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# The United States' Role in the Networked Containment Strategy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the West Asia Region: A Comprehensive Analysis

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## **Abstract**

Changes in the security order of the regions cause changes in the control systems and containment of the threats of extra-regional intervening powers. This evolution can be seen in the dimensions of the units, the type of relationships, the layers of the units' communication with each other, and the way the units function to ensure their security interests. In the region of West Asia, which has gone through three periods of regulation, we are witnessing significant developments in the field of regulation. Simple and linear security systems, complex security systems and network security systems are three periods of regulation in which there are three types of control and containment systems. Containment of the Islamic Republic of Iran as a regional security threat has always been discussed in US foreign policy since the victory of the Islamic Revolution. In this framework, the following research question is raised: What evolution has the American control and restraint system undergone against the Islamic Republic of Iran, and how has this evolution been? In response to the above question, the following hypothesis is proposed: the change in the security order of the West Asian region has caused American control system to become a network control system, and this system is a four-layer network (geopolitics, geoeconomics, geoenergy, and geoculture) against which the Islamic Republic of Iran operates. The research method in this article is descriptive-explanatory, and documentary and library methods were used to collect the materials.

**Keywords:** Network Security Order, West Asia, the United States, Control Strategy, Islamic Republic of Iran.



## Introduction

One of the most important areas of international relations research and regional studies is the study of security discipline and patterns of deterrence and control of security behaviors. In most of the structural and environment-oriented theories, security systems are considered an independent variable that forms the behavior of security units in security systems. The multiplicity of variables that make up the security and control behavior of government units has caused theories of international relations and regional studies to deal with a part of the variables and formulate their analysis format based on a number of variables. The security behaviors of government units affected by security regulations have been proposed in the structuralist theories of realism and in the works of thinkers such as Waltz, Gilpin, and Kaplan.

Until the collapse of the Soviet Union, due to the classic and simple nature of the international system, the strategies of the great powers were also linear and simple, and mainly the model of the world order was also shown in a smaller format in the regional orders. But over time, with the change of the system from simple to complex and chaotic and the multifaceted development of the main security concepts of the system, such as security and threats, the former security strategies are not effective in the new security environment. As a result, in order to have an effective and low-cost presence and control the security campaigns of new regional orders, the great powers are designing and implementing security strategies that are appropriate for complex and chaotic systems.

The new global security order is the result of regional orders, and each of the great powers tries to have the greatest impact on the formation of regional orders by designing and implementing effective security strategies in order to improve their position in the global system emerging from regional orders. With the increasing complexity of security systems and the pressures of the strategic environment as an independent variable in the regional strategies of great powers, we are witnessing a change in the control systems of global powers in different geographical regions. The security system of the West Asian region has benefited from fundamental changes with the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the beginning of the security competition with the United States. As a result, the containment of Iran's regional behavior model has also undergone a remarkable transformation for the United States. The commonality of both the control models of Iran and the United States is the lack of direct military conflict in the form of full-scale

war, and the difference between the control models of both security units is the difference in the level of national capabilities and regional access.

In this article, the author seeks to explain the new model of control and containment of the Islamic Republic of Iran by the United States. What is important in this development and how to carry out and follow up on the new model of containment is the reason for the formation of the new model and how it works. In the framework of pursuing the above issue, the following research question is raised: What evolution has the American control and restraint system undergone against the Islamic Republic of Iran, and how has this evolution been? In response to the above question, the following hypothesis is proposed: the change in the security order of the West Asian region has caused the American control system to become a network control system, and this system is a four-layer network (geopolitics, geoeconomics, geoenergy, and geoculture) against which the Islamic Republic of Iran operates. The research method in this article is descriptive-explanatory, and documentary and library methods were used to collect the materials.

### **Research Background**

The literature related to the field of regional orders and control systems can be divided into two categories: Persian language and English language literature. Farhad Ghasemi (2017), in *Theory of Complexity: Chaos and War in International Relations*, examines the transfer of order from simple and linear to complex and non-linear control systems, such as individual control, multiple control, and single-base control against collective control. The base has been examined. Ghasemi and Shokri (2008), in an article entitled *Attitude Toward the Regional Deterrence System in International Relations: A Case Study of Iran and the United States* discussed the deterrence of Iran and America against each other in the order of the West Asian region. Sotoudeh and Mohammadi Zia (2016), in the article *American Strategy and the Middle East Regional Order: From Classic Hegemony to Soft Hegemony*, have gathered some information about the American alliance and coalition strategy to manage the threats in the order of the West Asian region. In another study, Torabi and Taherizadeh (2018) discussed the issue of regulation in West Asia. In the regulation considered by the authors of the article, transnational divergent forces are considered one of the most important reasons for the divergence and instability of security systems in the West Asian region.

