

IRAN'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS MIDDLE EAST: A CASE OF SMART POWER

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Abstract

Since Iranian Revolution of 1979, Iran has been perceived as rogue and revisionist state that has desired to maximise its security and has redefined regional balance of power that once favoured US and its regional allies. Last four decades sketch a history of economic sanctions and political pressures on Iran by US and its regional allies to halt Iran's quest to shift regional balance of power in its favour. Despite of counter strategies by a strong alliance of regional and extra-regional powers, Iran has successfully managed to create a pro-Iranian block that is composed of both state and non-state actors (mainly proxies). Iranian success in creating a pro-Iran block is widely perceived as the result of penetration of Iranian proxies in the region but this study argues, Iran's hard and soft power tools (smart power) shares the synergy of revolutionary ideology and interest and they assist each other mainly in states, having weak central authority and disrupted state structures in Middle East.

Keywords: *Iran, Revolutionary Ideology, Smart Power, US, Non-State Actors, Middle East*

Introduction

American invasions on Afghanistan and Iraq, Arab spring and rise of ISIS have provided Iran with an environment based on opportunities to be exploited and threats to be eliminated. Iran has successfully deterred

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the threats and consolidated its power in the Middle East by exploiting opportunities and created a pro-Iran alliance or block in the region.¹ This study aims to explore: how Iran could manage to evolve the regional balance of power into its favour through creating an alliance with state and non-state actors? The study argues, Iran has employed both hard and soft power tools to deter threats in the region against its security and exploited opportunities to maximise its regional influence by reaching both state and non-state actors. Both hard and soft power tools aren't only supplementary to each other but also shares the synergy of interest. The lens of Smart Power, as defined by Joseph Nye will be employed to prove the constructed argument. The study will employ the interviews of scholars like Arshin Moghadam², Bahador Aminian³ and Mohammad Reza Takhsheed⁴ to support the above hypothesis.

Scholars including Natalia Punic, narrow down the Iranian aspirations to Shia' Muslims. By opting an active policy guided by smart power, Iran has exploited soft power tools based on ideals of Iranian Revolution of 1979, its self-perception as leader of Shi'a Islam by cultivating a web of socio-cultural and political links assisted by its hard power tools, mainly demonstrated by the arming and financing of Shi'a militias throughout the region.⁵ But this study has explored Iranian role in Syria, Palestine and Yemen, where Iran support militant groups like Houthis and Hamas and also tries to create goodwill with sunni (Hamas) and non-twelver Shia' Arab street (Syria, Yemen). The study builds its argument on hypothesis, "Iran's soft power tools assist Iran's hard power tools and strategic goals in Middle East and its hard power tools assist its soft power tools. Smart exploration through smart power tools and tactics lead significant choices resulted in consolidation of power across from Yemen to Palestine."

¹ Amin Saikal, "Iran and the Changing Regional Environment," In Shahram Akbarzadeh, Dara Conduit, ed. *Rouhani's First Two Years in Office*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 19-20.

² Arshin Adib Moghaddam, interview via email by Mehreen Bibi, June 12, 2019, Centre for Iranian Studies at the London Middle East Institute.

³ Bahador Aminian Jazi, interview via email by Mehreen Bibi, February 23, 2019, Institute of Training of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tehran.

⁴ Mohammad Reza Takhsheed, interview via email by Mehreen Bibi, February 23, 2019, Faculty of Law and Political Science, University of Tehran.

⁵ Natalia Paunic, "The Rising Shia Crescent: Iranian Smart Power and Implications for Middle East, Central Asia and Persian Gulf," *Carleton Review of International Affairs* no.3 (2016): 71.

Theoretical Framework: What is Smart Power?

This study will adopt Joseph Nye's definition of power to look at Iranian successful ventures in the Middle East through its proxies mostly driven by its ideology and Iran's soft power expeditions to create a lasting block in its neighbourhood. Nye splits power into hard and soft forms and defines Power, "as an ability to affect others to achieve the outcomes one wants". Nye calls this, the traditional definition of power that according to him is losing its significance due to the factors like economic growth, education and technology as societies have transformed from agrarian to Industrial.⁶ Nye believes, states demonstrate this ability of affecting others behaviour in desired manner through, coercion, attraction and payments and categorises coercion and payment under Hard power while, attraction with Soft power. By combining both Soft and Hard power, states can produce effective foreign policy. The combination of both faces of power is called Smart Power, the term Nye coined in 2003.⁷ Nye differentiates both faces of power, "one country gets other countries to want what it wants-might be called co-optive or soft power in contrast with the hard or command power of ordering others to do what it wants".⁸ Nye defines Soft power as the ability of states to achieve the desired ends through attraction, "the sources of soft power are the attractiveness of country's culture, political ideals and policies". While hard power on the other hand is commonly defined as, "to shape the behaviours of a political entity by other political entity, by using military and economic means like cohesive political power, military aggression or economic power". According to Nye, by coining the term, smart power, he aims to develop the argument that soft power alone can't become sufficient enough to produce successful choices by states to pursue national interest. Nye believes, state needs the combination of both hard and soft power to successfully pursue national interest.⁹ Smart power's, hard and soft components create a complex and interactive relationship with each other but this neither makes them perfect substitutes nor perfect complements for each other. A state's hard defences can be strengthened by a strong soft positive image while hard force in the wars of liberation, intervention on humanitarian ground can acquire a positive image for the intervening state.¹⁰ Like Hillary Clinton, while speaking to Senate Foreign Relations Committee profess the need of

⁶ Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power," *Foreign Policy* no. 80 (1990): 154.

⁷ Joseph S. Nye, "Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power," *Foreign Affairs* 88, no.4 (2009): 160.

⁸ Nye, "Soft Power," 166.

⁹ Nye, "Get Smart," 160-163.

¹⁰ Robert Gilpin, "The Rise of American Hegemony," In *Two Hegemonies: Britain 1846-1914 and the United States 1941-2001*, ed. Patrick Karl O'Brien and Armand Clesse (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2002), 165-182.

using smart power, "We must use what has been called 'smart power,' the full range of tools...diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal, and cultural." Hence, Smart power is the ability of an actor, to effectively merge the elements of both hard and soft power in a way that makes both faces of power mutually complementary and leads to attain the ends in desired manner.¹¹ This trend can be seen in Iranian case as Iranian self-perception (revolutionary ideals) and its regional aspiration are integrated that compels Iran to combine hard and soft tools of power to maximise its security and regional influence.

