Imamate's Asymmetrical Influence Strategies and the Empowerment of Ansar Allah

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A detailed synopsis, structure including chapter summaries and theoretical framework.

SYNOPSIS

The contemporary Iran aims at expanding its influence in the Middle East and beyond, forged by its Persian DNA. It questions its strategic security and defence policies introducing war by "proxy" through the establishment of militias in the Middle East: in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Palestine, and Afghanistan. Since 1979, the export of the Islamic revolution with Imamate values has seen strong resistance to its success in the Arab-Muslim world and has been consolidated by failure. Although this Islamic revolution succeeded in Iran and was institutionalised, giving rise to a unique Islamic state model in the world. By default, this transfer of the Islamic revolution is now taking place through other prisms of power strategies in strong competition with its American rival. The main basis for this success lies in the secrets of Iranian Imamate ideology. The latter has transcended borders through its support for deprived, oppressed, and neglected minorities in their countries. This creation of an Imamate base and/or sympathy with the Islamic Republic represents a new context of confrontation between competing powers at the local level in these countries.

Thus, the mullah's regime has introduced asymmetric warfare in the Middle East and Persian Gulf region in response to maximum pressure in economic sanctions, its diplomatic isolation, and the cancellation of nuclear treaty 2015. Yemen is one such battleground and thus joins the overall Iranian security and defence strategies in the Persian Gulf by supporting Ansar Allah in their war against the Gulf coalition. This research elaborates on Iranian security and defence strategies based on the accession of Ansar Allah of Zaydi origin to the 'Axis of resistance'.

Keys words: Asymmetrical Strategy War, Proxy War, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Ansar Allah movement, Iran's Comprehensive Strategy in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, Iran's Security and Defence Strategies in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf

Structure

The work plan of this thesis is divided into fourth main parts: the first is devoted the theoretical framework, the second to Iran, the third to Yemen and the last one at the definition, functioning and development of *Spider's Absolute Strategy* at operational military engagement. At first the theoretical part consists in setting up a reading of the literature on my subject and defining for this purpose, the adequate theory to accompany this analytical work. At the second part, I present the historical background of Iran from the period of the royal regime of Mohamed Reza Pahlavi, its fall after the Iranian revolution of 1979 and then the Islamic revolution and the installation of *Vilayat e-Faqih* through the doctrine of the Imamate by its founding father Ayatollah Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini. In this same section, I try to draw a picture of how Iran's internal politics work and how it is organised. I analyse the interaction with its foreign policy, introducing the religious and ideological foundations of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and its al-Quds Force. This work sheds light on the ideology of the Ayatollah Khomeini and his ambitions to extend this Islamic revolution to his Arab neighbours. This research will give a more realistic vision of export policies, in the absence of initiatives already aborted in the past, and of the expansion of the Islamic revolution in the Persian Gulf region.

The third part immerses the reader in the history of Yemen from the last years of his Imamate zaydi's empire to the time of its unification in the 1960s, and the propulsion of the Zaydi movement in northern Yemen. Still in a historical perspective, I offer an analysis of the "Arab Spring" and its consequences on the government in power, as well as the seizure of Sana'a by Ansar Allah. This part also sheds light on the internal struggles within Yemen, evokes the advent of the coalition and the different political agendas of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates while at war with Ansar Allah.

Next, I discuss Iran's role in the war in Yemen and the tools of its support for Ansar Allah, both ideologically and militarily. The ARAMCO case study included in last part of this research illustrates the example of Ansar Allah's involvement in this attack without being an operational actor, and I will also address the issue of arms transfers as well as the transfer of "military technology". This research will be devoted to an analysis of the Iranian maritime military strategy in relation to Yemen's geostrategic positioning between Saudi Arabia and the Bab Al Mandab Strait. There forth, I introduce my theory of *Spider's Absolute Strategy* as a

Power Projection in an asymmetric war conducted by Iranian security and defence strategies in its positioning as a *weak state* vs. the world superpowers.

Finally, I conclude this work, based on several years of research and study of various fields, with a better understanding of Iranian security and defence strategies through my theories of *Spider's Absolute Strategy* and *the Tide's Trick* in the Middle East region and the Persian Gulf. I provide a synthesis of the functioning of the militias, precisely the Ansar Allah militia and the mechanisms that enable it to integrate the "Axis of resistance", and a measure of its degree of belonging to it and envisage its emergence in the short term, as a local actor armed to potentially exist as a state, and above all to bring out its limits in action.

CHAPTER 1/ CONTEMPORARY IRAN: FROM DOMESTIC POLITICS TO ITS EMERGENCE AS A REGIONAL POWER:

This chapter is devoted to Iran. At first, I present the historical background of Iran from the period of the royal regime of Mohamed Reza Pahlavi, its fall after the Iranian revolution of 1979 and then the Islamic revolution and the installation of *Vilayat e-Faqih* through the doctrine of the Imamate by its founding father Ayatollah Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini. In this same section, I try to draw a picture of how Iran's internal politics work and how it is organised. I analyse the interaction with its foreign policy, introducing the religious and ideological foundations of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and its al-Quds Force. This work sheds light on the ideology of the Ayatollah Khomeini and his ambitions to extend this Islamic revolution to his Arab neighbours. This research will give a more realistic vision of export policies, in the absence of initiatives already aborted in the past, and of the expansion of the Islamic revolution in the Persian Gulf region.

CHAPTER 2/ AXES OF RESISTANCE: YEMEN'S CASE:

This chapter immerses the reader in the history of Yemen from the last years of his Imamate zaydi's empire to the time of its unification in the 1960s, and the propulsion of the Zaydi movement in northern Yemen. Still in a historical perspective, I offer an analysis of the "Arab Spring" and its consequences on the government in power, as well as the seizure of Sana'a by Ansar Allah. This part also sheds light on the internal struggles within Yemen, evokes the

advent of the coalition and the different political agendas of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates while at war with Ansar Allah.

