convention is similar to the 1992 Civil Liability Convention, but they have a few differences in some rules. Among other things, the BUNKER Convention defines the ship owner as the person who is in charge of the ship's tank, while in the 1992 Civil Liability Convention, the ship owner is its owner.³ In this convention, like the 1992 civil liability convention, the responsibility of the ship owner is based on the absolute liability system. In addition, in this convention, the ship owner is responsible for costs related to preventive measures and damages caused by such measures and other damages caused by oil pollution of the ship's fuel tank in addition to the costs of the oil pollution. Also, unlike the 1992 Civil Liability Convention, the liability limit of the ship owner has not been specified. Instead, the BUNKER Convention states that this shall not prejudice the right of the shipowner or their insurer to limit their liability according to national or international legal rules.⁴ This is considered one of the weaknesses of this convention due to the creation of different

1. International Convention Relating to the Limitation of Liability of Owners of Sea-Going Ships, 1957.

2. Claims excepted from limitation The rules of this Convention shall not apply to:
(b) claims for oil pollution damage within the meaning of the International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage, dated 29 November 1969 or of any amendment or Protocol thereto which is in force.

3. "Shipowner means the owner, including the registered owner, bareboat charterer, manager and operator of the ship." International Convention on Civil Liability for Bunker Oil Pollution Damage (BUNKER) Article 1. Part .3.

4. Nothing in this Convention shall affect the right of the shipowner and the person or persons providing insurance or other financial security to limit liability under any applicable national or international regime, such as the Convention on Limitation of Liability for Maritime Claims, 1976 , as amended.

procedures for determining responsibility. This convention was approved by the Islamic Council of Iran on May 18, 2010.

The scope of this convention includes the payment of damages caused by the leakage of petroleum substances by the oil of the fuel tank of the ship, except for oil tankers, which occurs on the ship or outside the ship and eventually spreads to the sea and causes pollution of the territory of a member country. According to this convention, territory means territorial sea and exclusive economic zone of a member state.¹ When a country becomes a member of this convention, it can declare that the provisions of this Convention do not apply to ships that operate exclusively in the territorial waters that include the waters of the territorial sea.

According to the 2001 Convention on pollution caused by oil substances in the tank of a ship, the owners of a ship engaged in transportation at sea are responsible for pollution damages caused by Bunker oil. If the pollution occurs as a result of a series of incidents caused by such a polluting source, the liability lies with the person who was the owner of the ship at the time of the first incident. If more than one ship is responsible, the rule of joint and several liability will be implemented. According to the civil liability convention for pollution damage caused by petroleum substances, oil, and fuel tanks of ships, all registered owners of ships with a gross capacity of more than 1,000 tons are required to provide insurance or other financial guarantee such as a bank guarantee to cover the liability caused by pollution or prepare a similar document issued by a reputable financial institution. Its amount is equal to the liability limit of their ship, which follows the national or international liability limit system, and they must have it with them. In addition, the amount of this guarantee doesn't need to be more than the amount stipulated in the amended agreement related to the limitation of liability for maritime claims of 1976.

As stated, the principle is based on the absolute responsibility of the ship owner to compensate for the damage caused by Bunker oil pollution. But there are exceptions that according to paragraph 3 of Article 3 of the Convention², they are exempted from the liability caused by pollution only if they can prove: pollution damage caused by war, hostile operations, domestic disturbances, accidents, and natural disasters which are exceptional, unavoidable and irresistible, or damage that is entirely caused by an intentional act or omission

1. Ibid. Article 2.

2. Ibid. Article 3.

by a third party, or damage that is entirely a result of carelessness or wrong actions of government officials who are responsible for maintaining of lights and other navigational services and facilities, or the pollution damage in whole or in part caused by the actual act or omission that was done to cause damage by the affected person or caused by their carelessness. In such a case, the owner of the ship, in whole or in part, will be exempted from liability against such a person.

3-3-3. Compensation for Damages Caused by Pollution of Oil Tankers

The international system for paying damages caused by oil spills from oil tankers is based on a set of treaties that the International Maritime Organization has established and approved with the efforts and supervision of oil tanker owners, oil importers and receivers, and other relevant international organizations. The main framework of this system is based on the 1969 civil liability agreements for oil pollution damage and the 1971 International Oil Pollution Compensation Agreement. The fund convention, which complements the civil liability conventions, has established the additional compensation for the civil liability system.¹ The purpose of establishing the international fund is to pay damages caused by oil pollution to the victims of oil pollution accidents who have a valid claim, but they cannot receive full compensation for the damages they receive due to the low ceiling of limitation of the liability of the owners of oil tankers of the 1992 civil liability agreement. In May 2003, under the Additional Protocol, the maximum amount payable for an incident was 750 million SDR, which is equivalent to 792.4 million pounds or \$1,105,000,000 at March 2008 exchange rates. In 1984, a conference was held to amend the 1969 Convention and adapt it to the needs of the day, especially making amendments regarding the limits of responsibility and the scope of the implementation of the Convention. But the approved protocol was never implemented, because the condition for its implementation was the accession of the American government, which was never fulfilled. Some have considered the reason for the US government's non-adherence to be the low limits of liability and the concern of the coastal states of that country about state laws being ignored (Nicholas, 2009: 7). On February 13, 2002,

1. [https://www.imo.org/en/About/Conventions/Pages/International-Convention-on-the-Establishment-of-an-International-Fund-for-Compensation-for-Oil-Pollution-Damage-\(FUND\).aspx](https://www.imo.org/en/About/Conventions/Pages/International-Convention-on-the-Establishment-of-an-International-Fund-for-Compensation-for-Oil-Pollution-Damage-(FUND).aspx)

Iran ratified the 1992 Protocol of the Convention on the Establishment of an International Oil Pollution Compensation Fund, the provisions of which entered into force on November 5, 2009.¹

The owner of an oil tanker ship can usually limit their liability to the gross capacity of the oil tanker according to Article 5 of the 1992 Civil Liability Convention (CLC). Also, if the following cases are proven, the ship owner is not responsible for compensation: pollution damage caused by war, hostile operations, domestic disturbances, accidents, and natural disasters which are exceptional, unavoidable, and irresistible, damage that is in whole or in part caused by a deliberate act or omission by a third party, damage that is a result of carelessness or wrong actions of government officials who are responsible for maintaining of lights and other navigational services and facilities. The fund conventions (1971 International Oil Pollution Fund and 1992 International Oil Pollution Fund) which are complementary to civil liability conventions have established additional compensation for the civil liability system.²

The 1992 Civil Liability Convention CLC, the 1992 FUND Convention, and the supplementary protocol of the fund are all applicable regarding oil spills from oil tankers that cause pollution in the territory of the territorial sea or the exclusive economic zone or areas that are like the areas of two member countries. The civil liability conventions and the fund apply only to ships that carry oil in bulk (oil tankers) but do not include pollution caused by: 1) Pollution caused by oil spills of oil tankers that have no cargo and use ballast during sea voyages to maintain balance, which is discussed in the appendix of the MARPOL Convention, and 2) pollution caused by oil leakage from Bunker oil tanks from non-tanker ships.

According to the 1992 Conventions and the Additional Protocol of the Fund, pollution damage is defined as loss or damage caused by pollution. This means that the common damages related to environmental cleanup the costs related to the measures necessary to restore the contaminated areas and the cost of preventive

1. <https://rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/97933>

2. "Under the Fund Convention, victims of oil pollution damage may be compensated beyond the level of the shipowner's liability. However, the Fund's obligations are limited. Where, however, there is no shipowner liable or the shipowner liable is unable to meet their liability, the Fund will be required to pay the whole amount of compensation due. Under certain circumstances, the Fund's maximum liability may increase" [https://www.imo.org/en/About/Conventions/Pages/International-Convention-on-the-Establishment-of-an-International-Fund-for-Compensation-for-Oil-Pollution-Damage-\(FUND\).aspx](https://www.imo.org/en/About/Conventions/Pages/International-Convention-on-the-Establishment-of-an-International-Fund-for-Compensation-for-Oil-Pollution-Damage-(FUND).aspx)

measures as well as the costs caused by the loss and damages of such measures are also covered.¹ Although pollution damages are defined by the 1969 Civil Liability Convention and the 1971 International Fund as loss or damage caused by pollution, contrary to the provisions of the 1992 Fund, it did not include the costs of restoring contaminated areas. The provisions of the 1992 Conventions and the Additional Protocol of the Fund include all possible costs for preventive measures if there is an imminent threat of major oil pollution. Even if such an oil spill did not happen, such costs can be collected. The 1992 Conventions and the Fund's Supplementary Protocol apply to spills of Bunker oil from empty tankers, provided that such bunkers contain stable oil residues.

The process of ratifying international conventions in the United States is complicated, as they first require the approval of the administration and then the approval of the Senate. After that, the law must be approved by the US Congress and finally approved by the President.² Even though many believed it was important to the United States, the Senate voted against the CLC in 1969. Therefore, it seems that the US Senate had a strong political power in advancing the policy of giving priority to domestic laws, and that is why the CLC 1969 and the Fund were never ratified by the United States.

3-3-4. Financial Resources to Compensate Damages Caused by Oil Pollution

According to the review and proportionality between the risk caused by maritime transport and its profit for transport operators in the conventions and commercial procedures for concluding transport contracts at the world level to compensate for the damage caused by maritime transport, some mechanisms and institutions have been devised that can be a useful tool for distributing losses and supporting the prosperity of shipping and complying with the

1. "This Protocol shall apply exclusively: (a) to pollution damage caused: (i) in the territory, including the territorial sea, of a Contracting State, and (ii) in the exclusive economic zone of a Contracting State, established in accordance with international law, or, if a Contracting State has not established such a zone, in an area beyond and adjacent to the territorial sea of that State determined by that State in accordance with international law and extending not more than 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of its territorial sea is measured; (b) to preventive measures, wherever taken, to prevent or minimize such damage." *Ibid.* Article 3.

2. For details on the legislation process in the US, see Johnson, C., *How Our Laws Are Made*, House of Representatives Document 108-93, 108th Congress, 1st Session, 20 June 2003.

principle of full compensation for losses. Insurance plays a fundamental role as a financial tool and a source of compensation. In general, marine insurance includes ship insurance (hull insurance), cargo insurance, and freight. Also, this branch of insurance rights covers the liabilities arising from the operation of the ship towards third parties. Grounding, fire, and sinking of ships are incidents that occur today as in the past and cause great damage to ship owners and their cargoes (Sadeghi Neshat, 2013: 8). The marine insurance industry covers the risks that threaten the cargo, the ship, and its service during the sea voyage by H&M hull and machinery insurance P&I protection, and indemnity insurance. P&I clubs were formed due to the wide range of risks and the high cost of risks (Razavi Sayad & Shahrezaei, 2013: 4).

Liability insurance is one type of marine insurance that states that the responsibility of the ship owner is not only limited to the ship's cargo but also any damage caused to other ships, and their cargoes, due to his negligence or the fault of the people in his employment. The lives of people and port facilities will be affected and even polluting the environment will cause the responsibility of the ship owner. In addition to this, ship insurance includes the liability caused by the collision of ships (Abu Ata, 2013: 269).

In the Civil Liability Convention of 1969 and the BUNKER Convention, we often face the liability of the person responsible for the accident in providing financial compensation for the damage caused by oil pollution due to heavy costs. In this regard, these two conventions have benefited from the compulsory insurance system to guarantee the damage in such a way that the ship owners are obliged to obtain an insurance policy or other financial guarantee up to the prescribed limit that covers all the risks and actions of the ship owners, their stewards, and agents (Seifi Qaraytaq et al., 2014: 269). In the CLC convention, it is accepted to file a lawsuit directly against the insurer, and the defendant may be the insurer, but there are doubts about our rights. This is also mentioned in the law of protection of the seas in Iran approved in 2010 in such a way that all ships, oil tankers, and vessels are obliged, when entering the waters subject to this law, to be insured against possible damages caused by the pollution of the waters by oil substances. Otherwise, it is necessary to bring a financial commitment letter to compensate for possible losses (Asadzadeh, 2015: 260).

They are non-profit associations formed for the mutual support of ship owners and are known as P&I clubs. Unlike insurance companies, these clubs do not perform insurance operations in the

real sense. The members of these associations are the owners of the ships and are required to compensate the damages caused to each of the members with conditions (Abu Ata, 2013: 257). They are both insurers and insured to each other, that is, the owners receive the certificate of the ship's entry into these clubs, which is considered a type of insurance policy, against the amount they pay to the association according to the capacity of the ship or ships (Abu Ata, 2013: 259). One of the clauses covered by these clubs is damages caused by oil and non-oil pollution of the seas, as well as the costs of preventing or reducing the heavy effects of pollution (Razavi Sayad & Shahrezaei, 2013: 11).

4. Filing a Lawsuit in the Civil Liability Regime

4-1. Dispute Parties According to the Domestic Regulations of Iran and the United States

Examining the conventions that have been approved in the field of civil liability shows that there is no reference to the injured persons and their ability to file a lawsuit. However, according to paragraph 8, article 7 of the 1969 Civil Liability Convention and the 1992 protocol, as well as paragraph 10 of article 8 of the 2010 BUNKER Convention, compensation for damage caused by oil tanker pollution can be made directly against the insurer or another person who is provided financial guarantee due to the responsibility of the registered owner regarding the damage caused by oil pollution. This convention has assigned the right to file a lawsuit locally to the law of the seat of the court. Clause E of Article 2 of the 2001 plan of the International Law Commission regarding the prevention of transboundary damage caused by acts that are not prohibited in international law, the victim is any real or legal person who has suffered a loss as a result of the incident. According to this definition, the scope of inclusion is very general. With the occurrence of oil incidents in the seas, including the open sea, many people claim damages. This has caused them to be categorized so that they can file a lawsuit collectively. For example, in the Exxon Valdez case, more than 30,000 people, from fishermen to indigenous people, landowners, and owners of restaurants, and entertainment venues, filed a lawsuit.¹ In another incident called

1. All the people who filed a lawsuit following the Exxon Valdez incident are: 1- the US government; 2- the state of Alaska; 3- the trade union (10,000 fishermen); 4- Alaska natives (4 companies with 3,455 natives); 5- the present Fishery industry (35 companies); 6- Fishery industry workers (5000 people); 7- Regional businessmen (200 people); 8- Landowners (10 people including Sarhpostan

Amoco Cadiz, outside the coast of Brittany, the executive departments of France in Cote du Nord and Finistere and some parts of municipalities, and several French citizens filed a lawsuit against Amoco and its American parent company. It should be noted that the persons who are considered trustees for the protection of natural resources according to the domestic laws of any country may have the right to file a lawsuit. In many legal systems, the public trustee refers to various persons who have legal personality, and in this way, the way to receive compensation from the cost of environmental measures is opened for this category of persons (Wetterstein, 1997: 30-50). For example, per Part 1 of Section B, Section 1006 of the US Oil Pollution Plan, OPA90, in the event of oil pollution and damage to natural resources, the president of an Indian tribe or a foreign government can file a lawsuit on behalf of the public as a guardian to receive compensation. In other legal systems, public officials can be considered to have similar rights. In Iran, due to the approval of new laws, regulations in this field have been approved, including Article 66 of the Criminal Procedure Law approved in 2013, which generally stipulates "Non-governmental organizations whose statutes are in the field of child protection, adolescents, women, persons who are sick or have physical or mental disabilities, environment, natural resources, cultural heritage, public health, and protection of citizen's rights, can file a lawsuit against the crimes committed in the above fields and participate in all stages of the proceedings." Therefore, according to the formation of non-governmental organizations in the field of environment and natural resources, whose philosophy of formation is the protection of the environment, the right to file a criminal lawsuit, like other countries, has been recognized in the laws of Iran. Therefore, according to these provisions, it can be said that the government or any natural or legal person who suffers financial or economic loss or loss caused by the costs of compensatory measures has the right to file a lawsuit against the cause of the loss. Since these claims are filed in domestic courts, the direct beneficiary will be determined by domestic law criteria.

4-2. Jurisdiction

Another issue that exists in filing civil liability lawsuits due to oil

company) 9- Environmental organizations as public guardians (National Wildlife Federation, Alaska Wildlife Federation and National Resources Defense Council); 10- Seattle Seven group (consisting of several private companies related to the fishing industry); and some other group lawsuits.

pollution is the lack of consensus between governments in choosing a competent court to file a lawsuit, which can be a big obstacle to proper and effective immediate judicial proceedings and providing solutions to the victims of accidents caused by oil pollution. (Cuperus & Boyle, 2000:264) This is particularly evident in the case of victims who do not have the necessary knowledge and do not use expert consultants in this field. For this purpose, governments can help resolve these issues by harmonizing laws and agreeing to access courts. In many conventions, including the conventions of civil liability caused by oil pollution damage, regulations have been established regarding the jurisdiction, which has solved the problem of the competent court to a large extent. For example, Article 9 of the 1969 Civil Liability Convention and Article 9 of the 2001 BUNKER Convention stipulate that in the event of an accident in the territorial sea of the member states or the exclusive economic zone, the victims can file a lawsuit against the owner of the polluting ship in any of the courts of the member states. As a result, choosing a competent court to handle the lawsuit has been resolved to a large extent. In the case of a country that is not a member of the convention, according to the principle accepted in private international law, the victims can file a lawsuit in one of the courts where the harmful act took place. It is also necessary to mention that according to Article 8 of the Civil Liability Convention, the rights related to the compensation of damages according to this Convention will be forfeited if a lawsuit is not filed within 3 years from the date of the damage. However, in no case can a lawsuit be filed after 6 years from the date of the incident that caused the damage. In case this incident consists of a series of incidents, the period of 6 years will start from the date of the first incident. However, the nature of environmental pollution incidents is such that the emergence of some of its effects, especially the effect of oil pollution on marine organisms such as corals, may take years so due to the time provided in the liability convention, it is no longer possible to file a lawsuit to compensate them. (Krishna Kiran, 2010) The important point in this context is that if the rules of civil liability are not applicable for any reason, especially when an accident caused by oil pollution occurs in the open sea, the issue is ambiguous and should be clarified according to the judicial practice of this issue. The fundamental principle of compensating the victims requires that they file a lawsuit in a country where they can receive compensation. Of course, the injured parties can file a lawsuit wherever they want, but it is the court that evaluates its jurisdiction

and deems itself competent or rejects its jurisdiction. In this case, the principle that comes to the defendant's aid is referred to as the "improper court". Based on this principle, to choose the most appropriate court for the petitioner and other possible cases of abuse in the court selection process, the petitioner cannot impose additional difficulties and costs on the respondent by choosing an inappropriate court, either in terms of location, cost, etc (Eskenazi, 1998: 381). But in practice, it is not easy to apply the principle of improper court, as oil tankers are usually owned or leased by large oil companies, which themselves have many subsidiaries. The head office of the ship owner or broker is the first option for determining the competent court. It is based on an accepted principle in private international law that a defendant in a state must be summoned to court where they reside.¹ This principle is accepted in various conventions and maritime laws of most countries (Van Bar, 1997: 336). In Iran, according to domestic regulations, including the civil procedure law, the competent court for filing a lawsuit is the court of the defendant's residence. The 1968 Brussels Convention on Jurisdiction and Enforcement of Judgments on Civil and Commercial Matters has placed the determination of residence on the conflict resolution law of the government of the court in which the petitioner filed a lawsuit (Van Bar, 1997: 336). According to this convention, judicial remedies are only within the jurisdiction of the court of the state where": 1) the harmful act or omission has taken place, 2) the damage has been inflicted, and 3) the residence of the agent or the normal residence of the agent is located, or the principal place of business of the broker is located there".