Iran's Foreign Policy Aspirations: The Need for Smart Power

Arshin Moghaddam writes, Islamic Republic institutionalised "utopian-romantic" ideals, used as attractive slogans during 1979's Revolution in its foreign policy discourses. Such romanticism hasn't been discarded by Tehran but integrated with its grand strategic preferences. Iran and Iranians hold a nostalgic self-perception about Iran's status and role in international affairs.¹² To attain such fantasised amalgamation of power and ideology, Iran needs to pursue a foreign policy that is comprehensive and embraces all aspects of power. The study argues that Iranian foreign policy choices are smart and combination of hard and soft power tools, for some to understand this smart approach; one must understand Iran's aspirations in the region. Iran today may be a shadow of glorious Persian empires but Iran never forgets to uphold its pride in its splendid political and intellectual history. Iranians like nationalist Russians who strongly believe in natural right of maintaining paramount influence in near abroad, also believe that it should develop its sphere of influence within its former imperial boundaries. Even Islamic Republic can't eliminate this thirst based on Iranzamin (Iranian's Land) and is stapled in Supreme Leader, Khamenie's approach.¹³ According to Bahadur Aminiyan, "Without understanding, Nizam ul Mulk Toosi, the Mideval Persian Philosopher, Iran's foreign policy can't be understood. (He wrote, Seyasatnama, the book of guide for rulers. He smartly created balance between political approaches and religion by evaluating the realities of politics and offer an insight about the role of soldiers, finance officers and

¹¹ Mandip Singh, "From Smart Power to Sharp Power: How China Promotes her National Interests," *Journal of Defence Studies* 12, no.3 (2018): 7. <https://idsa.in/system/files/jds/jds-12-3-2018-from-smart-power-to-sharp-power-msingh.pdf>.

¹² Arshin Adib Moghaddam, "Islamic Utopian Romanticism and the Foreign Policy Culture of Iran," *Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 14, no. 3 (2005): 267.

¹³ Michael Rubin, "Strategies Underlying Iran's Soft Power," *American Enterprise Institute*. 7 March 2017, <http://www.aei.org/publication/strategies-underlying-iranian-soft-power/>.

other members in the power structure. Moreover, Aminian is of the view that Iran in Middle East has tried to contact people (as Iran is part of region and knows the region well) by appealing them unlike United States, that solely relied on hard power".¹⁴ This is what Nye has explained as it's explained above. So Iranian strategies in Middle East can't be looked through realist lens or ideological lens separately but should be looked through the combination of both lenses as they supplemented each other.

Iran and Soft Power or Qodrat e Narm

Before exploring Iranian strategies guided by soft power, the study will define, how Iran defines Qodrat e Narm? Arshin Moghadam says, "for Iran, Qodrat-e-narm or Soft Power is a derivative of the doctrines of "dawat"(to invite) and "tabligh"(to preach) which were central to Ayatollah Khomeini's efforts to export the revolution, without the "barrel of a gun". Whereas the discourse of Khomeini was radical, Qodrat-e narm translates into multilateral engagement and cultural diplomacy, for instance the network of Iranian bonyads, cultural centres and universities with branches all over the world".¹⁵ Although Iranian Revolution of 1979 is widely speculated as a threat by Iran's neighbourhood and West due to Iranian rhetoric of "aspiration for exporting" revolutionary ideals that's its soft power and Iranian support to militant groups in the region is perceived as acts of instability.¹⁶ But the soft power tools employed by Islamic Republic aren't benign and integrated with its expansionist agenda. From cultural diplomacy to charity, Iran exploits all ventures to create goodwill for its revolutionary ideals and its proxies in the region, mainly in states with weak central authority. Soft power tools employed in Middle East are as under.

Tools of Soft Power Employed by Iran

Islamic Republic of Iran's growing regional influence is an indispensable factor to calculate regional power dynamics. More emphasis has been laid on Iran's hard power venture in the Middle East while its endeavours to increase its influence through soft power aren't well documented. Qodrat e narm/ soft power has taken central stage in Iranian politicians, academics and policy makers rhetorical lexicon.¹⁷ We can see,

¹⁴ Ira M. Lapidus, *History of Islamic Societies* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 151.

¹⁵ Arshin Moghaddam, interview via email (June 12, 2019).

¹⁶ Shirin T. Hunter, "Iran and the Spread of Revolutionary Islam," *Third World Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (1988): 730.

¹⁷ William Bullock Jickens, " Bonyads as Agents and Vehicles of Islamic Republic's Soft Power," In *Rouhani's First Two Years in Office* ed. Shahram Akbarzadeh, Dara Conduit (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 155.

consensus among all factions of Iranian political stage. Even conservative Ayatullah Misbah Yazdi has laid emphasis on use of religious soft Power¹⁸ and moderate President Rouhani, in his 2013 presidential campaign stated, "Iran needs soft power."¹⁹ Iran has exploited a wide range of areas to spread its soft power both through state and non-state actors. Islamic Cultural and Relations Organisation, bonyads (non-state welfare organisations), state media, economic influence through state and non-state actors, educational institutes, utilisation of shared religious bond and political influence through pro-Iranian elements.

Direct Community Engagement

In order to reach people Iran has developed mechanisms, the most important one is ICRO. ICRO (Islamic Cultural and Relations Organisation) or *Saazman e Ferhang o Irtebatat e Islami* runs a state-run chain of cultural centres (along with Iranian embassies) propagating the ideals of Iranian Revolution, Persian language and civilization and improving relations between Muslim countries. ICRO works directly under Vilayat e Faqih (the supreme leader), hence exporting Iran's regional foreign policy goals, successfully working in Middle Eastern states including Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia.²⁰ This policy of direct engagement with local communities has created loyalty between Shiites and Iranian Government. Promotion of religious tourism in Iran and Iraq falls under this strategy.²¹ According to Jeffery Haynes, Iran's cultural soft power can be characterised in three ways, Persian language, Twelver Shiism and Iranian traditions. Very few Iraqis speak Persian and one can't rightly predict how much Iranian traditions are popular in Arab Iraq but Iran's satellite channel Al Alam has won a great deal of audience as majority Iraqis are followers of Twelver Shiism. Hawza of Najaf is under Ayatullah Ali Sistani, and contrary to Qom and Mashad its quietest Shia' tradition but it is the oldest Shia' hawza and has regained its past glory after the fall of Saddam.