CHAPTER 3/ IRGC'S SECURITY AND DEFENCE STRATEGIES ACROSS THE AXIS OF RESISTANCE: THE YEMENI CASE:

This last chapter, I discuss Iran's role in the war in Yemen and the tools of its support for Ansar Allah, both ideologically and militarily. The ARAMCO case study included in last part of this research illustrates the example of Ansar Allah's involvement in this attack without being an operational actor, and I will also address the issue of arms transfers as well as the transfer of "military technology". This research is devoted to an analysis of the Iranian maritime military strategy in relation to Yemen's geostrategic positioning between Saudi Arabia and the Bab Al Mandab Strait. There forth, I introduce my theory of *Spider's Absolute Strategy* as a *Power Projection* in an asymmetric war conducted by Iranian security and defence strategies in its positioning as a *weak state* vs. the world superpowers. Finally, this research provides a better understanding of Iranian security and defence strategies through my theories of *Spider's Absolute Strategy* and *the Tide's Trick[1]* in the Middle East region and the Persian Gulf. I provide a synthesis of the functioning of the militias, precisely the Ansar Allah and the mechanisms that enable it to integrate the "Axis of resistance", and a measure of its degree of belonging to it and envisage its emergence in the short term, as a local actor armed to potentially exist as a state.

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[1] **The Tide's Trick** It is an introduction of my theory representing a continuation to the theory of the useful enemy. The *Tide's Trick* is a space where two or more opponents are in search of balance, with a language of combat cunning and codes reinventing themselves in their struggles without having the will to enter a frontal war, nor to neutralise the other. The idea of the useful enemy is present, taking advantage of the usefulness of the other's presence to capitalise on its policies of influence, military, economic, etc. (I created this term to illustrate my analyses).

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Theoretical Framework

"We can say, in a very general way, that a theory is an expression, intended to be coherent and systematic, of our knowledge of what we call reality; it expresses what we know or what we think we know about reality" (Braillard, 2010).

Jürgen Habermas and Thomas Kuhn consider theory to be this structuring of reality conditioned by various factors; the researcher's interest, sometimes unconscious, in a particular epistemology or conception of knowledge, the socio-cultural context in which the research takes place, and the value system and methodology favoured by the researcher (Éthier, 2010). The fundamental orientations of the theory vary from the so-called essentialist theories to the so-called empirical ones. For the former, the aim is to uncover the essence of the various social entities either through philosophical reflection or through intuitive understanding. They are 'normative' and attempt to show that the best form of social organisation should guide human behaviour. On the other hand, the empirical orientation sees the theory as a logically coherent set of propositions subject to verification or falsification by confrontation with the facts. The aim of these theories is to explain the data that relate to various social behaviours, interactions, and processes. They involve a description and classification of these data and tend directly to a prediction of the phenomena they explain (Éthier, 2010).

My research is based on realist theory as an analytical grid that puts into perspective an understanding of the positioning of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the international scene; and more precisely in its action in search of regional power projection, as an irreversible international actor in the maintenance of power balances; between states in the Middle East and Persian Gulf region. In this setting of power projection, states are key players in an anarchic world according to realist theory (Kauppi & Viotti, 2020). Political reason must guide all activity in the political sphere, and foreign policy is merely the ability to influence the distribution of power among states. Politics is therefore domination, and the state is defined as a human community that within the limits of a determined territory claims for itself the monopoly of legitimate violence. While this legitimate violence is not the only means of the state, it remains its specific means. Max Weber considers that all ideas whose aim is to abolish the domination of man over man are utopian.

The realist theory defines states as seeking above all to guarantee their security and to extend their power because of the competition that exists between them. Realism is opposed to the idealist illusion of an international system based on the negation of force and the absolute value given to an idea or to international law. Thus, realism rejects idealism for two kinds of reasons: because it criticizes it for not corresponding to reality, but also because idealism, when it defends total principles, can lead to fanaticism and thus to the most violent war (Macleod & O'meara, 2007). Furthermore, Raymon Aron defines politics as power and the international order as subject to an anomic context. According to his view, the realist vision in its quest rigorously asserts that the state pursues and must pursue its national interest. It assumes that it becomes ideological. Thus, true realism would rather recognise the importance of ideology and passions in the conduct of nations (Aron, 1962).

According to Braillard, realists are authors who approach social and political relations as they are and not as they idealise them. They are often identified as conservatives or defenders of the *status quo* (Braillard & Djalili, 2020). According to the realist theory, the world is governed by certain objective laws, and change is only possible with knowledge and awareness of the constraints of these same objective laws. To this end, the work of realists is propelled by the objective observation of the potential determining actors and their constraints in relation to this reality (Braillard, 2010). According to Paul Viotti and Mark Kauppi, the quintessence of realist thought summarises states as the main actors in international relations; the state is by nature unitary; the state is rational and constantly aims to maximise its national interest, which implies the periodic use of force; security and political issues are the sole or main purpose of foreign policy (Viotti & Kauppi, 2010). This positioning is questionable according to Éthier because it is difficult to find the full expression of these four theses in all realist authors. Indeed, this classical vision of realism was built up progressively and was formulated by the authors of the 1950s-1980s. Subsequently, this same formulation or conception was the object of various questionings and adaptations by the neorealist theorists.

Going back in time, the first precursor of the traditionalist realist view and analysis of international relations was the Greek philosopher Thucydides (471-400 BC). His famous History of the Peloponnesian War is an analysis of the foundations of the military and political power of these two states (Athens and Sparta) and the causes of their aggressive behaviour towards each other for 28 years. This analysis is based on careful observation of events and interviews with the protagonists. He defines war because of fear, and a shift in the *balance of power*; Sparta attacked Athens because it feared losing its supremacy over the Peloponnese. Athens then retaliated to defend itself, but the degeneration of its democratic institutions led it

to become increasingly fanatical and aggressive in pursuing war against Sparta in order to challenge its hegemonic status. Realists have learned from this study that every state necessarily seeks to defend or maximise its military and political power, and this state of affairs fosters a favourable context for war. The war seems, more likely between authoritarian states than between democratic states (Ethier, 2010).

