Smart Power in Iran’s Foreign Policy Towards Arab National Security in the Middle East 2003-2015

Case Studies of Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen

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Plagiarism Disclaimer

Praise be to Almighty Allah (S.W.T), and prayers and peace be upon the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W), and all the Prophets and Messengers

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own and autonomous work. All sources and aids used have been indicated as such. All texts either quoted directly or paraphrased have been indicated by in-text citations. Full bibliographic details are given in the reference list which also contains sources containing URLs and access dates. This work has not been submitted to any other examination authority.

If my work is correct, then this correctness is by the grace of Allah (S.W.T). However, if it is wrong, it is my own error, and Allah has nothing to do with it, and I only wanted to do good.

Ali I. Al-Mohammad
Malmö 15-May-2022

Name&surname Place&date Signature
In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful

“...Every time they kindled the fire of war, Allâh extinguished it; and they (ever) strive to make mischief on the earth. And Allâh does not like the Mufsidûn (mischief-makers).”

[Surah Al-Mā’idah: 64]

“Then said Jesus unto him, put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.”

[The Gospel of Matthew 26, 26:52]
Dedications

*This research is lovingly dedicated to the sunshine of my days and moonlight of my nights*

My beloved parents

My late father (Issa) & my late mother (Yazi)

“My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy as they did bring me up when I was small.”

And

To Mrs. Noblewoman

Anna Maria Nagy

“May Almighty God fill her life with endless happy moments, countless wonderful surprises, and infinite success.”

Ameen thumma ameen
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Thank you most sincerely,

Ali Issa Al Mohammad

May 15th, 2022
Abstract
The theme of this research is smart power in Iran’s foreign policy toward Arab national security in the Middle East [Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen]. This important and influential topic was explained and analyzed on the regional and international political scene. Also, it highlighted how the IRI managed in employing this type of power in its foreign policy with the purpose to penetrate Arab national security and exporting its Islamic revolution to the Arab surrounding, and the gains it had made, in accordance with the directives of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini, and in line with what is stipulated in the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran 1979. The study examined the case studies of Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen during the time period (2003-2015), where 2003 witnessed a significant turning point that contributed to reviving Iran’s dual-strategy to expand in the Arab world and reshaping its map and regimes in preparation for exporting its Islamic revolution to it and extending its control over it, relying on its hard and soft power instruments on the one hand, and taking advantage of some regional and international shifts that turned the balance of power in favor of Iran - such as the US-led occupation of Iraq, the strategic buffer for the Arab region, in addition to the outbreak of the Arab Spring in late 2010, which crowned in the Iranian-backed Houthis group’s seizure of the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, in late 2014- that made the Middle East a fertile soil and conducive atmosphere to the implementation of Iranian agendas on the other hand. The research depended on Nay’s smart power model and Waltz’s neo-realism theory, as exclusive analytical frameworks. As well an interpretive case study was utilized as the main research method whose findings were derived from primary and secondary databases. The research concluded that the IRI had succeeded in employing smart power in its foreign policy, enabling it to occupy three Arab countries, which are considered fundamental pillars of Arab national security. This, in turn, has proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that the IRI poses an existential danger and a serious threat to the Arab nation and its national security, as evidenced by the research databases.

Keywords: Smart Power, Foreign Policy, Arab National Security, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon.
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*Including:* The front page, table of contents, abstract, and bibliography.

*Excluding:* Disclaimer, dedications, acknowledgments, and the list of abbreviations.
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List of Abbreviations

ANS  The Arab National Security

GCC  Gulf Cooperation Council

IRGC  The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps

IRI  The Islamic Republic of Iran

ISIS  The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

LAS  League of Arab States

ME  Middle East

PMF  The Popular Mobilization Forces

UAE  United Arab Emirates

USA  United States of America
Chapter 1: Introduction

“We will export our revolution to all the world so that everyone knows why we made the revolution. Our goal was independence in the sense of freedom from restrictions and dependence on the East and West (i.e., the United States and the [former] Soviet Union), and freedom, that is, freedom from the shackles of the tyranny of the Shah of Iran’s empire (Pahlavi rule), as well as for Iranians to realize their dream of establishing a government based on Islamic principles and democratic standards.”

“Our revolution must be exported to all parts of the world. Do not misunderstand us, we do not want to conquer other countries. Rather, we want all peoples to wake up and revolt against colonialism and tyranny.”

[Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini]

With such sugar-coated slogans came the Iranian Revolution of 1979, which makes it clear that the goal of exporting the revolution is a principle inherent in the Iranian military doctrine. The success of the Khomeini Revolution, which was based on the Twelver Shia doctrine, was instrumental in guiding the IRI’s strategy and foreign policy towards Arab countries (Bayat, 1983: pp. 30-42). The predominance of religious leadership in the decision-making process in the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) has significant implications for the national security of the Arab region (Barzegar, 2008: pp. 47-58). Where Iran resorts to employing smart power in its foreign policy to achieve its strategic goals and export its revolution within the framework of subjecting the region to the Iranian dual adopted-project of Wilayat al-Faqih (Ibid).
Thus, this historical turning point makes the subject of the IRI’s foreign policy worthy of research and study.

1.1 Research Problem and Global Politics Relevance

The IRI’s foreign policy is often shrouded in ambiguity and lack of information mostly, and a lot of controversies are raised about the Iranian strategy that IRI follows in its foreign relations and policies (See Ramazani, 2004: pp. 1-11). Accordingly, the research’s problem centers around getting familiar with IRI’s foreign policy towards Arab national security (2003-2015), the agendas it seeks, and the tools it utilizes. As well as the extent of the success of this policy in view of the development of the IRI for its political, economic, and military capabilities, and in light of the diminished role of Arab states as a result of the problems and turmoil in the Middle East.

This research is significant and inextricably linked and relevant to global politics, which is at its core the study of politics in a global context. In a simple sense, global politics strives to comprehend how politics manifest in the global arena, let alone how power and relationships between different states or non-state actors exist across borders (Darren & O’Byrne, 2011: pp. 3-5).

This research fits with this broad topic because it will attempt to understand how foreign policy changes depending on the status quo and current events from one angle, and how sectarian ideology can be used to justify changes in foreign policy from a second angle. This can be interpreted as an attempt to understand how one state’s activity on the global or regional scene can cause a shift in the politics and national narrative of another unrelated state. Smart power in foreign policy is chosen to be examined, analyzed and understood because it illuminates how the state, according to its strategy, interacts with threats, crises, turmoil and moments of conflict.

1.2 Motivations, Aim, and Research Questions

The motivation for covering the IRI’s foreign policy in this thesis has gradually evolved. It stems from the researcher’s special interest in the IRI, especially after the success of the Islamic Revolution in assuming the reins of power in Iran in 1979, which in turn brought about a radical change in Iran’s policy and directions (Ibid). In addition to the researcher’s interest in IRI’s external behaviour, and its regional role in the Middle East, given its central weight in many issues that made it an insurmountable regional actor in resolving many issues
and crises that reflect, positively or negatively, on the security and stability of the Middle East as a whole.

Equally important, the motivation for this research is due to the availability of some studies that concern Iranian affairs, though not entirely identical to the subject matter of this research, which has led to the intellectual puzzle identified from the literature.

Accordingly, this study aims to explain and analyze an important and influential topic in the regional and international political scene, which is the smart power in the Iranian strategy, and how the IRI succeeded in employing this power in its foreign policy to penetrate Arab national security and export its Islamic revolution to the Arab neighbouring countries (Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen), in accordance with the directives of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini, and in line with what is stipulated in the constitution of the IRI (Ramazani, 1989).

With the research problem and thesis objective in mind, the following research questions (RQs) will resemble a red thread to guide the research:

RQ.1: What are the components of Iranian smart power in Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen? And what are its motivations and dimensions?

RQ.2: In what ways has the IRI’s foreign policy succeeded in utilizing smart power towards Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen?

RQ.3: To what extent has the utilization of smart power resulted in strategic gains for the IRI in Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen?

1.3 Research Significance

Given the importance of the IRI in the regional and international arena, the importance of the study stems from the fact that it is an attempt to study and analyze the dimensions and pillars of its foreign policy, which is marred by ambiguity in many aspects. Not to mention, it highlights the tools of smart power that Iran applies in its foreign policy and shows how successful Iran is in employing smart power to achieve its strategic goals at the expense of the Arab countries in the Middle East region.

Equally important, the study and analysis of Iranian foreign policy enable the countries of the Arab region to adequately deal with Iranian influence and threat, as well as to build effective counterstrategies to curb Iranian policies and strategies.
1.4 Study Delimitations

The researcher [Me] decided to limit this study in three aspects, area, time, and focus as follows:

**Area: The Middle East.** The study is concerned with the Middle East, which has been overwhelmed by a wave of transformations that have reshaped Iran's foreign policy in one way or another. Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen have also been chosen because of their Shia base, making it easier for Iran to implement its strategy toward these countries, in fulfillment of its greater ambition to dominate the region.

**Time: Late 2003- Early 2015.** The study focuses on the period 2003-2015, where in 2003, the US-led invasion of Iraq removed the role of the Arab state that had been a bulwark against Iran's nationalist aspirations [to be a leader in the Arabian/Persian Gulf and the Middle East as a whole]. In 2005, elected Ahmadinejad, who revived Khomeini’s principles and renewed Iran’s export policies. Then, between 2010 and 2011, the region witnessed the events of the Arab Spring accompanied by turmoil and a political vacuum, and in conjunction with two crucial events: Iran’s Allies, the Houthis group, took over the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, in late-2014, and the emergence of ISIS in mid-2014 as a new vital player on the regional stage, which in turn permitted Iran to infiltrate the Arab region more and more. It ends in 2015 because of the changes that came with the win of moderates in Iran’s presidential election [led by Rouhani], as well as the beginning of the lifting of the economic embargo on Iran.

**Focus: Iran’s foreign policy and Arab national security.** As Iranian foreign policy is considered one of the most controversial issues in the Middle East region, from the success of Khomeini’s revolution in 1979, to Iran’s entry into a longtime war with Iraq, then Iran’s negotiations with the international community over its nuclear program, not to mention its ability to establish armed militias in three major gates in the Middle East (Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen). All these matters have made Iran’s foreign policy and Arab national security the focus of this research.

1.5 Thesis Structure

Following this introduction, a historical background and in-depth study of the political landscape of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) are in **Chapter 2.** This is followed by a review of the literature in **Chapter 3,** thereby the chapter outlines previous research in the field of Iranian foreign policy and strategy and points out the research gap that the researcher strives
to fill in this thesis. **Chapter 4** accounts for the methodological considerations and research design. It includes a presentation of the methodological basis of the thesis and a critical discussion of the chosen method, the alternative methods, and the research databases and materials upon which the analysis will be built. Then a presentation of the theoretical basis and context within which the research is to be built initiates the study in **Chapter 6**. It encompasses conceptual definitions alongside highlighting two analytical frameworks, Nye’s Smart Power Model, and Waltz’s Neorealism Theory. This is followed by the analysis in **Chapter 7**, which is divided into three independent case studies (Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen) and terminates with a final discussion. The final chapter is the **conclusion** which summarizes what has been covered in the research and discusses and reflects on the results of the research in relation with the previous research, as well as implicates some suggestions and gestures for future research on the topic.
Chapter 2: Historical Background

The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) is a country located in the Middle East and in Western Asia. It is the second-largest country in the Middle East in terms of an estimated population of 85 million people, as well as it is the second-largest country that covers an area of 1,648,195 square kilometres. The IRI is characterized by an important geopolitical location as it is the meeting point of three Asian domains (West, Central, and Southern Asia). It is surrounded on the north by Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and the Caspian Sea, on the east by Afghanistan and Pakistan, on the south by the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, and on the west by Iraq and on the northwest by Turkey (Mehrdad, 2009: 69).

Tehran is the capital and largest city of the country and the political, cultural, commercial, and industrial center of the nation. The IRI is an oil-rich country [the fourth-largest oil reserves in the world and the second-largest natural gas reserves] that oversees one of the largest sea lanes in the world, which is the Strait of Hormuz, one of the energy corridors around the world, and because it overlooks the Gulf region, one of the largest oil reserves in the world and a vital area in which major powers compete, it was natural to have a policy trying to influence its environment (Khodabakhsh et al, 2009: pp. 22-24).