In reaching to people, or Arab street policy, Iran targeted both Shiites and Sunnis. Even Iran successfully attracted the Zaidis of Yemen who aren't follower of Iranian official Twelver Shia strand. Many of them are part of Houthi movement. Such as Abdul Malik Houthi, the leader of Houthis, whose admiration for Khomeini and Hezbollah's Hassan Nasrullah as symbol of resistance to colonialism and zoinism is borrowed from the rhetoric of Iranian Revolutionary mentality, slogans like Death to

¹⁸ Jeffrey Haynes, *Religious Transnational Actors and Soft Power* (Routledge, 2016).

¹⁹ Akbarzadeh, and Conduit ed. *Iran in the World*, 155.

²⁰ "Culture and Relations Organization," Islamic Culture and Relations Organisation, <http://icro.ir/>, Accessed on April 20, 2019.

²¹ Christopher Forrest, "Coercive Engagement: A Security Analysis of Iranian Support to Iraqi Shia Militias," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 3, no. 2 (2009): 114.

America and Death to Israel can be quoted as example in this regard.²² Supreme Leader Ayatullah Ali Khamenei has ordered to renovate the shrine Nasser Haqq, who was Zaidi Imam of 3rd century in order to strengthen ties with Zaidis.²³

Iran certainly is the strongest candidate in post-Saddam Iraq, an Iraq with weak central authority. Iraq's 60-65 percent population is Shiite and fall of Saddam provided opportunity for Iran under Ahmadinijjad to exploit its religious soft power in Iraq. Iran actively supported American stance of making Iraq a democratic country in hope of having a Shiite dominated government in Baghdad with which Iran could develop understanding based on religious affiliation. Such policies of using soft power in Iraq are contrary to Iranian policies opted right after revolution when government largely relied on funding Shiite resistance groups to export revolution. Iran's soft power ventures in Iraq also countered Saudi influence. Iran has better military capability in Iraq and Saudi Arabia is trying to exploit the dissatisfaction of Sunni Iraqis. Iran is struggling to win the heart of common Iraqis. According to Geoffrey Kemp, Iran's capability and will to influence events in Iraq are high both in terms of soft and hard power.²⁴

Iran's community outreach isn't limited to Shiites only, it has also maintains links with Sunni and Kurdish parties. Former Iraqi president Jalal Talabani has longstanding ties with Iran because of Islamic Republic's support for Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan party during 1990s.²⁵ This helped Iran to influence political process in Iraq. Muqtada al Sadr, despite of his strong nationalistic orientation couldn't resist to act as pro-Iranian militia leader. He placed his followers in ministries like Health ministry where he could enhance his influence at grass root level. Khodair al Khozei, an important pro-Iranian member of Da'wa party placed members of the party in schools across Iraq. Controlling Health and Education ministries, means transferring Iranian influence to the micro level where like-minded doctors and teachers are hired regardless of their qualifications.²⁶ So the community outreach serves dual purpose for Iran not only creates favourable environment for Iran in public but also assist Iran in creating and increasing influence in political spheres of the hosting states.

²² Dayrl F. Urbina, "IRGC and Iranian Soft and Hard Power Influence in Middle East," PhD diss., (University of Central Florida, 2018), vi.

²³ Urbina, "IRGC and Soft and Hard Power of Iran," viii.

²⁴ Haynes, *Religious Transnational Actors and Soft Power*.

²⁵ Quil Lawrence, *Invisible Nation: How the Kurds' Quest for Statehood Is Shaping Iraq and the Middle East* (New York: Walker & Company, 2008), 78-79.

²⁶ Rubin, *Underlying Iranian Strategies*.

Bonyads: Non-State Charities and Assistance for IRGC

Bonyads, the parastatal organisations, emblemize and propagate mainly the Islamic Republic's revolutionary religious discourses and to a lesser extent, Persian identity through business, religious and secular philanthropy and media both at home and abroad. Bonyads ability to influence and effectively instrumentalize Iranian foreign policy agendas, is guaranteed by their links/connection with policy makers.²⁷ Today, the most important bonyads are Foundation for the Oppressed and Disabled or Bonyad-e-Mosta'zafin va Janbazan, Martyr's and Veterans' Foundation or Bonyad-e-Shahid va Isargaran, Imam Khomeini Relief Committee or Komiteh ye Emdad-e-Emam Khomeini, Islamic Propagation Organization or Sazeman-e-Tablighat-e-Eslami, 15 Khordad Foundation or Bonyad-e-Panzdah-e-Khordad and Aastan-e-Qods-e-Razavi.²⁸ Being trans-national charitable foundations, bonyads provide targeted social welfare, philanthropic, cultural and commercial activities in Iran and abroad. For example, Sa'adi foundation propagates for Persian language and literature, 15 Khordad Foundation commemorates revolutionary struggles, Bonyad e Farabi promotes Iranian cinema and bonyads like Global Society for Reconciliation between Islamic Schools offer religious services. Islamic Propagation Organisation or Sazeman-e-Tablighat-e-Islami and Resalat Foundation or Bonyad-e-Resalat are influential vehicles for disseminating Islamic ideology. They are energetic partisans for Revolutionary government to fulfil the revolutionary mandate to promote a just society for the oppressed that gives Iran a mandate to appeal through soft power.²⁹ Bonyads account for between 30 and 40 percent of the Iranian economy and formerly receive 58 percent of state budgets. Bonyads do businesses outside Iran in free and unchecked manner providing them with leverage to appeal and attract in more systematic manner and assist Iran's hard power tools like IRGC, Hezbollah, Hamas and other groups through soft war to counteract Western influence. These groups, having bonyads help and support enjoy great popularity for regional communities, often across the sectarian lines.³⁰ The bonyads on the other hand provide enduring support to Hezbollah of Lebanon directly and indirectly through the IRGC. The establishment of a seminary by Hezbollah's first leader for Lebanese clerics was supported by Bonyad e

²⁷ Suzanne Maloney, "Agents or Obstacles? Parastatal Foundations and Challenges for Iranian Development," in Parvin Alizadeh, *The Economy of Iran: Dilemmas of an Islamic State*, ed. (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 150.