Another leading thinker of realist thought should be mentioned, the Italian Nicholas Machiavelli (1469-1527) and his work The Prince (1513), which is essentially devoted to the triumph of the strongest, which is, according to him, "the essential fact of human history". He explains, by defining the desire for acquisition in men remains of the natural order and every state must strive to extend its possessions. This end justifies the use of all means. The Prince undertakes to enlarge his territory and preserve his conquests. To this end, he must draw on the cunning of the fox through the means of diplomacy and practice military power through the symbolism of the strength of the lion. Machiavelli goes even further and believes that unfaithfulness to commitments made is only a practical necessity. A prince must know how to fight as a man and as a beast, as well as how to build a reputation for goodness, mercy, loyalty and justice. Machiavelli's thought depicts the role of the prince as having the responsibility to bring together all the good qualities and their opposites and to remain self-controlled in using these opposites when expedient. That is, to adapt to the context of the reality in which he is confronted. "*I posit that a prince, and especially a new prince, cannot exercise all the virtues of the average man with impunity because the interest of his preservation often obliges him to violate the laws of humanity, of loyalty...*"(Prince, 2010, Chapter VIII, p.4). This contemporary of the Renaissance was marked by the breakdown of the legal and moral order of Christendom and the development of the first monarchical nation-states. To this end, Machiavelli conceives of states as cold monsters that have neither friends nor enemies, but only national interests to defend. This desire for sovereignty is the noble cause that justifies the use of all means to safeguard and enlarge the power of a state. As it also remains the cause of inevitable and permanent rivalries and conflicts between states. It is the law of the strongest that governs inter-state relations, imposing its will on the weakest according to its realistic perception (Éthier, 2010). It must be said that both Machiavelli and the Englishman Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) were marked by their times, and their visions are tinged with pessimism about human nature and relations between states. Hobbes lived during the bloody repression of the Irish and Scottish rebellions and the establishment of the first English republic under the dictator Oliver Cromwell (1648-1658). Hobbes' thought will deepen that of Machiavelli from his publication of Leviathan (1651). He differentiated between national and international societies. He assumes

that the absence of an organised power automatically leads to anarchy, and above all encourages competition between states in their raise for power. This competition will automatically create a threat. On the other hand, men can establish a "pact" or "social contract" under the aegis of the prince to put an end to the threats of war. The renunciation of their rights and freedoms is indispensable in exchange for the protection of their lives (Éthier, 2010). Our two thinkers base their realistic perception on personal observation and the reality of their time. Men are driven by an innate instinct for power and domination, which leads them to compete with each other for wealth, power, prestige, etc. This natural struggle seems to be favoured by the fact that they are not the only ones to have the power to control the world. This natural struggle seems to be favoured by the attributes of their birth, such as physical strength, intellectual capacity, a more privileged family background or the opportunities that existence has given them in relation to others. In this reasoning the conduct of states is no different from that of men. States are driven by a will to power that leads them to compete with each other. To this end, insofar as states are unequal, some being at an advantage over others due to the unequal natural distribution of resources, whether geographical or economic, etc., they use military force and diplomatic cunning in this rivalry relationship, for the domination of the weakest by the strongest (Éthier, 2010). Viotti and Kauppi point out that the vision of international relations by our thinkers Machiavelli and Hobbes remains cynical and pessimistic because it only considers the diplomatic-strategic relations of states essentially characterised by war - latent or open - in their time (Viotti & Kauppi, 2010).

On the other hand, other thinkers of realism, who looked at international relations from an economic point of view, were more optimistic in their analyses. Like Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), a contemporary Dutch diplomat, jurist, and historian. This thinker made commercial negotiation a means of guaranteeing an international pact between states to maintain peace. *De jure belli ac pacis* is Grotius' most famous work, in which he demonstrates that war cannot be the only form of relationship between states since the power of the latter is not only based on the safeguarding and enlargement of their territories; economic prosperity is also a guarantee of their power. Grotius remains one of the first realist thinkers who defended the role of trade as a pacifying actor in international relations (ÉTHIER, 2010).

Karl von Clausewitz (1780-1831) another founder of realist thinking; he contributed through his work *On War* to explaining military strategy and related decisions characterised by the so-called fog of war and the uncertainty of what happens next on a battlefield. He also showed that war is the continuation of politics by other means and that its outcome depends

not only on the military capabilities of a state, but on its social and economic resources as well. He theorised the purpose of war to define peace (Éthier, 2010).

Hans J. Morgenthau is considered the main contemporary successor of Machiavelli and Hobbes because of his major contribution to the conceptualisation and systematisation of classical realist thought. In his most famous work *Politics among Nations*, *The Struggle for Power and Peace*, published in 1948, which laid down the main foundations of realist thought: the sovereign state is seen as the main actor in international relations and suggests that foreign policy (high-politics) should be understood separately and as not dependent on the requirements of domestic politics (low-politics). Moreover, the context in which states interact is anarchic in nature, marked by a constant struggle for influence and power. To this end, this power becomes a vital national interest to be defended and a value of state action on the international scene. Finally, this state of affairs, by maximising the value of power, leads states to war. Realists never consider war as an end in itself. It is rather a means in the hands of the policy maker to achieve objectives. In this dialectic, the only *balance of power*, i.e. a reciprocal understanding between different states in search of power, makes it possible to maintain the *status quo* and thus avoid conflicts (Bouteiller, 2014). This definition of realism may seem relatively cynical since it considers the search for power to be the central element in the understanding of international phenomena. This conception is associated with the notions of *Realpolitik* and "raison d'Etats", i.e., a rationalist political vision for the defence of national interests, rather than an ethical or moralist one. Realist thought dominated until 1970, after which it gradually declined with the appearance of new theories, notably Marxist, liberal and later constructivist. Then we see the emergence of Kenneth Waltz's neo-realism, which definitively put an end to the predominance of classical realism. Moreover, beyond academic bodies, classical realism inspired several politicians in the exercise of their functions, such as Henry Kissinger, American Secretary of State under the presidency of Richard Nixon between 1973 and 1977, known for his role in the rapprochement between the United States and China from 1971, and his taste for secret diplomacy (Bouteiller, 2014).