In the section of English-language works, at the level of explaining geo-economic orders, Wallerstein divides the layers of the world economic order into three layers: the center, the periphery, and the semi-periphery of different countries based on the division of global labor in each of the aforementioned categories. In explaining the global order and its divisions, capital accumulation and profit are considered two major forces in the dynamics related to it. Is. Waltz (1979) and Mearsheimer (2001) explained the power distribution in the behavior of government units to explain the impact of power-based orders on the dynamics of world politics. At the level of geocultural orders, Huntington (2003) proposed the concept of the war of civilizations, considered order-making at the global level as a function of conflicting cultures clashing with each other, and considered future order-making conflicts to be of a cultural type. There is a pyramidal and hierarchical view of organization in the works of Modelski (1984) and Organski (1968). The constant competition of governments with each other to be at the top of the power cycle is the most important factor in the dynamics of hierarchical orders at the global level. At the regional level, Lemke (Lemke, 2001) also acknowledges with a pyramidal view the construction of order at the middle level against the dial of regional powers in order to be placed at the upper points of the power cycle.

In the form of using the complexity approach in explaining the behavioral patterns of government units, Santo Banerjee (Banerjee, 2014) has discussed the ambiguous effect of complexity on global policy interactions and the increase of uncertainty by using the theory of complexity in global orders. In another work, “Herd” (2010) in the book *Great Powers and Stabilization Strategy in the 21st Century* focuses on the element of national power over regional regulation by world powers. Herd (2010) considers extra-regional intervening powers as one of the most important factors in creating regional orders. The difference between the present article and the above research works is in the link between the networked order and the control and restraint systems of the big powers in the regional networked orders. The mentioned link will be operationalized in the form of the theoretical framework of the research on the containment strategy of The United States against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The following theoretical model has been designed using a realism

approach and the network analysis method. In the following model, the change in security order and its periods will be explained first, and then the cause of said change will be explained in the form of the independent variable effect of the change in security order on the control system and its types.

### **Transformation in Regional Orders**

The network of the geopolitical order of the regions contains diversified existential and harm threats for the regional and extra-regional units. The fluidity, complexity, and dynamism of this network have caused unpredictability and uncertainty to always be raised as two essential principles in this kind of network. The link between threats and regional orders is linear and direct in simple orders and causally recursive in complex and chaotic networked orders. Kawalski summarized complexity in the form of the concept of non-linearity into four characteristics. Bounded rationality, limited unpredictability, evolutionary change, and giving less importance to the concepts of progress and knowledge due to uncertainty are among these. On the opposite point, in the approach of simple order, which has its roots in the period of enlightenment and modernity, there are rationality, predictability, determinism, and no limitations in human knowledge or the idea of progress. (Kavalski, 2007, p. 438) In a nonlinear explanation, minor changes lead to large and unpredictable outputs. (Barry, 2013). Prigozhin considers the difference between a simple and a complex system to be the difference between the formation of an equilibrium state in a simple system and moving away from the equilibrium state. (Sim, ۲۰۰۷, □. ۱۲)

In the global hierarchical network, regional networks have a high position in the competition of great powers to be at the upper levels of power. Due to the strategic importance of the regions and the competition of units that maintain the status quo and challengers of the status quo, the regions have fluctuations related to security competitions. Regional networks affected by intra-network and extra-regional network factors show different rules in their security formulations. Regional order is often drawn and explained in a hierarchical manner with the focus of regional powers due to the dissimilarity of the actors' powers. Most of the building blocks of regional interactions are made by regional powers. The distribution of power in the regions and the response of the regional units to the power of the hegemon in the region and the extra region are important in the construction of order. (Acharya, 2014, p. 36)

Regional orders have experienced three generations of order building, and as a result, in all three types of order, the way threats are formed and the dynamics of regional threats have been highly diverse. In the initial stage of regional order, the key characteristics of a simple order have been the presence of influential government entities capable of effectively managing security crises, along with the predictable linear and causal connections among the various components of the order.. In this type of order, security and geopolitical threats appear in the form of predictable damage with a specific scope of destruction. In the second phase of regularization, with the complexity of the regional order, the links among the units have become multi-level and complicated. The complexity of the adversarial and cooperative communication links among regional units has led to the unpredictability and uncertainty of the structural outputs. Threats arising from complex order have two characteristics: emerging and unpredictability. Also, the high fluidity and dynamism of complex systems have caused the level and depth of security crises to be unpredictable in comparison to simple and linear systems.