The IRI is commonly misperceived as an Arab country, but truth be told, its Arab population comprises only (8 percent), Kurds (6 percent), and Baloch (2 percent) of its ethnic identity. The major ethnic groups are Persian (63 percent) and Turks (Azers and Turkmens 24 percent). And, as a matter of fact, Arabic is only used in religious contexts and expressions, while Persian (Farsi) is spoken by 58 percent of the population. Other spoken languages include Turkish, Kurdish, Luri, Turkic, and Balochi. The official religion of the IRI, according to Article 12 of its Islamic constitution, is the Jafari Faith of the Twelve Imams (Asgharzadeh, 2007: pp. 8-11).

Roughly 99 percent of the population of the IRI is Muslim, 89 percent of which belong to the Shi’a sect, and around 10 percent belong to the Sunni sect. Other religious minorities in the IRI include Jews, Christians, and the followers of the very ancient Persian faith, the so-called Zoroastrianism (Ibid).

In 1921, Reza Khan, a military officer in the Cossack Brigade of Persia, called himself Shah of Persia (King of Persia) after successfully carrying out a coup against the regime of the Qajar Dynasty (Abrahamian, 1980: pp. 21-26). Once in power, he immediately launched an ambitious campaign to modernize the country (Ibid). Among his many other plans, he aspired
to develop a national public education system, improve healthcare, and build a national railway system. Not to mention the agricultural land reclamation plans, the promotion of the tourism and industrial sector, and irrigation systems (Ibid), to name but a few.

In 1926 Reza Khan Pahlavi was crowned as King of Persia, marking the beginning of the Pahlavi dynasty [His eldest son, Muhammad Reza, was also appointed crown prince in the same year] (Ibid).

Until March 21, 1936, Iran was known as Persia. And in that year, Persia has been officially renamed the Kingdom of Iran. As of this year, the era of dictatorship perpetuated by Reza Pahlavi began, under which he ruled Iran with an iron fist, and thus his dictatorial approach aroused the opposition forces throughout the country (Amuzegar, 1991).

During World War II 1939-1945, although Reza Pahlavi declared Iran a neutral power, the British-controlled Iranian oil interests remained largely subject to German technicians and engineers, and Reza Pahlavi refused to expel German citizens and employees despite Britain’s request (Ibid: pp. 117-120). As a result, in 1941, after the British and Soviet occupation of western Iran, Reza Pahlavi was forced to step down from power. His son, Muhammad Reza Pahlavi, succeeded him on the throne (Ibid: pp. 120-130).

In 1949, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi expanded his constitutional powers after the assassination attempt on his life, which was attributed to the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party. Subsequently, Muhammad Pahlavi carried out the so-called “The White Revolution”, an aggressive campaign of economic and social westernization that was met with strong popular opposition (Ibid: pp. 171-180). The popular nationalist Ayatollah Khomeini was arrested in one of several crackdowns on opponents of the Shah. By the late 1960s, the Shah enforced martial law and regularly depended on the SAVAK (intelligence agency) to suppress dissidence. In response, Iranians resorted to riots, mass demonstrations, and strikes to protest the Shah’s authoritarian regime (Ibid: pp. 181-193).

The year 1979 culminated in the flight of Shah Mohammad Reza from Iran, amid escalating unrest that swept across the country, in which all the various segments and currents of Iranian society participated, including liberal, Islamic, and leftists, despite their ideological and intellectual differences on the one hand, and its diverse strategic goals and tactical plans on the other hand (Arjomand, 1985: pp. 41-43). This year also witnessed an important milestone, the return of the Islamic nationalist Ayatollah Khomeini from France, where he was exiled for his opposition to the Shah’s regime (Al Jazeera Doc TV, 2019). However, the most important
event of this year, under the guidance of Ayatollah Khomeini, Iran declared itself a theocratic republic guided by Islamic principles, and a referendum was held to rename it the Islamic Republic of Iran, which has ushered in a regional political transformation and a historical and strategic event that has occupied and continues to occupy the world to the present time (Ibid).

The year 1979 marked a major geopolitical turning point in the Middle East. This year was accompanied by the overthrow of the Shah of Iran, the policeman of US interests in the region, and the assumption of power by clerics under the leadership of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini who became the supreme leader of the Islamic Revolution and the head of the Iranian regime (Ibid: pp. 50-52). Once Khomeini came to power, he launched a crackdown, arrests, and assassinations of every remnant of Shah Mohammad Reza’s regime. In parallel, a new system was established for the Islamic Republic of Iran with two pillars: a nationalist pillar with Persian nationalism at its core, and a religious pillar with Shi’ite beliefs derived from the Twelver Ja’fari doctrine (Panah, 2007: pp. 51-53).

Not to mention that in the same year, the Iranian foreign policy was crystallized, which is based on the principle of supporting the vulnerable and the oppressed, as well as exporting the Islamic Revolution, in accordance with Article 8 of the IRI’s Constitution, to all parts of the world in general and to the Arab region in the Middle East in particular, as a starting point (Ibid: pp. 55-57).

Thus, the IRI politics through its mullahs’ leaders, after the Shah’s fall in 1979, formed a radical policy based on a Shia religious basis. As the new leadership began to influence Iran’s foreign and security policy, the IRI’s perception of Middle Eastern Arab security reflected its Shia-based political thinking. Iran based its strategy towards the Arab region as it is the only Islamic state in the Arab world and as such is the guardian of Islam (Ibid: pp. 69-70).

To illustrate this matter more clearly, the IRI has pursued a sectarian foreign policy based on exporting Twelver Shi’ism and supporting its affiliate groups. Therefore, in order to achieve its political ambitions, the IRI relied in its strategy and policy on the principle of exporting the revolution, especially to neighbouring countries, and taking advantage of the religious currents emerging or attempting to create and support it by all available financial and military means, especially those that embrace the Shiite sect, based on the principle of exporting the revolution that emerged after the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran in 1979 (Ibid: pp. 70-74).
In line with this ambition, the IRI adopted what is known as the “Mother of the villages” strategy as a road map for Iranian politics, which was formulated by Muhammad Larijani in his book “Says in the National Strategy” (Samaha, 2013). According to which the IRI considers itself the center of the Islamic world in which the rest of the Arab and Islamic countries must rotate, and accordingly IRI saw the Arab Spring as an echo of the Islamic awakening in Iran 3 decades ago, as it worked to empower Shiite minorities in many countries of the Arab world, to achieve a greater role in the political future (Ibid).

In this regard, Al-Otoum believes that it has become crystal clear from the ”mother of the villages” theory adopted by the mullahs’ regime in Iran, as a road map, that the reality of the road to liberating Jerusalem from the Zionists, which the Iranian regime is hiding behind, is , , in fact the road to Mecca (the heart of the Islamic world) in an attempt to marginalize the status and sanctity of this city and make the city of Qom as an alternative to it (Al-Luhaidan, 2013).

Therefore, Al-Otoum asserts that “the mother of the villages” strategy is no longer a theory as much as it has become a formal undeclared Persian Iranian national project. Yet the signs of its agenda implementation on the ground are notable. Especially in the Arab Gulf states (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Sultanate of Oman). Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain) and in the Levant (Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan), Yemen, Iraq, and the list goes on...! (Al-Luhaidan, 2013).

To put things into perspective, based on the above-mentioned road map for exporting its Islamic revolution to neighbouring countries, the IRI has adopted in its foreign policy an approach based on offensive realism (of which Mearsheimer is one of its most prominent pioneers), which urges the state to possess the greatest possible military and economic strength and to strive in every way to impose hegemony over its regional surroundings by force and coercion (Menashri, 2019; Panah, 2007).

However, the offensive realism adopted by the IRI led it to the longest bloody war in the 20th century with its neighbour Iraq under the rule of the Arab Baath Party (1980-1988). Where Saddam Hussein, the former president of Iraq, was concerned about Ayatollah Khomeini’s attempts to export the Iranian revolution to Iraq by inciting the Shiite majority in southern Iraq (Panah, 2007; pp. 80-82; Scott, 2009). Saddam Hussein took advantage of the state of turmoil and weakness that was still going through the IRI in the wake of the overthrow of the Shah’s regime, as well the state of international isolation in which the new Iranian authority
was living, especially in the wake of the occupation of the American embassy in Tehran and the detention of dozens of American hostages there (Ibid: pp.80-81).

The Iran-Iraq War lasted eight years (1980-1988), resulting in economic, military, and human losses for both sides. It also contributed to the increasing regional and international isolation of the IRI (Ibid: 81). This international isolation and regional hostility towards the IRI were further compounded by the latter’s occupation of Abu Musa Island in the Strait of Hormuz in 1992, which belongs to the United Arab Emirates (Ibid: 82).

After the reformists won the presidential elections in the IRI, Hashem Rafsanjani in 1993 and Muhammad Khatami in 1997, who are considered relatively moderate, along with the second Gulf War (liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion), the IRI has adopted a liberal and defensive realism approach, of which Waltz is one of its leading pioneers. encourages states to possess sufficient strength to ensure their national security and deter their opponents (Ibid: pp. 131-133). Defensive realism encourages states to possess sufficient power to ensure their national security and deter their opponents. Based on this approach, the IRI began developing its defence capabilities, achieving economic growth, and encouraging foreign investments in Iranian territory, as well as opening bridges of cooperation and communication with regional neighbours and the international community (Ibid: pp 134-136).

In the reformist era of the IRI, Iran’s domestic and foreign policy moved from being a series of reactions and emergency responses to the judicious formulation of its foreign policies and future plans (Ibid: pp. 136-139). In this context, the IRI has put forward the concept of dialogue between civilizations and religions, which succeeded in returning its foreign policy to the right track. Iranian decision-makers approach to the international community is thus based on a clearly defined cultural strategy (Ibid). The IRI also realized in this period that it is situated between two millstones (the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the Arab Ba’ath Party regime in Iraq), and, needless to say; that these two regimes had nothing in common with the new Iranian regime, which, on the one hand, is based on a Shiite religious pillar that is at sharp contrast with the Taliban regime, which is based on a strict Sunni Salafist pillar. On the other hand, a Persian nationalist pillar is at complete odds with the Arab Ba’ath Party regime in Iraq, which is based on an ultra-Arab nationalist pillar (Ibid: pp. 101-104).

In the wake of the condemnable terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the IRI has had an ample opportunity to rid itself of its fiendish enemies in Afghanistan and Iraq, and to return to the international community from the window of the US war on terror. Iran immediately
expressed its condolences and sympathy to the American people and expressed its willingness to cooperate with the USA in striking the strongholds of terrorism. Thus, the 9/11 attacks presented Iraq and Afghanistan on a silver platter to Iran, which, together with the US, eliminated the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in 2001 and the Ba'ath Party's regime in Iraq in 2003 (Ibid: pp. 158-162). This was confirmed by Mohammad Abtahi, Iranian Vice President for Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, at the end of the work of the Gulf Conference and future challenges in the UAE, that Iran has provided a lot of assistance to the USA in its war against Afghanistan and Iraq, and said: “Without IRI’s help, Kabul and Baghdad would not have fallen” (Saikal, 2014).

Following the US invasion of Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) and the toppling of the Taliban and Saddam Hussein regimes (Iran’s fierce adversaries), the IRI has found a golden opportunity to revive its strategy, export its revolutionary ideology to the countries of the region, and fill the vacuum left by the absence of its aforementioned enemies (Ibid: pp. 10-15).
Chapter 3: Literature Review

This chapter has been divided into four sections; the first section highlights smart power as an instrument in foreign policy in general, the second section addresses Iranian foreign policy, while the third section illustrated the literature that explained the Iranian strategy toward the Arab world, and the last section has devoted the contribution of literature and the research gap.

3.1 Literature on Smart Power as an Instrument of State Foreign Policy

Among the literature that highlighted the smart power in Iranian foreign policy, Samah Abdel-Sabour’s study (2014), *Smart Power in Foreign Policy: A Study of Iranian Foreign Policy Tools toward Lebanon (2005-2013)*. The study considers smart power as a tool of Iran's foreign policy towards Lebanon since 2005, and Iran as an emerging regional pole is concerned with various movements and tools in its foreign policy, namely soft and hard power, which depends on smart power strategy in its foreign policy, especially towards Lebanon. The research puzzle in the study centres around why the IRI is moving to Lebanon with smart power tools? and why Lebanon is appropriate for Iranian smart power movements? Moreover, the study seeks to examine smart power as a concept that has emerged in the field of international relations and political science in the IRI’s case toward Lebanon. The IRI is intervening in support of Hezbollah, especially with the conservative rise of Ahmadinejad, and the study depends on the method of measuring the power of the state, in its three phases, consistent with the specificity of the study that studies smart power as a tool for foreign policy toward Lebanon.