Another author deserves to be mentioned as he contributed to the advancement of the thought of the precursors of the realists, Edward Hallett Carr. In his work, *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (1919-1939), he questions the Versailles peace treaty (1919) and why it could not last more than 20 years. He refers to the writings of Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes. In his work, he argues that the aggressed states (Russia, France, Great Britain) during the First World War defended themselves to protect their security, but gradually became more and more belligerent and sought to continue the war to weaken their enemies (Austria-Hungary,

Germany) and to achieve new conquests. They imposed very heavy reparations on defeated Germany, inspired by a spirit of revenge rather than rationality or realism, which helped fuel resentment, rearmament, and further German aggression in 1939. CARR joins Morgenthau - and the English economist John Maynard Keynes - in concluding that if the victorious powers of the First World War had adopted a realistic attitude and approved treaties that defended their interests while respecting those of the defeated powers, the Second World War would not have taken place (Éthier, 2010).

In *The Anarchical Society, A Study of Order in World Politics*, Hedley Bull, a British author, discusses the anarchic nature of international relations; since sovereign states are entirely free to act according to their selfish interests, being subject to no higher authority. Although there is a certain international order emanating from these same states: it is the power relations and customary rules of behaviour that political leaders establish and the common moral standards to which they adhere. Bull's analysis combines the classical realist ideas of Machiavelli and Hobbes on power, the heterodox realist theses of Grotius on the foundations of international law, and the ideas of the liberal philosopher Emmanuel Kant for the establishment of an international order based on universal moral standards. To this end, his analysis is in line with neo-realism. In concrete terms, what differentiates neo-realism from classical realism is its borrowing from other currents of thought and more specifically from liberalism.

In the view of this competition in the society of nations, the latter, through their supposed sovereignty, freely and voluntarily enter into agreements. They are concluded through a set of rules; to contain a certain dynamic of inter-state conflicts in a peaceful framework. However, achieving perpetual peace remains an unrealistic, if not unimaginable, concept. Since states are sovereign therefore having ambitions as well as inequalities between them, arousing distrust so they place them in a dilemma of security or even survival maintenance. According to Thucydides and his successors, it is when a state believes that its supremacy is threatened by another state that it declares war on it. States therefore enter into alliances to dissuade a great power from attacking them (Éthier, 2010). It is in this sense that the solution to counteracting war, according to the realists, is: "*(...) to seek a balance between the forces involved that will prevent the domination of the most powerful and reduce the risks of armed confrontation. To achieve this state of equilibrium (...), states are encouraged not only to moderate their ambitions but also to conclude the necessary alliances among themselves*" (ÉTHIER, 2010). In this sense, armed confrontation can be avoided by adopting

defensive, isolationist, or neutralist policies or by establishing a *balance of power* through strategic alliances.

For Henry Kissinger, strategic alliances are essentially based on the will of states. The latter can only conclude these alliances between states whose economic, political, and ideological systems are similar or convergent. Kissinger gives the example of the Cold War and states that no alliance is possible between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics because of the antagonistic nature of their economic and political-ideological systems. This much sought-after peace is only possible with the maintenance of a balance between these two superpowers, as Raymond Aron also deduced.

The change of course in Kissinger's thought towards the USSR is based on the period following the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The latter was marked by a revision of the principles of Marxism-Leninism, the denunciation of Stalinism and the adoption of a new foreign policy based on peaceful coexistence with the West. Kissinger envisaged a strategic alliance between the two superpowers, since the communist and capitalist systems were now converging (Éthier, 2010). Henry Kissinger also raises in his reflexion the notion of the established order, thus joining his position on alliances between states. This idea of the established order must certainly respond to changes in the internal and external policies of nation states in correlation with history. He says that accepting this reality of change at the local level and understanding it, denoting it, are indispensable reflexes to develop a capacity for rapid adaptation and to be in a state of mind to bend to these changes and not to bring a biased vision that can be fatal in political decision-making, including the deployment of military forces on the ground.

My analysis of Iran's security and defence strategies in this study is essentially based on the realist view. The latter automatically responds to putting forward realistic policies that are consistent with the society at large, thus its policies are governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature. In the case of the Islamic Republic of Iran, this human nature is specific to Iran's socio-cultural, religious and historical thought. This background is the primary source in the concretisation of a rational, pragmatic behaviour in accordance with a specific context and responds to a defined historical conjuncture according to the enlightened vision (opinion) of the Supreme Leader. It has already been mentioned that the fundamental objective laws governing international relations are the quest to defend their political interest or power; while maintaining their economic, ethical, cultural, and religious independence. The Islamic Republic of Iran is indeed in this scheme of thought, although it uses 'sincere' speech according to the doctrine of the Imamate or only for 'a political purpose' by acting in the name

of moral and humanistic motivations. The behaviour of a realist state is aware of the inescapable tension between the moral imperative and the demands of political action, but it regards respect for the latter as the supreme virtue in politics. For Iranian Imamate's followers, on the other hand, realism in their actions is linked above all to their conception of the religious virtue of *Vilayet-e-Fagih*. To this end, the Islamic Republic of Iran positions itself as a state that defends its political interest without respecting that of other states. However, according to their perception, its commitments will bring justice to all, i.e., the oppressed.

Key Concepts

Balance of Power

The *balance of power* is the central theory of international politics in realist thought. A system for the *balance of power* - forces - is one in which the dialectic of balance-seeking, where the weaker states join the stronger ones. In other words, if the power of one nation increases to the point of threatening other states, a coalition of counterweights emerges to limit the rising power, so that any attempt at global hegemony is doomed to failure. *Balance of power* theory also suggests that national security is enhanced when military capability is distributed in such a way that no one state is strong enough to dominate all others (Schweller, 2016). The nature of international relations is the source of this *balance of power* of these competing states. This competition prevents one power from overpowering another; at the same time, there is no state organisation strong enough to regulate the whole community of nations.