In the case of the existing legal procedure regarding damage caused by oil pollution, the jurisdiction of the court of the state of the owner or the main center of the ship owner's company is considered the competent court. This issue was raised in the case of Amoco Cadiz, as the said ship was under the ownership of Amoco Cadiz and this company was one of the subsidiaries of the American company Amoco.² The latter company was also one of the subsidiaries of Indiana Company.³ In addition, at the time of the accident, this company was under lease from Shell Oil Company, which it had at that time to transport its cargo. However, in terms of capital and financial control, it was under the control of the Indiana Oil Company. Since the main center of the latter company (Indiana)

1. actor sequitur forum rei

2. Amoco Company of Chicago

3. Standard Oil of Indiana

was considered to be the United States, the victims filed a lawsuit in the American courts, and the court also accepted its jurisdiction to file a lawsuit.

4-3. The Applicable Laws

Regarding the choice of law, there is no uniform procedure among the governments. Various courts consider either the law cited by the petitioner or the local law with which the incident and the parties have the most important relationship. But what is certain is that it will be appropriate to establish jurisdiction by the judge's court at the beginning. The judicial procedure in this field shows that if there is a relationship between the injured party and one government, the law of that country will govern the matter. For example, when an incident happens in the open sea and pollution reaches the coast of a country, it is reasonable to consider the law of the coastal country that is polluted. In fact, by complying with this, the law of the place of occurrence of the loss will govern the matter. In the Amoco Cadiz case, since the plaintiffs of Amoco and Standard Oil were both Americans and the United States, on the other hand, had not joined the Civil Liability Convention of 1969, the judge refused to implement it and considered the American law to be competent. However, the judge stated at the same time that the arrangements related to the compensation of damages in the present lawsuits are the same according to the law of France and the United States, and any of these laws can be applied (Eskenazi, 1998: 382). Now the question is, in the absence of the above-mentioned connection, which law will govern the dispute? It seems that in this case, the ruling of the law of the place of occurrence of the damage or harmful act will lose its effectiveness and we will have to apply the law of the seat of the court as the local law. The existing jurisprudence in Torre Canyon, Amoco Cadiz, and Exxon Valdez all considered the law of the seat of the court to be the governing law of the matter. Where damage has been caused in the open sea, such as pollution of fishing nets by oil, most judges and countries of the world decided to give priority to their national law. In the Amoco Cadiz lawsuit filed in Illinois and New York, the French plaintiffs asserted that US law prevailed. This choice of valid law was argued with the criterion of "the most significant relationship" with the accident. According to them, since the punishable behavior of Standard Oil and the American Oil Company is exclusively and completely concentrated in the United States especially in Chicago, as a result, the law of that country should be applied. For this reason, the place of the incident is only a

completely random place, and the application of the rule of the place of occurrence of damage to choose the law governing the subject plays no role in this respect (Wu, 1996: 43). Against this argument, the lawyers of Amoco confirmed that in many cases the American law prevails and argued that since the coast of France is polluted and France is a member of the 1969 civil liability convention and that convention also governs the matter, this convention and the law of France determine whether French claimants can file a lawsuit against said company or not. But in the end, the judge of the court argued and relied on the fact that it was the responsibility of the court to determine the law governing the matter. He also said that since the United States was not a party to the 1969 Convention, the Convention is not applicable. He also considered it appropriate to apply the law of the United States due to the similarity of French law to the United States in the field of negligence and compensation (Bartlett, 1985: 7). It seems that the application of the United States law does not need such an argument.

Conclusion

Compensation for damages caused by oil pollution requires filing lawsuits so that the responsible parties can compensate for the losses based on that. The damage caused to the victims of pollution in catastrophic cases is not fully compensated and the responsible parties feel that the financial burdens on them are very heavy. On the other hand, although the legal regime is widely accepted, the United States has turned away from it and has not joined it. Therefore, in the lawsuits caused by oil pollution, it is observed that the judgment for full compensation is not made, and the demands and expectations of the lawsuit from the parties remain sterile. The author believes that the improvement of the legal regime should be compatible with its trends. In general, the oil pollution liability and compensation regime has moved towards better protection of the marine environment and for the benefit of oil pollution victims, behind which is a gradual increase in environmental awareness and protection. Every drop of oil that enters the sea is the main loss of the public and national interests. As in domestic law, damage to the environment is considered to be damage to national interests, governments allow public governmental and non-governmental organizations to file lawsuits. According to the law of Iran, the Ports and Maritime Organization, the Environmental Protection Organization, and the Iranian Fisheries Organization are considered to be Iran's representatives in the lawsuit for damages caused by the

oil pollution of ships for claiming damages. Also, in the United States of America, Congress has allowed the president or authorized representative of the government or indigenous tribes to file a lawsuit on behalf of the nation for compensation for oil pollution. These cases show that there is a process in domestic law according to which it is possible to claim and compensate damages in these cases through the public guardian. There is no doubt that governments have refused to bear the burden of responsibility in the beginning, and this led to the creation of conventions of civil liability caused by oil pollution damages, according to which private individuals bear the burden of responsibility. But over many years and the occurrence of large-scale accidents caused by oil pollution such as Amoco Cadiz, Exxon Valdez, and Erica, these shortcomings have been revealed. The acceptance of the governments in these years (14 member states of the 1969 civil liability convention compared to 101 states until 2010) indicates the satisfaction of the governments and the effectiveness of the civil liability regime. As a result, it is important to create a system based on which the responsible person and the extent of their responsibility can be determined and ensure that the damages are fully compensated. We are seeing more complete laws in the United States that deserve to be emulated. There is a prospect that these efforts will one day make the damages to the environment compensable (through NRD), and both at the global and domestic levels, laws will be established to file lawsuits and claim such damages.

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The Role of Qassem Soleimani's School in the National Identity of the Islamic Republic of Iran

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Abstract

National identity is the highest level of collective identity in a society, and a sense of adherence, attachment, and commitment to the national community is considered a part of collective identity. Since national identity plays a crucial role in national unity and political legitimacy, it is very important to address this issue. As a prominent resistance figure and symbol of Iranian Islamic identity and counterterrorism, Qassem Soleimani founded a new school of national solidarity, promoted Shiite identity, mobilized resources, and became the basis for the reproduction of national identity in Iran. Therefore, the purpose of the current research was to explain the role of Qassem Soleimani's performance in the reproduction of the national identity of the Islamic Republic and to answer the question of what role Qassem Soleimani's performance had in the reproduction of the national identity in political, religious, and territorial dimensions. The current research method is fundamental in terms of purpose and descriptive-analytical in terms of data collection. The results of the present study indicated that Qassem Soleimani, by creating a new school of thought, by hegemonizing the discourse of resistance and Shiite religion, activating the protest of Muslims, and creating a cultural heartland among Shiites as a campaign strategy, caused the reproduction of national identity in the Islamic Republic.

Keywords: National Identity, Qassem Soleimani School, Resistance Identity, Shiite's political identity, Cultural Heartland.

E-ISSN: 2717-3542 / Center for Strategic Research / Biannual of Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs

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 10.22034/IRFA.2023.420971.1217

Introduction

The concept of identity is important in two ways. First, identities express the individual's or group's perception of themselves and how they communicate with others. Second, identities are formed due to specific socio-political conditions and have a strong social aspect. National identity is a result of a country's culture, politics, society, economy, and history, and it is important and necessary to address it. It is as if a nation is consciously accountable for the past, present, and future. In national identity studies, two cultural (culture-oriented) and political (government-oriented) attitudes have been used. The first one looks at cultural variables (such as language, religion, literature, beliefs, etc.) that are the product of a long time period (history). However, the second one provides the basis for entering political variables. In the second view that this article follows, national identity is something that is constructed.

Bashirieh (2003), in an article entitled "Evolution of self-awareness and political identities in Iran," proclaims that the ideology of the Islamic revolution presented a set of new identities and self-awareness, which resulted in concepts such as the Islamic Ummah, the unity of the Ummah, and the Islamic world against the west overcoming all political relations. Tajik (2005) also concluded in an article entitled "Modern Man and the Mystery of Identity" that in the process of the Islamic Revolution, a system of knowledge and the organization of religious discourse were formed, which is rooted in the ancient tradition of Islam and is an ideology that guides action and is liberating. Accordingly, the essence of identity in the discourse of the Islamic Republic is basically related to the structure of political power.

If we consider the national identity based on the formation of the political organization or government, then the most important feature of the national identity in the political aspect would be unity in the political organization, trust and loyalty to the political institutions, and the legitimacy of the political system, which will be able to rebuild itself in different situations. The reconstruction of the transcendent self and Iranian-Islamic identity can be clearly seen in Qasim's personality dimensions. Qassem Soleimani was a great military figure in Iran who integrated the Shiite identity and the identity of the resistance into a global brand in such a way that the followers of his school saw their transcendental identity in him.

Afazkanjin (2022), in a book entitled "The Myth of Haj Qasim and the Reconstruction of the National Identity of Iranians," considers Qasim Soleimani as a myth whose efforts have a deep

connection with the identification of people in Iran. Bagheri (2023), in a book titled "The Architect of the Holy Shrine," tried to portray the spiritual lifestyle of Qassem Soleimani. In his book, he has given real stories told by Qassem Soleimani's friends and comrades. The writing of this book can be an onset for the formation of the headquarters for the development and reconstruction of holy shrines, in which the role of Qassem Soleimani is described. Furthermore, Mazdabadi (2013) has compiled firsthand accounts from acquaintances, colleagues, and family members of Qassem Soleimani in a volume entitled "Born in March," utilizing interview-based methodology. These recollections encapsulate significant moments spanning from shifts in Syria and Iraq to the period leading up to Soleimani's martyrdom, shedding light on his demeanor and emotional disposition.

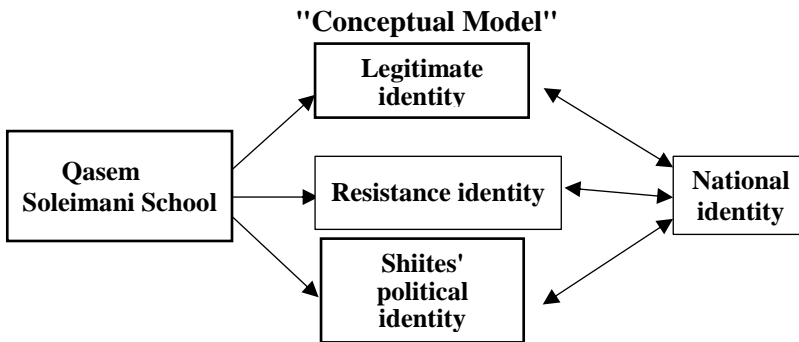
Since the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the concept of identity, especially in its religious dimension, has been redefined in a trans-territorial way; therefore, any solidarity and unity among Muslims is centered on the term "Islamic Nation." In this regard, the Soleimani School played an important role in reproducing the concept of religious identity and solidarity among Shias in an extraterritorial form due to its spiritualism and centrality.

Qassem Soleimani, by shaping the axis of resistance against western countries and their allies, as well as activating the protest capacities of Muslims and especially Shiites, caused the formation of the Shiite cultural heartland in the world. He challenged the West both spiritually (finding new identity meaning) and materially (the interests of the Middle East region and the world). Based on this, the aim of the article is to explain the role of the Qassem Soleimani School in the reproduction of national identity in Iran. In pursuit of this objective, the descriptive-analytical approach was employed to address the inquiry regarding the role of the Qassem Soleimani School in the perpetuation of the national identity of the Islamic Republic.

1. Research Methodology

The present study adopts a pragmatic methodology to achieve its objectives, employing a descriptive-analytical approach for data gathering. Its primary aim is to illuminate and delineate the role of the Qassem Soleimani School in shaping the national identity of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Secondary objectives include examining the school's role in legitimizing identity, its contribution to the identity of resistance, and its influence on the identity of Shiite

Islam. The core research hypothesis posits that the Qasem Soleimani School facilitates the reproduction of national identity within the Islamic Republic. The study further posits several sub-hypotheses regarding the school's role. Firstly, it suggests that the school strengthens the legitimizing identity of the Islamic Republic. Secondly, it proposes that the school contributes to the reproduction of the identity of resistance by mobilizing Muslim protests and fostering cultural cohesion among Shiite communities. Lastly, the study suggests that the Qasem Soleimani School strategically revitalizes the identity of Shia Islam, thus playing a crucial role in reproducing Shia political identity within the Islamic Republic. The research conceptual model is outlined as follows:



2. Conceptual Framework

2-1. National Identity

The national identity of people is a combination of their material and spiritual awareness (class, historical, religious, etc.) and their affiliations (class, historical, economic, etc.). According to the content of information and belongings, a person's response to who and what I am and which society belongs to is defined in the framework of the production method and the dominant culture of each period. According to this, by changing the content of awareness or belongings, changing the material conditions of life, changing awareness, or changing the social composition of society, the sense of identity of the individual in relation to the community undergoes transformation (Ameli, 2013: 52).

2-2. Resistance Identity

Activists, stigmatized and deemed worthless by the logic of domination induced by disregarded individuals, created this

identity. This type of identity, founded on two mechanisms, the procedure of "differentiated logic" and "inverted valuation," succeeded in confronting the prevailing values and projecting its own values and norms (Heuge, 2001:33).

2-3. Qassem Soleimani School

A school is said to be a set of worldviews, ideologies, and coherent and aligned theories that clarify the intellectual needs of humans in the course of happiness attainment. The school presents a comprehensible plan for the lifestyle in which the responsibilities and duties to touch perfection are defined with a focus on material and spiritual values. Accordingly, Qassem Soleimani's collection of thoughts and intellectual, ideological, and political systems is called the Soleimani School. This is due to the mainstream and the lessons that can be transferred to the next generation.

2-4. Shiite Political Identity

Shiite identity is a mixture of religious beliefs, political experience, extensive cultural heritage, and collective protest. Unlike Sunni Islamism, from the beginning, Shiite Islamism with a Shiite identity enjoyed authentic clerical leadership. It is a natural consequence of the outstanding role that scholars have played in guiding society. In addition to internal features, external pressure from the surrounding environment influences the Shiite identity. Except for short periods, most of the time, Shiites endured various degrees of exclusion, discrimination, or persecution. They criticized the three areas of theology, politics, and (in the new era) loyalty to the government (Fuller et al., 2009: 23).

2-5. Cultural Heartland:

In his theory, Mackinder called all lands of the world, including the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe, global islands and determined a central axis for this island called the Heartland, or the heart of the world. Based on his theory, he emphasized that whoever can control the heartland can control the global island, and whoever controls the global island will certainly control the whole world. The axis that Mackinder defined as the heartland included vast areas of Central Asia, the Caucasus, and parts of Eastern Europe (Dezhpasand et al., 2014).

3. Findings

3-1. The Legitimization of Identity and Qassem Soleimani's School

According to Castells, identity is the source of meaning and experience for people. He considered identity to be a meaning-making process based on a cultural characteristic with an interconnected set of cultural characteristics that have priority over other sources of meaning, introducing three types of identity, including "legitimizing identity," "resistance identity," and "planned identity" (Amir et al., 2015).

Belonging to a political unit as a national element requires belonging to the government, the political system, and the values that give legitimacy to the government in the national identity (Sani Ajlal, 2004:110). It will be a determinant factor in strengthening solidarity and the national bond (Riggins, 2017: 286).

The essence of Iran's Islamic revolution formed based on the Islamic teachings; this issue indicates the Universality of this policy-making in the foreign aspect. Relying on principles such as the rejection of seeking domination and rejecting domination over the country's natural and economic resources, defending the rights of the oppressed, adhering to international obligations and creating a peaceful relationship based on interaction and cooperation are among the principles involved in the constitutional law that govern the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Constitutional Law, Article 11, 152 and 153).

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Since the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the concept of identity in its religious dimension has been redefined in an extra-territorial way, so any solidarity and unity centered on the word "Islamic nation". Based on this, Qasim Soleimani's school played an important role in reproducing the concept of religious identity and solidarity among Shiites in an extra-territorial way by emphasizing

religious values and fighting against the domination system by referring to the text of the people.

In Iran and even other countries, Soleimani believed that referring to the context of the people was the straightest and least expensive way to solve problems; moreover, at the regional level, he saw the solution to complex issues in referring to the people and consulting and helping them. Based on this, in the face of the most challenging security crises, instead of relying only on official institutions, he led the people, changing them into a strong fortress against the enemy's attack.

In negotiations with different authorities in the West Asia region, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Azerbaijan, Soleimani announced cooperation with the resistance forces for their benefit. Also, in negotiations with the Afghan authorities, he succeeds in turning "Fatemiyoun" into a determinant guarantor of Afghanistan's security against terrorism and separatist groups. As a part of the Afghan security system and in negotiations with the Pakistani authorities, he made "Zeinabiyoun" an honorable force for the Pakistani authorities, encouraging the government to help them (Jahanbani & Levy, 2023).

Even through comprehensive negotiations, he convinced the Iraqi authorities to accept "Hashd al-Shaabi" as an important factor of the military-security structure and thus make it permanent. Before this, his efforts improved the political position of Hezbollah in the organization and society of Lebanon. Moreover, with the help of Soleimani, the Palestinian popular groups, including Hamas, Jihad, and the Palestinian Brigades, became the Palestinian security, military, and political power. (Mousavi, 2018:94)

By shaping the axis of resistance against western countries and their allies, as well as activating the protest capacities of Muslims, especially Shiites, Soleimani levered the formation of a cultural heartland among the Shiites of the world, which in terms of identity caused their cultural cohesion to support Islamic movements and the intifada of the Palestinian people. By uniting the resistance forces through his continuous presence and establishing Basiji culture and jihadi management among the commanders, on the one hand, he caused greater unity and cohesion and, on the other hand, strengthened the legitimizing identity among his forces (Rad, 2018).