²⁸ Akbarzadeh and Conduit, *Iran in the world*, 157.

²⁹ Suzanne Maloney, "Islamism and Iran's Postrevolutionary Economy: The Case of the Bonyads," in *Gods, Guns, and Globalization: Religious Radicalism and International Political Economy*, ed. Mary Ann Tetrault and Robert A. Denemark, (Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner, 2004), 198.

³⁰ Akbarzadeh and Conduit ed. *Iran in the World*, 158.

Shaeed that provided impetus for establishment of Hezbollah.³¹ The bonyads also support Iranian hard power initiatives with soft power value. Thus the contribution to Iranian soft power counter intuitively revolves around the fact that soft power can be propagated by “command power equally.”³²

Iran’s Media Diplomacy: Aiming to Shape Minds

According to article 75 of constitution “freedom of expression and publication of ideas by the Radio and Television must be in line with Islamic laws and national interests.”³³ Since its inception, Islamic Republic has smartly employed electronic media as a strategic tool to disseminate its ideology. *Sazman-e-Seda va Sima-ye Jomhuri-ye Eslami-ye Iran* or Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), founded after revolution, is the key state agency that is in charge of the propagation of the audiovisual policy of Tehran. According to Peirri Pahalvi, *Sazman-e-Seda va Sima-ye Jomhuri-ye Eslami-ye Iran’s* world service functions under supervision of the Valiy-e-Faqih (the Supreme Leader) and serves to facilitate the achievement of Iran’s strategic objectives, by promoting the reputation of the Islamic Republic in positive manner. Through IRIB’s Arabic satellite television channels like Sahar, Jamejam, Al-Alam, and Press TV (English and Spanish Television), Iran has targeted millions to promote Islamic Republic’s image as “Moderate Islamic democracy.”³⁴

Iran’s Al-Alam is a news channel with 24 hours news service in Arabic.³⁵ Al-Alam’s professional and slick coverage effectively shaped perceptions of viewers against U.S, prepared the groundwork for the new regional dynamics in which Iran emerged as a crucial power broker in Iraq.³⁶ Al-Alam didn’t achieve significant success only in instable states like Iraq and Lebanon but also in rich Arab states like Bahrain where Saudi and Bahraini authorities blame Al Alam for inciting population to engage in violence and sabotage, to mislead their Arab population to flame sectarian

³¹ Misbah Mahjub, *Hezbollah Va Rahbari-Ye Seyyed Hassan Nasrullah* [Hezbollah and the Leadership of Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah], trans. Mohammadreza Mirzajan (Tehran: Mu’asase-ye Farhangi-honari-ye Qadr-e Velayat [CulturalArtistic Institute of the Guardianship’s Esteem], (2012), 32–33.

³² Akbarzadeh and Conduit, *Iran in the World*, 167.

³³ “Iran: Constitution 1979,” Ace Project: The Electoral Knowledge Network, <http://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/asia/IR/Iran%20Constitution%201979.pdf/view> Accessed April 23, 2019.

³⁴ Pierre Pahlavi, “Understanding Iran’s Media Diplomacy,” *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 6, no. 2 (2012): 22-24.

³⁵ Al Alam TV, <https://www.alalamtv.net/aboutus>, Accessed March 16, 2019.

³⁶ “Iran TV Channels Targets Iraq,” *BBC News*, April 3, 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2913593.stm.

strife in their states. This shows the level of Iranian influence in the region through media as soft power tool.³⁷

Press TV (started in 2007) not only endeavours to convey Iranian perspective on its nuclear program, U.S presence in the region but also tries to shape perceptions in the favour of “resistance movements” like Hezbollah and Hamas.³⁸ Press TV has conducted and conducts live broadcasts for Hassan Nasrullah’s speeches and gives coverage to Sadar movement in Iraq. Both face censorships and lack of access to international regional audiences. Press TV by providing opportunity to these symbols of Iranian resistance has played pivotal role in increasing their popularity as carious polls have described Hassan Nasrullah as one of the most popular figures in Middle East.³⁹

Education: A Tool to Spread Khomienism and Jihadism

Education is an important tool for Iran. In religious and theocratic sphere, it’s the Al- Mustufa International University with headquarters in Qom (Iran’s religious capital), that serves Iranian interest through a wide network of institutions working in the Middle East. It provides missionaries for the Arab and rest of the world to spread Iran’s ideological goals.⁴⁰ Al-Mustafa network not only produces subjects loyal to the ideology of Vilayat-e-Faqih but also provides a recruiting pool for IRGC’s Quds Force. Such ideological underpinnings definitely motivate the graduates to fight in conflict zones and spread Khomenist ideology in their home countries.⁴¹ Since its establishment, Al Mustafa International, 30,000 future clerics and religious scholars has been graduate from Al Mustafa International, which serves in different countries spreading Khomenist ideology.⁴² Iran has also offered scholarships to Yemeni students belong to the Houthis and the Zaidis belong to the tribes of Sheikhs. Zaidis don’t follow Twellver Shia strand. By offering scholarships to such people in

³⁷ Firouz Sedarat, “Sattelite TV News Channels Widen Iranian Arab Gulf,” *The Reuters*, December 14, 2011, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-arabs-iran-television-idUSTRE7BD11Q20111214>.

³⁸ Ramin Mostaghim and Borouzu Daraghi, “Iran Starts its Own English News Channels,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 13, 2007, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2007-jul-13-fg-presstv13-story.html>.

³⁹ Jordan Stekler, “Iran’s Ideological Expansion,” *United against Nuclear Iran*, June 18, 2018, https://www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com/sites/default/files/expansion/iran%27s_ideological_expansion_report.pdf.