Alternatively, balance can be based on a system of 'balancing' itself; the strategy of balance, where certain countries or a certain geographical area are used to maintain the overall balance. Localised wars can be part of an arsenal of means to maintain the balance. On the other hand, generalised warfare should be avoided at all costs as it poses the greatest threat to the survival of the system and, consequently, of its various components (The Conflict, 2018).

According to the realists, there are two understandings to the accomplishment of this *balance of power*: the automatic version of the theory, leaning towards a spontaneous, self-regulated and totally involuntary outcome mechanism of states pursuing their narrow self-interests. On the other hand, the 'semi-automatic' version of the theory suggests that a 'balancing' state throws its weight on one side of the scale or the other, depending on which weight is lighter, to regulate the system. That said, the British school of *balance of power* opts

for a 'manual' system, emphasising human genius, the skills of diplomats and statesmen, a sense of community of nations, shared responsibility, and the goal of preserving a balance of power on the international stage (Schweller, 2016).

For the policymaker, the behaviour of power-seeking states is a political process between elites with different ideas about the politico-military world and divergent views about the nation's goals and challenges. In addition, the means that will best serve their objectives; entail considerable political costs and uncertain political risks. To this end, the political *balance of power* on the international stage is far from being a godsend or an inherently stable condition. It is certainly the result of human intervention and the functioning of political forces. States as actors in the society of nations cannot afford to wait passively for the happy moment when a miraculously achieved balance of forces will bring peace and security. They survive the moment when they are prepared to go to war to preserve a *balance of power* (Schweller, 2016).

Power Projection

Power projection is the military capability of a state to conduct expeditionary warfare, which relies on the rapid deployment of home-based military forces in a crisis. *Power projection* can range from a demonstration of force by an aircraft carrier task force to the forward deployment of an infantry company. An important advantage of *Power projection* is that it allows resources to be managed in situ or at major operating bases. This reduces operational and logistical costs. However, this strategy requires significant mobility capabilities to deploy forces when needed (Lohse, 2019). This strategy according to Krepinevich and Work's analysis includes a force employment posture with adequate positioning, and strategic mobility and logistics infrastructure, force entry and rapid base construction, a global command, control, communications and intelligence network, legal agreements, deterrence strategies (Lohse, 2019).

This *Power projection* capability is a strategic mechanism for intimidating other nations and being willing to achieve its policies through force or threat in an area far from its own territory. In other words, any state capable of directing its military forces outside the confines of its territory has some level of *Power projection* capability. The latter is a crucial element of a state's power in international relations. Traditional measures of *Power projection* are defined in terms of the hard power assets of military capability. On the other hand, developing soft-power theory notes that *Power projection* need not necessarily involve the active use of military forces in combat. Means of *Power projection* can often have a dual purpose. The ability of a state to project its forces into an area can serve as an effective diplomatic lever, influencing

decision-making and acting as a potential deterrent to the behaviour of other states (Mazarr, 2020). It is clear that *Power projection* is necessary for coercive diplomacy and immediate deterrence; States wielding coercive diplomacy project power when and where they choose, in order to achieve their strategic and political objectives. In the case of immediate deterrence, once a potential aggressor triggers a crisis through threats, the rapid deployment of forces provides a credible threat (Lohse, 2019). Military bases abroad are integrated into this *Power projection* strategy; although they remain financially and politically costly and require the cooperation of host nations. These forces develop relationships with coalition partners that expeditionary forces cannot. By training with host nation forces, they improve interoperability and learn about the field. Because these forces are already in close proximity to combat positions, they can mitigate some anti-access threats. The enduring nature of these forces positioned outside of state territories in this power approach, however, offers significant deterrent advantages (Lohse, 2019).

Jus ad Bellum

The *Jus ad Bellum* or just war theory is based on the principle of self-defence. This principle implies that a state has the right to defend itself by military means in case of aggression by one or more states. "*This principle also implies that there is no relevant moral difference in terms of obligation between being attacked and witnessing an aggression against another agent. If one is entitled to defend oneself, this right is also valid for others. And if a state recognises this right for others, it also recognises its obligation to assist them as far as possible*" (Nadeau, 2010). Responding to aggression is a consequence of the principle of *Jus ad Bellum*. This principle states that a very serious threat can be rightly seen as a form of aggression. The latter is responded to and, above all, justified by the right to defend their self. A state that is attacked by another state obliges other states to defend it. This moral right is reinforced, and in fact held above all by numerous international conventions (Nadeau, 2010).

However, the field of political philosophy gives a supreme purpose to war, that of the pursuit of peace. As Aristotle suggested: "*(...) the art of war is, in a sense, a natural mode of acquisition (the art of hunting is a part of it) and must be practised both against wild beasts and against men, who, being born to obey, refuse to do so, for this war is by nature in accordance with the law*" (Aristotle, 2014). This morality of war was addressed by Saint Augustine (Sharma, 2014). According to him the notion of just war is often associated with Christian thought. St. Augustine is a Christian philosopher and theologian of the fourth century. His thought is based on a strong limitation to the use of war. War is permitted, but strictly

limited. Saint Augustine defends the idea that peace is the major objective and the only purpose of war: "*Peace being an act of virtue, and war being contrary to peace, and therefore contrary to virtue, it is necessarily a sin*" (Geolinks, 2015). As for Thomas d'Aquin, the just cause of war is based on a doctrine considering that all defensive wars are justified in terms of legitimate defence (Vianes, 2014). He will then integrate three conditions of a just war into the thought of Saint Augustine: authority (the commitment of the prince in the war), just cause (the reasons) and finally just intention (for a common good to promote the good and avoid evil) (Geolinks, 2015).