Moreover, among the most important literature in this regard is Nourhan Sheikh’s study (2014), *Foreign Policy Theory*, which illuminates how the state combines traditional “hard power” and non-traditional “soft power” in its relations with other countries. Joseph Nye used the term “smart power” as the ability to combine the two hard and soft powers in one strategy for influence, where soft power is more effective than its hard power in some cases, while some developments occur that require the use of hard power, which necessitates a state of harmony and balance between them to achieve the goal sought in foreign policy, and the USA is one of the first countries to combine the two models in this respect.

Furthermore, a study entitled *Measuring Iranian State Power and the Balance of Power in the Persian Gulf (2003-2010)*, by Mostafa Allam (2012) seeks to measure the IRI’s different conventional and non-conventional military power compared to its GCC power determinants.
The study revolves around three trends, or schools, that question the relationship between the disparity in the instruments of power held by neighbouring states. The Arabian/Persian Gulf is an example of this disparity, and the researcher used both a power measurement and a comparative approach applied to his study to illustrate this controversy.

3.2 Literature on Iranian Foreign Policy

Among the most prominent pieces of literature here, is *The Impact of the Change of the Political Leadership on the Iranian Foreign Policy towards the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries (GCC)*, by the Iranian writer Khaled Al-Ajmi (2012), and this study deals with the change of the political leadership during the reign of President Muhammad Khatami and Ahmadinejad and the impact of that change on Iranian foreign policy towards the GCC countries.

This study is concerned with analyzing the approach of each of the two leaderships and the extent of the impact of that approach on foreign policy. It is also interested in researching the concept of leadership and foreign policy. The study concluded the following:

1) It is not possible to limit leadership to only two styles and generalize the results to them.

2) The impact of internal factors and determinants on the political leadership cannot be overlooked, since with the return of the conservative trend (the hard-line) with the assumption of power by “Ahmadinejad”, who revived Khomeini’s principles and renewed the policies of exporting the revolution toward the countries of the Arab region.

3) Foreign policies are affected by the stereotypical approach of the political leader, and accordingly, Ahmadinejad’s foreign policies towards the Arab region have not departed much from the general framework governing IRI’s foreign policy since the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

However, the researcher is accused of his clear bias towards Iran, as it is the country to which the researcher belongs.

In another study by Saeed Al-Sabbagh (2011), *An Introduction to the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, in which the writer shows the governing characteristics of Iranian foreign policy and points to the predominance of the religious character over its foreign policies, describing them as policies with Islamic tendencies. Thus, he defined Iranian
diplomacy according to which it represents the art of employing the available capabilities to
affirm the interests of the Islamic nation in the international arena.

Also, Pakinam al-Sharqawi’s study (2004), *Iranian Foreign Policy*, in which the writer
touches on Iranian foreign policy and its determinants, as the Iranian Islamic Revolution of
1979 had the greatest impact on Iran’s foreign policy in terms of its view of the outside world.
It also addresses the impact of the Iranian Islamic Revolution on the Arab region as an
intellectual, ideological, and security influence, and then monitors in detail Iran’s relationship
with the Arab Gulf region, Asia, and the USA.

### 3.3 Literature on the IRI’s Strategy Towards the Arab Region

In Nasr Ali’s study (2015), *Iranian Strategy in the Middle East*, the author touched upon the
Iranian strategy in the Arab region, in terms of its objectives, means of implementation, and
the most important consequences of it.

The author also referred to the Iranian vision aimed at achieving two main goals: to have
dominant power in the Middle East and to be an influential international power in the overall
world. To achieve this end, Iran has drawn the features that constitute its strategic thinking,
which contemporary studies indicate IRI’s usage of a strategy that embodies a mixture of hard
and soft power. In this regard, the author also points to the success of this strategy in
accomplishing some of Iran's goals, such as:

a) Skilfully igniting public Arab anger, as it did not focus much on the issue of establishing a
new regime, but rather focused on belittling and questioning the existing regimes,

b) Drafting a nuclear agreement in its favour, after a long period of arduous marathon
negotiations with the superpowers (5+1), and

c) Extracting an official recognition from the US administration that settling the issues of the
Middle East region will not be possible without the IRI’s help.

Another important piece of literature in this context is the study of Shehata Nasser (2009),
*The Shia phenomenon in the Middle East*. Nasser explains the rise of sectarianism as one of
the dimensions in which the events, interactions, axes, and balances of the Middle East are
viewed. also highlights the problems and crises plaguing the Middle East and predicts the
factors of conflict and clash on its scene. Most importantly, the writer touches on the
historical transformation that occurred in favour of the Shiites in Iraq in 2003, which took
place in an Arab country that was ruled by a regime affiliated with the Sunnis (the Ba 'ath Party), with a Shia majority undergoing persecution and restrictions, which in turn awakened the aspirations of Shiites in neighbouring countries.

Another notable study is Gorgan (2000). *National security imperatives and the neorealist state: Iran and realpolitik*. This study highlighted the new reality in the IRI, the international isolation it faces, and ways to open the door to economic and trade cooperation and develop and strengthen cultural and religious ties, as well as mutual and beneficial cooperation with influential countries in the region, which are the real foundations of Iranian national security and the invulnerable fortress to protect the Iranian regime from foreign interference in political decision-making. The author presented four study cases involving Iran's relationship with Azerbaijan, Turkey, Israel, and the Arab Gulf states, and concluded that Iran adopts a neorealism approach in its policy, an approach that always prevails, especially when it comes to issues of national security and foreign policy objectives.

Another worth mentioning study in this regard is by Tabe Khalili (2008), entitled *Building national security foundations in the Persian Gulf: adopting a policy of national security in Iran*. The study identified the concept of national security for countries bordering the Arabian/Persian Gulf and concluded that economic, social, cultural, and political factors have a role to play when it comes to building security. To this end, the best mechanism for the IRI is to achieve the highest level of regional rapprochement and improve relations between the IRI and neighbouring countries, as suggested by the study.

Musa Qaoud’s study (2012) *Iran’s regional role in the Middle East (1991-2010)*. This study analyzes the role of Iranian politics in the Middle East and discusses the Middle East project from the Iranian perspective. The IRI has developed projects for coordination and cooperation in an effort to draw a new map that includes the Arab world, the IRI, Turkey, and the Islamic countries of Central Asia. Iran's greatest goal remains to protect its national security as well as to create an "Islamic Middle East" based on its firm belief in the inevitability of establishing a world Islamic government sooner or later.

It also explains in detail the IRI’s mechanisms for implementing this project and the regional and international reactions to the Iranian project, in addition to the Iranian engagement in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Not to mention the international challenges it faces because of its nuclear file, and the Arab stance rejecting that for fear of an imbalance of power in favour of Iran.
Finally, the study touched upon the Iranian role in regional issues such as the Iraqi issue and its great role in Iraq, especially after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, its role in the Palestinian cause, and its role towards Lebanon and its support for Hezbollah.

Alaa Matar’s study (2004) *The ideology of the Iranian revolution and its impact on foreign political trends towards the Persian Gulf states (1979-2003).* This study delved into the details of the Iranian Revolution and its impact on IRI’s foreign policy toward the Arabian Gulf states. The Islamic Revolution in Iran is one of the most important revolutions of the 20th century and still has the potential to influence internally and externally and to pursue its strategic goals and aspirations based on the Shia religious origins, the ideology of Wilayat al-Faqih being based on the Twelve Shia doctrine. The study also covered many matters that had an impact on IRI's foreign policy toward the Arabian Gulf states.

Moreover, the study highlighted the regional environment surrounding the IRI, consisting of Arab states, the Central Asian Republics, the Caucasus Republics, and Turkey. As well as the international environment and Iranian foreign policy towards the Gulf states. Furthermore, the study also illuminated the principle of the export of the Iranian revolution and its impact on Iran-Gulf relations, as well as the first Gulf War and the issue of the three UAE islands.

In the end, this study showed the role of Shi’ism and its clear imprint on Iranian ideology in foreign policy toward Arab states.

Among the considered studies in this context is Kayhan’s study (2008) entitled *Iran and The Shiite Crescent: Myths and Realities.* The study elaborated on the analysis of the security arrangements in the Gulf states and the extent of the ability to maintain security and stability in the region. The study concluded by emphasizing the importance of balance in the Arabian Gulf while keeping an eye on the two variables in the domestic, regional, and international arena, and taking the necessary new security measures in light of the winds of change and sources of threat that the Arab region is witnessing, as well as the emergence of new actors on the scene or what They are called non-state actors.

This study also stresses that building an integrated and effective security system requires an accurate and refreshing assessment of the old and emerging levels of threat, and laying solid foundations to protect national security and confront emerging and potential challenges, the most important of which is Iran’s Shiite crescent, which the Sunni Arab elites view as an attempt by Iran, first to involve Iran masses in the region; second, building an ideological belt
of sympathetic Shiite governments and political factions in Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon, and the Persian Gulf region.

3.4 Literature Contributions and Research Gap

The previous literature contributed to shaping a clear picture for the researcher of the orientation and objectives of the Iranian foreign policy towards Arab national security in the Middle East, the means, mechanisms, and policies it has crystallized for the sake of achieving its aspirations. It also deepened and broadened the researcher’s perspective on the ideas, principles, and ideologies contained in IRI’s strategy that sharply contradicts what its counterparts in the Arab world hold.

This study is distinguished in that it attempts to address the issue of Iranian foreign policy, and its impact on Arab national security in three countries that are considered among the most important pillars of Arab national security in the Middle East region. Especially in the period following the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, and the overthrow of the Taliban and Ba'ath Party regimes [IRI’s fierce enemies]. Equally important in light of the arrival of conservatives (the hard-line) to power in the IRI headed by Ahmadinejad, who revived the idea of exporting the Iranian revolution to neighbouring countries, in accordance with the Iranian constitution and the directives of Ayatollah Khomeini. Not to mention the events of the Arab Spring in the Arab region, which created a political and military vacuum that allowed IRI to infiltrate through it, with its hard and soft power means, to have the upper hand and the final word in determining the fate of some of these countries.
Chapter 4: Methodological Approaches

This chapter presents a discussion of the methodological approach of this research. The first section explains the methodological design of the research. The second section is an outline of the research method. This is followed by an in-depth explanation of some reflections regarding the choice of this methodology, along with illuminating the alternative research method that will be combined with the main research method, as well as illustrating the materials and samples used in the research, as follows:

4.1 Research Design

The choice to study the IRI’s foreign policy toward the Arab national security in the Middle East, and in particular the case of “Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen”, depends on the Shiite base in each of them that allows the IRI to utilize smart power in its foreign policy. The study, therefore, endeavours to apply an interpretive case study approach by analyzing events following domestic and regional shifts that took place in the aftermath of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. In addition to the change that occurred in the Iranian strategy and its tendency to adopt the smart power in its foreign policy towards the Arab region, from which the interpretive case study approach arises. This method has been chosen because it is compatible with the research in each case of the study separately, despite the similarity of the reasons that led to the adoption of this strategy by the IRI in those countries.

4.2 Research Method

The method utilized for material analysis will be a qualitative interpretive case study. The term “interpretive research”, as per Creswell, is often used loosely and synonymously with “qualitative research”. This method [interpretive case study] refers to the analysis of the sources when nothing is measured or counted; Rather, it is about interpreting and explaining the material (Creswell W and Creswell D, 2017). Moreover, the interpretive case study as a method enables the researcher to closely examine and analyze data in a particular context.

A side point in this regard is that the interpretive case study is a research paradigm that is based upon the assumption that social reality is not singular or objective but is rather shaped by human experiences and social contexts [ontology], and is, therefore, best studied within its socio-historic context by reconciling the subjective interpretations of its various participants.
Because interpretive researchers view social reality as being embedded within and impossible to abstract from their social settings, they “interpret” the reality through a “sense-making” process rather than a hypothesis testing process (Ibid).

As such, the interpretive case study method selects a very limited number of individuals or small geographic areas as research subjects. As such, the case study, in its actual essence, investigates, examines, and explores the contemporary real-life phenomenon through a detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of conditions, events, or circumstances, and their relationships (Yin 1984). In this way, Yin describes the case study method as “an empirical investigation that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in the context of its real-life; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly visible; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.” (1984:23).

Thus, the interpretive case study method provides a systematic method for collecting data, observing events, analyzing information, and reporting the results of the studied case over a long period of time in order to achieve a better and deeper understanding of the reality of the event it represents. Not to mention that the case study method depends on multi-directional studies, such as longitudinal, transverse, vertical, and horizontal studies related to the social events covered by the study (Creswell, 2017).