Qassem Soleimani's Personality, Ideological, and Managerial	Social Relations	Serving the people, taking care of orphans, respecting parents, appreciating family and friends, emphasizing the foundation of the
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Characteristics		family, helping cultural affairs, seeking justice, seeking to respect and restore the rights of the people, seeking justice.
	Personal Characteristics	Seeking assistance from Imam al-Mahdi (A.S.), turning to the Qur'an for guidance, exhibiting love for Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.) and martyrdom, maintaining a steadfast focus on the anticipation of Imam al-Mahdi's emergence, acknowledging spiritual blessings, particularly through love for Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.) and expressions of gratitude, contemplating death and the afterlife, recognizing God as an ever-present observer in all circumstances, demonstrating devotion to religious principles, nurturing affection and commitment to spouse and children, displaying perseverance and tolerance, balancing worldly pursuits with spiritual aspirations, acting with wisdom, fostering moral development, entrusting oneself to God's will and finding contentment in His command, embodying a spirit of service and readiness for jihad, and showing profound concern for the welfare of the underprivileged.
	Management Style	Strategic leadership, efficient governance, cooperative administration, behavioral discipline and time management, authoritative guidance, and influencing hearts and minds.

3-2. Reproducing Resistance Identity: The Role of the Qassem Soleimani School

Each nation, besides giving depth and meaning to the history and culture of the people of their country, is known as a symbol of national unity, stability, and resistance against threats and facing adversity and can help the country's unity and integration (Jaafari, 2019). Qassem Soleimani is one of the historical legends of Iran who adopted the strategy of resistance to ensure security in West Asia and to deal with terrorism. He ensured the national security of the region by uniting the countries of the region in the form of an

"axis of resistance."

The theory of resistance was developed within the framework of a monotheistic worldview and conception as a liberating approach in the form of the anti-dominion paradigm. This theory relies on the power of the Islamic Revolution and aims to de-Westernize power relations and international politics. Belief in resistance has led to the formation of resistance clusters and liberation movements. This issue has become more topical in the region of Southwest Asia because, for many years, due to the presence of Zionists and Americans, the geopolitics of the region changed to the geopolitics of resistance (Mousavi, 2018:94).

Qassem Soleimani formed the Resistance Front with forces from Lebanon's Hezbollah and Iraq's Hashd al-Shaabi, mobilizing the people of Syria and uniting them with the defenders of the Iranian shrine against the arrogant offensive measures that created insecurity in the West Asian region by using their infantry, the Takfiri forces of ISIS. He boosted resistance and opposition and prevented the further spread and emergence of ISIS in this region (Jaafari, 2019).

In summary, the objectives of the Qassem Soleimani School, aligned with the discourse of resistance, encompass a range of aims including the liberation of Quds, bolstering the axis of resistance particularly with Syria's involvement, combating Takfiri terrorism, enhancing deterrence capabilities, ensuring national security, boosting diplomatic leverage, and fostering sustainable development (Mousavi, 2018).

Qassem Soleimani, by shaping the axis of resistance against western countries and their allies, as well as activating the protest capacities of Muslims and especially Shiites, caused the formation of the Shiite cultural heartland of the world. This issue has challenged the West both spiritually (finding new identity meaning) and materially (the interests of the Middle East region and the world).

He introduced and represented the discourse of resistance in the world of Islam; therefore, a wider circle of Iranian people could take part in this discourse. Shahreshtani (2021) stated that the discourse of resistance in Iran has various representatives. Unlike the discourse introduced by Qassem Soleimani, the other represented ones attracted and included a minimum number of people. Qassem Soleimani succeeds in presenting the discourse of resistance in such a way that a broader circle of people comes into contact with the resistance.

Qassem Soleimani was involved in the Islamic Republic's most dangerous project, the project of inter-regional and cross-border

military manifestation, and he managed to expose the discourse of resistance identity at the internal and external boundaries. He was able to represent the resistance identity discourse across internal and external borders.

This discourse, known as the centrality of Qassem Soleimani, was a product of cultural, historical, and national identity. At this time, Soleimani communicated with different aspects of Iranian identity. On the one hand, many Iranians saw him as a continuation of the ideals of the Iranian empires, from the Sassanid era to Al-Buya and the Safavids (Ghasemi & Ebrahimabadi, 2011). Soleimani was the one who changed the axis of resistance from a passive stance to an active approach in the region. Also, the discourse of resistance articulated around Soleimani's axis in traditions such as generosity and chivalry, courageousness, astuteness, and kindness is considered the borrower and heir of the cultural and historical descent of Shiism and Islamic tradition (Robati & Bazmandangan, 2022).

These aspects establish a deep connection and unity between different layers of national identity, Shiite identity, Islamic identity, and global identity. The discourse phenomenon created with the centrality of Qassem Soleimani's personality was a sign that ancient, authentic historical and cultural identities can be reproduced in contemporary and later times and maintain their coherence to a large extent against other identities. These features cause this discourse to earn significant potential and actual ability to mobilize the masses and social bonds, and Iran's relationship with its opponents would come out of passivity.

With Western policies aiming to change the geography of the region while ensuring Israel's security, Soleimani's performance in the axis of resistance caused this program to face many problems and obstacles. He stood against Israel in the 51-day war alongside the Sunni Palestinians and in the 33-day war with the Shiite forces of Hezbollah as a representative figure of resistance and a symbol of the contest against terrorism. Also, at the height of the Syrian crisis and on the verge of the fall of Baghdad, he reached this city by passing over ISIS forces and led the anti-terrorist operation until a satisfying result was achieved (Rashidi, 2011:96).

By creating a new school, Soleimani declared the defense of the oppressed beyond territorial concern and purpose. For this purpose, the defense of the oppressed by his school was not limited to supporting the people of Iran; it also developed from Syria to Iraq and Yemen, and even Palestine was also involved in his field of activity. Since Soleimani had a unique genius in military operations,

strategic management, and high organizational ability in many operations in the fight against ISIS, there have been some outstanding successes attained under his leadership. And it was by using this genius that he successfully led strategic and critical battles, so that the last and greatest achievement of General Soleimani in this field was the defeat of the dangerous Takfiri-terrorist project of ISIS. In addition to Iraq and Syria, ISIS planned to capture the entire Shamat region and then other regions of the Middle East and North Africa. By mobilizing the resistance forces in the region, including Hezbollah, Hashd al-Shaabi, local Syrian forces, Fatemiyoun, Heydaryoun, Zainbiyoun, etc., Soleimani was able to create a powerful front against ISIS and finally overthrow the base of this group's vicariate in Raqqa and Mosul (Turabi Qatazi Kalate, 2019: 52).

In this regard, Imam Khamenei, in describing Qassem Soleimani, calls him the martyr of the Islamic nation and acknowledges, "Martyr Soleimani is the international face of the resistance, and all the families of the resistance are seeking retaliation from his enemies" (Khamenei, 2019). However, he also cared about the republican aspects of the Islamic Republic system that make it different from others. In a speech, he stated that the democracy in the country and the all-round independence of the country have made us different from other countries.

Soleimani's performance increased the strategic depth and spiritual influence of Islam across the region. So today we see the cores of resistance spread from the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden to the Mediterranean coast and the Great Wall of China. The description of the "international face of resistance" by the leader of the revolution refers to Soleimani's management and successful performance not only at the regional level but also at the global level (Torabi Kalateh Ghazi, 2019).

One point that we should consider is that the resistance forces originated in various perceptions, cultures, and beliefs; even Sunnis and Christians were also present among them. He organized and managed all of them in one format to achieve a common goal. Soleimani managed them by commanding their hearts. This made him an international figure and an effective leader, to the point that Imam Khamenei believed we should know his performance as a school and an educational source. The Qassem Soleimani school had specific features such as jihadist training and internalization of Islamic values, Islamic civilization, the spirit of resistance, the spread of Shia culture and Basiji culture, populism, and tolerance.

4. Qasem Soleimani School and the Revelation of Shiite Political Identity

If we consider the concept of identity in Iran as a cluster, two types of vertical and horizontal cuts can be made. Vertical cuts include subcultures and small social identities, but horizontal cuts are cultural and identity layers placed on people's identities at every point. In pre-Islamic Iran, the main and outstanding characteristic of people's identity was ancient history and the characteristics of that period (Ahmadi, 2004:197).

At another point, due to the confrontation of Iranian civilization with Muslim Arabs, a new layer with an Islamic and religious approach was added to Iran's identity. Even in the contemporary period, it encountered another layer, which was a western approach. With the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the Islamic layer of identity became more prominent, while religion formed the essential element of the national identity of Iranians.

To put it another way, before the revolution, particularly during the Pahlavi era, a picture of national identity that was essentially the opposite of religious identity and Shiite religion was presented, so that the duality of the West and Iran was actually defined under a type of archaic nationalism in which religious identity was weak. The discourse confrontation that arose between these two domains was established. However, over time, following the success of the Islamic revolution, we achieved a synthesis of the combination between national identity and religious identity, with Qassem Soleimani serving as the symbol of this synthesis (Javadzadeh, 2019).

In fact, his activism and political spirit served to strengthen this synthesis. In other words, Soleimani is the perfect synthesis of these layers of identity, i.e., the national, the Islamic, and even more so, the global. He stood for human activism to realize the purest expression of humanity.

For this reason, in the case of ISIS, he defended and protected other religions, such as Yazidis, Christians, and even seculars. He dealt with a problem that affected all people and preserved layers of national, Islamic, and international identity. Even in the smaller layers of national identity, i.e., at the local level and in his hometown, he maintained constant social influence and activism (Shahreshtani, 2021).

According to Qassem Soleimani, the recognition and revival of the identity of Shia Islam are prerequisites for independence and national power. It is also an obstacle to the expansion and reinforcement of the world's dominance. He felt that Iranian Islamic

identity was threatened by the perversion and transformation induced by some representations of Western modernism. According to him, it is the prominent cause of Western colonial rule over Iran and the Islamic world in general. The issue of reviving the identity of Shia Islam was presented as a kind of campaign strategy to prevent such domination. He believed the unfeigned identity was structured based on Islamic culture and belief, including all Iranian layers.

5. The Qassem Soleimani School and the Preservation of Shiite Islam Identity Centered on Guardianship

National identity is the outcome of a country's culture, politics, society, economy, and history. Regarding national identity studies, two cultural (culture-oriented) and political (state-oriented) attitudes are screened and focused. The first one deals with cultural variables (such as language, religion, literature, beliefs, etc.) that are the product of a long time (history), while the latter provides the basis for entering into political variables (Zahiri, 2014). In the second attitude that the present article follows, national identity is something that is constructed.

Qassem Soleimani, who called himself the Troop Zero of guardianship, revealed in words and deeds that he is wholeheartedly subordinate to the authority of the Islamic Republic (Salajegheh & Afshin, 2022). By hegemonizing the discourse of resistance, he produced and reproduced the political dimension of national identity and presented new and different interpretations of that concept. He played an important role among his supporters, especially the Shiites of the world. He defined a new interpretation of the political Islam identity, which led to the legitimacy and political trust of many towards the ideals of the Islamic Revolution and religious authority.

Guardianship is one of the basic characteristics of Soleimani School. During many years of impeachable service and struggle, his thought and manner point to his obedience to the authority of the Velayat-e-Faqih. His will, which some people interpreted as a "guardianship will," is full of long descriptions of the guardianship and advice to follow him. (Mousavi, 2018)

According to Soleimani, the need for guardianship, the creation of social solidarity and convergence of the masses, and the mobilization of resources are actualized through God's guardianship and protection. Hence, the sense of convergence among people in Islamic society originates from "religious culture" and "divine values." On the other hand, the lack of divine guidance will result in social divergence, a lack of unity, and a waste of social forces and

talents that can be employed in realizing sacred issues. Soleimani was an impeccable and genuine example of the Supreme Leader's description of jihadist military power. He had left his earthly being and surrendered his being to the boundless divine ocean.

Governorship	Adherence to Guardianship	Viewing himself as a member of the Supreme Leader's family, he harbors deep affection for guardianship, maintains unwavering focus on the Twelfth Imam (A.S.), demonstrates wisdom regarding the Wali Faqih, and exhibits kindness towards the populace.
	Governor's Manner	Listening to and executing the directives of the leadership, serving as a soldier of the Twelfth Imam (A.S.), obeying the religious leader, continuing the legacy of guardianship, laying the groundwork for the advent of emergence, supporting and aiding the religious leader who champions the rights of the oppressed, the leadership of Islamic struggle, and fostering Islamic unity and solidarity among Muslims.

5-1. The Approach and Conduct of Qassem Soleimani in Relation to Guardianship

Rituals are considered an inseparable part of the culture of any society, contribute to different views on the universe and way of life, and have a religious origin in religious societies (Mirzadeh, 2017:51). The Ashura movement was a Shia uprising against oppression and injustice, and the basis of the Hosseini movement was Islam and its pure values. What immortalized these rituals in the hearts of the people for years was the blood of the martyrs Ashura and Qassem Soleimani, which is added in continuation of the red blood of the martyrs of Karbala. The Arbaeen procession has become a trans-religious and trans-Islamic gathering, so the number of people participating in this procession from other Islamic religions is increasing every year.

Today, the Arbaeen procession has become a symbol of the power of the Shia religion. It is an event that changes a political context, regardless of the intention of its contributors—a context that allows for multiple interpretations. While the Islamic Republic views this ritual as a symbol of Shia power and identity, Western media and Shia opponents interpret it as a purely religious act apart from socio-political factors, while Takfiri groups see it as a symbol of Shia unity and their attempt to attack it (Mirzadeh, 2018). For

example, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the self-proclaimed caliph of IS, threatened to kill all pilgrims in 2013. In an audio file, he said, "The Arba'in pilgrimage has become a symbol of unity among Shiites, and we must inflict great damage on this unity and sympathy" (Shia News 2014, 1–15).

Qassem Soleimani was an international, cultural, and efficient figure of the Resistance Front, whose school is derived from the School of Ashura. In other words, the Soleimani School's approach to Arbaeen was a form of civilization. Since Arbaeen, in his opinion, was a civilization-building movement between Iran and Iraq, for this purpose he tried to create a sense of brotherhood and unity between the people and officials of Iran and Iraq, so that it was not political and geographical issues but a religious and spiritual brotherhood that would lead them to a global Islamic civilization.

On this basis, one of the important actions of Qassem Soleimani in the process of reproducing Shia identity was the emphasis on the Arbaeen procession, an important part of which was due to the security belt that emerged from Soleimani's activities in collaboration with people like Abu Mahdi. The Arbaeen procession became a symbol of security in West Asia.

This shows that the Arbaeen procession has evolved from a pure mourning version into a socio-political phenomenon. Both the Arbaeen processional tradition and today's believers not only look forward to the Karbala event but also have a political view of it. The Pilgrim of Arbaeen, within the framework of the story, mixes his intellectual horizons with the tradition and values inherent in this ritual, offering a political interpretation according to the current situation. Therefore, 75 percent of Arbaeen pilgrims in 2015 (along with the same currently known believer) defended supportive actions for the Houthis in Yemen, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Hashd al-Shaabi in Iraq (Mirzadeh, 2017).

Conclusion

Qassem Soleimani was a key military figure in Iran who turned the Shiite identity and resistance into a global brand. So that the followers of his school saw their transcendental identity in him. By emphasizing religious values and fighting the ruling system by relying on the popular community, the Qassem Soleimani School was able to play an important role in the extraterritorial reproduction of the concept of Shiite religious identity and solidarity. Both in Iran and in other countries, Soleimani believed that contact with the national community was the shortest and most

promising way to solve problems. Therefore, at the regional level, he saw the solution to important problems in reaching out to the people, advising them, and helping them.

By shaping the axis of resistance against Western countries and their allies, as well as by activating the protest capacities of Muslims, especially Shiites, Soleimani ensured the formation of a cultural heartland among the Shiites of the world, which gave identity to their cultural cohesion in support of Islamic movements and the Intifada of the Palestinian People. By uniting the resistance forces through his continuous presence and establishing Basij culture and jihadi management among the commanders, he ensured greater unity and cohesion on the one hand and strengthened the legitimizing identity of his forces on the other. On this basis, one of the important actions of Qassem Soleimani in the process of reproducing Shia identity was the emphasis on the Arbaeen procession.

Qassem Soleimani viewed the recognition and revival of the identity of Shia Islam as a secret of independence and national power and an obstacle to the expansion of the rule of world powers. He felt threatened by the perversion and transformation of native culture by a particular interpretation of Western modernism and viewed it as the main cause of Western colonial rule over Iran and the Islamic world in general. For this reason, he viewed the issue of reviving the identity of Shia Islam as a kind of campaign strategy to prevent this type of rule. He considered the main identity as the basis of Islamic culture and faith, which includes Iranian layers.

The Soleimani School is a comprehensive moral, intellectual, cognitive, and spiritual model for all free people in the world. Soleimani has undoubtedly entered the Iranian national identity network as a legend. What was buried with him at the farewell ceremony was not a body, but the components of a nation's identity. Many reflected their transcendental identity in the presence of Qassem Soleimani and sought to bow to their collective selves by honoring him. In Soleimani's school, waiting is a strategy of action and jihad; therefore, in the way of waiting reform programs, he fought against oppression, established justice, and spread religious values.

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Sino-US Relations in the Persian Gulf during the Obama's Administration

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Abstract

The Persian Gulf is one of the most important regions of the world and has been vital for the great powers since a long time ago, not only for its energy resources but also for its strategic location. After the British withdrawal from the region in 1971, the United States filled the vacuum and tried to preserve the status quo during the Cold War. Since the 1980s, China has also found attraction in the region's vast energy resources and market. But in the 21st century, with the rise of China as the second-largest economy in the world, the importance of the Persian Gulf has been enhanced in China's view to manage its energy needs and benefit from its lucrative market and possible bilateral capital investment. This article intends to examine the relationships between China and the United States of America during Obama's administration. By using the "Power Cycle Theory," it is concluded that the United States has accepted the Chinese position as the rising power in the Persian Gulf region and that their relationships were based on collaboration and competition, not confrontation or hostility, which seems to continue in the foreseeable future as well.

Keywords: The Persian Gulf, China, The United States, Collaboration, Competition, Confrontation, Hostility.