With the entry of regional orders into the third phase, a transformation has taken place in the essence of communication, and the formulation of relations based on power, and the formation of threats and changes. In the third phase of regularization, with the physical construction of orders being networked and the essence of interactions becoming chaotic, multiple bodies and the quick access of communication nodes to each other are among the most important features of this type of order. The formation of a networked order has caused the emergence of crises and threats among modern and cross-border people, who simply violate traditional borders and multiply themselves in multi-dimensional and multi-layered ways.

### **Evolution in the Management and Containment of Threats**

Deterrence is the most important strategic tool for government units to deal with regional and extra-regional threats. The concept of deterrence, in its essence, benefits from the concept of defense-offensive balance. The defense-offense balance is like a scale that gets lighter as each side gets heavier. The security strategy of the units in the order hierarchy of the global hierarchy network is formed in connection and interaction with each other based on the principle of deterrence based on the defense-offensive balance, which is rooted in environmental threats. Global and regional



geopolitical threats make the positions of the units in the power cycle hierarchy face security and political challenges. Therefore, by using the power of communication and interference in subordinate regional systems, governments seek to ward off threats and increase their level of deterrence in the hierarchy of the power cycle in the world order network compared to their other global and regional competitors. Not all hegemonies seek to suppress the potential hegemon by interfering in the regions, but rather give some units superiority. (Barden Montgomery, 2016, p. 76)

American international relations researchers have begun to theorize in the form of a strategy to reduce the costs of containing threats. Mearsheimer, an American strategist and researcher, emphasizes the discussion of balance from a distance and non-interference directly in the governance of countries. He considers handing over the affairs to local actors and selective intervention as the most appropriate options to contain existing threats. (Mearsheimer, 2019: 10) In this framework, Mearsheimer and Walt, in a joint work, prescribe to American politicians that the United States can control Iran's hegemony and the balance of the Persian Gulf through Saudi Arabia and terrorist groups such as ISIS. While terrorist groups are still a serious threat to the countries in the region, they are considered a small problem for The United States. (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2016, p. 80)

With the increase in national capabilities and increasing threat perception, the units will move toward making the attack base heavier, and in the meantime, they will use threat control strategies according to the existing order. With the transformation of the structure and content of regional orders, deterrence centered on defense-offensive balance has changed from a simple and linear state to a complex and networked one based on communication management. The control strategies of extra-regional and regional powers have undergone a transformation in order to establish a balance between defense and aggression.

In the first phase of regularization and in the simple control system, due to the simple order and linearity of regional order links, the control system uses simple hardware tactics, such as the use of military power, to manage limited and spotty threats. In network control systems, with the complexity of regional orders and the unpredictability of their outputs, control systems have retreated from claims of direct hardware intervention and have turned to the use of proxy tools and regional allies. In the simple system of controlling the input and output of the existing resources in the

complex systems of the region, it is out of the scope and dominion of the government powers, and the cost of managing crises and threats will increase chronically.

In network control, regional threats with a network and the chaos of regional orders require regional and extra-regional units to seek to manage regional threats based on the manipulation and management of chaotic communications. In this generation of control, the use of intra-network links and communications in order to intensify and neutralize regional threats by using intra-network capacities with maximum distance and minimal direct intervention is the most important tactics. Emerging security threats appear at three levels of geopolitics, geoculture, and geoeconomy, and with their irregular and unpredictable expansion in geographic clusters, they challenge traditional management. In network systems, threats do not disappear but continue to exist in a chronic form, and the controlling units only deal with the network control of threats.

### **The United States' Network Containment Strategy**

In the design of the United States' containment strategy in the West Asian region, two factors— reducing costs and looking at competition with other powers in the world power cycle— have been adopted. Due to the increase in the costs of direct intervention in crisis management, such as military presence in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the economic and strategic competition in the Far East with China, the control and containment system of American threats in West Asia has undergone a transformation. Networked regional order is another factor that has had the greatest impact on the networked control system of the United States.