⁴⁰ Hasan Dai, “Al Mustufa International: Iran’s Network of Global Schools,” *Iranian American Forum*, April 12, 2016, <http://iranian-americans.com/irans-export-of-islamic-fundamentalism-al-mustafa-global-training-centers-2/>.

⁴¹ Jordan Stekler, “Iran’s Ideological Expansion,” 7-8.

⁴² Dai, “Al Mustufa International: Iran’s Network of Global Schools.”

Qom Iran tries to increase its through conversion of people.⁴³ Scholarships aren't limited to religious studies, but also cover Persian language and literature. Iran has opened Departments for Persian language and literature in different universities in its allies like Damascus University (opened in 2005).⁴⁴

Trade, Aid, and Financial Dependence

Since 2003, Iraq has become an important economic partner making Iran its second largest trading partner. Iran's soft economic power in Iraq isn't limited to Iranian exports to Iraqi markets but heavy investment in religious tourism, electricity, hydrocarbon, and construction and banking sectors. Here too, Iran remained conscious of Iraq's Shia centres as much of its investment is directed towards Holy cities of Kerbala, Najjaf and southern Iraq. Iraq is Iran's second largest non-oil market in 2007.⁴⁵ Iraq imports mostly non-oil commodities such as cement, gas and electricity. Despite of international sanctions, trade between two states increased in 2019 as Iran exported close to US \$9 billion goods.⁴⁶ Iranian soft power investment in Iraq doesn't aim only creating a favourable environment for Iran through construction of holy shrines and promotion of religious tourism but Iran is also concerned about the centrality of Najjaf in Shiite world that offers a parallel quietist Shiite tradition contrary to Vilayat e Faqih of Iran. Positioning for clerical succession of Najjaf after Grand Ayatullah Ali Sistani (who is facing health issues) is a concern of great importance for Iran. In absence of clear succession alternative, Iran tries hard to expand influence of Vilayat e Faqih in Najjaf. Muqtada al Sadr, who has lived in Qom and studied under Ayatullah Kazem al Haeri who is an Iraqi cleric but upholds Khomeni's version of clerical rule of Vilayat e Faqih. Appointment of Ayatullah Abdullah Mahmood Sharoudi as the Guardian of the Jurists for in Iraq in 2011 by Ayatullah Khamenei was an attempt to expand Iranian influence but strongly opposed by Ayatullah Ali Sistani. Hence one can conclude that

⁴³ Daryl Urbina, "IRGC and Iranian Soft and Hard Power Influence in Middle East," (B.S Thesis, University of Central Florida, 2018).

⁴⁴ Nadia von Maltzahn, "The Case Of Iranian Cultural Diplomacy In Syria," *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* no. 2 (2009): 43-45.

⁴⁵ Frederick W. Kagan, Ahmad Majidyar, K Pletka, Danielle Sullivan, and Marisa Cochrane, "Iranian Influence in the Levant, Egypt, Iraq, and Afghanistan," *American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War* (2012): 71-72.

⁴⁶ "Iraq to Establish Special Mechanism for Trade with Iran," *Radio Farda*, July 2, 2019, <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/iraq-to-establish-special-financial-mechanism-for-trade-with-iran-w/30033685.html>.

Iran's investment in Najaf and Kerbala can't come at the expense of Qom, the Iranian theological centre.⁴⁷

Syrian Government has granted lucrative contracts to IRGC companies after the seizure of Aleppo. On the visit of Syrian Prime Minister Imad Khamis, Tehran and Damascus have signed several agreements ranging from telecommunication to construction; awarding contracts to IRGC affiliated Iranian companies. IRGC has successfully progressing in its mission to consolidate long term influence in Lebanon and Syria through its economic soft power assisting its hard power.⁴⁸

Iran also signed a number of joint economic agreements with Houthis in oil, electricity, aviation and sea transit after the deposition of President Ali Abdullah Saleh. The agreements pledged construction of electricity plants in Ade, Hodeida and Taiz, expansion of port of Hodeid, reconstruction of Yemeni infrastructure and creation of Sky Bridge to increase bilateral trade. These agreements blatantly declared that Iran and Houthis were bonafide allies. Operation Decisive Strom by Saudi led coalition started in March 2015 and bonafide allies couldn't materialise their joint economic agreements.⁴⁹ After 2006, Lebanese Israel war, Iran provided Hizbullah with \$150 million, including \$10,000 of donations for the victims of Israeli aggression. Most interesting thing in this financial aid was the catch phrase: "The Zionist enemy destroys; the Islamic Republic of Iran builds."⁵⁰

Iran's Hard Power: State and Non-state Actors

Supporting armed non-state actors has been a pillar of Iran's strategy towards Middle East since 1979. Iran pursues a range of objectives through these armed groups. The most important is to seek access to geographic areas to project its influence to decrease influence of US presence and to confront Iran's regional rivals, Saudi Arabia and Israel. Over the course of four decades, Iran has developed significant deterrent

⁴⁷ Kagan, Majidiyar, Pletka, and Sullivan, "Iranian Influence in the Levant, Iraq, and Afghanistan," 73-74.

⁴⁸ Ahmad Majidiyar, "IRGC's Khatam-al-anbia Eyes Leading Role in Syria's Reconstruction," *Middle East Institute*, December 13, 2017, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/irgcs-khatam-al-anbia-eyes-leading-role-syrias-reconstruction>.

⁴⁹ Hassan Al-Qadhi, "The Iranian Role in Yemen and Its Implications on the Regional Security," *Arabian Gulf Centre for Iranian Studies*, 2017, <https://rasanah-iiis.org/english/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/12/>.