Equally important, the interpretive case study approach strives to reveal the negative and positive aspects of the phenomenon under study, in addition to studying the similarities, the difference, and the causal relationships between these elements. In short, a case study method can study one particular stage of a society’s history, or a set of stages that society has gone through in order to come to an accurate study of these social events and patterns along with their correct historical development (Ibid).

4.3 Limitations in Methodological Approaches

The interpretive case study as a methodological approach is a very valuable research method aims at interpreting, explaining, and describing the reality of a social, religious, or political phenomenon (Creswell, 2017). Notwithstanding, this type of method has limited capabilities when it comes to generalizing the results obtained through the study, as they are not generalizable to cases outside the framework of the research, no matter how close the similarities between the cases are. Consequently, the results may change, for example, if other
cases or even other aspects are included in the research. Instead, the research conclusions should be viewed as pointers toward a particular direction. This can be further confirmed if extra research is done in other ways, pointing in the same direction (ibid.). In addition, one of the disadvantages of the case study is the difficulty of the researcher’s commitment not to be biased in his research, as this approach makes some researchers bias their studies, especially when interpreting and analyzing the outcomes of the case, which makes the results stray from objectivity because the researcher here is not neutral (Bryman, 2008: 368).

In sum, the qualitative interpretive case study approach can have some methodological problems, especially with regard to the limitations of creating generalizable results. Not to mention the difficulty in replicating qualitative studies compared to quantitative studies, since qualitative research relies heavily on researchers’ observations, interpretations, and explanations (Ibid).

4.4 Alternative Methods

The historiography approach can also be used when it comes to studying smart power in Iranian foreign policy towards Arab national security. It is also beneficial to be combined with the interpretive case studies. Historiography, as per O’Brien, is “an empirical research paradigm that uses an interpretive or qualitative approach that focuses on chronology over a large period of time in order to obtain a fuller and richer understanding of a situation or set of circumstances” (O'Brien et al, 2003:137). It is also beneficial to be combined with case studies. Thus, it involves much more than just collecting dates, events, and facts. In other words, it is a study of the events and influences surrounding those events (Ibid: 138-140).

The historiography approach also contributes to providing diverse data to monitor the study field. It goes without saying, realizing the background to any situation or in any case embraces our comprehension and improves our capacity to visualize what is influential and what is not. Hence the historiography approach encompasses interpreting past events so that ideas surrounding those events can be better recognized and communicated towards fresh ones (Ibid:136).
4.5 Research Materials

The materials consist heavily of academic papers and documents. The following is a presentation of the material, an outline of the sample criteria, and then a discussion on some of the material concerns.

4.5.1 Presentation of the Material

It goes without saying that anything that summarizes, describes, interprets, evaluates, or analyses information from primary sources, can be counted as a secondary source. Thus, if a source provides an overview of background information or presents another researcher’s ideas on the topic under study, it is probably a secondary source.

Based upon that, the material that will be utilized in this research is mainly secondary, including textbooks, academic papers, journal articles, newspapers and social media (Maimbo and Pervan, 2005), annual reports and financial statements, public records, and minutes of meetings and organization charts (Myers, 2009). In addition to secondary sources, some primary sources will also be used in the form of TV interviews, official speeches, audio or video recordings, documentary programs and films, government publications, oral histories, research data, e.g., public opinion polls) from relevant agencies covering the IRI’s strategy and foreign policy toward the Arab national security (Ibid).

4.5.2 Sampling Criteria

To find the books/articles, four digital research archives were used: Academic Search Premier, Google Scholar, J Store, and Scopus. These four databases were selected based on their wide and diverse set of data. The search comprised four criteria for the sake of finding books/articles correlated to the research topic. The criteria are categorized as follows:

1) Publication date between 2003-and 2015.

2) Written in English, Arabic, and Swedish.

3) Collegial review.

4) Articles will be found and collected by using the following keywords:

• Iranian foreign policy,

• IRI’s foreign policy; and
• Smart power in Iranian foreign policy.

4.5.3 A Critique of the Materials

The above criteria have certain limitations that are crucial to be indicated. With regard to the first criteria, the dilemma that can arise when using articles from 2003, is that they can be misleading, due to the uncertainty that was still present in Iranian external decision-making circles towards Middle Eastern countries at that point. Nonetheless, the inclusion of articles from 2003 may be helpful compared to what was mentioned about Iranian policies later. As a researcher, a lack of mastery of the Persian language creates additional limitations on the material of information and data. Still, the exclusion of material written in Persian may contribute to the loss of important factors not highlighted in English, Swedish or Arabic articles, which in turn leads to skewed findings.

The third and final limitation concerns the use of the chosen keywords. These keywords may lead to the loss of some important articles and academic papers that could be vital in the results and conclusions but do not appear in the search. An attempt to tackle this problem is to search for material based on references in articles found through the above keywords. Despite these limitations, the approach is still a very useful way to find relevant and qualified material for inclusion in cases study. On the basis of this method a total of 75 articles were found, of which 38 were correlated to the research aims and questions. Four of the articles were not undergone collegial review, however, were included in the articles given their high quality and relevance to research aims and questions.
Chapter 5: Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

This study adopts, as an analytical framework I, Joseph Nye’s model (2011) and definition of power to analyze the Iranian foreign policy in the Arab region in the Middle East, through its hard power represented by its armed sectarian militias [Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq, and the Houthi group in Yemen]. Together with its proxies driven mostly by its ideology and Iranian soft power expeditions with an aim to create grassroots and lasting blocs in its neighbourhood. In addition to Nye’s model, Waltz’s neo-realism theory has been adopted as an analytical framework II.

5.1 Key Conceptual Definitions

In this section, the researcher will offer a concise definition of the concept of Arab national security, and the instruments of foreign policy espoused by the IRI.

5.1.1 Arab National Security

In accordance with the Charter of the League of Arab States (LAS), the concept of Arab national security rests heavily on the idea of the ability of Arab States to protect the Arab nation from internal and external threats in times of peace and war, whether existing or potential, as well as achieve the highest levels of political, security, economic, and military cooperation, and coordination in all fields, based on the idea of Arab nationalism (Al-Rawashdeh, 2019: 70).

Considering this fact, the comprehensive concept of Arab national security is the capacity of Arab countries to perfectly advocate their rights, and preserve their sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. As well as reinforcing and supporting these capacities by developing the Arab potential in diverse military, security, political, cultural, economic, social, and technical fields depending on their political, geopolitical, and cultural characteristics (Ibid: 71).

Accordingly, the national security demands of each country, the obtainable potentials, along with the internal, regional, and international variables that impact the Arab national security, which is considered the bedrock of regional security. Thus, the essence of the concept of Arab national security is centred around maintaining national belonging and strengthening Arab identity, which is a fundamental component in linking the Arab states, preserving common national interests, and achieving the desired development at all levels (Ibid: 72).
5.1.2 Foreign Policy Instruments

In general, foreign policy can be defined as ‘the behaviour of the state on the international stage, which is adopted by the decision-maker and the policymaker with the aim to achieve the interests of the state. The state resorts to a set of instruments to implement its foreign policy and achieve its goals” (Nye, 2011: pp. 9-10; Tayfur, 1994: pp. 115, 117). The Notable foreign policy instruments in this context include:

5.1.2.1 Military Instrument

The military instrument is considered an important tool for the implementation of foreign policy, as it is a mainstay and a basic pillar for the success of diplomacy (Nye, 2011: pp. 13-15). The military tool may be used in its traditional form represented in launching military attacks, whether for the purpose of expansion or the seizure of the resources of another country or for the purpose of deterrence (Ibid). Or perhaps the state may resort to using the military instrument of pressure, as other states are subject to the desire of the state that uses the means of pressure for fear of incurring losses from entering a war with that state, and the success of both means of deterrence and pressure depends on the state’s military capabilities (Ibid:16).

As pointed out in the introduction chapter, Iran’s foreign policy is the most controversial in the international system since the success of Khomeini’s revolution in Iran in 1979, then Iran’s entry into a long war with Iraq during the time of Saddam Hussein, through Iran’s conflict with the international community over its nuclear program and its ability to establish shields in three gateways in the Middle East: Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen. It is waging a proxy war in its regional environment and its open ideological and political conflict with Arab countries (See Ramazani, 2004).

Equally important, the shape of the Shiite belief system in Iran and the geostrategic location of the Islamic Republic of Iran at the gates of the Strait of Hormuz, and in the vicinity of the Gulf region, which is considered the largest oil reserves in the world, and close to Sunni Islamic countries, cannot produce a foreign policy different from Iran's current foreign policy, which is a puzzle that can be explained by testing a set of theories in international relations and political science and proven by a set of scientific arguments (Ibid: pp. 1-11).

5.1.2.2 Economic Instrument
It is represented in the state’s use of its economic capabilities and resources to influence the behaviour of other countries to serve its interests, and what increased its importance is the emergence of economic blocs and economic interdependence between states, and this tool is used through two patterns of “encouragement” and “intimidation” (i.e., “carrots” and “stick” modes) (Nye, 2011: pp. 17-18).

The first type is “encouragement”: in which the state provides technical or financial assistance or loans to another country to motivate it, with the aim of influencing and directing the policy of that country to serve its interests. Usually, rich countries provide financial assistance while countries with limited resources provide technical assistance (Ibid).

The second type is “intimidation”: in which the state resorts to putting pressure on other countries by preventing or threatening to halt aid and imposing sanctions on countries whose policies are not in line with the donor country; An economic ban in whole or in part; Boycott, the refusal to import goods produced by a particular country; Tariffs; Freezing or nationalization of assets is an economic measure intended for political gain, depriving a state of the use of its assets within the territory of the freezing state until it responds to the political or economic demands required of it (Ibid).

5.1.2.3 Media Instrument

It aims basically to influence the decision-makers or public opinion of a country or world opinion and direct it to serve its interests, by resorting to appealing to emotions in its favour, or by spreading division and destabilization by provoking minorities (Ibid: pp.19-20).

Thus, in order for this instrument to be adequate and effective, the following conditions must be met: Simplicity in the sense that the media message is simple and uncomplicated in order to be able to deliver the intended message; Attractiveness is the ability to attract and arouse interest; Being realistic, the more it relates to reality, the greater its ability to target and influence a larger number of people; Arousing feelings and passion because this helps to arouse and increase interest in the advertising material; be based on harmonious facts and not contain many contradictions; Repetition is one of the most important conditions for the success of the media tool, as the repetition of the material makes it attached to the minds of individuals and makes it a given fact (See Yukaruç, 2017: pp. 492-495).

5.1.2.4 Diplomatic Instrument:
The diplomatic apparatus is the diplomatic representation of the state in international theatres, in the form of a diplomatic mission usually headed by the head of state, which is to represent, negotiate, make decisions, implement the foreign policy of the state, follow the fulfilment of the obligations of the sending state, and act as a permanent channel of communication between countries (Nye, 2011: pp. 20-23).

The diplomatic instrument also includes the state’s ability to negotiate and play a mediating role between the conflicting states. The importance of the diplomatic instrument emerges due to the international community’s awareness of the danger of wars and their destructive material and human losses (Ibid: 23). And its importance increased, especially because it is not limited to the traditional style represented in the diplomatic mission, but rather expanded to include types of diplomacy such as crisis diplomacy, summit diplomacy, and alliance diplomacy (Nye, 2008: pp. 96-97).

Therefore, diplomacy is considered effective when supported by other foreign policy tools, military, economic, and media. Without the support of these means, the effectiveness of diplomacy will be limited if not nonexistent (Ibid: 97).

5.2 Analytical Framework I: Nye’s Smart Power Module

To comprehend the IRI’s utilization of smart power [combination of hard power and soft power], the researcher will first and foremost define both terms separately and then the smart power itself. This research adopts Nye’s definition and forms of power as a framework for the analysis.

Joseph Nye defines Power, “as the ability to affect others to achieve the outcomes one wants”. Thus, Nye divides power into two types, hard power, and soft power (Nye 1990: 154).