E-ISSN: 2717-3542 / Center for Strategic Research / Biannual of Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs

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 10.22034/IRFA.2023.382563.1177

Introduction

Despite its aid relationship with Yemen dating back to the 1950s, China has only taken the Persian Gulf seriously in the 1970s. In the first phase of its relations with the littoral states of the region, China appeared to have had contradictory impulses: the desire to establish ties with the existing conservative governments conflicted with the desire to support national liberation movements (Chubin, 1980: 2-3).

The Chinese, however, chose the former path and terminated direct Chinese arms supply Chinese arms supply to the liberation movements in the early 1970s because they thought that identification with opposition groups would seriously harm this effort. Rather than supporting subversive movements, the Chinese tried to develop amicable relationships with sovereign Third World states, whether their regimes were progressive or not. China began to decrease its aid to the PFLOAG (Popular Front for Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf) operating in the Dhofar province of Oman and granted recognition to various sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf region as they achieved independence (Yodfat, 1983: 14-15; Yodfat and Abir, 1977: 4-5). In addition to these and already existing relations with Iraq, the Chinese established diplomatic relations with Iran on August 8, 1971. This announcement came a short while after the conclusion of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation on August 9, 1971. Diplomatic relations were established with Kuwait as well (Yodfat, 1984: 33; Chubin, 1980: 4).

China's decision to establish relations with Iran in particular reflected a basic commitment to give priority to supporting governments, which shared its concern for containing Soviet influence by erecting strong barriers in the form of armed forces and regional security arrangements (the most prominent of which was the withdrawal of support for movements that might create instability in the region and thus be exploited by the USSR; Peking, therefore, terminated its support for the Dhofar movement in Oman in 1972-73). This interest in Iran as a potential barrier against the spread of Soviet influence was demonstrated time and again in 1973. In June 1973, Chinese Foreign Minister Ji Pengfi, on a visit to Tehran, endorsed Iran's arms buildup in light of the "hegemonic" threat in the region and supported the right of the littoral states to cooperate in ensuring security, particularly against subversion assisted by outside powers (Chubin, 1980: 4-5). He also gave assurance that China had no hand in subversive activities in the Persian Gulf and did not support the leftists in the region (Yodfat,

1984: 15). These themes were repeated by Vice Premier Li Xiannian in Tehran in 1975, and later on, Soviet pressure on Iran, criticism of its arms purchase, and Soviet espionage were extensively covered by the Chinese media, which contrasted them with Moscow's claims of "good neighborliness" (Chubin, 1980: 5).

China did not have a broad presence in the region, for it lacked diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia and most of the Arabian Peninsula states. Moreover, China was seen as an atheistic state and not a technologically advanced country. Militarily, China's capabilities were not outstanding, and therefore it was not considered a provider of security for littoral states (Chubin, 1980: 7).

It is worth mentioning that China offered small amount of aid to certain countries in the Middle East/Persian Gulf region. Between 1954 and 1970 total credits extended by China were just over 300 million US dollars. In addition, China also conducted a small volume of trade with the region involving a total turnover (exports and imports) of 200 million US dollars in 1968 and slightly more in 1969. This did not include oil since China met its very low consumption from its estimated output of 25 million tons a year (500,000 barrels a day). China's main impact however was political rather than economic.

1. Theoretical Base

The power cycle theory tries to show the rise and fall of powers, how dominant powers are substituted by rising ones, and the consequences of such substitutions. The theory was first presented by Charles Doran in the early 1990s. It contains two parts: first, the dynamics of the rise and fall of powers, and second, the effects of it on international relations. He argues that the change in national power of a country follows a systemic pattern of configuration, growth, maturity, rising, and declining (Tesman & Chan, 2004: 131-134). He further explains that;

- A country determines its power through its capabilities.
- The power of a country is relative in comparison to power of other countries.
- The enhancement of the power of a country results in enlarging its role in the international arena.
- When the power of an actor exceeds the power of the dominant actor, the new power demands an increase in its role in the international scene, which creates a "critical point" in the structure of the international system.

In his view, the most important part of the theory is the critical

point, which brings about a shift of power in the international system. At this turning point, a competition between the hegemon power and the rising power may result in bitter wars. Another possibility is that the power and role of the rising power are accepted by the descending power, and wars will not take place (Doran, 2000).

2. Discussion

After Britain withdrew from the Persian Gulf region in the early 1970s, this region became the focus of American attention for three basic reasons: 1. Competing with the Soviet Union and preventing the influence of communism in the region; 2. Securing access to Persian Gulf energy resources, especially after the Arab oil embargo crisis against Israel's supporters; 3. Securing the security of Israel. At the end of the 1970s, the occurrence of the Islamic Revolution in Iran had wide-ranging effects in the Middle East, and the United States lost its most important ally in the region and saw its interests in serious danger. America's military and political presence in the region increased (Mousavi and Khodaie, 2016: 67).

The most important goals of the United States of America in the Persian Gulf are: access to oil and gas resources; preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction; keeping terrorism under control; and preventing the formation of a regional and extra-regional power (Dahshiri, 2004: 115).

By the end of 2011, all major US military units had left Iraq for a number of reasons, including reducing the economic costs of the war. The proposal for military withdrawal from Iraq was made by Obama as the major policy of his government in 2008 under the title "Pivot to Asia." In fact, it has been taken into consideration during the ten years of the fight against terrorism. The rise of China's power, India's global ambitions, the failure to resolve the differences between North Korea and South Korea, and the need to reassure historical strategic allies such as Japan and Australia, caused Washington to move towards the Pacific Ocean since 2011 (Mohammadzadeh et al., 2016: 81-96).

However, the United States still maintained a military presence in the Persian Gulf, which can be cited for reasons such as allies, curbing the threat of hostile governments, maintaining the security of the Strait of Hormuz, and fighting against terrorism and extremism (Mirzaei and Bozorgmehri, 2017: 2007-16).

China is the most important rising power in the world. The military spending of major powers since 2007 shows that during

2007-16, China's spending has increased by more than 100 percent, at the top of all other major powers. China's progress and technical capabilities are remarkable, from "ultra-long-range conventional ballistic missiles to fifth-generation fighter jets" and naval forces. China has a clear strategic aim: to push the US military power as far away from its shores as possible in the event of a conflict. This explains why China focuses on long-range air and maritime systems that threaten the US Navy carriers maintaining the security of groups. Thus, a turning point is reached where it is China and no longer Russia that is a menace to the US military power, which will make it the "peer competitor" for the United States (Marcus, 2018).

China's Military Budget 2000–2017, US\$(billion)

2000	43.261	2006	92.652	2012	162.382
2001	52.216	2007	103.67	2013	185.152
2002	60.682	2008	113.542	2014	200.915
2003	65.543	2009	137.512	2015	214.093
2004	72.467	2010	144.499	2016	215.178
2005	80.197	2011	158.009	2017	228.000

Source: (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Military Expenditure)

On the other hand, China's gross domestic product (GDP) has shown constant growth since the 1990s, to the extent that it is now the second-biggest economy in the world.

1990	36.855	2010	6.101
1995	734.548	2015	11.065
2000	1.211	2016	11.199
2005	2.286	2017	12.238

Source: (World Bank Group, 2017)

It is obvious that such an economy consumes huge amounts of energy, most of which is imported from foreign sources.

China's Oil Consumption from 2007 to 2017 (Million Barrels per Day)

2007	7.808	2012	10.230	2017	12.799
2008	7.941	2013	10.734		
2009	8.278	2014	11.209		
2010	9.436	2015	11.986		
2011	9.796	2016	12.302		

Source: (BP Statistical Review of World Energy, 2017: 15)

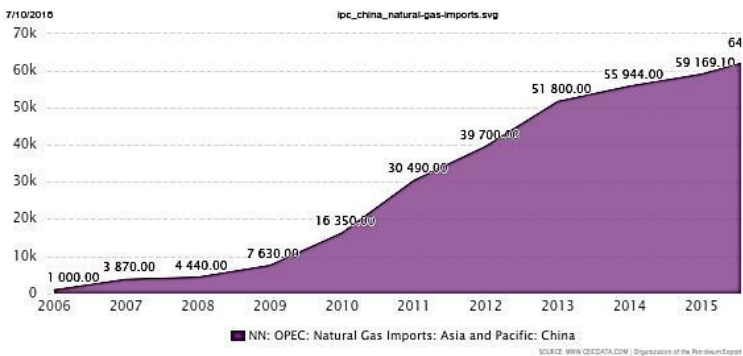
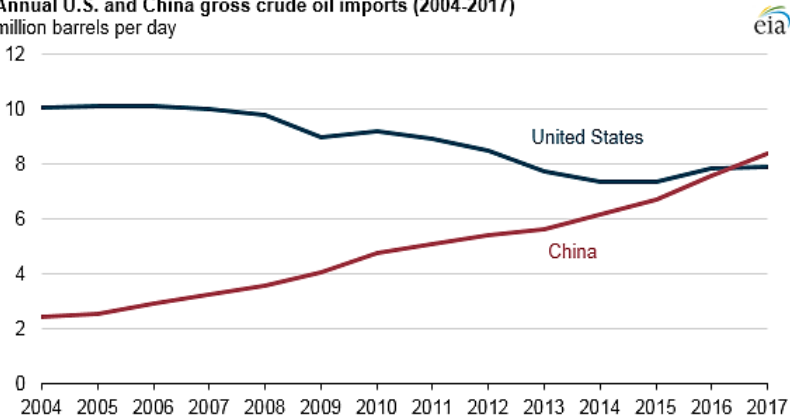
China's Natural Gas Consumption from 2007 to 2017
(Billion Cubic Meters)

2007	71.1	2011	135.2	2015	197.7
2008	81.9	2012	150.9	2016	209.4
2009	90.2	2013	171.9	2017	240.4
2010	108.9	2014	188.4		

Source: (BP Statistical Review of World Energy, 2017: 29)

According to the 2017 US Energy Information Administration (EIA) report, the China's oil import exceeded that of America by 2016 (more than eight million b/d), and the main source of this import is the Persian Gulf.

Annual U.S. and China gross crude oil imports (2004-2017)
million barrels per day



Moreover, it is estimated that China accounted for 37 percent of the world's increase in gas consumption during 2017–2023 above all other countries. In 2019, China was the largest natural gas importer in the world and will import 171 billion cubic meters of natural gas

by 2023(IEA, 2018).

What could be the consequences of China's demand for energy on the one hand, its increasing capital investment in the energy sector of the region (and vice versa), and its extensive and growing relations with the states of the Persian Gulf region on the other?

Before answering these important questions, let us look at the three crucial issues in US-China relations and the behavior of the two actors. First is China's growing military buildup in the South China Sea; second is the so-called trade war between China and the United States; and third is China's role in negotiations between North Korea and the United States to ease tensions in the Korean Peninsula.

2-1. Military Build-up in the South China Sea

First, China has long been constructing seven man-made islands in the South China Sea for military use, and on May 19, 2018, the first Chinese long-range bomber (H-6K) landed on an airport there. The move certainly created more concern about the Chinese intentions over the disputed islands there, which are crucial for global commerce and rich in fish and potential oil and gas reserves. Adm. Phil Davidson, then head of the Pacific Command said, "China has reached the tipping point in its control over the South China Sea." He also wrote in a testimony to the Congress that "China's South China Sea bases can be used to challenge the US presence in the region" (CBC, May 9, 2018). Moreover, China's first aircraft carrier was launched at the Dalian shipyard on April 26, 2017 (Marcus, 2018). The Chinese state media said that the country needed at least six more carriers. Military experts believed that developing such a force could eventually erode US military prominence in the region (CNBC, May 12, 2018).

2-2. The Trade War

Second is the trade war between the two countries, in which the United States was demanding a trade balance with China, threatening a \$50 billion tariff on Chinese exports to the United States. China, in turn, pledged a retaliatory tariff on US exports. Although it was said that China agreed to buy \$200 billion in American goods, the Chinese foreign ministry denied that such an offer had been made (Liptak & Shane, 2018). What is important is that, after months of tension, they agreed not to impose tariffs on each other after reaching an initial agreement on trade (Horwitz, 2018). Although they were said to impose sanctions on each other's

exports in late June of that year, one must take into consideration the amount of bilateral trade and foreign direct investment (FDI) between the two states. The US exports to China were \$115,873.4 million, \$115,545.5 million, and \$129,893.6 million in 2015, 2016, and 2017, respectively. During the same period (2015–2017) China's exports were \$483,201.7 million, \$462,542.0 million, and \$505,470.0 million, respectively (Trade in Goods with China, Census.gov). Regarding FDI, according to the Statistics Portal, US FDI in China was \$73.66 billion, \$84.53 billion, and \$92.48 billion in 2014, 2015, and 2016, respectively (statista.com/188629/). During the same period (2014–2016) China's FDI in the United States was \$10.07 billion, \$16.77 billion, and \$27.48 billion, respectively (statista.com/188935/). Thus, one can come to the conclusion that the US and Chinese economies are so interwoven that any loss for one would certainly mean the same for the other

2-3. Co-operation on North Korean crisis:

And third is China's vital role in persuading North Korea to start negotiations with South Korea and the United States to resolve the crisis. China seems to have gone much beyond United Nations sanctions on North Korea by reducing its total imports in the first two months of 2018 by 78.5 percent and 86 percent in value, respectively, which began in late 2017. At the same time, Chinese exports to North Korea also fell to 33 percent and 34 percent, respectively, in the same two months. We have to keep in mind that almost 80 percent of the total North Korean trade is with China. Therefore, trade with China is absolutely crucial to its survival (Talmadge, 2018).

The export reduction included coal, steel, motor vehicles, and oil products. Especially important is the level of reduction in oil product exports which went far beyond the 89 percent decrease stipulated by UN sanctions (Kynge, 2018). Thus, it is obvious that China has been doing more than ever regarding sanctions, which should not be ignored or neglected, in bringing North Korea to the negotiating table.

Despite their strategic differences and disputes over China's military activities in the South China Sea and the so-called trade war, if the United States and China could cooperate on the Korean Peninsula crisis, there is no reason they could not reach a similar agreement regarding the most strategic region of the world, namely the Persian Gulf.

2-4. Energy Demands in a Rapidly Growing Economy

First, considering that the Chinese economy is the second biggest and fastest growing economy in the world, it was estimated that by 2020 its GDP will surpass that of the United States. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Standard Chartered assessed that China's GDP would hit \$24.6 trillion in 2020, up from \$5.7 trillion in 2010, while that of the United States would be \$23.3 trillion, up from \$14.6 trillion in 2010 (Rapoza, 2011). Later, it was even assessed that the Chinese economy might overtake the US economy in 2018. In 2015, the US GDP was 16.7% of the world economy. By 2025, it was expected to fall to 14.9 percent. While the GDP of China was 15.6 percent in 2015, it was expected to rise to 17.2 percent in 2025 (Patton, 2016). It was obvious that such an economy has an ever-growing demand for energy, for which the most probable source is the Persian Gulf energy resources.

The Persian Gulf Oil Reserves in 2017 (Billion Barrels)

Saudi Arabia	266.2	Iran	157.2	Iraq	148.8	Kuwait	101.5
U.A.E	97.8	Qatar	25.2	Oman	5.4	Bahrain	00.00
Persian Gulf Total: 802.1				World Total: 1696.6			

Source: (BP Statistical Review of World Energy, 2017: 12)

The Persian Gulf Gas Reserves in 2017 (Trillion Cubic Meters)

Iran	33.2	Qatar	157.2	Saudi Arabia	8.0	U.A.E.	5.9
Iraq	3.5	Kuwait	1.7	Oman	0.7	Bahrain	0.2
Persian Gulf Total: 78.1				World Total: 193.5			

Source: (BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2017: 26)

Although China was trying to diversify its sources to decrease its dependence on the region's resources, in the foreseeable future it would depend on the resources of the Persian Gulf. The International Energy Agency projected that China's oil imports from the Middle East would rise from \$2.9 million barrels per day (b/d) in 2011 to \$6.7 million b/d or 54 percent of total oil imports, in 2035 (Downs, 2013). Out of 89.2 percent of crude oil exported into China in 2017, 42.8 percent (nearly half) was exported from the Persian Gulf countries. Saudi Arabia exported \$20.5 billion (12.6 percent), Iraq \$13.8 billion (8.5 percent), Oman \$12.2 billion (7.5 percent), Iran \$11.9 billion (7.3 percent), Kuwait \$7.1 billion (4.4 percent), and the U.A.E. \$4.1 billion (2.5 percent) (Workman, 2018).

2-5. Trade and investment incentives

Second, we have to remember that the states of the region are developing and wealthy, having very lucrative markets for Chinese goods and services. Bilateral investments with the states of the region in the oil and gas sectors are also attractive to any country, including China. China was the leading investor in the Arab world region in 2016 with an investment worth of \$29.5 billion and held 31.9 percent of FDI in the region. According to the Investment Climate Report in 2017, the Middle East attracted \$92 billion worth of investment, of which nearly one-third came from China (Middle East Monitor, July 24, 2017). In 2012, trade between Iran and China was \$37 billion and \$155 billion with the GCC states of the Persian Gulf. GCC trade with China was expected to rise to \$350 billion in the next decade (Karasik, 2016). In March 2017, a \$65 billion deal was signed with Saudi Arabia during a state visit by King Salman to China (Fulton, 2017).

On the other hand, US petroleum imports peaked in 2005 but generally declined until 2015 as a result of increased domestic production of crude oil and hydrocarbon gas liquids, a decline in consumption, and increased use of domestic biofuels. Although petroleum consumption and imports increased from 2015 to 2017, the share of imports from OPEC and the Persian Gulf countries decreased (Oil Export Import, EIA). The US petroleum imports from the Persian Gulf region were 15.9 percent, 17.6 percent, and 17.3 percent of total imports in 2015, 2016, and 2017, respectively (statista.com/191254/). Moreover, the International Energy Agency (IEA) assessed that United States oil imports from the Middle East will decrease from 1.9 million b/d in 2011 to only 0.1 million b/d in 2035 (Downs, 2013). It is clear that the US reliance on Persian Gulf energy resources has declined tremendously when compared to the 1970s.

Regarding US trade relations with the region, according to the Office of the United States Trade Representative, Executive Office of the President, the amount of US goods and services trade with the GCC states in 2016 was as follows: Saudi Arabia: \$45.7 billion; U.A.E.: \$25.8 billion; Kuwait: \$6.6 billion; Qatar: \$6.1 billion; Oman: \$3.7 billion; and Bahrain: \$3 billion (Executive Office of the President).