### **Evolution of the Containment Strategy in US Foreign Policy Documents**

The strategy of the American foreign policy elites against environmental threats and how to manage them can be seen in the national security and foreign policy documents published by the presidents. National security and foreign policy documents in the United States are designed in a process based on a new understanding of the security environment and proposed solutions to deal with threats. Identifying and prioritizing threats are important parts of the aforementioned design. Different eras of foreign policy and presidents in the United States indicate the types of threats and threat management in the form of national security documents and other foreign policy documents.

American national security documents show the evolution in the perception of the threat environment and the strategies to deal with it. The Bush administration, focusing on the dangers and threats of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, proposed the use of hardware and manual power. During this period, the militaristic hardware control system formed the axis of the United States' strategic behavior, which reached its peak in the form of the 2001 Afghanistan and 2003 Iraq wars. The National Security Strategy of 2006 went so far as to consider the preservation of American freedom as dependent on the success of freedom abroad. This means a significant expansion in the depth and breadth of the United States' effort to export its values. (Doyle, 2007, p. 627)

With the increase in the costs of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, Obama's presidency began with a change in the United States' security doctrine. The swamps of Iraq and Afghanistan, along with the great economic recession of 2008, prompted the Obama administration to take a different approach in its strategic view. Therefore, in 2010, the definition of the problem was viewed as a topic for national reconstruction. Obama's first national security strategy, accepting the ongoing wars and the threat of terrorism, announced that the United States must pursue a strategy of national reconstruction and global leadership, a strategy that rebuilds the foundations of American power and influence. (US National Security Strategy, 2010)

The 2010 National Security Strategy states that the US approach begins with a commitment to building a stronger foundation for American leadership. Because what happens inside our borders determines our power and influence outside them. The security landscape has changed significantly between 2010 and the next national security strategy published in 2015, especially in the Middle East. The Arab uprisings (Islamic Awakening) and their consequences, especially the Libyan crisis and the internationalized civil war in Syria, challenged the Obama administration to determine the boundaries of security and the extent of American intervention. Obama's doctrine, which in various situations received nicknames such as restraint or guidance, and this approach came back to doubts about the effectiveness of military force and caution from foreign interventions to avoid long-term commitments (Cohen, 2015), from strategic commitment to strong leadership, was gaining strength. (National Security Strategy, 2015)

In the 2010 National Security Strategy document, it is clearly

stated that multilateralism will strengthen those who move along international standards and isolate and weaken those who do not. In this document, threats are managed in the form of a network control system with the help of proxy actors and a network-type control system using communication nodes. In this period, like the Bush era, the United States was implementing its management system in the form of global leadership in order to deal with threats. The three modes of leadership reflect the themes that emerged in the 2010 National Security Strategy: targeted leadership, power-based leadership, and exemplary leadership. The fourth mode refers to a type of leadership accompanied by capable partners, including allies of international institutions and the private sector. Although the centrality of leadership is new in this document, this national security strategy is not much different in terms of substance from the national security strategies of the Bush era, which emphasized the importance of cooperation with others to resolve regional conflicts.

In 2015, Obama's second National Security Strategy stated that the United States is taking the lead with a long-term vision of changing the distribution of global power. The new developments were beyond the security paradigm after September 11, which the Obama administration accepted. This includes developments that redistribute power to new focal points in the global environment, such as sub-state and non-state actors, and among networked transnational agents. (Jahanian, 2019, p. 122) Trump's national security strategy, emphasizing the terrorist threats and mass killings of the previous eras and focusing on the network-type control system without direct hardware intervention, sought to use the regional security order network to contain the threats. The introduction to Trump's 2017 strategy begins with the introduction of an extremely dangerous world populated by transnational terrorists and recalcitrant and errant states. (National Security Strategy, 2017) Trump's national security strategy declares that China and Russia want to build a world opposite to the values and interests of the United States. (Weaver, 2018, p. 69) The increase in the costs of the US military presence in the West Asian region had caused Trump's visa to pay attention to the network-type control system.