5.2.1 Hard Power

According to Joseph Nye, hard power involves “the ability to use the carrots and sticks of economic and military might to make others follow your will”. In this regard, “carrots” stand for inducements such as the reduction of trade barriers, the offer of an alliance, or the promise of military protection. On the other hand, “sticks” represent threats - including the use of coercive diplomacy, the implementation of economic sanctions, or even the threat of military intervention. Wilson (2008) describes hard power as the capacity to coerce “another to act in ways in which that entity would not have acted otherwise” (pp. 110-111)
Hard power is commonly known in politics as, “using military and economic means to shape the behaviour of others or use of cohesive political power, military aggression or economic power by one political entity against another.” (Nye 2004: 25, 51, Copeland 2010). In other words, hard power involves, as per Nye, the ability to use sticks and carrots of military might or economic strength to make others follow one's will (Ibid). In this context, "sticks" represent threats - comprising the usage of coercive diplomacy, the implementation of economic sanctions, or even the threat of military involvement. Whereas "carrots" stand for inducements such as the offer of an alliance or the undertaking of military protection, or/and the reduction of trade barriers (Nye 2004). Therefore, Hard power can be described as command power that is deemed as the oldest form of power, integrated, and enrooted in the idea of an anarchic structure of global politics.

Historically, hard power has always been measured by such criteria as the natural resources, the size of population, territory, as well as geographical space, political weight, and economic strength remained significant instruments to determine the hard power of any certain state. On the contrary to soft power, which its legitimacy essence comes from diplomacy, history, and culture (Nye 2008). The reliance of hard power on military and economic power to protect its security makes it fall under the realist school, just as soft power’s reliance on legitimacy, cooperation, cultural and social ties, and identity make it fall under the banner of the liberal and constructivist school (Ibid).

5.2.2 Soft Power

Nye in his book, The Future of Power, defines soft power as “the capability to achieve what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments,” and “the sources of soft power are the attractiveness of country’s culture, political ideals, and policies.” (2004: 81). Accordingly, soft power relies heavily on the state’s ability to act as a role model and shape others' desire to adopt its style and values. Moreover, as per Nye, Soft power is considered as an alternative to the traditional “stick and carrot” tactic utilized by states to pursue national interest (Nye, 2004).

In the same vein, Nye also associates soft power with sources of tangible power such as ideology, culture, institution, to name but a few. According to him, co-operative power is no less important than hard power because it creates legitimacy for state power and this legitimacy decreases resistance to the state’s desires. State mystifies its ideology and culture
to make it attractive so that it acquires more enthusiasm and willingness among masses to follow up its national interest ((Nye, 1990).

As a result, by employing soft power, states contribute to building a positive image that produces space for states to consolidate their impact in global politics.

5.2.3 Smart Power

Based on the above, the concept of power has evolved from the monist concept (hard power or soft power) to the binary one, which combines hard power and soft power to form the concept of smart power (Gray, 2011). Nye is considered the founding father of this type of power in foreign policy [in his book The Future of Power]. This concept of smart power came as a response to the fallacy of the prevailing notion, which is that soft power can work alone in achieving the goals of the state's foreign policy, and the necessity to move to the broader and more comprehensive concept of foreign policy and develop it to include both hard power and soft power, so that to be more in keeping with different contexts and developments in the international arena, and also to emphasize that it is not possible under any circumstances to dispense with the aforementioned two types of power mentioned (Ibid).

Accordingly, one can affect others to get what he wants in three major ways; the first way is with coercion and threats. In other words, with “sticks”; the second way to affect others is with payment, it is most often called “carrots”; and the third and final way is to get people to do what one wants by attraction and persuasion, that is what Nye calls it soft power (Nye, 2004: pp. 231-234). Thus, soft power is the ability to get what one desires without using payment or coercion. Based on that, smart power cannot be understood as a substitute for hard power (military or economic), or soft power (persuasion and attraction), but on the contrary, it combines them in different ways in diverse contexts to have an effective and adequate policy or strategy (Ibid).

To more illustrate this matter, the current reality on the international stage shows that it is necessary to deal with soft and hard power together, not separately (Ibid: 234). Needless to say, the classic distinction between realpolitik and liberalism has become blurred. Hard and soft power often interact and reinforce each other. Both are ultimately related because both represent the ability to achieve the desired goal by influencing the behaviour of others and, as a result, are inextricably intertwined (Ibid: pp. 3-5).
The ability to combine hard and soft power skilfully in order to develop integrated strategies is called "smart power ". In other words, smart power is the ability of an actor to combine hard and soft power elements in ways that effectively and efficiently develop the actor's goals. Soft power alone may not be enough, but its relative strategic importance relative to hard power will continue to increase. Advocates of smart power necessitate articulating the advantages of hard power, such as strong military power, in addition to investing in partnerships, alliances, and institutions. If the hard power is “push” and the soft power is “pull”, then the combination allows for maximizing the results in a legitimate manner. As a more flexible approach, it fits well with the current sphere of international politics (Nye 2004: 5-7).

5.3 Analytical Framework II: Waltz’s Neo-realism Theory

To fully understand the IRI’s foreign policy towards Arab national security, the researcher will also use Waltz’s neo-realism theory as an additive analytical framework.

*Neo-realism, or structural realism*, is defined as an approach to international relations, a development of realism theory, which emerged in the 1970s, within the framework of the critique of Classical Realism, for its emphasis on state behavior and foreign policymakers. Neorealism considered understanding the behavior of decision-makers in foreign policy insufficient to recognize international interactions (Waltz, 1988: pp. 615-618).

Its key proponent is Kenneth Waltz, who outlined it in his book titled "*Theory of International Politics*", and neorealism relied in its interpretation and analysis of international politics on four basic determinants (Ibid: 618):

1) the state, which is considered, according to this theory, the main actor in international politics, is sovereign and independent and seeks to ensure its survival (Ibid: 619).

2) the anarchy of the international system; this anarchy determines the behavior of states and non-state actors in the absence of a central authority, and states are distinguished by their capabilities, not their functions (Ibid).

3) the power of the state, which is the guarantee of survival, through power, states can defend themselves, and this power is subdivided into military, economic, diplomatic, to name but a few (Ibid: pp. 620-622).
4) balance of power; The anarchy of the international system pushes toward a balance of power, and although the needs of states are the same, the means differ from one country to another, and there are two ways that can achieve a balance of power in the international community, and this is through:

A) Internal balance, where the capabilities and resources of countries grow by taking advantage of economic growth.

B) External balance, where countries form alliances to benefit from the strength of the countries involved in the alliance (Ibid: pp. 622-625).

To put things into perspective, neorealism emphasizes the use of soft power instruments in foreign policy, along with hard power instruments such as military force. For these reasons, neo-realism seeks to achieve a balance of power, and based upon that, states must confront the most pressing threats, given that the anarchy of the international system requires states to continue to possess sufficient strength to defend themselves (Waltz, 1988).

Therefore, countries seek, according to neo-realism, to strengthen the economy, build military forces on the internal level from one angle, build alliances, and weaken hostile alliances on the external level from another angle (Ibid).

As earlier mentioned, Neo-realism explains the approaches based on anarchy and they differ in analyzing how much power states need in anarchy. This has led to the development of theory, which is divided into two branches as follows:

5.3.1 Offensive Neo-realism

contends that states must acquire an adequate amount of power necessary for them to thrive. Moreover, in this quest to acquire power, they should not, nevertheless, maximize their relative power. Thus, offensive neorealism is when one state seeks power and influence to gain security through hegemony (Waltz, 1988: pp. 625-630).

5.3.2 Defensive Neo-realism

emerges when the offensive neorealists upset the balance of power theory through their aggressive hegemonic expansion. Likewise, while defensive neorealism does not deny the reality of interstate conflict, nor that incentives for state expansion do exist, it affirms that these incentives are sporadic rather than endemic (Ibid: pp. 630-634).
Chapter 6: Analysis
In line with the limitations of the research in chapter I and the theoretical framework on which the research was based in chapter V, and in an attempt to answer the research questions, this chapter has been divided into three sections [according to the study cases], and will get started with the case of Lebanon, through the case of Iraq, and finally the case of Yemen, as follows:

6.1 Case Study I: Lebanon
The Lebanese civil war from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s led to the dedication of the Syrian regime as director of the Lebanese affairs, and little by little the Syrian regime allowed a direct Iranian presence, which paved the way for the birth of the Hezbollah militia under the supervision and funding of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) (Abdul-Hussain, 2009: pp. 68-69).

Likewise, the shifts in the balance of power and sectarian conflicts that the Arab region has witnessed, since the occupation of Iraq in 2003, helped the Iranian regime, in one way or another, to expand its influence over the Arab region, particularly Lebanon (Ibid).

6.1.1 The Components of Iranian Smart Power in Lebanon
In this section, the components of the Iranian smart power in Lebanon will be discussed; Hard power components (Hezbollah militia) and soft power components (media activism and religious institutions).

6.1.1.1 Hard Power Components: Lebanon’s Hezbollah Militia
The Iranian regime played a key role in the shaping of “the Lebanese Hezbollah militia” under the party’s founder, Mohammad Hussein Fazlullah, nicknamed (Khomeini of Lebanon), and some of the leaders of the Amal movement studying in the seminaries of Najaf, in order to pave the way and prepare the popular incubator for the export of the Iranian Islamic revolution to the Arab region (Ibid:72). Where some of the leaders of the IRGC, under the direction of Ayatollah Khomeini, met with groups loyal to the Supreme Leader within the Amal movement, and this resulted in the establishment of Hezbollah in Lebanon in 1985, and since then the Iranian regime has had a destabilizing entity inside Lebanon (Ibid: pp. 72-73).

Looking at the wording of Hezbollah’s 1985 founding manifesto, “Who are we and what are we?”, we find that since its inception, Hezbollah belongs to the Iranian regime and not to Lebanon, “We are the sons of the nation of Hezbollah, Nasrallah’s leader in Iran, which re-
established the nucleus of the central Islamic State in the world. We abide by the orders of a single, wise, and just leadership, represented by the Wali al-Faqih (the guardian of the jurist) who gathers all the conditions, and is embodied in the present by the eminent Imam, the Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, whose shadow will be the bomber of the Muslim revolution and the initiator of their glorious renaissance.” (Al Manar-TV, 2012).

This allegiance is demonstrated by Mohammad Hussein Fazlullah’s statement that “My opinion is consistent with Iranian thought and in the same line with its policy”, (Ibid: 75) as well as the statement of Ibrahim al-Amin, the party’s spokesman in 1987, “We do not say that we are part of Iran, we are Iran in Lebanon, and Lebanon in Iran”, (Ibid) Then Hassan Nasrallah’s statement, the current Secretary-General of Hezbollah, “We see in Iran a country that supports Muslims and Arabs. Religious authority there constitutes the religious and legitimate cover for our struggle and jihad.” (Ibid: 77).

Consequently, Hezbollah (the Iranian instrument) has been able to expand and radicalize Lebanon, supported by the Lebanese Shia base through its religious, social, and political marketing of the IRI in Lebanon, replacing the slogan “Exporting the Islamic Revolution” with “Islamic Resistance” as a political umbrella, which the mullahs’ regime supports and uses as a tool for its hard power that goes beyond the political ceiling to the religious reference alliance, in the Arab region in general, and Lebanon in particular (Clarke and Phillip, 2017: pp. 14-18).

As such, in Lebanon, Hezbollah, as the principal organ and arm of the Iranian Quds Force, played a direct and effective role in the implementation of the IRI’s foreign policy agenda and in making Lebanon a malleable starting point for spreading IRI’s strategy to the rest of the Arab countries. Not to mention turning Lebanon into a source of threat to Arab national security from within (Ibid: pp. 15-17).

6.1.1.2 Soft Power Components

The most important components of Iranian soft power in Lebanon, according to the literature [chapter III], are media activity and religious institutions [See the study of Nasr Ali 2015 and Shehata Nasser 2009], which will be highlighted separately.

6.1.1.2.1 Media Activism

The Iranian regime not only supported Hezbollah in the media but also officially asked the Lebanese government to establish sectarian media platforms and mouthpieces. Former Iranian
President Hashemi Rafsanjani telephoned his Syrian counterpart Hafez al-Assad in the early 1990s to ask him to pressure the Lebanese government to allow the establishment of sectarian media channels (Pahlavi, 2012: pp. 22-25). This resulted in granting permission to establish Hezbollah’s Al-Manar channel, NBN for Amal movement, in addition to many other satellite channels, such as Al-Kawthar channel, Ai Fem channel, Mayadin TV, Al-Nour Radio, Al-Enqaq, and Al-Akhbar newspaper (News), (Ibid) to name just a few.