Furthermore, the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius, the founder of modern natural law, formulated a fundamental principle of modern international relations: the legitimacy of the head of state and of the political regimes in place, the respect of conventions applying to all, and the word given must be respected, which is the very basis of the sovereignty of states. To this end, he introduced the reflection on the interest of nations and the question of their sovereignty. The reason of man is at the very heart of Grotius' thought, and this is what differentiates him from Christian thinkers. "*War is just insofar as it aims at a right, it will naturally lead to peace*", he says. Grotius and other thinkers such as Emer de Vattel and De Vitoria also took an innovative look at the notion of just war. Their reflections marked the end of the period in which the only purpose of war was justice and peace. It is now up to states, sovereign powers, to conduct their internal and external policies and it is they alone who will determine 'the justness and justice of the cause they have to wage war' (Geolinks, 2015).

Soft Power

The term *soft power* is the ability of a state to persuade others to do what it wants without resorting to force or coercion. The term was coined by Nye in the late 1980s. Through his book Nye argues that successful states need both *hard* and *soft power* - the ability to coerce others as well as the ability to shape their attitudes must be referred to in a balancing act between the two powers (Nye, 2004). *Soft power* is an ability to seduce and attract. This concept puts the notion of power into perspective in a non-conventional framework. In the geopolitical tradition, there are two types of relationships between nations. The first is a symmetrical relationship of rivalry and negotiation in the sense of hard power, where war measures forces, while diplomacy seeks compromise and agreement. The second is influence through the mechanisms of *soft power*. It is an asymmetrical relationship between an influenced and

influential. Its prestige gives it the power to influence strategic outcomes in its favour and set the international policy agenda.

However, the strategy of influence through *soft power* attempts to gain control of the targets to create favourable behaviour towards it. When the methods of persuasion and seduction aim to produce total mimicry, absolute adherence, the values of the influential nation and its worldview are shared by the other, who comes to behave according to its model. The consent of the 'influenced' is not explained by the threat or by any explicit reward. The strategy is indirect, although it may be deliberate (Nashidil, 2018). Among the Maori the authority of the chief is increased by his success in war. He increases his mana (spiritual aura) through marriages, feasts and displays of power. His mana is diminished by obvious humiliation, defeat in war or negotiation. Napoleon, for example, held the weapon of the aura of invincibility which froze the hearts and minds of his opponents. Today, we speak of a candidate's political capital by his ability to rally the electorate to his political objectives.

In an international negotiation, a country must make concessions to achieve its objectives - it is a question of give and take. By using *soft power*, a country does not have to make concessions: it simply gets what it wants quietly. Power is either exercised by force or by legitimacy. A regime that has lost its legitimacy can survive by terror for a while, but eventually it will be overthrown because it is considered to have 'lost the mandate of the sky' (Matteucci, 2005).

My research highlights the *soft power* mechanisms engaged by the Islamic Republic of Iran in its ambitions to be a regional power and to project its power into its immediate surroundings. This *soft power* started with the positioning of Ayatollah Khomeini as the founding father of *Vilayet e-Faqih* confronting the Shah of Iran. His charisma, aura, boldness and scholarly background automatically put him in the position of being a source of inspiration and leadership.

The *soft power* of the Islamic republic of Iran begins with the personality of Ayatollah Khomeini. Then he is imitated in his behaviour and actions by the Imamate's followers in their internal and external political functioning. The disappearance of Ayatollah Khomeini did not make his influence disappear since this capital of influence has already been transmitted to his followers. Otherwise named by the Imamate's followers continued his spiritual quest. Imam Khomeini being an outstanding personality, since he is considered "infallible" remained a source of blessing long after his death; thus, all the literature of the Shia Imamate dogma is conveyed to transmit this value of power, and sacredness through the personality of Ayatollah Khomeini and well-guarded through the *Secrets of the Imamate*. This legacy is as sacred as it

is a source of strength and realization of the objectives of the Imamate's followers in relation to their pact to transmit the missionary message of Ayatollah Khomeini by protecting the Imamate and exporting it outside the Iranian borders to the neediest. Iranian-style *soft power* is certainly interwoven with a form of deep Shia religious culture revisited by Ayatollah Khomeini.

In this asymmetrical war waged by Tehran, *soft power* represents a tool for preparing the ground for the militia's establishment, targeting Shia minorities first and foremost. More concretely, *soft power* makes it possible to recruit, build loyalty, raise awareness, and create synergies with other populations outside Iran. This same *soft power* is even more powerful in Iran and makes it possible to mobilize the IRGC in their missionary quests and to prepare the new Imamate generations in love of the charismatic figure of Ayatollah Khomeini. This *soft power* has been very effective in terms of the creation of Shia militias, but it has also been an important brake on the export of the Iranian Islamic revolution to Arab-Muslim countries. In the rest of this analysis, I elaborate more elements to understand this functioning of the Imamate's *soft power*.

Asymmetrical Warfare

> *"War is a grave affair of state; it is a place of life and death, a road to survival and extinction, a matter to be pondered carefully" (SUN TZU, 2005).*

Since Antiquity, practitioners, and theorists of the art of war have been obsessed with the quest to rationalise combat by giving it a perfect form, while ensuring the greatest success in achieving its objectives at the lowest cost. Indeed, war is never limited to devastating and bloody clashes; irregular or asymmetric warfare has participated at its level in giving other expressions to this art of combat.

Asymmetric warfare is a conscious choice of a form of combat adapted to the case where regular or frontal warfare cannot succeed. This so-called asymmetric or irregular warfare responds to an asymmetry of power, means, methods, organisation, values, and time. The asymmetry can be participatory, technological, normative, doctrinal, or moral (Hein Tschel Von Heinegg, 2021). More concretely, asymmetric warfare is an operational mode of combat, diverting the frontal struggle with an enemy in superior combat capacity. This operational choice allows inferior forces to achieve targeted objectives (Marczak & Paw, 1995). The

asymmetric weapon is a weapon of the poor and weak by excellence as a posture of resistance to the strong opponent (Pahlavi, 2011).