A network approach in the US national security strategy document in 2022 with the focus on strengthening multi-dimensional ties with regional allies and the simultaneous use of all political and economic tools and internal access to support internal opponents and develop internal conflicts in the Islamic Republic of Iran It is being operationalized. The network view of the regional containment of the

Islamic Republic of Iran in this document is summarized by the following principles: The first principle is that the United States will strengthen its partnership with countries that adhere to the international law-based order and ensure that those countries are able to defend themselves against foreign threats. Second, the United States will not allow foreign or regional powers to remember the freedom of navigation through the Middle East passages, including the Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Bab al-Mandab. Third, while trying to reduce threats and establish regional stability, the United States will seek to reduce tensions and end conflicts through various means, including diplomacy. Fourth, the United States will seek to strengthen integration in the region by building political, economic, and security ties. Fifth, the United States will always seek to promote human rights and values enshrined in the United Nations Charter. The aforementioned series of claims are being pursued against the regional activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the security network of West Asia. In the new US national security documents, the emphasis on diplomacy, cooperation with allies to contain regional threats, and the selective use of unilateral military tools are among the components of emphasizing the use of the network containment system.

### **American Network Area Control in Triple Clusters**

The new approach of containment of Iran by the United States is carried out in the form of a multi-layered network with the focus on reducing Iran's regional deterrence with the help of manipulating the communication nodes. In the three clusters of the Levant, the East and Persian Gulf, governmental and non-governmental units affected by the United States' behavior are seeking to intensify regional competition with Iran, and these competitions have continued in the fields of geopolitics, geoenergy, geoculture, and geoeconomics.

### **Persian Gulf Cluster**

The geopolitical cluster of the Persian Gulf has been used as a strategic cluster to deal with Iran's threats in different layers due to the existence of high economic, energy, and security capacities for the United States. The most important threat facing the United States in the security network of West Asia and the Persian Gulf cluster is formed by the axis of resistance centered on the Islamic Republic of Iran. Utilization of the network of regional allies is pursued in different layers to harness the capabilities of the

resistance axis and the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the geopolitical layer of the United States' control and containment network against the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Persian Gulf cluster, the United States' regional allies, and the United States' arms support nodes, and intelligence and security support are located.

The United States' direct presence in the Persian Gulf has decreased, and a limited military presence is ongoing to establish security coordination in the form of advisory support and military bases (Torabi, 2018, p. 55). The United States has seven military bases in the Persian Gulf region, which include al-Adeed Air Base in Qatar, Tumerit Air Base in Oman, Bahrain's Fifth Fleet Base, Ali al-Salem Air Base in Kuwait, Sheikh Isa Air Base in Bahrain, Ahmed al-Jaber Air Base in Kuwait, and al-Dhafra Air Base in Emirates. (McCarthy, 2017, p. 11) About 54,000 US military forces are present in 12 West Asian countries. In the meantime, about 11,000 American soldiers are stationed at the Al-Adeed base in Qatar, more than 10,000 at the Al-Doha military base in Kuwait, about 5,000 at Al-Dhafra Air Base, and more than 4,000 soldiers at the Fifth Fleet of the US Navy in Bahrain. (Yenisafak, 2018, p. 55) In 2017, NATO opened its first regional office outside its borders in Kuwait. (Aluwaisheg, 2018, p. 21)

During the war in Yemen, the intelligence assistance of the United States and the Zionist regime made it possible for Saudi Arabia and Yemen to easily destroy ground targets with the help of airplanes purchased from the United States. (Mohsani, 1400, p. 21) The Patriot air defense missile systems and their newer generation against Iranian mid-range and long-range missiles are one of the other US military nodes to strengthen the military support network for the Persian Gulf Arabs. The integrated and multilateral air and missile defense system is one of the network defense plans that the Americans and the Zionists are seeking to establish against the Islamic Republic of Iran. This coalition is being pursued in the form of the Red Sands project. In the field of maritime defense, the 59th Special Group is deployed by the US 5th Fleet in Bahrain. (What is the Story of Group 59?, 140) In addition to this project, the creation of a network of 100 unmanned surveillance vessels is on the agenda of the American military authorities in the Persian Gulf. Vision ۲۰۴۰ بین ایالات متحده و کشورهای منطقه خلیج فارس در زمینه همکاری‌های نظامی و امنیتی بین‌المللی و منطقه‌ای در راستای مقابله با تهدیدات مشترک و تقویت امنیت منطقه، به ویژه در زمینه توسعه و استقرار ناوگان پهلو در خلیج فارس، به گونه‌ای که در آینده نزدیک به ۱۰۰ کشتی پهلو در خلیج فارس مستقر شود. (The United States' Plan to Deploy 100 Unmanned Vessels in the Persian Gulf, 1401)