6.1.1.2.2 Religious Institutions

The Iranian regime supported Hezbollah, whose representative in Lebanon, as described by the party’s Secretary-General, Hassan Nasrallah, in the funding and establishment of sectarian schools in Lebanon, such as Imam Khomeini, Imam Mahdi, and Shahid schools (Shaery-Eisenlohr, 2008; Abdul-Hussain, 2009). This means spreading Iranian culture to Shiites in Lebanon. In addition to the establishment of Azad Islamic University, Al-Rasul Akram Institute, and Sayyidah Al-Zahra. Furthermore, several community institutions have been created, such as the Loan Al-Hassan Foundation, whose goal is to provide loans to the Lebanese in an Iranian way, and the Goodwill Foundation (Eisenlohr, 2008). Not to mention, many banks, hospitals, and publishing houses. All these institutions play a major role (as soft power) in spreading the teachings and ideology of the revolution of the Iranian mullahs, who take advantage of those institutions to politicize the entry of Shia Arabs into the territory of neighbouring countries (Shaery-Eisenlohr, 2008; Clarke and Phillip, 2017).

6.1.2 The Usage of Iranian Smart Power in Lebanon

The Iranian regime has provided the Lebanese Hezbollah with a multibillion-dollar arms deal since its inception, as it has trained thousands of Hezbollah members militarily both inside Lebanon and in Iran to be a stumbling block to Lebanon’s national unity and to lobby its political system to respond to Iranian demands (Paunic, 2016: pp. 72-76).

On the other hand, the Iranian regime capitalized on the Hezbollah militia’s emergence, aiming to improve its image in front of some Arabs under the pretext of defending Arab lands against Israel. Thus, the Iranian regime’s support for Hezbollah has led the latter to be used as a trump card at will to achieve Iranian goals, particularly to relieve pressure on it regarding the negotiations on its nuclear program with the superpowers (5+1), and then to deliver a veiled threatening message (coercive and persuasion) to the USA that it can move the war against it from one region to another in the Middle East (Clarke and Phillip, 2017).
As a result, the Iranian regime was able [by combining hard power and soft power, which the Iranian regime is well-versed in] to politicize Lebanon’s Shiite sect and Lebanon’s political structure as a whole to serve the Iranian project, the Iranian project. As it spread its sectarian ideology that led to civil wars and societal disintegration, in favour of a sectarian faction (Hizballah) which has gained control of the political, economic, and military equation in Lebanon in the implementation of the Iranian agenda, far from Lebanon's national interest (Ibid).

6.1.3 The Strategic Gains of IRI’s Smart Power in Lebanon

As indicated above, Lebanon was the first station for employing smart power in the IRI’s foreign policy towards the Arab world, which was reproduced in Iraq and Yemen (Abdul-Hussain, 2009), as will be explained below. Accordingly, the employment of the smart power in Lebanon has yielded many paramount strategic gains for Iran, the most notably:

1) Dominating the Lebanese state, confiscating its political, economic, and military decisions, and holding it hostage to the dictates of the Iranian mullahs’ regime (Ibid),

2) Finding a foothold for the IRI in the Levant (Syria, Palestine, Jordan, and Lebanon), and filling the security, military, and political vacuum left by the Syrian army’s withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005, threatened by the United States following the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Mr. Hariri (Paunic, 2016: pp.76-77),

3) Using the Israeli cards, in devious ways, to put pressure on the US administration, regarding negotiations on the nuclear agreement, and the lifting of economic sanctions, as the IRI’s presence next to Israel [under the slogans of resistance and opposition] posed a serious security threat to Israel, as Israel’s security became related to the IRI’s security and vice versa. By doing so, the IRI immunized its regime from any attempt to overthrow or any retaliatory strike that might weaken it (Ibid: 78),

4) Evasion of the economic sanctions imposed on Iran, as Lebanon contributed to lifting a heavy burden on Iran in this regard (through its airports, ports, and central bank, which was harnessed in favour of venting the Iranian regime in the face of international pressure, of course at the expense of the Lebanese interest), and

5) Most importantly, the IRI has taken Lebanon as a platform to beautify Iran's image on Arab streets [through some deceptive and camouflaging wars with Israel], just to win Arab sympathy, and to raise the popularity of the IRI [as the banner holder for the
6.2 Case Study II: Iraq

Iraq is reckoned the most important Arab country that occupies a special priority in the Iranian foreign policy agenda, due to its location as a backyard for Iran, its great economic resources, and the presence of a large Shiite majority in it. The IRI, therefore, seized the opportunity of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, which opened the door wide for Iran to use its hard and soft power tools to tighten its grip on Iraq and make it a bridge to expand into the rest of the Arab region, for which Iraq served as a protective fence and impenetrable shield.

6.2.1 The Components of Iranian Smart Power in Iraq

This section touches upon the components of the Iranian smart power in Iraq: Hard power components (The Popular Mobilization Forces) and soft power components (media activism and religious institutions).

6.2.1.1 Hard Power Components: Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF)

The US occupation of Iraq has presented a golden opportunity for the IRI, as it opened the door for foreign interference in Iraq. Where IRI initially focused its military weight on its traditional allies, the “Badr Corps,” which is affiliated with the Islamic Supreme Council in Iraq, and then expanded its military influence to include the “Mahdi Army,” which is affiliated with the Sadrist movement. Some reports also stated that IRI’s hand had extended to include the “Ansar al-Islam” group, which enabled Iran to exercise a strong influence on the Kurdistan Regional Government (Paunic, 2016: pp. 73-75).

However, in the shadow of the sudden security shift in the Iraqi scene in June 2014, represented by the control of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant “ISIS” over the Iraqi city of Mosul, the Iranian regime realized the danger of this transformation that would threaten its presence in Iraq, so it instructed to its Iraqi militias, in cooperation and coordination with government forces, in the fight against ISIS. In a step supporting this trend, the Iranian mullahs instructed the Shiite religious authority in Iraq (Ayatollah Al-Sistani) to issue a fatwa on “defensive jihad” to confront the attacks of the Islamic State. As a result, the Popular
Mobilization Forces were established, which is a paramilitary militia belonging to the Iraqi Shiite component and loyal to IRI (Ibid: pp. 74-75).

The Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), consist of the Iraqi Shiite youth distributed among more than 47 militias. Analysts attribute the large number of militias that make up the PMF to the Iranian desire to create a hard power and obtain political and military privileges in Iraq (Mansour and Fāliḥ, 2017: pp.3-5). In greater detail, the PMF falls into two categories: the first is the large militias, such as the Badr Organization, the Mahdi Army, Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq, Saraya al-Salam, and the Khorasan Brigade, which are military entities that are ideologically, organizationally, and financially linked directly to the Iranian regime. The second category of the Popular Mobilization Forces consists of young people who listened to the call of the religious authority after the fall of Mosul to ISIS in 2014 and joined the army and police sectors in the Baghdad belt and in other provinces (Ibid: pp. 12-15).

To put things into perspective, regarding the IRI’s relationship with the Popular Mobilization Forces, it can be argued that the Popular Mobilization Forces are headed by Jamal Jaafar, better known by his nom de guerre, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, who, according to Iraqi officials, is the right-hand man of Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani. Despite the Iraqi government’s denial of Iranian support for these militias, Iraqi Defense Minister Khaled al-Obeidi was eventually forced to admit that Iran provides “great support” to the Popular Mobilization Forces allied with Iraqi forces, and a leader in the National Coalition revealed that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard is the one who It provides the PMF with weapons, combat equipment, and financial support (Ibid: 10-12).

As for IRI’s aim of the PMF, it is centered around making it a military arm affiliated with it in Iraq (as hard power, according to Nye) and integrating it into the official Iraqi army, of course after eliminating the ISIS (Ibid: pp.15-16). In this vein, the IRI reproduces the experience of the Lebanese Hezbollah in Iraq, but in a different manner, in the sense, that Hezbollah in Lebanon is a strong current in Lebanon’s non-governmental political system. In the Iraqi case, the PMF will be at the heart of the Iraqi governmental political system, and in the most important institutions of the Iraqi state (i.e., the Ministry of Defense). As such, the IRI would have a subsidiary army defending its domestic regime and regional interests (neo-realism, defensive realism) (Ibid: 17).

6.2.1.2 Soft Power Components
Considering the literature review [Chapter III], the IRI’s most powerful components of Iranian soft power in Iraq, as in the case of Lebanon, are media activism and religious institutions, as explained below.

6.2.1.2.1 Media Activism

The IRI runs dozens of media organizations that adopt a discourse attempt to consolidate Iranian influence and strike IRI’s opponents in Iraq. They are well-known institutions far and wide, including the “Al-Itijah” channel affiliated with the Iraqi Hezbollah militia, the faction that fights in Iraq and Syria, as well as the “Al-Ishraq” and “Al-Ibaa” channels affiliated with the PMF. And also, the “Al-Nujaba” channel, which is affiliated with the al-Nujaba faction, which is also fighting in Syria, the “Al-Ghadir” channel, which is affiliated with the Badr Organization faction, and the “Al-Ahed 1” and “Al-Ahed 2” channels, affiliated with the Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq faction, which also fought in Syria (Köse et al, 2016: pp. 355-361).

These above-mentioned channels own news agencies, such as Al-Ahd News Agency. It also has extensive radio stations, such as Najiba and Kawthar, as well as dozens of institutions that continue to operate under the umbrella of the Islamic Radio and Television Union, headed by Hamid Husseini, who is affiliated with the Islamic Union's Director General Karim Yani (Iranian nationality) (Ibid: 360-364).

As a matter of truth, these media organizations are primarily aimed at passing the Iranian discourse, as Iranian funding dictates full affiliation of these institutions to the IRI, so that news bulletins should broadcast Wilayat al-Faqih (Ayatollah Khomeini) and the IRGC’s achievements as headlines, even ahead of the headlines of the Iraqi affairs. In this regard, an Iranian media source in Iraq says that “Iran’s Arabic-speaking media is based on several pillars, the most important of which is that it wants to impose the political vision of the party, which is close to the IRI, and which finances the satellite station through talk shows and news bulletins.” (Jamshidi and Rasool, 2004:67)

In a related context, the source of “Ultra Voice” clarified that staff of newsrooms and broadcast programs through the Iranian media are directed to work on marginalizing the official military institution by misleading the recipient with the weakness and corruption of this institution”. On the other hand, promoting the PMF as a “stronger and more disciplined” alternative (Ibid: pp. 68-74).
Equally important, these Iranian media organizations in Iraq play a role in the sectarian polarization of Iraqi Shiites, as a tool to solicit political loyalty on a sectarian basis. It also seeks to isolate Iraq from its Arab surroundings. As the source mentioned above has explained, such means seek to stigmatize the Arab States by supporting terrorism and at other times by feeding sectarian conflicts. According to the source, “Newsrooms and media organizations have generally distorted any diplomatic move of the state [Iraq] towards opening up to Arabs,” noting that “this is being ordered by the channel’s management and is broadcast in talk shows hosting analysts of the same orientation to support these ideas.” (Jamshidi and Rasool, 2004: pp. 81-86)

6.2.1.2.2 Religious Institutions

The religious or ideological factor is the real framework in the relationship between the IRI and Iraq. The origin of the Shiite doctrine in Iraq is the common denominator between Iraq and IRI. As the Iranian National Security Council (INSC) considers Iraq as the backyard of IRI, and therefore the religious instrument is considered one of the most significant instruments of Iranian interference (as soft power) in Iraq, whether it is at the level of political parties or religious references. This is something that IRI has exploited to influence Iraqi politics as the "protector of Shiite doctrine" and the source of fatwas to which the Shiites in Iraq, whose number represents about 60% of the Iraqi population, descend (Köse et al, 2016).

Based on that, Iraq has become the main destination for Iranian religious tourists, with about 40,000 Iranians visiting the holy shrines in Najaf, Karbala, Kadhimiya, and Salmara each month (Ibid), as the IRI invests tens of millions of dollars annually for the reconstruction and improvement of tourist and pilgrimage facilities [Payment as an economic tool of soft power here, as Nye sees].

On the same rhythm, Iran sent more than two thousand scholars and students of religion to holy cities such as Najaf where the shrine of Imam Ali Ibn Abi Talib (the most sacred place), and Karbala, which has many Shiite shrines. A third of these people belong to Iranian intelligence and some are activists, who were sent to Shia shrines to influence voters’ will ahead of the elections (Köse et al, 2016: pp. 365-369).