In 2017, the American goods export to the Persian Gulf states, excluding Iran, were as follows: U.A.E.: \$20.005 billion; Saudi Arabia: \$16.260 billion; Kuwait: \$5.166 billion; Qatar: \$3.118 billion; Oman: \$2.095 billion; Iraq: \$1.197 billion; and Bahrain \$0.970 billion (Trade Outlook, 2017). This is far behind the Chinese trade with the Persian Gulf countries, including Iran.

Although these trends may have raised speculations regarding US military postures in the Persian Gulf, it does not mean at all that the United States would completely disengage from the Persian Gulf. As mentioned earlier, the United States is the preserver of the status quo to ensure the free flow of energy, capital, goods and services to the region, which is crucial to global security and the economy. Thus, even if the economic incentives of the United States were diminishing in the region, which might reduce its military presence in the Persian Gulf region, the ever-growing economic interests of China, especially its appetite for oil, which resembles that of the United States in the last three decades of the twentieth century, compels Beijing to play a larger role in preserving the stability of the region (Johnson, 2015; Downs, 2013). Even Washington has long been persuading China to accept more responsibility when President Barack Obama complained that Beijing has been a "free rider" for decades to benefit enormously from trade and energy deals made possible by the US military presence in the Persian Gulf (Johnson, 2015).

2-6. Enhanced Active Presence

It seems that Beijing was making its way towards the Persian Gulf. Gwadar Port, a deep, warm seaport at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormoz, built with Chinese technical aid and investment of nearly \$46 billion, is a case in point. It is said that Gwadar will become one of the largest transit and transshipment cargo ports in the world (Gul, 2017). It was even reported that Pakistan may allow China to construct a military base in Jiwani near Gwadar Port (The Economic Times, February 9, 2018). Although China lacked formal alliances in the Middle East/Persian Gulf or air and naval bases nearby and was years away from matching the US firepower, it was helping to improve the security conditions in the region. For example, in November 2014, China offered some \$10 million to the United States to aid displaced people in Iraq. Later in December, China offered Iraq military support in the form of air strikes against ISIS (Johnson, 2015).

Even farther from the Persian Gulf, the same understanding prevailed in their relations. China has been constructing its first overseas military base in East Africa, in Djibouti, close to the Bab-al-Mandeb Strait, which is one of the most important choke points connecting the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. The base is just a few miles away from Camp Lemonier, which is the only permanent and one of the largest and most important foreign US bases in Africa. China

has escorted 6,000 ships from different countries by its vessels through the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, off Somali waters. In addition, China also kept 2400 peacekeepers in Africa (Jacob & Perlez, 2017). In 2013, China sent 170 troops to Mali to help its government control the internal turmoil from escalating into neighboring countries, and in 2014, it mediated between the warring factions in South Sudan to start negotiations (Johnson, 2015). Thus, China participated in peacekeeping operations, providing manpower and means. It has also observed the Security Council sanctions against countries accused of terrorist activities, and in the fight against global terrorism, it could assist the United States as it has so far.

3. Summary

Soon after the communist revolution in China, attention was drawn to the Persian Gulf region, which started supporting the revolutionary movements in the Middle East in general and the Persian Gulf in particular. From the 1950s until the 1970s, China's policy was ideological-oriented and saw the region as ripe for Marxist-type revolutions. Thus supported the so-called progressive countries (e.g., Iraq) and revolutionary movements (e.g., the Dhofar Liberation Movement in Oman). It was also partly due to China's competition with the Soviet Union over the leadership of the communist world. But in the early 1970s, it changed the course of its policy, started establishing relations with existing conservative states in the region and stopped its limited material support for revolutionary movements like the Dhofar Liberation Movement of Oman.

In the 21st century, China, as the most important rising power, has had some tensions with the United States, some of which were serious. For example, China's military buildup in the South China Sea, which threatened the US military hegemony in the region, and the so-called trade war over huge imbalance of trade between the two countries. But they collaborated on some other issues, like containing Korean Peninsula tensions; and coping with terrorism and radical groups active in the Persian Gulf region.

It is clear that these collaborations to preserve the status quo in the region were not only due to the huge dependence of China's fast-growing economy on the oil and gas reserves of the region but also to take advantage of the potential trade and investment opportunities of the vast markets of the Persian Gulf countries.

On top of these, there is the economic interdependence of the two countries. They are major economic partners. Their economies are so interwoven that a loss for one is definitely translated as a loss

for the other. All these make the collaboration of the two countries imperative for world affairs in general and the Persian Gulf in particular.

Conclusion

Since the 1980s, China has had a mercenary attitude, not an ideological-oriented one, avoided taking sides in multi-faceted disputes and conflicts in the Persian Gulf region, and acted as a stabilizing power. Therefore, the relationships between the United States and China continued on the same path of deeply understanding each other's sensitivities and vulnerabilities, which was the consequence of their interdependence. It appeared that the United States accepted the power and role of China as a "rising power" during Obama's administration. Hence, in the author's view, it is unlikely that Beijing wants to change its direction and policies in the foreseeable future, and the relationships between the two countries in general and in the Persian Gulf would be those of collaboration and competition, not rivalry or hostility.

Appendix: Recent Developments in China's Relations with the Persian Gulf

In light of new developments in the Persian Gulf region regarding the relationships of China with the regional states, the author deemed it necessary to write a few words.

President Xi Jinping's state visit to Saudi Arabia started a new era in China's relations with states in the Persian Gulf in that it was without precedent since the 1970s. Ostensibly, China abandoned its traditional and long-standing policy of neutrality and non-interference in the regional disputes between the Persian Gulf countries by supporting Saudi Arabia, and the GCC (Persian Gulf Cooperation Council) stands on the disputes with Iran.

President Xi Jinping of China visited Saudi Arabia from December 7 to 10, 2022. In Saudi Arabia, he was received very warmly, a grander reception than President Biden in July. His state visit was historic in that he attended three major regional events: the Sino-Saudi summit, and the Sino-GCC summit and Sino-Arab summit. Xi held bilateral meetings with nearly 20 Arab leaders (out of 23 members of the Arab League countries), which was the largest and highest-level diplomatic move with Arab countries since the foundation of the People's Republic of China, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry (Marks, 2022).

During his visit, China and Saudi Arabia signed a strategic partnership agreement and 34 investment deals in different fields of

technology and energy. Besides, they also signed deals valued at \$30 billion on December 8 (China Briefings, December 9, 2022).

What is particularly critical from Iran's point of view is the joint statement of Xi with the GCC countries regarding the three islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa in the Strait of Hormuz, which belong to Iran. Regarding the three islands, the statement said, "The leaders affirmed their support for all peaceful efforts, including the initiatives and endeavors of the U.A.E. to reach a peaceful solution" (Taslimi, 2022). The China-GCC joint statement also announced that Iran is a "supporter of regional terrorist groups" and a "proliferator of ballistic missiles and drones". It also declared the importance of addressing "the Iranian nuclear file and destabilizing regional activities".

The statement was shocking to Iranian officials and the media. Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian tweeted that "the three islands Abu Musa, Lesser Tunb, and Greater Tunb in the Persian Gulf are indispensable parts of the pure land of Iran and belong to the mother land forever. With regards to respecting the territorial integrity of Iran, we show no complacency with any side." In a subsequent meeting with the Chinese ambassador to Tehran, the Deputy Minister for Asian Affairs of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed "strong dissatisfaction" with the declaration. President Raisi also complained to Chinese Vice President Hu Chunhua, who visited Tehran, that "some of the remarks made during President Xi's trip to the region have caused dissatisfaction from the people and government of Iran." Kamal Kharazi, the former foreign minister of Iran, now the head of the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, announced that the Chinese position on the territorial integrity of Iran was wrong and that it was as if we took a similar position on Taiwan (Taslimi, 2022; Marks, 2022).

For his part, Wang Wenbin, the Chinese foreign ministry spokesman stated in a press conference that China and Iran "enjoyed traditional friendship, and GCC countries and Iran are all China's friends, and neither China-GCC relations nor China-Iran relations are targeted at any third party." He said that China "supports the GCC countries in improving relations with Iran based on principles of good neighborly friendship, conducting [a] win-win cooperation with Iran, and jointly promoting the development and stability in the Persian Gulf," and that China "is willing to continue to play a constructive role in this regard." He further added that "Vice-President Hu Chunhua's visit to Iran starts today. We believe this visit will play a positive role in deepening the comprehensive

China-Iran strategic partnership" (Xinhua, December 13, 2022).

To summarize, four out of the eighteen points of the joint statement of China and GCC states are directly related to the Islamic Republic of Iran, but the language used was not as neutral as the normal Chinese communiqués and instead took the tone of Saudi and Emirates words regarding I.R. Iran. The reactions of Iran's officials and public were sharp. The evident strains in US relations with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have created opportunities for China to deepen ties with the two countries. This opening has decreased China's need to cultivate a deeper partnership with Iran to check the US influence in the Persian Gulf. While Iran tries to turn to the east, China may be shifting away. Although China is trying to show that it is keeping a balance in its relations with Iran and the Arab states of the Persian Gulf, it is leaning towards the latter.

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Hybrid War and Regional Powers: Iran

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Abstract

The 21st century is characterized by the widespread occurrence of hybrid warfare among participants engaged in asymmetric conflicts, employing a variety of warfare tactics that are tailored to the specific scenario and context. Therefore, modern conflicts differ from classical conflicts in terms of their complexity, diversity, form, nature, and dynamics. This study examines the susceptibility of actors in hybrid warfare. Thus, the research question is, "What requirements does a hybrid war impose on international actors, and how should Iran be explained as a case study?" The data were collected through desk studies and analyzed based on a descriptive-analytical approach. The study findings showed that, given the assumption of changes in the nature of wars and the emergence of hybrid wars as a result of the combined nature of threats in the complex international system, hybrid war is the most difficult challenge for actors, particularly dissatisfied ones, in confrontation with the international system's power poles, particularly the hegemon. This includes a variety of conventional and unconventional wars that are fought anytime, anywhere, and with varying degrees of intensity by the military or civilians. Iran is under pressure from rivals engaged in this type of conflict to give up its demands and needs on the regional and international levels.

Keywords: Hybrid war, Non-linear, Conventional, Unconventional, Hegemon.

Introduction

In practice, any threat may be hybrid, as long as it is not limited to a single size or shape. When any threat or use of force is defined as hybrid, the term loses its value and brings about confusion rather than clarifying the reality of modern war (Neag, 2016: 14). According to Clausewitz, war is the use of naked force to compel our enemy to do our will (Clausewitz, 1993). Hadley Bull defines war as organized violence carried on by political units against each other (Bull, 2012:184). Both definitions of war essentially include the use of organized force or violence by two sides against one another. This is indeed a classic definition of war. With the advancement of science and technology, the nature of warfare has evolved to include irregular, unconventional, and hybrid wars in addition to organized warfare.

In essence, each period is characterized by its own peculiar warfare, shaped by the prevailing circumstances, weapons, technologies, goals, forces, vulnerabilities, and nature of society. The evolution of technology and changes in war games and actors have led to a shift in the nature of warfare, making hybrid wars a necessary component of the international system. Since its introduction in 2005, the term *hybrid* has dominated the war discourse to describe modern wars and has been advocated as a fundamental concept for contemporary war strategies (Neag, 2016: 14). The occurrence of hybrid wars and hybrid threats, exemplified by the conflicts involving little green men in Crimea and little blue men in the South China Sea, suggests that the world will experience more international conflicts of this nature in the future. In fact, the term *hybrid warfare* has become part of the actors' defense-security lexicon (Giegerich, 2016: 65).

It has always been challenging to detect changes in the essence, patterns, and characteristics of war throughout political history, particularly following extended periods of tranquility. In the current global context, the prevailing types of conflicts are likely to involve insurgencies or operations occurring in both rural and urban environments, where the local population is supported by a dominant power. This has been observed in instances such as the Western coalition interventions led by the United States of America in the Middle East and Africa.

Alternatively, conflicts may involve insurgents who are supported by a foreign power in their bid to overthrow their own government (as exemplified by Russia's hybrid war in Ukraine), with the ultimate objective of advancing the interests of the

dominant power, particularly the hegemon. Henceforth, the conflicts in the contemporary world are indicative of the fact that we inhabit a realm of unconventional hybrid confrontations (Josan, 2015: 49; Johnson, 2014: 71).

In the contemporary complex landscape, classical conventional wars have taken on an additional proxy dimension. In broad terms, hybrid threats are threats that can draw on the symmetry and simultaneity of conventional and unconventional tools to achieve specific results and effects (Miklauci, 2011). These wars involve participation from diverse governmental, non-governmental, local, and global actors. Some conflicts may entail mass violence, symmetry, terrorism, cyberspace attacks, insurgency, pervasive crime, and widespread disorder (NATO, 2017: 2-11). NATO employs a comprehensive approach to addressing hybrid threats, involving the coordination of all available resources among allies, including diplomatic, economic, and intelligence measures. Therefore, the research question is, "What requirements are imposed on target countries, including Iran, in the current hegemonic and complex system of hybrid wars, and what strategies do the target countries need to deal with this system?" In response to this question, it is hypothesized that in the current hegemonic and complex system, hybrid warfare is a means to achieve goals, primarily applied by technologically superior powers in the territory of the target countries. We also presuppose that the hegemon of this type of warfare in the opponent's land, especially disaffected regional powers, takes advantage of its high benefits. This refers to the utilization of both conventional and unconventional, regular and irregular, and overt and covert methods to attain one's objectives.

In line with the research purpose, part of the hypothesis is related to Iran and its strategies against hybrid wars. Iran has regional and international demands and ideals as a regional power. However, given its foreign policy approach and basic principles, this country is engaged in a hybrid war in which it is under pressure from the hegemon and its ally regional powers to abandon its foreign policy demands and change its behavioral patterns. In order to defend against this type of war, Iran employs a variety of strategies and tactics to neutralize the hybrid actions of its regional and international rivals and enemies.

This paper aims to explain hybrid threats as a modern type of threat against international system players, particularly regional powers. The paper first elaborates on hybrid warfare and develops its analytical model. It also examines the benefits of this type of

warfare for hegemonic powers and its constraints on regional powers. Iran is presented as a case study to demonstrate the practical application of the research.

1. Hybrid Warfare and International Relations Literature

Hoffman (2007) characterizes hybrid wars as having a predominance of terrorist acts and diverse criminal activities. Hoffman (2009) defines hybrid warfare as the simultaneous and adaptive utilization of irregular tactics, conventional weapons, terrorism, and violent elements in the battle space to attain political objectives. Hybrid wars encompass a variety of actors, threats, and tools, necessitating a diverse range of strategies to address them. Freier, McCuen, and Habermayer offer a comparable definition. These definitions rely on the efficient and concurrent implementation of diverse forms of combat (Freier, 2007). According to Kilcullen, the term hybrid warfare best describes contemporary conflicts. Kilcullen (2009) presents various definitions, asserting that hybrid warfare involves a combination of armed and unarmed, military and non-military, government and non-government, and internal and international actions, with or without the use of violence. Nemeth (2002) assumes hybrid warfare to be a new variant of guerrilla warfare that is heavily influenced by modern technology and mobilization techniques. McCuen defines hybrid warfare as the use of regular and irregular warfare methods to gain influence over populations in the conflict zone, on the home front, and in the international community (McCuen, 2008). Jacobs and Lasconjaris undermine the technological aspect. In addition, they maintain that in hybrid warfare, a variety of non-military influence tools are employed alongside military forces (Jacobs and Lasconjaris, 2015). Otaiku (2018) analyzes the expenses associated with hybrid warfare. Deep (2015) asserts that achieving the desired effects and outcomes in a hybrid war is accomplished by employing asymmetric tactics and techniques and synchronizing multilateral battles. Warden postulates that five concentric rings determine what targets are vital in war: leaders, processes (organic essentials), infrastructure, population, and fielded forces (Warden, 1995). He identifies unconventional war and color revolutions as the two primary pillars of hybrid warfare. McCulloh and Johnson (2013) have considered the cultural dimension and diversity of management centers. Lastly, hybrid warfare is classified as a form of irregular warfare, according to British doctrine.

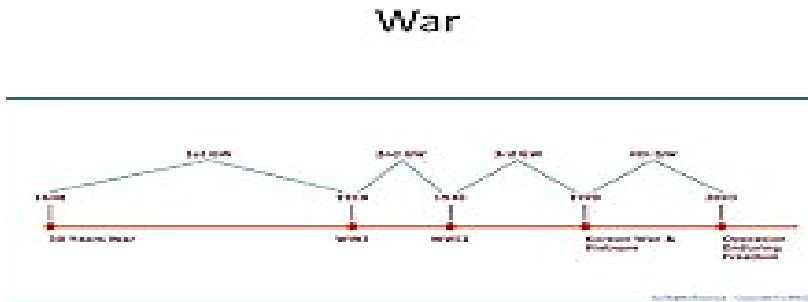
The prevailing literature suggests that hybrid warfare involves a

significant degree of penetration. Hybrid wars transcend the physical and conventional dimensions of warfare, encompassing aspects that have yet to be penetrated by traditional military forces. The crux of this warfare entails organizing and executing concurrent operations to attain the intended outcomes. Irregular armed forces engage in hybrid warfare, utilizing precision weapons and systems typically associated with regular forces. Hybrid warfare can transition between fields under appropriate circumstances. Moreover, irregular groups are assumed to seek superior weaponry and technology. As a result, government and military forces must contend with a wide range of threats. Hybrid threats operate not only in the physical domain but also in the cognitive domain, as conventional technologies are connected with unconventional tactics (Banasik, 2015). This study aims to build on the current literature to provide an explanation of hybrid warfare as a systemic reality in the relations between international actors. In addition to explaining hybrid warfare from a theoretical perspective, this study considers the problem from a practical perspective, with Iran serving as a case study.

2. The Transition from Classic to Hybrid Warfare

Since the Peace of Westphalia, the world has experienced five generations of war¹, with the current period representing the apex of the fourth generation and the onset of the fifth. Hybrid operations, typically carried out unconventionally by non-state actors, differ from classical symmetrical wars conducted by state actors. Following the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the nature of warfare evolved from a focus on manpower (1st generation) to the utilization of artillery and firepower (2nd generation), then to war maneuvers (3rd generation), and subsequently to rebellion and terrorism (4th generation). Currently, warfare has shifted towards non-contact methods (5th generation) (Bahnareanu, 2015: 57).