⁵⁰ A. Shadid, "With Iran Ascendant, U.S. Is Seen at Fault: Arab Allies in Region Feeling Pressure," *Washington Post Foreign Service*, January 30, 2007. www.washingtonpost.com/dyn/content/article/2007/01/29/AR2007012902090_pf.html/.

capacity by forging ties with non-state actors to protect its interest in case of confrontation with its rivals. Hezbollah in Lebanon, militant groups in Iraq, Islamic Jihad and Hamas in Palestine severely constrain Iran's rivals' margin of manoeuvres against the Islamic Republic. By supporting these armed groups, Islamic republic gains position for itself as indispensable player to influence decision-making process in home lands of its non-state allies or proxies.⁵¹

Iran's support for non-state armed actors is motivated by three considerations

1. Support to Hezbollah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad (the anti-Israel organisations), provides Iran with opportunity to garner popularity in the Sunni Arab world.
2. Support is driven by self-image of Iran, being de-facto leader of oppressed Shi'a communities in the region.
3. Finally the support is driven by Iranian quest to deter its enemies while having conventional military weakness.⁵²

Iran hedges its bets by developing ties with multiples actors by providing them political military and financial support keeping in view the cost and benefit analysis according to the possible future utility of these actors. Iran quickly creates new partners when an old one becomes a difficult partner. Muqtada al Sadr tried to distance itself from Iranian interest in Iraq; Iran started investing in breakaway factions (Asa'ib Ahl ul Huqq and Kata'ib Hezbollah) of Sadr's movement. Both are small, more manageable and dependent on Iran but important actors on Iraqi scene.⁵³

Hezbollah: A Proxy that has Emerged as State

Hezbollah, a socio-political and military organisation of Lebanon was founded in June 1982. It shares ideological synergy with Iranian Revolution and enjoys close relationship with Islamic Revolution Guard Corps.⁵⁴

Hezbollah pledged its allegiance to Khomeini and then Ayatullah Khamenie, A devout in its adherence to the philosophy of vilayat e faqih. According to Hassan Nasrullah, Khomeini told the delegation that visited Tehran in 1982, to "rely on God and predict about the victories that we now see." The meeting led to the arrival of 1,000 IRGC soldiers in Lebanon

⁵¹ Thomas Juneau, "Iran's Policy towards the Houthis in Yemen: A Limited Return on a Modest Investment," *International Affairs* 93, no. 3 (2016): 649.

⁵² Marc R. Dvore, "Exploring the Hezbollah Iran Relationship: A Case Study of How State Sponsorship Affects Terrorist Group Decision Making?" *Perspectives on Terrorism* 6, no. 4-5 (October 2012): 90.

⁵³ Juneau, "Iran's Policy towards the Houthis in Yemen," 649.

⁵⁴ M. Mahtab Alam Rizvi, "Evaluating the Political and Economic Role of the IRGC," *Strategic Analysis* 36, no. 4 (2012): 587.

to provide military training to the Hezbollah fighters. So Hezbollah formally emerged in Feb 1985.⁵⁵

Financial and military support from Tehran to Hezbollah is passed through Al Qods, the elite branch of IRGC making it a medium between Islamic Republic and Hezbollah. In 2010, According to the U.S. Department of Defence, Hezbollah received roughly \$100 million to \$200 million annually.⁵⁶ Hasan Nasrullah openly admitted in a publicly broadcasted speech in June 2016, that Hezbollah solely relies on Tehran and denies having any business ventures. "We are open about the fact that Hezbollah's budget, its income, its expenses, everything it eats and drinks, its weapons and rockets, come from the Islamic Republic of Iran,"⁵⁷ Anoushiravan Ehteshami believes, Hezbollah serves as bridge between Arab world and Iran.⁵⁸ Sanctions imposed by Trump in 2018 have greatly affected Iranian financial assistance to Hezbollah forcing the organisation to cut its 2019 budget. Thus affecting both hard and soft ventures of Hezbollah as its fighters have reassigned or furloughed on one hand and Al-Manar media group that serves Hezbollah in Lebanon, also have to laid off staff along with cancelling its programming on the other.⁵⁹

Hezbollah isn't only an Iranian proxy driven by the ideology of Resistance but it's a political party that has penetrated its roots in Lebanese society and polity through charities, education and TV channels. Through Hezbollah, Iran aims to create a state within a Lebanese state by delegitimizing the official status of state until it is co-opted with Hezbollah or over thrown.⁶⁰ Hezbollah began its political journey in 1992 by winning eight of the 128 Parliamentary seats. Hezbollah won 23 seats and in the 2009 election by defeating "March 14" alliance supported by US. Hezbollah and its allies won 70 seats in 2018.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Counter Extremism Project, Hezbollah, 3, https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/threat_pdf/Hezbollah-07252019.pdf.

⁵⁶ Greg Bruno, "State Sponsors: Iran," *Council on Foreign Relations*, October 13, 2011, <http://www.cfr.org/iran/state-sponsors-iran/p9362>.

⁵⁷ Agence France-Presse, "Hezbollah Brushes off US Sanctions, Says Money Comes Via Iran," *Times of Israel*, June 25, 2016, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/hezbollah-brushes>.

⁵⁸ Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *The Foreign Policy of Iran*, The Foreign Policies of Middle East States (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 298.

⁵⁹ Liz Sly and Suzan Haidamous, "Trump's Sanctions on Iran are Hitting Hezbollah, and it Hurts," *Washington Post*, May 18, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/trumps-sanctions-on-iran-are-hitting-hezbollah-hard/2019/05.

⁶⁰ Rubin, "Strategies Underlying Iran's Soft Power."

⁶¹ "Hezbollah's Nasrallah says Lebanon Results Are 'Victory' for the Resistance," *Reuters*, May 7, 2018, [https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-election-hezbollah/hezbollahs-](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-election-hezbollah/hezbollah/hezbollahs-)

Hezbollah has fought Iranian war in Syria alongside Syrian National Army to protect Iranian ally, the Assad regime. So, Hezbollah's role and influence isn't limited to Lebanon, but serves the Iranian interest beyond Lebanese borders. It has fought against Daesh, a Wahabi threat to Iran and Hezbollah both. Hassan Nasrullah in an interview in 2014 rejected the view that, Hezbollah has fought against ISIS to protect Iranian and Syrian interest as to him, Daesh, "is an extential threat to Lebanon too". Iranian enemies are Hezbollah enemies. Hassan Nasrullah is very vocal to express his anger on Saudi involvement in Yemen as he regards Saudi Arabia's Wahabi ideology as "more evil than Israel."⁶²