In this regard, Munir al-Khamri, a military analyst at Fort Levine, says, “There is a thriving politico-religious trade across the border, with ten thousand Iranians crossing the border to visit religious shrines every year, and Iran has built an airport in Najaf to facilitate the exchange of religious visits.” (Ibid)
Furthermore, the IRI entered more than a thousand clerics in the Iraqi religious estate organization in an attempt to influence its decision and completely dominate it. the IRI has also strengthened its relations with religious parties, especially Shiite leader Muqtada al-Sadr and other important leaders in Iraq, based on the Islamic Republic’s keenness to strengthen its relations with Shiite religious authorities (Ibid) so that the Iraqi threat does not return to the same as before and does not establish a secular state that is incompatible with its Islamic approach and belief in governance [in accordance with Neo-Realism, see Waltz Defensive realism approach].

6.2.2 The Usage of Iranian Smart Power in Iraq

The overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s regime in 2003 provided a historic opportunity for the Iranian regime to transform its relationship with Iraq - formerly one of its most formidable enemies. The IRI has taken advantage of its long and porous borders with Iraq, its long-term relationships with key Iraqi politicians, and armed militias and groups [hard power], in addition to its [soft power] in economic, religious, and media fields to expand its influence and thus establish its position as the main external power broker in Iraq [smart power] (Bibi and Syed, 2020: pp. 86-88). The occupation of Iraq by the USA is considered to be the greatest strategic gift to the Iranian regime in pursuing its expansionist project, which begins to consolidate control over Iraq and, later, extends it to the Levant and Yemen. It has its motivations, its forms, and its influence tools. There are several motives that have led Iran to become one of the main players in the developments in the Iraqi scene, most notably:

1) Finding a regional outlet, as the Iranian regime directs its policy of escalation in Iraq, as part of the policy of looking for an outlet, due to the internal contradictions it is going through arising from the declining economic situation, and the repeated conflicts over the centers of influence between the wings of the Iranian regime (Ibid: pp. 91-93).

2) Doctrinal ideological dimension, as the Iranian role in Iraq, was based on the ideological dimension in its intervention on the side of the Iraqi government in its war against “ISIS”, under the pretext of protecting Shiite religious places and shrines in Iraq, and the Iranian visitors coming to it, which was dictated by the Fatwas (a legal opinion or decree handed down by an Islamic religious leader) issued by the Recognized Religious - Shiite Authority in the form of the so-called “sufficient jihad” (Ibid: pp. 93-95).
On that account, the IRI has employed a smart power policy (carrot and stick) as pointed out, in an interview on Al Jazeera, by Professor Nafisi [head of political science department at Kuwait University and specializing in Iranian affairs], that Iran supported Al Qaeda led by Zarqawi against the Shiite militias that emerged after the US invasion of Iraq. The aim was to force the militias to seek support from Iran in their fight against al-Qaeda (“stick” or “coercive” as hard force). By doing so, the IRI had the opportunity to offer the leaders of those militias the necessary financial support (“carrot” or “persuasion” as soft power) in exchange for militia leaders to appoint three Iranian advisors, a military, religious, and political adviser. As such, the control of these militias has become in the hands of Iran, driven at will to serve its political agendas and strategic goals [Smart power See Nye in the theoretical framework chapter V (AlJazeera-TV, 2011)].

In the same context, Abbas AlJanabi, in an interview on the Al-Mustaqala channel, noted that following the US-led invasion of Iraq, the IRI created a militia called “Death Squads” whose task was to eliminate and assassinate Iraqi army officers, pilots, university professors, Ba'athist leaders, prominent Sunnis, and tribal leaders with the aim of securing Iran from any possible future danger from Iraq [Defensive and offensive neo-realism, see Watts, Theological framework chapter V] (AlMustaqala-TV, 2020).

3) Employing the war on terrorism, as there is an Iranian desire to exploit the international war on Sunni armed groups to consolidate its influence in Iraq, as well as to improve its image from being accused of supporting terrorism to a partner in fighting it (Ibid: 96).

4) Establishing a strategic launching platform in Iraq against the rest of the Arab countries (Ibid: pp. 95-98), as there is an Iranian strategic interest that sees Iraq as an important starting point for Iranian incursions towards the Levant, Egypt, the GCC countries, and Yemen [See Chapter 5, Offensive Neo-realism].

5) Exploiting insecurity in Iraq, in light of the inability of the government of Iraq to confront ISIS, which controlled large parts of the country, and the delay of the USA and the Arab countries in assisting the government of Baghdad to confront this organization, the IRI took advantage of Iraq’s need and the miserable situations it is going through and provided weapons, ammunition, and military support to the Iraqi forces before other countries to enhance its role in Iraq (Ibid: pp. 98-105).
To these ends, the IRI has adopted a policy of diversity and multiplicity of political movements, parties, militias, and factions in Iraq and has encouraged many prominent leaders and figures to defect and form new military groups of their own. These new groups enable the Iranian regime to diversify its political and military portfolio in Iraq and allow it to replace any party attempting to depart or deviate from the drawn Iranian policy, especially given the awareness among various factions and militias of the importance of their need for Iranian support, which, if withdrawn, would not be able to survive in the Iraqi arena \( i.e., \text{Smart power based on coercive and persuasion, as per Nye} \).

6.2.3 The Strategic Gains of IRI’s Smart Power in Iraq

As mentioned above, Iraq represents the IRI’s soft belly and backyard. Historically, Iraq served as the main gateway to the colonial military campaigns that swept Iran (Ibid: pp. 87-88). Thus, by using smart power (the combination of hard and soft power referred to above), the IRI has been able to accomplish the following strategic gains so far:

1) Securing its borders and protecting its regime [against any attempt to invade, contain it, or overthrow its regime] from any threat that might come from the Iraqi window,

2) Creating a sectarian Iraqi government-affiliated with the IRI and a pliable tool that Iran directs as it pleases according to its interests,

3) Turning Iraq into a trap for US forces with the aim of blackmailing the US administration in other files such as the nuclear agreement and the long-range ballistic missile program,

4) Making Iraq a launching pad for the rest of the Arab world, as Iraq was the impenetrable bulwark of Arab national security in the face of the Iranian threat, and

5) Circumventing the economic sanctions imposed on the IRI, as Iraq played a major role in easing the sanctions against Iran (Ibid: pp. 86-88, 89-90, 103-104).

6.3 Case Study III: Yemen

Yemen’s location is deemed as extremely strategically important regionally and internationally, as it includes the Socotra Archipelago in the Indian Ocean, which oversees a
large area of the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea and controls the global trade and energy routes across the ocean, between Asia and Africa on the one hand, and between Asia and East Africa, Europe, and even the North and South Americas on the other hand. Over and above that, the island of Mayoun located in the Bab al-Mandab strait, the southern gateway to the Red Sea as well as groups of adjacent islands in the Red Sea make Yemen (with its regional seas, coasts, and islands) an important strategic meeting point. Whoever controls it has the upper hand over trade and energy routes to and from global markets.

6.3.1 The Components of Iranian Smart Power in Yemen
Likewise, as in the case of Lebanon and Iraq, this section will touch upon the components of the Iranian smart power in Yemen; That is, hard power components (the Houthis group) and soft power components (media activism and religious institutions).

6.3.1.1 Hard Power Components: Yemen’s Houthis Group
Iranians have historically been expansionist, as expressed by the formation of an empire that sought to extend its borders to as many places as possible, while Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran, saw power as an ally of the USA with nuclear power. But after the success of the 1979 Islamic Revolution and the proclamation of Iran as the Islamic Republic, Iran sought power by extending its influence to the countries of the region by exporting its revolution (Jubeir et al, 2021: pp. 1909-1911). To that end, the IRI has built bridges with the Shiite minorities in the region and strengthened its relations with them in order to ensure their loyalty to it, even at the expense of their own countries (Ibid: 1912). Thereby, it was able to build armed militias in those countries capable of threatening security and stability in the region for the benefit of the IRI and using them as leverage or pressure cards in its regional and international policy. In line with these purposes, the IRI has strengthened its relationship with the Houthis group in Yemen for nearly 20 years, providing them with various forms of support that kept pace with their needs and demands as they progressed on their pathway to power (Bibi and Syed, 2020: pp. 86-88).

It is well known that Hussein al-Houthi, the first founder of the Houthis group, was influenced by Khomeini and the 1979 revolution he led in Iran. As such, his lectures and speeches were not without reference to Imam Ruhollah Khomeini, as he saw him as a model to follow, and he took this experience to Yemen, mobilizing followers around him and winning their loyalty by adopting rhetoric similar to the IRI’s anti-American and anti-Western discourse and raising
the Iranian motto: Death to America/ Death to Israel, making the Palestinian cause the foremost concern and Jerusalem the desired goal in all his sermons. Not to mention, reviving Ja’fari Shiite religious occasions in Yemen, and after his murder, his brother Abdul Malik al-Houthi, the current leader of the Houthis group, followed the same pattern (Ibid: pp. 102-103).

This admiration for the Iranian revolution encouraged Iranian mullahs to attract the Houthi group, pointing to the difficulty of determining the start date of Iran-Houthi relations. Notwithstanding, it can be argued that relations between the two parties entered a serious stage with the success of the IRI in bringing the Houthis and the departure of Badr al-Din al-Houthi, the Houthis’ group spiritual father, and his son Hussein al-Houthi to Iran in 1994, after they left Sa ’dah following a dispute between them and the Zaidi scholars, even though the choice of Iran as a refuge for them at that time indicated prearrangement between the two parties (Ibid: 103).

In short, the words of British Prime Minister Churchill: “There are no permanent friends or permanent enemies; only permanent interests” (Trapenberg Frick, 2021: 72) apply to the relationship between the IRI and the Houthi leadership; The interests between the two parties overcame the religious differences between the Zaidi [Yemen] and Jafari Twelver [the IRI] doctrines, and the two parties were able to build close relations based on interest essentially without ignoring ideological considerations. What matters to Iran in this relationship is to reproduce another model in Yemen such as Hezbollah in Lebanon (hard power instrument, as per Nye), whose hand in the Arabian Peninsula, is able to threaten security and stability there at will, on the one hand. And on the other hand, create a hub for the spread of Twelver Shiite doctrine in Yemen and from there to other parties without Zaidi opposition (Bibi and Syed, 2020: pp. 97-103).

As for the Houthi interests in the relationship with the IRI, it revolves around gaining power and ruling Yemen, and restoring the glory of their ancestors (the imams who were ruling Yemen). For this aim, they needed a lot of support, whether moral, financial, military, logistical, or even cultural and educational support, and there was no better than Iran to provide them with all this support, in exchange for being a microphone to amplify the IRI’s voice in Yemen, as well as an Iranian cat’s paw to destabilize the Arabian Peninsula (Ibid: pp. 102-103).
Iranian military support for the Houthis, as a military hard power instrument [See Nye in Chapter 5, Theoretical Framework] emerged with the start of armed confrontations between the Houthis and the state in 2004; Where the Yemeni army, while combing Houthi sites after one of the battles, found Iranian-made weapons. It also provided financial support, as an economic hard power tool [See Nye in Chapter 5, Theoretical Framework], to buy weapons on the black market at exorbitant prices, even the Houthi moral mobilizers were produced by Iranians such as films on the Iran-Iraq war and films on the killing of Imam al-Hussein. In addition, it supplied them with Revolutionary Guards instructors, who were supervising the occasional Houthi combat exercises and manoeuvres (Jubeir et al, 2021: pp.1119-1120).

6.3.1.2 Soft Power Components

Considering the literature review in chapter III, the most effective components of Iranian soft power in Yemen are media activism and religious institutions, which will be detailed as follows:

6.3.1.2.1 Media Activism

The IRI supported the Houthis group in its six wars against the state in the media [as a soft power tool, as per Nye] by introducing the Houthis group to the Shiite world and presenting them as a Shiite minority that is persecuted, fought, and displaced because of their Shiite faith. In this context, Shiite references issued statements accusing the Yemeni government of genocidal practices against Shiites. Ayatollah Montazeri warned against targeting Shiites and asked the international community to intervene to save the persecuted Shiite minority. On the same token, the Iranian Al-Alam channel at that time broadcast 47 programs talking about the Houthis group during a period of only seven months (Bibi and Syed, 2020: pp. 94-95).