1. The term war generation has been defined and operationalized by American military experts.



Source: (Bahnareanu, 2015:58)

Figure (1): The Timeline of the Five Generations of Warfare

The military technology revolution occurred a few years ago, featuring advancements in high-precision and smart weaponry, powerful explosives, space programs, nanotechnology, energy management and resources, advanced production techniques, sensors, and networks. There is currently no human activity that is unaffected by the development and growth of technology. Indeed, it is possible to combine lethal military products that are created in civilian environments with technologies that are easily accessible (Bahnareanu, 2015: 60).

Future wars will evolve and broaden due to the proliferation of technology, particularly information technology, and its extensive integration into military activities, as outlined below (Bahnareanu, 2015: 60).

- New forms of struggle: Future armed conflicts will involve new military operations, including information warfare, missile defense, and advanced electronic warfare with a robust cyber component.
- Development of weapons systems and other related equipment: The focus will be on the development of intelligent digital equipment with new technologies, long-range capabilities, and high-precision strikes.
- Structural organization: The trend is to utilize joint and combined forces that possess diverse capabilities and are flexible, rapidly deployable, and low in numerical terms. Additionally, these forces are highly efficient in terms of command and control.
- Combat support: There will be a greater emphasis on the use of modern digitized technical means to provide combat troops with accurate, rapid, qualitative, and timely support.

Currently, information superiority is viewed as a significant

competitive advantage. Information warfare and operations are crucial in both military and civilian conflicts. Future conflicts will involve obtaining information through intelligence tools and countering the enemy's information systems. Preventing insider systems from being penetrated by espionage and subversive actions will be a critical aspect of the national security strategy of actors.

The revolution in military affairs is linked with social changes, particularly in the realm of information and technology. The evolution of various fields, such as awareness and communication, concealment and robustness, accuracy and miniaturization, speed and undetectability, and automation and simulation, has resulted in changes to military capability. Future wars will involve four strategic confrontations: anti-access or area interdiction capabilities; threat cloaking and tracking technologies; stealth attack and missile defense capabilities; and intelligence/biological attack and defense against it. Hence, maintaining the confidentiality of critical information will be crucial in the future. The identification of enemy forces will prompt the development of novel stealth techniques, while the growing significance of intelligence infrastructure will enhance the value of information warfare capabilities. Furthermore, advances in molecular biology will intensify hybrid operations. More than two and a half decades ago, American military analysts identified four modern warfare domains that are currently prevalent. long-range precision strike, dominant maneuver, information warfare, and space warfare (Bahnananu, 2015: 61-62).

Hybrid warfare typically entails direct multilateral efforts aimed at undermining state functionality and creating societal divisions. As such, hybrid warfare's center of gravity is focused on society, unlike conventional warfare (Chivvis, 2017:2).

Hybrid war has characteristic elements that distinguish it from classic wars.

- 1- Military action starting in peacetime without a declaration of war
- 2- Conflicts between hybrid armed groups with no contact between them
- 3- Neutralization of military and economic force through strikes on critical infrastructure (civil and military)
- 4- The widespread utilization of precision weaponry, special operations, and new technologies
- 5- The deployment of armed civilians
- 6- Simultaneous attacks on military units and equipment

throughout the opponent's territory

- 7- Simultaneous fights on land, air, sea, cosmic dimension, cyberspace, and information sphere
- 8- Asymmetric and indirect methods of influence usage
- 9- Management of phenomena, especially in the information, cyberspace, and network spheres (Banasik, 2015: 28–29).

Table (1): Classic and Modern Military Methods

Classic Military Methods	New Military Methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The start of military operations after the declaration of war • The occurrence of direct conflict between competing forces • The failure of the military force and firepower meant the loss of control over regions and borders, and the opponent gained territorial control. • Destruction of economic power and territorial annexation • Conducting combat operations on land, sea, and air • Hierarchical management of forces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military operations starting during peacetime • The occurrence of indirect battles between troops • Destruction of military and economic power with precise attacks on military and civilian strategic infrastructures • Extensive use of high-precision weapons, special operations, and weapons that benefit from new physical principles • Use of armed civilian forces • Simultaneous strikes of enemy units throughout the territory • Simultaneous battle on land, air, sea, and information space • Use of indirect and asymmetric methods • Management of forces in terms of intelligence

Source: (Bilban, 2015: 8)

The primary objective of hybrid warfare is to reduce the need for military forces while simultaneously compelling the adversary to use a great deal of force, thereby having a destructive effect on the opposing government, administration, and society. The term hybrid threat denotes a complex mixture of unlimited measures. The hybrid threat is characterized by decentralized command, the simultaneous use of military and civilian actions, a combination of asymmetric terrorist actions and dispersed criminal methods, and the use of time and space to make the best decision for a given situation (Glenn, 2008: 1–8). Hybrid threats refer to the use of both conventional and unconventional actions by one or more non-state actors to negatively impact the decision-making cycle of the adversary and achieve one's own objectives (Anghel, 2011: 58).

Overall, hybrid warfare is a military strategy that integrates conventional, irregular, and cyber warfare. Hybrid warfare refers to

the complex and flexible dynamics of the battlespace, which demands a swift and suitable reaction. The concept of hybrid warfare is denoted by a range of terminologies, such as hybrid warfare, hybrid battle, hybrid threat, hybrid adversary, non-linear warfare, non-classical warfare, or special warfare. The military and academic literature differ in their terminology, with the former using hybrid threats and the latter using hybrid warfare.

3. Hybrid War and Disaffected Powers

Wars are unique to each era and time because they are fought with unique weapons, against unique targets, using unique forces, exploiting unique vulnerabilities, and affecting unique societies. Currently, the nature of war is changing as a result of the evolution of technology, the types of actors and violence involved, and the nature of war games. Meanwhile, hybrid wars with two wings, namely color revolutions and irregular conflicts, are used by great powers who are content with the status quo to confront powers who are dissatisfied with the status quo. Hybrid threats and warfare defy conventional categorizations of war and peace. Hybrid warfare does not conform to the traditional conception of warfare, which states that a conflict concludes in a particular order after passing through various stages (Weissmann, 2019: 22).

The advancement of war technology has led to a shift in the nature of war, with hybrid wars emerging as a substitute for or supplement to conventional wars in achieving the objectives of the actors involved. War contains threats that cannot be directly characterized as classical war, but it poses a threat to the national security of the actors. Currently, deception is commonly utilized in warfare and is actively disavowed by the dominant power and major actors to the greatest extent feasible. Deception and adaptability are the two fundamental characteristics of hybrid warfare. Hybrid warfare prioritizes unconventional methods of combat with the objective of achieving victory without resorting to direct military confrontation. Indeed, hybrid warfare poses a significant risk of miscalculations and misunderstandings. Accordingly, the slowdown of defensive measures can result in the actor's defeat due to inadequate knowledge of the opponent's actions (Weissmann, 2019: 23).

The new generation of warfare employs a blend of unconventional, non-linear, and asymmetric tactics alongside modern classical warfare techniques (Berzins, 2014). While these tactics are not necessarily new, the integration of conventional tactics with modern technologies offers numerous benefits to major

powers in dealing with their dissatisfied adversaries. The strategies comprise eight consecutive phases:

Phase 1: The war is asymmetric and non-linear (and includes informational, moral, psychological, ideological, diplomatic, and economic operations).

Phase 2: This strategy involves using coordinated actions through diplomatic channels, the media, and high-level government and military officials to disseminate misleading information and instructions in order to deceive political and military leaders.

Phase 3: It comprises intimidating, deceiving, and bribing government and military officials in an effort to convince them to abandon their responsibilities.

Phase 4: This strategy involves using destabilizing programs (propagandas) to increase discontent among the people.

Phase 5: It entails establishing a no-fly zone for attacking a country, implementing sanctions, and utilizing private military companies to collaborate closely with military units.

Phase 6: This strategy calls for the use of military measures soon after the identification of sensitive points and the execution of subversive actions of all types, including special operations forces, electronic information, and diplomatic and spy services.

Phase 7: This phase entails collecting targeted information, engaging in electronic and aerospace operations, conducting air force attacks on the rival country's airspace for espionage purposes, and utilizing high-precision weapons from various platforms (e.g., long-range artillery and weapons based on new physical principles, including lethal and non-lethal biological weapons).

Phase 8: This strategy consists of eliminating any remaining resistance and neutralizing adversary forces through specialized operations (Weissmann, 2019: 20–21).

In general, the target actors involved in hybrid warfare face competitors with the following characteristics and parameters:

- A fluid, non-standard, and complex enemy;
- A hybrid enemy that uses a combination of conventional and irregular methods;
- A hybrid enemy that is flexible and quickly adapts to existing conditions;
- A hybrid enemy that uses advanced weapon systems and other destructive technologies;
- The enemy uses mass communication tools for propaganda

against the target country (Otaiku, 2018: 4).

The attacking power in hybrid war attempts to completely dominate the opponent by combining color revolutions and unconventional warfare, taking into account the rule of chaotic dynamics in the international system. The individuals responsible for color revolutions and unconventional warfare assume control of the offensive initiative of a coup, thus prioritizing the defense of their own territory and engaging in subversive activities in their opponent's territory. Color revolutions and unconventional warfare cause chaos in the targeted land. Moreover, unconventional warfare induces fear, which amplifies the combined impact of chaos and instability on the regime's performance (Korybko, 2015: 31). Hybrid warfare employs unique tools on the battlefield. This phenomenon amplifies the impact of proxy combat and the instability of the conflicting actors in hybrid conflicts (Korybko, 2015:31).

4. Hybrid War and Iran

According to Hart (1967: 321), war is a means to achieve national interests. However, no interest should result in war, nor should war be the means to achieving any interest. The contemporary international system's complexity and chaos have led to a transformation in warfare, replacing conventional warfare with modern warfare. This new form of warfare is characterized by distinct features. Hybrid warfare is utilized as a means to achieve objectives based on prevailing circumstances. Iran's strategic location in the volatile Middle East has made it a frequent target of conflict and invasion by major powers, particularly following the 1979 revolution. The Western conflict with the Islamic Republic of Iran is a multifaceted and evolving issue, as evidenced by ongoing analysis. This evolution is one of the bases of hybrid warfare, which is founded on the principle of inflicting maximum pain on vulnerable areas and having cognitive effects (Eftekhari & Raji, 2022: 114). Hybrid warfare offers advantages that make it appealing to international actors, particularly to the hegemon in conflict with disgruntled regional powers. This type of warfare offers several benefits:

- Capacity to keep rivals from directly confronting one another;
- Preventing the war from escalating into a widespread conflict while pursuing interests without fanfare or provocative measures;
- Hybrid warfare being both cost-effective and capable of inflicting irreparable damage on the target nation;
- Because of guerilla tactics, hybrid warfare does not necessitate a

large military force or government actors.

- It is a tool used by superpowers to instill instability in target countries at a low cost (Ref. Lansezka, 2016: 3–9).

Being located in the heterogeneous environment of the Middle East, as well as demographic diversity, regional unrest, and revolutionary ideals, have all contributed to the possibility and creation of grounds for the emergence of a hybrid war against Iran. Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution challenged the regional order desired by the West, it was natural that Western countries put pressure on this nascent political system from the beginning and made numerous efforts to destabilize it. In fact, enemies of Iran, led by the US, the Zionist regime, and some European countries such as England, have indirectly entered into an armed war against Iran with their financial aid and equipment since the beginning of the victory of the Islamic Revolution by supporting internal dissidents, trying to overthrow the ruling system of the Islamic Republic of Iran in a coherent plan using different methods, such as strengthening separatism by creating ethnic unrest, planning coups such as the Nojeh coup, direct military intervention such as Operation Tabas (Operation Eagle Claw), and launching internal terrorist operations with the help of MEK, in order to physically eliminate the leaders of the revolution (Eftekhari & Raji, 2022: 115-116).

4-1. Hybrid Measures Against Iran

Creating internal chaos in the actors who are dissatisfied with the order and macromanagement of the systemic order is one of the most fundamental justifications for hybrid wars and actions by the hegemon in confrontation with the powers that are unhappy with the status quo. Hybrid warfare is also inherently indirect and unpredictable in its targets due to its non-linear nature. When considering it from a geopolitical standpoint, one may recall Brzezinski's description of chaotic regions, which has applications in international relations and military science (Korybko, 2015: 24). This principle makes color revolutions and unconventional warfare far more effective than conventional methods of regime change (Korybko, 2015: 28). William Lind foresaw the future of warfare in an article published in the Marine Corps Gazette in 1989 (Gazette, 1989). He discussed the fourth generation of warfare and asserted that the subsequent generation of warfare would be more fluid, decentralized, and asymmetrical than previous generations (Gazette, 1989). In addition, Lind placed emphasis on psychological operations and information warfare, which are both fully realized in

color revolutions (Korybko, 2015: 19). He contended:

“Psychological operations may become the dominant operational and strategic weapon in the form of media and information intervention... A major target will be the enemy population’s support of its government and the war. Television news may become a more powerful operational weapon than armored divisions” (Korybko, 2015: 19).

The objective of a combined or hybrid war is to induce a state of severe and widespread chaos in the target nation, impeding the opponent’s policies and strategies to resolve the crisis. This results in a catastrophic situation in the target country, ultimately forcing the opponent to compromise or surrender. With this strategy, pressure is ratcheted up on the enemy’s governance structure until it collapses. Iran is currently engaged in an all-out hybrid war with its regional and global rivals and adversaries. In fact, Iran’s regional environment and its location in the chaotic environment of the Middle East, as well as the demographic composition of the region and the existence of regional heterogeneity, have resulted in the country being involved in a hybrid war that has included several stages or phases ever since the Islamic Revolution:

Phase One: The attack and full-scale war against Iran by Iraq. The first phase of Iran’s involvement in the hybrid war, known as the Inclusive War, began with Iraq’s attack on Iran. These measures created a potent and detrimental combination that inflicted significant and unparalleled harm on Iran and its fledgling revolution of 1979 (Zulqaderpour, 2023).

Phase two: It began in 1990 with the alteration of the international system’s construction. The dissolution of the Soviet Union brought about two substantial alterations: a transformation in the structure of the global system and a shift in the nature of power within it. These changes necessitated a shift in hybrid warfare tactics, which in turn influenced how the West would deal with Iran and the Islamic Revolution. During this phase, the hybrid warfare against Iran intensified, with increased emphasis on economic and political measures. The US and its regional allies applied economic and political pressure on Iran, including labeling Iran as part of the "axis of evil," presenting a horrific image of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the public, disrupting and sabotaging its military and nuclear programs with tactics such as the Stuxnet virus, and creating a negative global consensus against Iran. Additionally, they distorted facts and threatened military action as an option (Taefi and Janat Mekan Shad, 2019: 75).

Phase Three: Beginning in 2011, Arab nations began to undergo transformations. This phase aimed to curb Iran's regional influence. The key feature of this phase is the involvement of numerous actors with the backing of the hegemon. In this phase, it has taken on new dimensions as a result of proxy conflicts and wars, with multiple Arab, Western-Hebrew, or Western-Arab-Turkish coalitions waging a hybrid war against Iran. The current hybrid warfare strategy aims to isolate Iran within its borders and cause its collapse. This is being pursued through a range of tactics and tools. The tools and components utilized in the new hybrid warfare are designed to render Iran's political system ineffectual. These tactics include an all-out attack on Syria as the center of Iran's strategic interests in the region; Iran's border threat by terrorist groups; an ISIS terrorist attack in Iran, particularly in the Islamic Council; increasing propaganda and media attacks on Iran in regional issues; the continuation and intensification of economic sanctions; denying Iran's nuclear rights and threatening to destroy its nuclear facilities; and nuclear negotiation and diplomacy with an equidistant approach. Additional measures involve political and diplomatic sanctions by resorting to extreme measures, such as the attack on the Saudi embassy in Iran and efforts to incite labor and livelihood protests in Iran to foment rebellion against the regime (Zulqaderpour, 2023). Other tactics consist of internet surveillance, propaganda dissemination through virtual channels (Kulfam and Hosseini, 2017: 94), attempts to undermine international agreements, such as the JCPOA, the imposition of backbreaking sanctions against Iran, and targeted assassinations of Iranian nuclear scientists.

4-2. Iran's Strategies in the Face of Hybrid War

The new requirements essentially mandate that all actors create safeguards against hybrid threats. Alongside this, the comprehensive security approach, whose objective is centered on society, replaces the classical defense approaches, which were focused on government military forces. The comprehensive security approach involves political leadership and societal participation in defense measures. Valeriano and Vasquez (2010) suggest that preventing espionage and sabotage in a country requires a combination of expertise in identifying vulnerable points, access to credible information, and strategic efforts. Relying solely on military and security forces to address hybrid threats is ineffective, as the objectives of hybrid warfare target vulnerable aspects of

society beyond these entities. Hybrid defense requires a collaborative effort from all societal sectors. This model is alternatively referred to as a comprehensive security approach.

In general, in asymmetric and hybrid wars, the hegemon employs a combination of direct intervention, assisting allies' armies, and covert operations and espionage in the opposing country, depending on the existing situation, agents, and actor type. This assertion finds support in historical evidence. For example, the US has engaged in military interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001; has entered into conflict with groups that do not accept the existing order (Hezbollah of Lebanon); has established bases in and deployed forces to allied countries (Arab countries of the Persian Gulf) to strengthen the offensive capabilities of its allies to neutralize the actions of the opposing actors; has tried to detect and track threats using its intelligence and espionage systems; and has carried out espionage in the territory of opposing countries and entered into conflict with the actor inside his own territory (Syria). In some cases, the US has attempted to involve competitors in the region and its surroundings in conflict in order to cause chaos and confusion in the surrounding environment of the opposing actor (Iran). Modern societies' heavy reliance on digital services and critical infrastructure renders them highly susceptible to vulnerabilities. (Cederberg and Eronen, 2015: 7). Cyberspace presents an optimal battleground, necessitating a military structure capable of addressing the resulting threats. In contemporary information environments, actors encounter a surge in the data and information required to strategize and achieve victory in warfare. The success of actors in battle depends on essential information such as their goals, involved forces, general conditions, available resources, and force dispersion (Neag, 2016: 15).

Iran, like other international actors facing hybrid warfare, prioritizes measures for hybrid defense, including:

- Neutralizing sabotage and espionage actions. This is crucial as the first line of defense against hybrid threats. To effectively counter hybrid operations, Iran must understand vulnerabilities and prevent attackers from accessing sensitive information and engaging in espionage activities. During crises, the goal of defense is to prevent attackers from accessing up-to-date information and succeeding in their actions and operations.
- Thwarting the formation of global and local coalitions targeting Iran. Hybrid warfare can involve international coalitions. To counter these actions, a flexible approach to foreign policy and

defense strategies is necessary to prevent the formation of such coalitions.