Asymmetrical or even irregular warfare is a strategy of the art of war. This grand strategy is to discover and pierce the enemy's heel to break his will to continue the war. Similarly, this strategy seeks to strike the enemy at the flaw in his armour. Thus, to apply one's strength where the enemy is himself strong is only to weaken oneself disproportionately to the result obtained. To this end, it is wise to target the weak points of the enemy's armour for maximum effectiveness (Liddell Hart, 2012). In other words, the recognition of the opponent's military superiority will avoid open confrontation which can only lead to the annihilation of his troops and defeat. Instead, it will tend to compensate for the inadequacy of its arsenal by employing unconventional means and methods and prolonging the conflict by a secret war of attrition against its well-equipped enemy (Hein Tschel Von Heinegg, 2021).

The nuclear age in the 21st century has reduced the likelihood of engagement in a frontal war between the great powers, leaving room for low-intensity asymmetric conflicts. From the 1960s and 1970s, the proliferation of regional and local crises took over from wars of liberation. From the 1980s onwards, the American doctrine provided them with this notion of low-intensity conflicts. Then, from the 1990s onwards, the term medium-intensity was used by certain authors, and these two terms, low and medium intensity, were grouped together in a conglomerate known as asymmetric conflicts. More precisely, the notion of asymmetry appeared in the 1970s in the aftermath of the Vietnam War.

The pioneering theorist of asymmetric warfare is the French Lieutenant-Colonel Guy Brossolet (Essai sur la non-bataille, 1976) who put into perspective the role of asymmetry in the context of the Cold War in the face of the threat of a Soviet invasion. There is also the application of the concept with the war led by Hezbollah against Israel in Lebanon in summer 2006. Another term hybrid wars, was introduced by Frank G. Hoffmann in his book *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, 2007 (Coutau-Begarie, 2009). "*Irregular warfare is powerful and effective when conducted by troops who consider it a form of warfare in its own right (...). Irregular operations do not present immediate decisions or spectacular episodes, but they use the ways and means of warfare in a highly elaborate way; the faction that resorts to them mobilises calculation, cunning and guile to inflict the greatest possible losses on the enemy while maintaining its effectiveness and combat potential for as long as possible*" (Jakubczak, 2002).

Proxy War

The Proxy warfare is armed conflict between two or more states through non-state actors outside their territories. These non-state actors act at the instigation of those states that are not directly involved in the hostilities. Geraint Hughes through his work on proxy wars with case studies elaborated in his book *Enemy's Enemy: Proxy Warfare in International Politics*, introduces proxy warfare with the notion of a proxy and defined it as an equivalent to a non-state paramilitary group receiving direct assistance from an outside power in a context of competitiveness between two or more great or medium powers (Hughes, 2012). In his analysis, he considers that states cannot serve as proxies, or they cannot be the proxies themselves. To this end, he grants states the power of autonomy and the pursuit of self-interest, which is not necessarily the position of non-state actors in the service of external powers. At the same time, Hughes provides insight into the criteria for the realization of proxy wars. The mutual understanding of the worldview in relation to a common enemy brings about a rapprochement and direct assistance from the sponsor to the agent. This relationship is based on trust (Youra, 2014). However, this relationship is focused on the common enemy. The sponsor is not necessarily in full control of the proxy force. Since the interests of both sides may diverge, and rarely respond to autonomous interests, so proxy warfare may cease, or be less effective at the point where the divergences are sustained. The latter are influenced by developments in the local geopolitical context. More properly, the role of the influence of *Realpolitik* on the positioning of these proxies and the real capacity or genius of the sponsor to adapt as quickly as possible to local changes; so as not to lose the bonds of trust with its proxies.

In addition, the author Dunér defines proxy wars using parameters based on compatibility of interests, support, and the exercise of asymmetric power. He mentions that the exercise of power is essential for proxy wars to take place. A proxy must be "pushed to intervene". Without this characteristic proxy relations are no longer of the order of sponsor, agent, but mostly of the order of partner. Furthermore, the question of resource transfer is not necessarily a condition for the realisation of this proxy relationship because the agent may not depend on material support to carry out his or her activities (Duner & Bertil, 1985). Furthermore, immaterial support contains the rhetoric of action. Both power and interest play an important role, but once a state makes the decision to intervene indirectly and thus provide a form of support, it has decided to play a role in a conflict as a proxy support (Youra, 2014). Researcher Andrew Mumford defines proxy wars as the indirect engagement (no man representing the third party on the ground) in a conflict by third parties wishing to influence its

strategic outcome. This conflict may involve states and non-state actors. According to Mumford, for indirect intervention to be considered a proxy situation, he looks closely at proxies that use both direct and indirect forms of intervention. The unresolved nature of this context is likely to push a belligerent party to use all the tools at its disposal, including the intervention of proxy combatants (Mumford, 2014). It should be noted that proxy warfare is not only opposed to traditional warfare - where a state bears the burden of its own defence or offence - but also to an alliance, where powers collaborate, each making a significant contribution according to their means. Proxies also offer a way of fighting that can limit escalation. States often deny that they support proxies (Byman, 2018). This positioning allows states competing on a given territory to manoeuvre their proxies while avoiding a head-on confrontation.

The Useful Enemy

Carl Schmitt with his Constitutional Theory, in The Concept of the Political of 1927 and further developed in 1932, defines "political" as a natural and eternal tendency of human community to identify with each other as "enemies". By this definition he means this natural struggle between individuals with different ways of life; this struggle is by no means merely rhetorical but is also a deadly struggle of concrete reality. Schmitt defines this principle of zeal of the members of a group to kill and die based on a non-rational faith; by a willingness to die in the name of a substantial way of life in contradiction with the desire for self-preservation of modern natural rights theories and the liberal ideal. The latter are only the driving forces of modern European history from the 16th to the 20th century.

Politics requires a struggle, and this political struggle is between states or empires according to Schmitt. Moreover, war is defined as an armed struggle between politically organised formations and in other cases of civil war it is an armed struggle within a country (Kujawski, 2020). In this sense, this understanding of armed struggle is based on the principle of enmity, through the negation of the other, the one who is different, with the possibility of its physical destruction. To this end, the author defines war as the final stage of the incorporation of enmity. At the political level, the decision as to who is the enemy is made much earlier. This difference between friend and foe on the battlefield is not a political problem at all, since war remains a unique and extraordinary situation. Schmitt elaborates to emphasise that victory following a war or revolution is by no means a vision of the ideal society. The awareness of the reality of conflict is man's way of thinking and acting (Kujawski, 2020).