6.3.1.2.2 Religious Institutions

From the mid-1990s until 2004, Iranian efforts in relation to the Houthis group focused on religious activity and financial support. At this stage, the publication, and books of the Ja’fari Twelver doctrine, which coincided with the expansion of activities of the youth organization of the faith led by Hussein al-Houthi, emerged. Zaydi libraries began selling twelve Shi’ite books and publications, and Twelver visuals, sounds, and slogans appeared in the ranks of the movement, as well as revived the twelve Shi’ite celebrations and Shi’ite twelve decrees, that were not known to Yemen in the Zaidi era (Bibi and Syed, 2020: pp. 95-97).
During this phase, the IRI provided a great deal of financial assistance to finance and prepare training centers and summer camps to attract young people to its Khomeini cultural activities [See Nye chapter-5, theoretical framework, payment as a soft/ hard power]. These centers achieved the required success and increased the number of visitors. Other centers were opened in various governorates of Yemen; In Sa’dah, there were 24 centers, Amran 6 centers, Mahweet 5 centers, Hajjah 12 centers, Secretariat 5 centers, Dhamar 7 centers, Ibb 1 center, Ta‘izz 1 center, and Sana‘4 centers. The charged 'affairs of the Iranian embassy, at the time, travelled overland to Mecca to perform Umrah rites via Sa’dah so that he could deliver financial aid to the Houthis group (Ibid).

6.3.2 The Usage of Iranian Smart Power in Yemen

The IRI was affectively able to take advantage of the situation in Yemen during and after the February 2011 revolution (Arab Spring events) to consolidate its influence in Yemen by supporting and strengthening its Houthi Allies to bring them to power in two stages (Jubeir et al, 2021: 1117), and this was in two phases:

6.3.2.1 Prior to the Takeover of the Yemeni Capital, Sana’a

This phase is the primary stage in which planning, and construction were undertaken to reach the goals achieved by the Houthis later. This phase lasted from the period following the February 2012 revolution to the day of the fall of Sana‘a, September 21, 2014 (Terrill, 2014: pp. 430-432).

As a result, Iranian support for the Houthis group has developed in this period, as relations between the two sides took a serious turn and became more visible. Extending Houthis’ influence in Yemen has become vital for Iran as it means consolidating the IRI’s presence in the region, as the IRI was afraid of loss, in Lebanon, in the event of the fall of Assad’s regime in Syria (the umbilical cord linking Iran’s militias in Iraq and Lebanon’s Hezbollah). As well as the threat it faced in Iraq (The IRI’s backyard and the first fortress to defend the Iranian mullahs' regime) with the emergence of ISIS. Thus, in line with defensive neo-realism [see the theoretical framework, Chapter 5], the IRI had to secure a new foothold for its influence and another line of defense for its regime elsewhere in the arena of its conflict with regional and international powers in the region (Terrill, 2014: pp. 430-435).

In this manner, the IRI stood with all its media, political [Soft power], military, and economic [Hard power] weight to support the Houthis group in the February 2011 revolution. During
and after the revolution, the Iranian media portrayed the Houthis group as the leading the revolution and the most powerful constituent in it (Ibid). And portrayed the rest of the revolution components as being nothing but a few groups seeking to steal the revolution and deviate it from its course, as well as that they are subject to the guardianship of the USA and Saudi Arabia (as a prelude to and legitimization of any action the Houthis might take against their February partners, later).

On the media level, in particular (as soft power), the IRI has provided the Houthis group with full-fledged support, whether with money, the opening of the channels, or the training of cadres. It has launched several satellite channels to support its policy in Yemen, namely the Al-Masirah channel, the Saha channel of leftist activists, and the Aden Life channel. It has also supported the publication of weekly newspapers such as Al-Sattar, Al-Samoud, and Al-democrat, to provide the pivotal popular momentum to its Houthis Allies (Ibid).

As such, Iranian support for the Houthis group reached the point of recruiting Iranian spy networks in Yemen to work for the Houthis, as revealed by President Mansour Hadi in a lecture at the Woodrow Wilson International Center in Washington in September 2012. This is confirmed by Yemeni security services that they arrested an Iranian spy network operating in Yemen for seven years under the direction of a former Iranian commander in the IRGC (Ibid: pp. 435-437).

In this regard, Nafisi political science professor, in an interview on the Al-Zayadi channel, states that the IRGC has hired three islands from the state of Ariria (the Dahlak islands in the Red Sea), whose major mission is to train the Houthis group’s members and other Shiite militias in espionage and sabotage deeds, send them back [as sleeper cells] to their countries, and using them when the opportunity comes according to the IRI’s strategy and agenda [See the offensive neo-realism, theoretical framework, chapter V] (AlZayadi-TV, 2016).

Not to mention that the IRI provided the Houthis with weapons at this phase (as hard power). The former Yemeni Interior Minister, General Abdul Qader Qahtan, stated in a press conference held in Sana 'a (the Yemeni capital) in February 2013, that the shipment of weapons seized on board the Jihan ship, which is estimated at about 40 Tons of weapons, missiles, and explosives, were coming from the IRI. This is in addition to the IRI sending elements of the IRGC and Hezbollah militia to train and equip the Houthis, many of whom stayed after the fall of Sana 'a to help the Houthis implement their political and military agenda in Sana 'a (Ibid).
In the same context, the IRI has smuggled weapons to Eritrean islands (Dahlak) and then transported them by fishing boats, on small cargo, to the Houthis group, in conjunction with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard training Houthi fighters on one of the Eritrean islands. Likewise, the IRI (as a kind of smart power), has also established for the Houthis an independent internal communications network such as Hezbollah’s communications network in Lebanon, in an effort to enable it to consolidate its grip on Yemen (Jubeir et al, 2021; Bibi and Syed, 2020).

6.3.2.2 Aftermath of the Takeover of the Yemeni Capital, Sana’a

After the Iranian-Houthi coalition succeeded in seizing the capital, Sana’a, on September 21, 2014, and the Houthis group seized the reins of power in Yemen, relations between the two sides have been developed to become a relationship between two sovereign states, and the IRI had to support the Houthis group to break their international isolation because of their coup against legitimacy. Where a high-level Houthi delegation visited Tehran (the IRI’s capital and the Centre for mullahs Policy and Decision-Making) on the basis that it was a government delegation headed by the head of the Houthi Political Council, Saleh Al-Samad, to discuss prospects for strengthening cooperation and coordination between the two countries in the political, economic, and other fields (Terrill, 2014: pp. 437-439).

Consequently, a memorandum of understanding in the field of air transport was signed between the Houthis and the Iranian civil aviation to operate 14 flights per week (Ibid). The Houthis group also entered into an agreement with Iran to expand the port of Hodeida in western Yemen, set up a power plant, provide Sana ‘a with oil for one year, provide spare parts and maintenance for the Marib gas station, and send specialized experts and train Yemeni cadres in the fields of electricity, water, transportation, trade, and industry (Ibid: pp. 439-440) [Employing the economic tool as a hard and soft power here, see Nye in Chapter 5].

6.3.3 The Strategic Gains of IRI’s Smart Power in Yemen

Similar to Iraq, the utilizing of smart power in the IRI’s policy towards Yemen has resulted in many strategic gains that have strengthened the IRI’s regional and international position and have emerged as an unskippable regional player in many files in the regional and international arenas. Thus, this research reveals the following strategic gains for the IRI in Yemen:
1) The absolute control of the reins of power in Yemen by its Iranian-backed Houthis Allies, after the coup d’état against the legitimate government in September 2014 (Jubeir et al, 2021: 1116),

2) Control of water crossings and navigation ports (Bab Al-Mandab Strait, Hodeida Port, Mido Port, Socotra Island, and the Gulf of Aden), from which about 15 percent of energy carriers pass to the global markets (Ibid: 117),

3) Turning Yemen into a hotbed of attrition for the GCC countries (in particular, Saudi Arabia as one of the IRI’s strongest regional rivals), in addition to making Yemen a springboard for proxy wars to destabilize these countries (Ibid),

4) Putting the countries of the GCC [the largest global energy sources] between the hammer of the Houthis group in Yemen from the south, and the anvil of the PMF in Iraq from the north, and

5) The Same as Iraq, Yemen’s strategic location contributed to circumventing the economic sanctions imposed on the IRI by the international community, as Yemen constituted an undeniable breathing lung for the IRI in this regard (that is, securing global navigation routes in exchange for easing sanctions on the Iranian regime or at least ignoring them, at least partially). Not to mention strengthening the IRI’s position in negotiations with the superpowers (5+1) over its nuclear agreement and its ballistic missile program (Ibid: pp. 1116-119).
Chapter 7: Conclusions

The overall aim of this thesis was to explain and analyzed smart power in Iran’s foreign policy toward Arab national security in the Middle East [Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen]. It highlighted how the IRI managed in employing this type of power in its foreign policy with the purpose to penetrate Arab national security and exporting its Islamic revolution to the Arab surrounding, and the gains it had made, in accordance with the directives of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini, and in line with what is stipulated in the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran 1979. The study examined the case studies of Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen during the time period (2003-2015), where 2003 witnessed a significant turning point that contributed to reviving Iran’s dual-strategy to expand in the Arab world and reshaping its map and regimes in preparation for exporting its Islamic revolution to it and extending its control over it, relying on its hard and soft power instruments on the one hand, and taking advantage of some regional and international shifts that turned the balance of power in favor of Iran - such as the US-led occupation of Iraq, the strategic buffer for the Arab region, in addition to the outbreak of the Arab Spring in late 2010, which crowned in the Iranian-backed Houthis group’s seizure of the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, in late 2014- that made the Middle East a fertile soil and conducive atmosphere to the implementation of Iranian agendas on the other hand.

In a nutshell, based on Nay’s smart power model and Waltz’s neo-realism theory, as analytical frameworks. Along with the interpretive case study utilized as the research method. The research came to the conclusion that the IRI, with its hard power instruments [the Lebanese Hezbollah militia, the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces, and the Yemeni Houthi Group] on the one hand, and its soft power mechanisms [media activity, religious institutions] on the other hand, was able to export its revolution to the Arab world and penetrate Arab national security and overtake three Arab capitals (Beirut, Baghdad, and Sanaa) are considered essential pillars of Arab national security in the Middle East. This, in turn, has proven unmistakably that the IRI poses an existential danger and a serious threat to the Arab nation and its national security.

Equally important, and as many previous studies and literature have indicated [See chapter III, Gorgan’s study 2000; Khalili’s study 2008; Qaoud’s study 2012], the IRI, by adopting a smart power in its foreign policy, has achieved many strategic gains at the expense of Arab national security, such as fortifying its ruling regime from any external attack and aggression that may target it, as well as moving battlefields with regional and international powers beyond its
borders. Moreover, with its social and economic networks with its militias in the Arab countries, the IRI has managed to circumvent the economic sanctions imposed on it because of its nuclear program and ballistic missile system. Not to mention creating a foothold on Arab ports, roads, corridors, and crossings [the Arabian Gulf, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean] for energy and global trade, making the latter within the range of Iranian fire, disrupting it whenever it wants, as required by its interests and national security.

Simply put, by seizing Iraq, Iran’s backyard and soft belly, and the installation of a government in it affiliated with the IRI, the latter managed to protect its regime from any external threat, in addition to making Iraq a thorn in the side of its fierce regional rival, Turkey. Likewise, by controlling Yemen, the IRI has been able to control the nodes of strategic roads and waterways that Yemen is overseeing due to its critical strategic position, in addition to turning Yemen into a hotbed of depletion for the GCC countries, especially Saudi Arabia, Iran’s other strong regional rival. In the same vein, the IRI managed to dominate Lebanon by positioning itself in the vicinity of occupied Palestine, blackmailing the international community by putting pressure on Israel, Iran’s third powerful rival in the region, and improving its image in the mind of the Arab street as the bearer of the banner of the axis of resistance and opposition against the Israeli occupation forces.

Closing the circle, this thesis will end by recommending further future research into the Iranian threat to Arab national security. In light of the researcher’s belief that so-called the IRI has been able to set up cancerous cells in the fragile Arab body [which necessitates establishing an effective and comprehensive Arab strategy capable of protecting Arab national security from external threats and internal unrest, especially the Iranian threat that has penetrated deep into the Arab nation under the umbrella of Shiism that the IRI is using as a Trojan horse in the service of a Persian national project], the researcher recommends that the challenges of Arab national security to be studied and whether there is an Arab strategy to meet these challenges. The researcher also recommends including the Syrian case [the country to which the researcher belongs to], which the researcher avoided including in this research [taking into account the research’s ethical considerations and avoiding bias]. Also, including the case of Bahrain is recommended, given that there is an oppressed Shia majority that Iran is trying to use to extend its fingers of influence to it. As well as studying the case of the Hamas movement in the Gaza Strip, which was forced [by the Arab abandonment] to fall into the arms of Iran, seeking support and assistance in its confrontations with the Israeli occupation troops.
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