- Effective coordination and collaboration with regional actors, particularly the axis of resistance. To counter the formation of international coalitions against Iran, defense efforts can include a substantial international component. Similar to the mobilization of national resources, international cooperation results in the consolidation of dispersed actors' national resources and the improvement of the defense situation for all coalition actors.
- Hybrid defense may also involve disconnecting from affiliated groups. In this scenario, severing communication channels between domestic adversaries and foreign nations is required.
- Developing an active defense against attackers. These actions include modifications to the deployment of military forces, targeted strategic communications, and political actions aimed at combating the aggressor and neutralizing its ability to employ existing tools for hybrid operations.
- Developing a passive defense strategy against attackers. The measures encompass safeguarding critical centers, enhancing specialized human resources, bolstering national resilience, and promoting cyber literacy.

Conclusion

In essence, a new type of war has emerged in the contemporary world as a result of the transformation and evolution of international actors and the development and expansion of new technologies, all under the influence of the information revolution and multilateral social, cultural, economic, and political processes. Modern warfare is significantly impacted by technology, which exerts a profound influence on its conceptual framework and organizational structure. Modern society's complex infrastructure renders international actors highly vulnerable to technological dependence. Technology enables new forms of power for both governmental and non-governmental actors. The current circumstances give rise to cyberspace, in which identifying the perpetrator is hardly possible. The international environment's complexity, the blurring of the lines between war and peace, the merging of military and civilian operations, and the integration of governmental and non-governmental actors have made low-cost hybrid war a necessity and reality in the international system. International actors consider this fact when formulating their military strategies.

Located in the heterogeneous Middle East, Iran is involved in

this type of conflict as a participant in the international system. As a result of the internal and regional environmental dynamics, reasonably speaking, it is required to have a defense strategy to counter these threats. As previously noted, the hybrid war is based on cultural and political pillars that incite state and non-state actors to violence. To effectively address and preempt unexpected developments in hybrid warfare, Iran should focus on cultural and political tactics. Cultural strategies promote national unity and social cohesion while deterring acts of sabotage and espionage. Political strategies involve strengthening the actor's internal base and utilizing coalition building and synergy to address potential threats of this nature.

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The Resistance Axis and the Islamic Republic of Iran's Regional Policy: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

With the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, revolutionary socio-political movements emerged throughout the region that facilitated the formation of resistance groups against imperialism. The purpose of this research is to understand the process of the formation and evolution of resistance groups in the Islamic Republic of Iran's regional policy. The main question of the study is, "What is the place of resistance groups in the Islamic Republic of Iran's regional political strategy?". The hypothesis of the study is that "the Islamic Republic of Iran plays a stabilizing role in the region through collaboration with resistance groups against imperialism and intervention, a reality that serves the national interests of the region's Islamic countries." Based on the findings of the study, sponsoring the regional resistance groups provides stability and fosters the resistance discourse against US and Israeli intervention, leading to the stabilization of security for both Iran and other countries in the region. The method of the study is descriptive-analytical, and the theoretical framework is neo-classical realism.

Keywords: Islamic Republic of Iran, Islamic Revolution of 1979, Resistance groups, Regional policy, National security.

Introduction

The triumph of the 1979 Islamic Revolution ushered in the formation of an Islamic awakening in the Middle East and the world of Islam. The Islamic Republic's inherent attachment to these politico-religious movements and its inspirational role as their prototype, in addition to its ideological beliefs aligned with the interests of the region's countries, have pushed Iran towards sponsoring these resistance movements. Political parties and organizations emerged from these movements that have found increasing significance in Iran's foreign policy due to their very ideological proximity.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the expansion of US and Israeli intervention in the Middle East, the collaboration between the Islamic Republic and resistance groups doubled in size and importance, giving way to the central place of these groups in Iran's foreign policy, which is assessed to be serving the interests of both sides. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to understand the process of the formation and role-taking of resistance groups in the Islamic Republic of Iran's regional policy. The main question of the study is, "What is the place of resistance groups in the Islamic Republic of Iran's regional political strategy?". The hypothesis of the study is that "the Islamic Republic of Iran plays a stabilizing role in the region thanks to its collaborations with regional resistance groups against imperialism and intervention, a reality that serves the national interests of the region's countries."

The organization of the current study is structured by first going to the theoretical framework, then introducing internal and external factors involved in the formation and increasing importance of resistance groups in Iran's regional strategy, and eventually overviewing the challenges and opportunities the alliance has brought about to both Iran and the resistance groups.

1. Theoretical Framework: Neoclassical Realism (Balance of Threat)

Neoclassical realism is a combination of classical realism and neorealism that interprets realities based on the study of countries' internal, international, and interactive mechanisms (Salimi and Ebrahimi, 2014/1393: 19). Neoclassical realism does not ignore how the world is organized in shaping how countries behave politically. Instead, it tries to improve upon neorealism by pointing out where it falls short and showing how a country's own internal politics also matter. Therefore, neoclassical realism takes both

systemic variables and state agency for granted (Dehghani Firouzabadi, *Neoclassical Realism and Iran's Foreign Policy*, 2011/1390: 277).

Neoclassical realism deprecates the generic outlook of systemic theories to recognize internal processes through which behaviors and events evolve (Kitchen, 2010: 118). Unlike neorealism, which highlights the role of the international system's structural restrictions on the formation of state behaviors, neoclassical realism pays attention to the occasions at which states no longer abide by structural limitations and eventually deconstruct them (Rathbun, 2008: 296-297). Similar to neorealists, neoclassicists admit that the logic of the international system is anarchic, and thereby, state politics are defined by self-help and self-preservation. The anarchic nature of international relations as part of the international structure pushes states towards seeking power and security (Griffiths, 2007: 13).

As a result, neoclassical realism informs both the internal and international underpinnings of foreign policy and is of two types: offensive and defensive. States' power-seeking is an offensive manifestation of their devotion to neoclassical realism. John Mearsheimer (2003: 13) attributes states' power-seeking to the anarchic international structure and their distrust in their enemies' intentions. The collection of these factors creates conditions in which countries not only pursue balancing each other's threats but also strongly seek to maximize power. In such an approach, survival is the ultimate purpose of states.

On the other hand, the defensive front holds that the aim of states is to maximize security. Inasmuch as power-seeking states favor hegemony and maximize power, the security-seeking ones are simply after "threat elimination" and "maintaining relative security" (Barzegar, 2009/1388: 15-16). States struggle for survival by guaranteeing security and undergoing "collaboration" with other actors. In defensive realism, states do not adopt offensive behavior unless in reaction to cases of threat in which they suffice to preserve balance and contain the bullying agent. Reactions escalate only under conditions where security is gravely under threat (Moshirzadeh, 2009/1388: 121). With the formation of the unipolar world and the asymmetric distribution of power, scholars posed the question of how other countries should react to the US unilateral hegemony.

Theorists such as Stephen M. Walt and Robert Pape have sought to adapt neorealism to contemporary world realities and improve the explanatory power of the balance of power theory by giving it a broader definition. They did so by introducing the theories of

“balance of threat” and “soft balancing”. In their view, post-Cold War states pursue a different sort of power balance that is no longer founded on hardware capabilities.

Walt is of the idea that states dread not the most powerful but the most threatening enemies against whom they dare to balance power. He maintained that threat is a combination of the states' offensive power, military might, geographic proximity, and probable intrusive intentions. In his view, states do not vie for power balancing in reaction to the increasing power of other states; what pushes them towards it is rather the degree of threat they feel. The core of Walt's theory is that states react to threats rather than powers. According to Walt, states' reaction to threats is twofold: they either balance power against the threatening state or coordinate themselves with the hegemon. In other terms, they form alliances for the purpose of safeguarding their survival and security (Mousavi Dehmourdi, Malakoutian and Ghafouri, 2016/1395: 52).

Following the legacy of the Cold War, many countries avoided the costs of balancing power against the US as the single world superpower. For various reasons, including the US military's might and national and international organizations' economic dependence on it, states avoid hard power balancing against global power. In the meantime, the US's expansive involvement policy forces a few states to replace methods for balancing Washington's power. Therefore, though Balance of Threat does not directly challenge the hegemon's military supremacy, it seeks to increase the costs of hard power for it (Simbor and Salehian, 2012/1391: 38-39). Balance of threat is a strategy built on making coalitions that, in the absence of bilateral or multilateral military alliances, is meant to increase the costs of direct conflict for the hegemon or the threatening power (Brooks and Wohlforth, 2005: 86-88).

According to Pape, in the new stage of power balance, direct confrontation with the US is highly costly for individual states. As a result, independent states prefer “soft balancing” measures to limit the US's unilateral, offensive military options. Although these measures do not challenge the US military's upper hand in the short run, in the long term they increase the costs of constant reliance on this upper hand and depreciate the number of states that are likely to endorse such a policy (Pape, 2005: 23).

With the end of the Cold War, Iran has been one of the countries that has replaced the policy of subservience with that of confrontation. Due to the Islamic Republic's belief system, defined by its opposition to global imperialism and animosity toward the

US, Iran has preferred to present a different definition of itself to the rewards of backing the hegemon. Consequently, over the past decades, the West has used various methods like sanctioning, direct military presence in the region, instrumental use of the region's reactionary states, and proxy wars to pressure Iran and underrate its power and geopolitical position.

Meanwhile, Iran's major foreign policy objective is to guarantee survival in an anarchic and self-help context. Anarchy forces Iran to pursue power and influence for the sake of survival and security (Pape, 2005: 23). In this way, and to realize its ideological goals, the Islamic Republic has looked for non-state allies. Concludingly, many of Iran's foreign policy stances must be understood in terms of internal and external balancing with the aim of subverting foreign threats and preserving internal security. The Islamic Republic's foreign policy in creating and empowering the resistance axis and favoring groups against "the ruling system and the imperial front" can be interpreted as external balancing, while its attempts at integrating its regional role following the Iraq, Afghanistan, and Lebanon transformations are instances of enhancing regional influence (Pape, 2005: 26).

In conclusion, the most important element in the expansion of resistance groups after the collapse of the Soviet Union is the relationship between needs and costs. Iran's regional strategy must be understood in terms of its attempt to balance against the unilateral hegemon's threats. In fact, Iran's foreign policy strategy conveys a clear message that is not outside of the realistic discourse: the necessity of balancing power against the hegemon. Besides realism, ideologic beliefs have been involved in the role-taking of resistance groups in Iran's foreign policy.

2. Internal Predictors of Integrating Resistance Groups into Iran's Foreign Policy

With the end of the Iran-Iraq War as a testament to Iran's central role in the world of Islam (the Umm al-Qura theory), Iran's transnational ambitions became secondary to its national objectives. Although Iran's transnational goals are integral to the Constitution, they got peripheral due to the emerging preference for internal considerations post-war (Yaghoubi, 2008/1387: 233). In this era, the Iranian leaders were more than anything else preoccupied with reconstruction and economic development. As a result, Iran's foreign policy leaned towards realism; modernization and economic development in the scope that the Iranian leaders pursued required

trust-making, something that was dented by the radical revolutionary slogans a decade ago (Bagheri and Ebrahimi, 2016/1395: 160).

Thereupon, the internal conditions confirmed the importance of redefining Iran's foreign policy priorities. Hashemi Rafsanjani's government prioritized reconstructing the war debris and pursued economic development in the Five-Year National Development Plan. Realism succeeded revolutionary idealism in the reconstruction era, replacing economic statism and the government's control of banks that characterized the first decade of the Revolution. The new economic policies abandoned the mass mechanisms of the 1980s and expanded ties with the global capitalist economy. Reconstruction was dependent on increased oil prices. It was also in need of improving relationships with oil-producing countries and cooperation with all countries for the purpose of guaranteeing foreign exchange resources. Hashemi indicated that we need a strong and dynamic economy to export the revolution; exporting ideology depends on turning into an economic role model in the region. In his belief, the survival of the revolution, let alone its exporting, is not possible without promising financial resources (Aghaei, 2008/1387: 12).

Compared to the previous decade, the policy of exporting the revolution was totally transformed during the reconstruction and was followed rather indirectly and in silence. The Islamic Republic embraced the notion that, with the realization of freedom and independence, Iran will naturally turn into a role model for the rest of the nations; all third nations and Islamic countries will inevitably turn to the model the Islamic Republic provides without the need for a special method or instrument of exporting the revolution. In this way, the internal conditions transformed the orientation of Iran's foreign policy, and the war ruins led the Iranian leaders to welcome a pragmatic approach that could balance transnational foreign policy as highlighted by the Constitution with promoting national development.

On the “neither East nor West” slogan that was deemed part and parcel of Iran's foreign policy post-Revolution, Hashemi Rafsanjani believed that the slogan does, by no means, convey an isolation message but a “totally defensive and national” one, implying “the pursuit of absolute independence from aliens and the superpowers in all political, economic, and military respects.” He promoted the expansion of relations with all states based on mutual respect and shared interests, the de-escalation of relationships with neighboring

countries, and the advancement of unity in the world of Islam (Hashemi Rafsanjani, 2015/1395).

Sponsoring the liberation movements was another part of Iran's foreign policy. Considering that Hashemi was equally engaged with internal affairs, he had to take into account potential threats by countries that might have complained about Iran's breach of non-intervention (Aghaei, 2008/1387). Overall, the pragmatic, conservative front came to power in the reconstruction era and found hegemony in defining Iran's foreign policy. The central element in this discourse is realism based on an Islamic foundation. This discourse sought to both preserve Islamic ideals in foreign policy and take notice of national limitations and specifications (Dehghani Firouzabadi, 2012/1391).

This discourse, however, brought about contradictions between state policies and strategies and the Constitution, indicating a brotherly commitment to world Muslims and the defense of the oppressed by challenging the unbalanced global status quo. In other words, the reconstruction government of Hashemi was unable to meet these transnational commitments due to internal restraints. In fact, as an ideological state, Iran could not survive without transnational purposes but equally needed to strike a balance between purposes and instruments.

For example, Palestine has been a major concern of Iranian foreign policy for decades. The Islamic Republic also introduced itself as the patron of Lebanon Shiites, who fought in the first-line anti-Zionism front. The very Middle East concern of Iran brought about a kind of paradox in its regional and international politics. On one hand, Iran frontlines foreign policy sought close relationships with Arab and Muslim nations in the region while also improving relations with the West, and on the other, revolutionary and ideological responsibility obliged confrontation with the existing global order.

The solution to this paradox was concentrating on the creation of Shiite and Islamic "resistance cores" on the frontlines and establishing a kind of "negative balance" with world powers by employing these cores. This method simultaneously took Iran's "national" and "Islamic" interests into account and was considered Hashemi's strategic approach. In fact, the motivation to resort to resistance groups arose from legitimation, deniability, benefits, and financial and life casualties in the internal affairs of Iran. With the commencement of the reconstruction era, the role of "power balancing" of the Shiite resistance groups and its implications for

Iran's political-security approaches were undeniable in all regional and international foreign projects, turning the resistance front into Iran's foreign policy bargaining chip (Akbari, 2016/1395).

3. External Predictors of Integrating Resistance Groups into Iran's Foreign Policy

Countries with strategic purposes related to changing the status quo, especially those against the world powers, are prone to security threats. The Islamic Republic is among the countries under geopolitical threat with non-complying security and strategic aims. This way, great powers seek to restrain Iran's security milieus, and regional actors like Saudi Arabia and Israel make great efforts to confront Iran's security approaches (Mottaghi, 2010: 13).

The geopolitical situation, oil and gas reserves, preoccupation with Muslim world problems, and animosity with western imperialism have convinced the West, especially the US, to widely pose threats, from war to sanctions, against Iran. From the western viewpoint, the Islamic regime is the US and Israel's most stubborn enemy, who has interrupted the westward flow of energy, stalled the Middle East peace talks, demoralized Israel and denied its totality by financially and spiritually supporting jihad groups, and promulgated political Islam in defiance of American values (Adami and Keshavarz Moghaddam, 2015/1394: 16). In response, the US has widely applied sanctions against Iran, threatened it with preemptive attacks, and repeatedly talked of regime change. All these have motivated Iran to optimize its preventative power (Fars News Agency, 2011/1390).

In advancing its foreign policy and condemning the conservative region states, who are criticized as the agents of "American Islam" and traitors to the Palestine cause, Iran did not rely on conventional instruments of international relations. Animosity with both superpowers led Iran to pursue confrontation and aggressive policy, in stark contrast to the mechanisms of the bipolar world system that required an alliance with one power against the other, which Walt highlights as structurally essential to the bipolar world order (Ramezani, 2013/1392: 55-56). The radical policy of exporting the revolution and defending Muslims and liberation movements created as much anxiety among the undemocratic Arab states of the region as pessimism among the superpowers, giving way to Iran's isolation. In practice, Iran had confronted the international system relying on its limited resources; during the eight-year Iran-Iraq war, not only the Arab states but also the West backed Saddam. One of

the most important consequences of the war was that the Iranian leaders learned from their disability to fight on many fronts (Navazani, 2005/1384: 63-70).

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the bipolar structure of the international system ceased, and the US remained the sole global superpower. Many countries of the eastern bloc had no way other than upholding American liberal democracy. The situation for Iran which which opposed the US superpower got complicated; based on its belief system, Iran could not endorse the unipolar status of the former collaborator in the bipolar system.

Then, the defining factor in Iran's foreign policy became the antagonism against the US. Iran found that for fighting its main antagonist and its regional ally Israel, there is a need to build a coalition. The end of the Iraq war in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 paved the way for such a coalition-building project (Hajiyousefi, 2002/1381: 10).

The end of the bipolar system created a new security environment in the region and catalyzed the shift in Iran's foreign policy from idealism to coalition-building (Hajiyousefi, 2005/1384: 6). In other words, the aims of the Islamic Republic changed due to the transformations in the international system and its internal demands. For instance, Iran adopted a pragmatic approach to the transformations in Central Asia and the Caucasus that took into account Russia's place and later had a determining impact on Tajikistan's internal war as well as the Chechnya and Karabagh crises.

On the other hand, with the end of the Cold War, the revolutionary countries needed to expand their methods to resist international pressures and influence the regional environment. Due to their restrictions, such countries naturally face trouble expanding their methods. Among others, such a country could not hope to make regional defense treaties. A country with revisionist views could only influence substate and social forces using its political, defense, and security might. Therefore, states with liberatory inclinations have a hard time carving out strategies and audiences (Mosallanejad, 2011/1390: 119-120).