Machiavelli's political thinking is like Schmitt's pragmatism. Machiavelli prioritised political goals aligned with the good of the state, rather than moral goals. Both thinkers attest to a revulsion against politicians who have difficulty in making specific decisions and are unable to finish what they start, being on the one hand half cruel and on the other half virtuous (Kujawski, 2020). This pragmatic thinking, marked by political realism, is based on the conviction of both authors that it is naive to think that a defenceless nation is surrounded only by friends. What is noted is that the enemy can be awakened by the absence of resistance (Kujawski, 2020).

However, the concept of the enemy while conceding the appellation of the useful enemy has been addressed in Umberto Eco's essay entitled - *Constructing the Enemy* (2014). The author explains that having an enemy is important in defining our identity, but also in providing us with an obstacle against which we can measure our value system, while seeking to overcome it in order to demonstrate our own worth. Umberto Eco presents a conception of the demonised other, making a powerful argument that difference is presupposed to be the source of the threat to the 'enemy' the other; thus, difference itself becomes a symbol of what we find threatening (Delori, 2019).

The researcher Delori, in this perspective of identifying the identity of the enemy, interrogates this section of the representations of deeply held social, cultural and political assumptions about who 'our' enemies are today and why they deserve violence. This representation of the enemy is rooted in a large body of historical work on European nationalism and colonial expansion, regularly justified by racist representations of the 'other', shaped consent to violence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Rouzeau & Bartov, 2019). Moreover, the experience of war has in turn brought about a construction of this identity and the logics of altering the other, and the potential enemy. The existence of a link between negative representations of the other and violence allows its demonization and increases the violent behaviour against it (Delori, 2019). Furthermore, the consent to violence towards the potential enemy is not only a result of negative representations but finds its substance in a dehumanising dynamic such as a certain trivialisation of violence, or bureaucratic reasoning and mechanisation of thought (Wasinski, 2010). However, in his writings on violence and the sacred, Girard asserts that alteration is not the driving force of violence. The latter finds its source in the mimesis of desires or, in other words, a form of appropriation in logic of competitiveness between several protagonists in a model of 'mimetic violence' (Girard, 1979). Delori suggests that the studies on the representation of violence in the context of contemporary Western wars; such the discourse of the war on terror, as well as

humanitarian interventions have constructed the enemy of humanity. It is worth noting that the experience of war and military practices bring and turn shape, representations of the enemy (Delori, 2019).

In international relations, the theory of the useful enemy has the function of setting up a political strategy aimed at achieving political and/or economic objectives by the designator of the useful enemy. The designate is a protagonist in search of competitiveness or wants to put an end to competitiveness or both; uses this useful enemy to advance more securely on the international scene by capitalising on its ambitions. This choice allows him to put his preoccupied competitors to work out the strategies needed to counteract this designated enemy. The designator of the useful enemy from this diversion towards his potential competitors gives him more freedom to accomplish his predefined policies in advance.

National Security

The Realists are proponents of national security. Realist thinking presents a world where states are both the main sources of security and at the same time the main threats to that security. Realism envisions a world of fear, suspicion and mutual conflict in which states must constantly fight for their survival. A pessimistic view and the security problem of nations stem from this anarchic world view. The world is made up of independent and armed states, capable of fighting each other. National security policies are based on the creation and maintenance of armed forces for national defence and deterrence. As such, they are intended to deal with internal threats such as criminals, rebels, terrorists, etc. However, there is no single source of authority or government; international relations are orderly and subject to regulation and mutual constraint arising from shared responsibilities for survival and coexistence (Jackson & Preece, 2011).

In addition, the notion of national security is carried by the state as its primary instrument of promotion and its *raison d'être*. The state is also a mediator between the national interest and the interests of the communities within it. This postulate remains realistic and neo-utilitarian (Balzacq, 2003). In his article, Balzacq introduces what is international security? Several authors' definitions of this concept of national security; among them, Penelope Hartiand-Thunberg, who defines national security as the ability of a nation to successfully pursue its national interests according to its vision anywhere in the world. However, Giacomo Luciani defines it as the ability to resist foreign aggression, and Arnold Wolfers defines national security as the absence of threats to values, and the ability to measure these potential threats. Finally, national security in the context of the international system is only that capacity

of states to preserve their autonomous identities as well as their territorial integrity or even their sovereignty (Balzacq, 2003). The political conceptualisation of security responds to two ruptures. The first is between the second half of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century, when it is associated as a common objective of individuals and states, without being an end, propelled by the republican states. However, the second break occurred through the French Revolution, where security became a domain reserved for the state through military and diplomatic protection forces.

Adam Smith then becomes the first major author to argue for a decentring of security from its liberal context, reorienting it towards the state as the custodian responsible for protecting society from violence and foreign invasion. More than that, that this freedom of individuals is under the authority of the security of the state, and to ensure it must constitute an army. To this end, individuals are secured when the state itself is secured. The state will invest in a social contract with a monopoly on security action, and Jean Jacques Rousseau puts into perspective that security subsequently becomes the fundamental concern that the state institution must overcome (Balzacq, 2003).

In the 20th century, pluralists differed from realists in their assumption that states are not the only actors responsible for security. Since they argue that the responsibility for security also extends to the increasingly institutionalised society of nations. The Covenant of the League of Nations, Article 11, aimed at preserving the territorial settlement created in Paris in 1919 after the end of the First World War, illustrates this new approach to the concept of national security: *"Any war or threat of war, whether immediately affecting any of the Members of the League or not, is hereby declared a matter of concern to the whole League, and the League shall take any action that may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of nations."* In practical terms, insecurity is often the result of the actions of other members of international society, but it can also, be created by other members of society, such as non-state actors and terrorist groups (Jackson & Preece, 2011).