In the field of geo-economics and geo-energy of the Persian Gulf cluster, we see that the Persian Gulf Arabs are complying with US sanctions, and joint oil and gas projects with high investment volumes have not been carried out. Although the United Arab Emirates is one of the most important business partners of the Islamic Republic of Iran, this country is only responsible for the transfer of goods and has not made joint economic and energy investments with Iran. In the field of manipulation in the sub-state perception network, the Americans, with the help of Saudi Arabia, in the form of networks like Iran International, have always sought to create inflammation and reduce the acceptability of the government among Iranian citizens.

### **Eastern Cluster**

With the withdrawal of the US from Afghanistan and the return of the Taliban to power, the control of the Islamic Republic of Iran's network in the eastern cluster has gone from a direct mode based on military presence to exploitation through the perceptual and security gaps between Iran and the Taliban government. The hydropolitical and security disputes arising from the turmoil and confusion of the political and economic structures of Afghanistan under Taliban rule have caused the American network control in this cluster in a negative way and in the form of the loss of opportunities for bilateral cooperation between Iran and its eastern neighbor to take a new form. Before leaving Afghanistan completely on April 14, 2021, in a speech about the future of Afghanistan, Biden pointed out the change in the quality of the threat in Afghanistan and said, "Our reasons for staying in Afghanistan are becoming increasingly unclear; even the terrorist threat that we went to fight has changed. The threat is dispersed. With the spread of terrorism in many places, maintaining thousands of military forces stationed and concentrated in just one country at a cost of billions of dollars does not seem justified to me and our leaders." (White House Press, 2021)

During this period, the US used the Shindand base in western Afghanistan to spy on the eastern borders of Iran using spy planes (Bagheri, 2013, p. 120). The United States' use of regional allies such as Turkey and the countries bordering the Persian Gulf and the economic sanctions on the Taliban to increase the security and political gaps between this group and the Islamic Republic of Iran is another means of curbing Iran's network in the eastern cluster. The United States' attempt to not transfer the Peace Pipeline to Pakistan (gas pipeline) and opposition to electricity transmission projects to

Pakistan's Quetta in the form of an “everyone except Iran” policy is considered to be network containment in the field of geoenergy. (Yosefzahi, 2018, p. 214) The presence of terrorists and security damage in the borders of Iran and Pakistan have always been affected by the intelligence and political support of the United States and its regional allies. According to the official statistics of the government of Pakistan, about 11 thousand religious schools are active in this country, of which about five thousand are not officially registered. These schools, by cultivating extremist forces, make hardware confrontations ineffective. (Shahidani, 2019, p. 292)

### **The US Cluster**

The containment and control of the axis of resistance in the Levant cluster have been very costly for the United States and the Zionist regime. At the end of 2015, in order to reduce Iran's influence in Iraq and make Iraq's power structure dependent on the United States, this country spent about \$90 billion on training and equipping the Iraqi and Afghan army and police. The United States also spent nearly \$104 billion from 2001 to 2017 to help rebuild Afghanistan, and from 2003 to 2017, about \$60 billion to rebuild Iraq (Thrall, 2017, p. 3). The cost of curbing the axis of resistance through hardware curbs in Syria and Iraq showed that the United States is looking to use a network approach to curb this flow. Qatar's \$12 million in aid to the rebels in 2012 and the cancellation of Syria's membership in the Arab League in favor of the United States in order to curb the axis of resistance ended.

In the field of geopolitical containment of the resistance axis, the use of regional allies along with the selective use of military power in the form of air and intelligence superiority in the Levant cluster is used to contain the military forces of Hezbollah, Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), and scattered military units of the resistance axis. The support of the anti-Assad regime militias in Syria took place in the form of an arms and economic support network. The direct military removal of Assad for the United States had many costs, like Iraq during Saddam's era (Qorbanzadah Sovar, 2019, p. 170). Hence, the agenda of the American authorities involves the strategic objective of weakening and removing Assad through the establishment of a multi-layered network with the assistance of regional allies.