This way, Iran tried to promote its hostile foreign policy strategy by investing in regional anti-imperialist and anti-Israel groups and movements. In its pragmatic approach, Iran turned to the conventional coalition-building policy and balance-creation for confronting the US with the broader aim of escaping the post-Cold War demand for endorsing the American global power. In other words, acting based on the theory of the Islamic government and the

antagonism against global imperialism and Zionism and improving self-help and containment against the US and its regional allies who militarily hold the upper hand, the Islamic Republic turned to the strategy of creating resistance groups as its asymmetric instrument for ensuring interests and deterring threats.

In other words, the mobilization of overseas groups who favor Iran's ideology was developed as a foreign policy strategy that enabled Iran to withstand US offensive stances. The advent of resistance groups in Iran-West opposition turned into a long story that has lasted from the end of the Cold War onwards.

In fact, the defensive and security mission of the Islamic Republic as a symbol of the "critical power" against the imperial powers represents the opposition against the hegemon's intervention in international politics, while resistance groups and wars have made up the main element in Iran's strategic policy-making in the Middle East. Iran enjoys extensive borderlines with threatening neighbors, leaving it in serious need of power balancing (Mosallanejad and Samadi, 2018/1397: 207). Therefore, in the absence of independent, anti-hegemon states regionwide, Iran strategically needs the cooperation of nonstate groups who are against the oppression system in order to defend its totality, security, and interests against the ever-expanding pressures of the US.

Overall, the collapse of the bipolar system and the end of the imposed war against Saddam convinced Iran to pull another direct confrontation down to the bottom of its defensive-security priorities list and further appreciate the strategy of coalition with resisting non-state groups and ideologies. In other words, the new self-help conditions that had emerged as a result of the multipolar/unipolar structure, in addition to the internal affairs following the Iraq War, resulted in a behavior change in Iran's foreign policy. In consequence, the major reason behind Iran's concentration on resistance groups, based on a strategic logic, comes from the nascent self-help circumstances post-Cold War rather than the formation of the so-called Shiite crescent or the Persianate empire.

4. Advantages of Integrating Resistance Groups into Iran's Defensive Policy

In recent years, Iran has managed to add pressure on its opponents without entering into direct conflict (Farhadi and Nassirzadeh, 2018/1397: 34). Iran has attempted to weaken the US's hostile policies and rearrange the regional order. In this way, Tehran made the most of the post-9/11 regional turmoil and gained major hits by

increasing Washington's security expenses. In fact, low-intensity military and security battles are reflections of Iran's US approach (Mottaghi, 2010: 9-10).

Today, the Islamic Republic has demonstrated the art of gradual occupation without replacing its flags, from Lebanon to Iraq to Yemen. Tehran's invisible hegemony reaches farther than Baghdad, Beirut, Damascus, and Sana'a. Iran's flag does not hang above the national flags in these capital cities, nor do the Iranian military forces march in their streets, but the reach of Iran's influence has rapidly expanded throughout western Asia, and this victory has been recognized by pro-Iran groups throughout the region (Daoud, 2015). After effectively planning and executing its regional strategy, Iran has adapted its military and security apparatus to the realities of the region, enhancing a pragmatic approach to maintaining its security with a satisfactory success rate (Mohamadi, 2018/1397). For instance, in recent years, Iran has relied on its resistance group allies to restrict Israel within its northern borders and contain its maneuvering power, considering its limited geography. In Yemen too, Iran has sponsored Houthis and changed the regional power balance by geopolitically restricting Saudi Arabia in the strategic Bab el-Mandeb and the Red Sea with the least possible expenditure. Some of the potential and achievements of Iran's resistance group allies are as follows:

- Iran's ideology of the "resistance axis" and its propensity for executing asymmetric wars have made possible the weakening of the US's regional presence. The doctrine of asymmetric war and Tehran's reliance on unconventional military methods are two of the US's major challenges, as American analysts maintain that Washington's high military power has preempted Russia and China, a fact that is not still true about Iran (Robinson & et al., 2018: 125-129).
- London based International Institute for Strategic Studies has evaluated Iran's regional military upper hand as the achievement of its resistance group allies. It reports Iran's major weapon to be its reliance on "third-party capacities," or the Shiite militias. Based on this evaluation, the US and its allies in the region might be supreme in their "conventional military power," but Iran's network of influence made up of its proxies is of rather greater influence in comparison to its ballistic missiles, nuclear program, or military forces. This has skewed the balance of "effective forces" involved in the Middle East struggles in favor of Iran. The Institute's analysts believe that in modern times, no

government has been as influential in regional struggles as Iran. Iran's network of influence that works variably from one country to another is Tehran's most important tool for pressuring rivals, regional or international. "Externally, the doctrine aims to raise the risk to adversaries without increasing the risks and costs to Iranian forces" (IISS, 2019). Iran avoids direct confrontation with the US and is aware that such a war takes much more military power than Iran could afford; instead, it pursues asymmetric war through its nonstate allies.

- Iran's advisory involvement in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen has transformed the power and reach of the "resistance axis." Tehran affords promised military bases, dedicated allies, and sustained influence in these areas. Rather than a "sponsor/proxy" relationship, the resistance axis is today more akin to an alliance under the leadership of Iran and centered on the communal security and widespread preemption that is generated from Iran to its allies, thanks to the borderless dispatch of forces. The Atlantic Council describes Iran as having guaranteed its footprint in key Middle Eastern areas. The emergence of the resistance axis is, thus, understood as a tough test of the US Middle East strategy, a direct threat to Washington's regional allies, and a key challenge for the politicians in the White House (Katzman, 2019).
- Idealists highly emphasize the role of ideology in the formation of alliances and coalitions. The reality is, however, that in cases of confronting a grave threat, countries do not overemphasize shared ideologies. For instance, Iran's policy of empowering non-Shiite groups such as Hamas and the Islamic Jihad is justified considering their anti-Zionist stances. In other words, they are ideological aliens whose shared enemy has given them proximity to Iran and are recognized by Iran as members of the resistance axis. Evidently, ideology better strengthens alliances when mixed with shared interests (Ghavam and Imani, 2012/1391: 51). In conclusion, based on Walt's balance of threat theory, Iran's regional influence and coalition-making are far from constructing the Shiite crescent against the Arab and Sunni countries, but rather a response to threats that Tehran receives from the US and its allies.
- Although groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, Badr Organization, Kata'ib Hezbollah, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, and Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba' in Iraq manifestly follow theory of Jurist Guardianship-an indicator of their ties with the Islamic Republic-the success of this theory is not the sole cause behind their

coalition. Beyond the theory of Jurist Guardianship, Iran highlights ideology and symbolism to foster the loyalty of regional advocates. Tehran relied on the ideology of “resistance against US political objectives” and incorporated even Sunni groups such as Hamas, which do not sponsor the Jurist Guardianship doctrine. Another motivation behind the Iran and resistance groups coalition is made up of symbolic figures like the charisma that these groups identify Imam Khomeini, Ayatollah Khamenei, Sayed Hassan Nasrullah, and Ghassem Soleimani, the former Quds Militia leader, with (Smyth, Michetti and Daniels, 2017).

- Prior to the US attack on Iraq and the occurrence of the Islamic Awakening¹, the power balance favored the Arab conservative countries of the region, something Shiites later managed to change. More importantly, with the advancement of the Shiite culture as a result of regional transformations like the promotion of a Shiite government in Iraq, the situation was ripe for Iran to both add to its preemptive might and revive the Shiite culture, in addition to forming close relationships with various areas and underpinning an integrated civilization (Adami and Keshavarz Moghaddam, 2015/1394).

Overall, the expansion of links throughout the resistance front and the geopolitical connection from Tehran to Beirut to Baghdad and Damascus have upgraded the strategic status of this front even more. In these situations, the risk of integration to an inaccessible point has turned into a serious threat to the oppressor regime. Henry Kissinger, former US foreign minister, deemed Iran the most potential country in the region for making a hegemon vis-à-vis the ISIS and reminded that the former is, as a result, a much more threatening enemy for the US than the latter (Sohrabi, 2017/1396: 44). In the viewpoint of the American analysts at the Washington Institute, vast regional influence and reliance on resistance groups are Iran's main power levers against the US, which threatens the latter's interests in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen (Knights, 2017).

The outcome of these transformations in the regional power balance favors Iran. The formation of the unified transnational army of resistance is one of the most important achievements of Iran's regional program: a borderless army with strategic depth that is able to define defense in farther spots than Iran's real territorial borders. The “global mobilization of Islam” under the leadership of Iran and of multi-

1. The “Arab spring” in western literature

national layers can promote Tehran's anti-US interests in Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, and other strategic points without the need for considerable field presence by Iran (Clarke and Smyth, 2017).

5. Challenges of Integrating Resistance Groups into Iran's Defensive Policy

Resorting to the strategy of resistance groups in the region can entail limitations and harm to Iran. Some of the probable harms are as follows:

- Basically, proxy wars are suitable for purposes like frustrating the rival's military, political, economic, social, and ideological resources. Involving the rival in a multi-layer front is the erosive strategy of proxy wars (Shirazi, 2015/1394). Thereupon, involving Iran in proxy wars to diminish its regional influence is among the strategies that the US and its allies have adopted in recent years (Ghiasvandi and Tarkashvand, 2017/1396). Also, the adversaries of Iran have attempted to build coalitions and take up strategies to prevent its increasing influence and geopolitical upper hand in the region (Ghiasvandi and Tarkashvand, 2017/1396: 197). The reality is that Iran has not managed to reach a turning point through these wars. Therefore, Iran needs to take into account the economic and political obstacles in its way of evolving into a regional power (Pankratenko, 2014).
- With the passage of time, the US and its allies, including Turkey, Israel, and Saudi Arabia, have made a key strategic move in reproducing the takfiri, Salafi movement of Al-Nusrah and the ISIS in Iraq and Syria, Ahrar al-Sunnah in Lebanon, Bukuharam in Nigeria, and al-Shabab in Somalia as the antidotes to the Islamic Awakening. This is done with the purpose of containing, controlling, and deviating from the Islamic Awakening movement and dissolving the geopolitical chain of resistance. These groups rely on aggressive behavior and psychological tactics to confront their Shiite counterparts (Mahmoudi Raja, 2015/1394).
- The West and regional allies have led the proxy wars by indoctrinating Iranophobia, Shiite phobia, and securitization of Iran's regional role in order to push the other states of the region into direct and indirect confrontation with Iran. Relying on the proxy, terrorist groups such as the Taliban, Al-Nusrah, and ISIS, which maintain ideologic divergence with Iran, and attempts to manipulate Iran's civil society by sponsoring the opposition like

- the MEK, Pazhak, and Jundallah are other efforts of Iran's enemies (Mardaneh, 2015/1394).
- In the US strategy, the expenses of confronting Shiite empowerment and the ideas of the Islamic Republic in the region should not be paid out of the US's pocket but that of the takfiri groups. The US has come to the conclusion that the real Middle East does not afford the US's maximum interests. Therefore, foisting internal wars, changing powerful states into weak semi-states in the resistance axis, and their probable dissolution could better fulfill the US's interests (Adami and Keshavarz Moghaddam, 2015/1394).
 - At the regional level, Saudi Arabia has multiplied the geopolitical balancing and Shiite/Sunni polarization project by sponsoring the takfiri groups in Yemen, Iraq, and Syria in the western environment of Iran and lowering the security of Iran's borders with Afghanistan and Pakistan on the eastern side. At the international level, the most important element influential on Saudi Arabia's foreign policy against takfiri terrorism is the role of this country in the proxy strategy of the US's foreign policy. In fact, Saudi Arabia takes advantage of its geopolitical potential as the origin of takfiri terrorism and acts as the US agent in the anti-Iran proxy war (Hedayati and Moradi, 2014/1393: 25).
 - The West uses imperialist rhetoric in judging Iran's regional popularity and projects such an imperialist nature to Iran's regional influence in order to indoctrinate the idea, that rivaling the US, Iran seeks its own hegemon place; the "Shiite crescent" idea that proposes this allegation is in line with this propaganda policy. This is while, from the ideological viewpoint of the Islamic Republic, such hegemony is outlawed regardless of who takes the place.
 - Restricting Iran's defense of resistance groups is part of the US policy of maximum pressure on the Islamic Republic. The US has used information operations and diplomatic measures to drive a wedge between Tehran and its proxies, thereby reducing Iran's regional support. In its proxy wars against Iran, the US has always appeared as a supporter of Iran's regional rivals instead of entering direct confrontation with Iran's proxies like the resistance axis-this was true at least before Trump's administration (Fisher, 2016).
 - Iran's financial and spiritual support of Hezbollah, Hamas, Hashd al-Sha'abi, and Ansarollah-elemental to the security calculations of their countries of origin-has bought Tehran the accusation of

building its own military army in these countries. These countries ask themselves, "What if Iran intends to replicate this successful experience by establishing militia branches there one day?" Since most of such militias are made up of Shiite forces, Iran is prone to another accusation, that of sectarianism. Such a conclusion has converged anti-Iran regional forces and motivated them to support Sunni militias in return while, at the same time, persecuting the Shiite population in their countries under the conviction of being Iran's fifth column (Hosseini, 2018/1397).

- One of Iran's strategic weaknesses in supporting its proxies is the inevitability of taking responsibility for every action they take. Even if some of these actions are against Iran's interests, Iran might need to pay for things that could have been avoided. Iran's presence in other countries justifies the accusation of involvement in certain creepy actions (Hosseini, 2018/1397).

Overall, protecting the resistance axis has become an indispensable part of Iran's security doctrine and the mutual security dependence of Iran, and this axis is of major importance in Iran's foreign policy. It is for this reason that the downfall of Bashar Assad and the Shiite government of Iraq has led to the downturn of the resistance axis and Shiite discourse, Iran's isolation, losses in Syria and access to Hezbollah and Hamas, the dominance of Saudi Arabia and anti-Iran states, and the eventual decrease in Iran's security rate (Adami and Keshavarz Moghaddam, 2015/1394).

In the meantime, although Iran has earned much self-confidence and courage as a result of adopting a counter-proxy strategy, the deep geopolitical and sectarian rivalries in western Asia have never let any state in the region reach stability and peace. The formation of a coalition of Sunni states under the leadership of Saudi Arabia pushes Iran towards reciprocity. Considering the revolutionary government in power in Iran and its opposition to the Salafi governments of the region on the one hand and the intervention of transregional powers on the other hand, Iran's national security is facing challenges. As a result, the Iranian leaders need to avoid overestimating their regional and international capabilities. The Islamic Republic is advised to adopt a more conventional solution to turn all these militia groups into legal political groups and parties in their countries of origin (as demonstrated by the relative success of Hezbollah in Lebanon). The incorporation of these groups into their own legal and civil structures and/or integrating their military branches into their national army can create the possibility of

supporting them in rather formal, international legal procedures in addition to their integration into the political context of their countries (Fisher, 2016).

Conclusion

Understandably, for the Islamic Republic, nothing is more important than preserving national security and territorial totality. The imposed war with Iraq and the alignment of most western and Arab states with Saddam demonstrated that Iran suffers from “strategic solitude.” Defensive realists indicate concepts such as security and power to evaluate Iran's strategy of foreign policy after the collapse of the Soviet Union as the manifestation of the Iranian leaders' perception of the US threat and the resulting preference for striking a power balance against it. Iran's regional plan ideally terminates its strategic solitude and puts it at the epicenter of a geopolitical unit called the Shiite crescent in the language of the West and the Middle East Arab states.

Iran seeks to confront the US's unilateralism and threats with a degree of regional balance and relies on resistance groups to contain its increasing regional presence. In other terms, Iran's strategic approach to the US is a balance of threat with emphasis on expanding regional influence and reliance on resistance groups; every regional interaction by Iran must be understood based on this logic. In fact, due to economic and military limitations in confronting the US and the alignment of all regional states with US politics, Iran has defined its regional strategy based on asymmetric tactics and cooperation with non-state actors.

In this way, the resistance axis serves Iran's balance of threat against Israel, the US, and Saudi Arabia. The members of this coalition commit to communal security, and Iran acts as the underwriter of this coalition. In return, these allies widely provide preemption and bargaining power for Iran across the region and the world. In conclusion, the resistance axis guarantees Iran geopolitical self-confidence, preemption, strategic diversity, and an increased risk of military attack.

Based on the theory of threat balance and regarding Iran's perception of threat on the part of the US and the principles of this threat including power, geographic proximity (US military bases in the Middle East), offensive power, and offensive intents, Iran has little choice but striking balance against the US. Meanwhile, the current article offers the following points in contemplating this strategy:

- 1- The strategy of balance of threat is a rational and economical one, considering Iran's capabilities and regional specifications. In fact, Iran has developed its options for confronting US threats by creating a regional army and, in the meantime, challenging the US hegemony without direct confrontation with either the US or its allies.
- 2- As a state surrounded by regional and transregional forces, Iran is by no means recommended to abandon its alliance with resistance groups and nonstate allies or set aside its current policies in Lebanon, Afghanistan, Iraq, etc. under any circumstances. Otherwise, it will lose the chance to resist the opponent states and takfiri, Salafi groups' attacks on its main territory.
- 3- The resistance strategy has up until now relied on resistance groups in a negative way to undo the rivals' offensive attacks. In other words, supporting resistance groups has hardly gone beyond nullifying the plans of the US and its allies in the region. Although preventing US achievements in the downfall of Bashar Assad, supremacy in Iraq and Lebanon, and the crackdown of Houthis in Yemen should not be underestimated, the ultimate success is realized when Iran can introduce a regional security army that maintains a sustainable balance.
- 4- The ongoing cycle of counter-proxy wars, coupled with Iran's enduring struggle under severe economic sanctions and the absence of any regional power achieving decisive victory or complete dominance, significantly compounds the complexities of the region's security landscape. This situation fosters deep-seated distrust among neighboring states, squanders human and material resources, and perpetuates prolonged global interventionism. Therefore, it is necessary for Iran to avoid extremism by adopting this strategy.
- 5- Since it was after 9/11 that, for the first time, the US current administration, as Iran's main enemy, defined US Middle East policy based on systematic pressure over Iran's collaboration with resistance groups, Iran's leaders must consider developing a balance of threat of a non-military asymmetric nature and applying it to contain the US's political, economic, and military plans in the region; this would be possible by attempting to use its soft power to turn these resistance groups into powerful and practical actors in their countries.
- 6- This strategy has relevantly managed to fulfill Iran's interests in the turbulent region of the Middle East and keep threats away from the main territory of Iran. Meanwhile, considering the capricious

international situations and regional alliances, the feasibility of this policy might be challenged in the future. Therefore, Iran must target generic economic, social, and cultural progress to provide a role model for good governance in the region. Otherwise, Iran's influence and the popularity of resistance groups will be received with hesitance in the target countries.

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