Hezbollah al Hejaz: Incongruence Dilemma between Iran and Kingdom

Hezbollah al Hejaz, The Party of God in Hejaz (KSA), allegedly is a successful attempt of Islamic Republic to export Hezbollah's model to Gulf to threaten Gulf monarchies. Those who believe in Iran's strong role in formation of Hezbollah al Hejaz, argues that Iran ventures to capitalise the grievances of Shiites of Gulf, chafing under Sunni regimes through groups like Hezbollah al Hejaz.⁶³ The group was established after the clashes between Shiites pilgrims and Saudi security forces in 1987. The group met with violent resistance by Saudi security apparatus and dismantled. But in 2015, the name surfaced again with the arrest of Ahmed al Mughassil, the leader of military wing. He was hiding in Lebanon and was accused of Khobar bombings of 1996. Saudi authorities claim, he wasn't famous among Saudi Shiites, but claims couldn't be verified due to the closeness of Saudi state and society.⁶⁴

Iran: Hard Power, Non-state Actors and State of Iraq

Iraq is of vital importance for Iran as its gateway to Levant. Countering American presence in Iraq and shaping the Iraqi state, are two driving factors for Iran to deepen its influence. Iran opted for tactical strategic approach on both fronts in Iraq. Significant number of militia members has now been integrated in Iraq's political structure. The rivalries among different militia groups and political factions help Iran to strengthen its control as it keeps the state weak with contesting factional rivalries. Iran doesn't pose to have relationship of command and control on Iraqi militias but of mentorship. Iran's security concerns in Iraq have evolved through different stages, from the American presence to counter

⁶² "Counter Extremism Project," 4-6.

⁶³ Stekler, "Iran's Ideological Expansion," 42.

⁶⁴ Hassan Al Mustafa, "Hezbollah al Hejaz: A Story not Yet Written," *Al Arabiya*, October 1, 2015, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2015/10/01/Hezbollah->

the leviathan of ISIS. IRGC and Al Qods under Qasem Soleimani, are the primary actors, involved in designing and training the Shia' militias in Iraq. Hashad ul Shaabi or PMU (Popular Mobilisation Front), since 2014 is the primary conduit for expanding Iranian influence in Iraq, created through Ayatullah Ali Sistani's fatwa to fight against Daesh, Hashad ul Shaabi is an alliance of diverse militia groups mostly Shia' groups. Not all Shia' groups are under Iranian flag, as some of them are loyal to Ali Sistani and some follow Muqtada al Sadr but their presence is evident in all Iraqi governorates except Kurdish region. However, Iran exercises substantial influence over PMU as Jamal Jaafar Mohammad al-Ibrahimi (widely known as Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis), an Iraqi militant who spent most of his life in Iran is considered as the face of Iranian interest in PMU and Iraq. Despite of being deputy, he is the single most strongest actor in PMU, (till his death in American drone strike in Baghdad on January 3, 2020. Important point to note here is, most of the Iranian backed groups in PMU share ideological synergy with Iran as they adhere to Vilayat-e-Faqih.⁶⁵ IRGC oversees, funding training and coordination of PMU, which gained popular support of Iraqi Shiite population as it was perceived as a Shiite resistance to protect Shiites from Daesh and earned popularity of majority of Iraqi population. PMU's leadership is often criticized by Ali Sistani for its authoritarian conduct specially those who are pro-Iran like Muhandis.⁶⁶ Iraqi parliament passed a law, to institutionalise PMU as an official permanent military corps. The law was supported by majority of Kurdhish, Shiite and Sunni members of the Parliament. The dominant Shi'a identity of Iraq provided IRGC a basis to increase and prolong its presence on Iraqi soil. PMU 's role isn't limited to battle field as it provides Iran with better ability to achieve its hegemonic goals in society, economy and politics of the region.⁶⁷ Recently Iraqi parliament passed a resolution to end US led coalition's presence in Iraq. The vote was boycotted by Sunni and Kurd members who believe, American presence is necessary for Iraq's security. Mainly Iran backed Shia' factions in parliament moved the resolution. Interestingly not all Iraqi Shia's favour evacuation of foreign forces as demonstrators in Shia' dominated Southern Iraq and Baghdad demanded

⁶⁵ "Iran's Network of Influence in Middle East, A Strategic Dossier," *IISS*, November 2019, 121-158, <https://www.iiss.org/publications/strategic-dossiers/iran-dossier>.

⁶⁶ Mansour and Jabbar, "Popular Mobilisation Forces and Future of Iraq," *Carnegie Middle East Center*, 2017, https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/resources/docs/Carnegie_MidEast-CMEC_63_Mansour_PMF_Final_Web.pdf.

⁶⁷ Sardar Aziz, "The Dangers of the Institutionalization of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units," *The Washington Institute*, 2017, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/the-dangers-of-the-institutionalization-of-iraqspopular-mobilization-units>.

genuine reforms and reduction of Iranian influence in Iraq during street protests.⁶⁸

Iran's Hard Power in Syria, Palestine and Houthis

Iran praised the level of destabilization in the aftermath of Arab Spring, and defined Islamic Awakening as the extension of its own revolution. But in Syria, this Islamic Awakening couldn't win Iran's moral support. Instead, Iran claimed that Arab uprising in Syria was by product of Western conspiracy and interference to weaken Assad's regime. Assad regime is the valuable ally of Iran and its being functioning authority in Damascus guarantees smooth flow of supply by IRGC to Hezbollah. Syria is part of Iran's Axis of Resistance, formed to resist American and Israeli influence.⁶⁹

Iran protected Assad Regime and helped the liberation of Syrian territories from occupation of Daesh. Iran utilised Shiite Militia to maintain Assad in power. Iran created Shabiah militia or National Defense force that worked on the pattern of Iranian Basij militia. General Qasem Soleimani of Al Qods force played central role in formation of NDF. 7,000 Iranian and Iraqi fighters fought under the guidance of Qods Force and IRGC in Syrian Civil War. 5,000 Iraqi Shiite fighters, 5,000 Hezbollah fighters and 18,000 Afghan and Pakistani Shiite fighters were deployed by Qods Force to aid Assad Regime.⁷⁰ General Mohammad Ali Jafri the former head of IRGC, admitted, Iran is assisting Houthis of Yemen. This statement is a move that has negated Iran's claims of negation of providing assistance to Houthis. General Jafri, openly expressed the keenness of IRGC to assist the resistance front in Yemen if the people and government in Yemen seek IRGC's help against Saudi aggression.⁷¹