The use of advanced technologies to eliminate key anti-American elements in the West Asian region has grown significantly in the last two decades. The assassinations of Martyr



Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in Baghdad airport were carried out within the framework of American network control with the help of advanced satellites and information networks. Selective military action with the help of the intelligence services of the Zionist regime against the Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) forces is considered one of the other components of the transformation in the strategy of controlling regional threats by the United States. The air attack of the Zionist regime on some resistance positions in Syria and the strengthening of the Kurds in Iraq and Syria are carried out in order to strike a balance between the central government and the centrifugal forces in this framework (Salimi, 1400, p. 147).

In the realm of geo-economics, efforts to weaken the financial and economic capabilities of the resistance axis have been observed through measures such as the imposition of Caesar sanctions against Syria following the defeat of ISIS in the country, as well as the Islamic Republic of Iran's seizure of funds from energy sales to Iraq. These actions aim to exert control over dollar transactions through network containment and control. In the first three years of Trump's presidency, the US Treasury Department has added an average of 1,070 names to its main sanctions list every year. While Obama had 533, and during Bush's presidency, this number was 435. More than 20% of the sanctions list of the Trump administration is related to Iran and four Arab countries (Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen), where Iran has more influence. (Economist, 2020, p. 4)

It is possible for Americans to monitor the transfer of dollars to Iran by controlling the currency transactions of Iraqi banks that work with dollars. Increasing American pressure on Iraqi banks to prohibit the transfer of dollars to Iran is done in the form of pressure on the Central Bank of Iraq and the imposition of fines on the offending banks. American officials have stated that these pressures are aimed at limiting the use of the Iraqi banking system to smuggle dollars to Tehran, Damascus, and money laundering havens throughout the Middle East. For years, US officials have pressured Iraq to strengthen its control over banks. In 2015, Iraqi officials announced that the Federal Reserve and the Treasury Department temporarily blocked the transfer of billions of dollars to Iraq's central bank out of concern that the currency would be transferred to Iranian banks (New Rules of the US Treasury in Iraq to Prevent the Transfer of Dollars to Iran, 1401).

According to Iraqi authorities and court documents, the Central Bank of Iraq has prohibited four banks, "al-Ansari, al-Sharq al-

Awsat, al-Qabid, and Asia,” from doing any dollar transactions. The impact of the stricter controls adopted can be seen in the sharp decline in dollar transactions by Iraqi banks that the central bank records on its website. According to the data, on October 17, 2021, before the new rules came into effect, daily transfers from Iraqi official accounts at the New York Federal Reserve and other institutions abroad were \$225 million. But on January 17, this figure was \$30 million, which decreased by nearly 90%. (New American Laws to Prevent the Transfer of Dollars to Iran, 1401)

### **Conclusion**

The intervention of great powers in regional systems to meet strategic goals is one of the most important subjects of international relations studies. Regional presence and intervention by world powers are done through deterrence systems and regional control systems. Deterrence is the key concept in determining the security strategy of the units, and accordingly, their security behavior. Deterrence against environmental risks and threats to maintain basic values is a basic political unit in the design of security strategies. In the design of the security strategy of the units, calculations related to the defense-offensive balance in deterrence against threats have always been prominently noticed by researchers and designers of security strategies. Maintaining the defensive balance against threats and increasing the offensive balance to compensate for losses and ward off upcoming threats using communication power tools is the connecting point of power dynamics and the security strategy of the units.

The American control system in the Southwest Asia region underwent a transformation based on the evolution of the security order in this region. Due to the change in the security order and its networking and the increase in the costs of containing regional threats, the American control system has enjoyed three generations. The geopolitical landscape of the Southwest Asia region has been influenced by the rivalry between three Salafi currents, namely the Axis of Resistance and the Ikhwani Current. . These complications have caused the cost of managing threats to global powers, especially the United States, to increase and Iraq and Afghanistan to become quagmires of American forces. However, according to the statement in the American national security documents regarding the strategic importance of the Middle East and the threats in it, the complete liberation of Southwest Asia has not happened in the foreign policy of the United States. Rather, the threat control and management system of this country has changed.

In the United States' network control strategy against the Islamic Republic of Iran, the goal is to reduce the regional influence and deterrence of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Manipulation in the communication nodes of the strategic environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran is done in the form of creating regional alliances, cutting Iran's strategic links, and strengthening geopolitical faults in the Levant, Persian Gulf, and Eastern clusters in the framework of network containment. Simultaneity and hybridity are among the characteristics of network strategy. Blocking financial assets and financial sanctions are part of the multilateral containment network of Iran at the regional and global level by the US.

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