In 2006 when Hamas came to power, U.S and EU cut of funding to Palestine, Iran quickly pledged \$50 million aid to Hamas. Karim Sadjapour is of the opinion that Iran on one hand claims that Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah are indigenous forces and enjoy merely a moral support from Tehran. But Iran at the same time claims that road to peace to Middle East must go through Tehran as Iran enjoys great leverage over these armed actors. He believes, Iran provided huge material support to Hamas because Iran desires to be the regional power and the vanguard of Muslim

⁶⁸ Jaboori Rafid, "Call for US troops Withdrawl from Iraq Continue as Al Amiri Emerges as Leader of PMU," *Terrorism Monitor*, January 14, 2020, <https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/TM-Jan.-14-2020-Issue.pdf?x17103>.

⁶⁹ Mohsen Milani, "Why Tehran Won't Abandon Assad(ism)," *The Washington Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (2013): 84-85.

⁷⁰ Urbina, "IRGC and Iranian Soft and Hard Power Influence in Middle East," xli-xlii.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, li.

world. By supporting Hamas, Iran endeavours to diminish the Shiite-Sunni divide and keeps the Israel at bay. As Gaza provides a more fertile land for potential conflict with Israel and saves Lebanese-Israeli border guarded by Hezbollah.⁷² No accurate figures are available for Iranian economic and military support to Hamas. Only speculative estimates of Israeli authorities circulate as Israeli Chief of Staff, General Gadi Eizenkot, claims, Iran provides Hamas and other Palestinian factions with \$100 million a year. This prompted, PM Netanyahu to speculate that half of Palestinians are under Iranian influence. Hamas also don't hesitate to hide its disappointment towards Arab states and leaders. On the other hand, Hamas is being perceived as Iranian proxy by rich Gulf capitals. Anwar Grgash, Foreign Affairs Minister of the United Arab Emirates, accused Hamas in November 2018 being a tool for Iran to expand its regional influence. Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister, Adel Jubeir took severe position by explicitly stating that Hamas' relationship with the Arab capitals largely depend on Hamas attitude of distancing itself from Iran. Hamas, did not pay much attention to these overtures as these rich Arab capitals don't offer alternative financial and military support for the movement.⁷³

The scene on Yemen's front isn't different. According to a confidential UN report, Tehran has been shipping weapons to Houthis of Yemen since 2009. The report, presented to the Security Council's Iran's sanctions committee stated that Tehran's support dates back to the early days of Shiite militia insurgency in Yemen. The panel reported on an investigation conducted on the seizure of the Iranian ship, Jehan that was carrying weapons for Houthis in 2013. The weapons included anti-tank and anti-helicopter rockets.⁷⁴ So Tehran supports Houthis with both hard and soft power tools.

Conclusion

From the above analysis, the study concludes, Iran's modus operandi in supporting non-state actors (which in most cases have evolved into state actors, like Hezbollah, PMU, Badr Corps, Sadrist militia, Hamas and Houthis) are characterised by presence of two common

⁷² Karim Sadjadpour, "Iran Supports Hamas but Hamas isn't Iranian Puppet," *Council on Foreign Relations*, January 7, 2007, <https://www.cfr.org/interview/iran-supports-hamas-hamas-no-iranian-puppet>.

⁷³ Dr Adnan Abu Amir, "Hamas Iran Alliance Remains and Expands," *Middle East Monitor* January 14, 2019, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190114-the-hamas-iran-alliance-remains-and-expands/>.

⁷⁴ Carole Landry, "Iran Arming Yemen's Houthi Rebels: UN Report," *Middle East Eye* May 1, 2015, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/iran-arming-yemens-houthi-rebels-2009-un-report>.

features, (a) instability, (b) dissatisfaction towards state structure. Islamic Republic penetrates through hard and soft power tools in state and societies where central authority proves to be weak in provision of physical and economic security. Islamic Republic invests in like-minded actors or creates the like-minded actors based on its ideology like Shi'a militias, which are driven by the narrative of resistance as propagated by Iran and also loyal to Velayat-e-Faqih as explained above. Moreover, the success of Iran in states in Middle East is also dependent on exploiting the fault lines that create distance between state and society. Iran employs both soft and hard power tools. Its hard power assists its soft power and its soft power assists its hard power. By reaching people of the region through media, education institutions, welfare organisations Iran built a long lasting connection between people in its ally states.

As Aminiyan rightly said, Iran knew the region and it developed connection with the people of the region, unlike U.S who didn't know the region and mostly rely on hard power.⁷⁵ Same goes for the Arab states, who failed to lead Palestinian cause and this failure provided space for Iran that defying all sectarian boundaries, assisted Palestinian groups and people. Hence the Shiite Crescent, described by King Abdullah of Jordan has become full moon⁷⁶ in four decades through the strategies of smart power employed by intellectual inherits of Nizam ul Mulk Toosi. But one can't ignore the fact that this full moon is not shining alone in the Middle Eastern sky as the rising challenges in Iraq and Lebanon are trying to shake the favourable status-quo of Iran that is rightly depicted by Takhsheed when he says, "creating influence even through soft power isn't easy and it does not seem Iran is in position to maintain its desirable status quo because no state can act freely not even global powers and Iran may be a Umm ul Qorra e Jehani Islami (The mother of the Muslim world) for majority Shia's of the world but not for Saudi or Emirates' Sunni Muslims and not even for all Shia's."⁷⁷

⁷⁵ `Aminiyan, Interview ; Lapidus, Ira, *History of Islamic Societies* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 151.

⁷⁶ "Fear of Full Shia Moon," *The Guardian*, January 26, 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/jan/26/worlddispatch.ianblack>.

⁷⁷ Dr. Mohammad Reza Takhsheed, interview by Mehreen Bibi, February 23, 2019, Faculty of Law and Political Science, University of Tehran.

