

## Smart diplomacy; Examining the Performance of Martyr Soleimani in the Axis of Resistance

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### Abstract

During the years of commanding the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force, Martyr Soleimani designed and implemented a novel model of diplomacy which can be analyzed within the conceptual framework of "smart diplomacy." The central focus of the present study is to investigate the process of formation and development of this particular form of diplomacy, as well as the potential to institutionalize it. Employing (a qualitative case study approach), this article aims to answer this (primary question): What are the defining pattern and principles of diplomacy within Martyr Soleimani's school? The findings of this exploratory research show that Martyr Soleimani, implemented a unique model of diplomacy within the regional sphere with the help of four foundational principles: military security networking, simultaneous multi-layered action, nation (Ummah) centricity, and making diplomacy ideology-driven. In this model of diplomacy defined by the specific political-cultural and economic context of the West Asian region, Martyr Soleimani was successful to enhance national security and expand the influence of the Islamic Revolution's ideology to an unprecedented degree by defeating ISIS.

### Keywords:

Martyr Soleimani, Smart diplomacy, Resistance, Foreign policy.

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## **Introduction**

After the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the paradigm for dealing with both domestic and foreign issues also changed. It means that Faqahati political Islam discourse, centered on pure and authentic Muhammadan Islam and the Shia school, interpreted by Imam Khomeini was established as the dominant discourse in Iran's socio-political system. Following this, to address the multifaceted needs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, specific discourses emerged. These discourses were tailored to the particular temporal and spatial conditions and drew upon the broader framework of the dominant discourse. "Discourse of Resistance" is one of these discourses, which is based on forty years of experience of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It was proposed by observing international relations and the prevailing atmosphere and in relation to the conditions of the country with a logical and rational lens. This discourse was presented as the only optimal and effective strategy in dealing with the hegemonic system and achieving the outlined goals of the Islamic system.

Diplomacy, as a tool for the implementation of foreign policy, is considered as the most important concern of countries within the realm of international politics, which has its roots in the history of international relations. Following the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, not only was the political system altered, but foreign relations also underwent significant changes. Although the interest in cross-border engagement continued, the form and content of demanding responsibility and being responsible changed in Iran. The policy of exporting the revolution, supporting the resistance groups in the region, strengthening the presence in Iraq after the fall of Saddam, and supporting the Syrian government to confront the West and terrorist movements, represent Iran's new positions following the Islamic revolution. It is worthy to note that before the Islamic Revolution, the internal desire for transnational engagement across borders was mostly characterized by the sense of pride in the history and empire of ancient Iran. However, following the victory of the Islamic revolution, the internal desire was formed around the centrality of Islamic teachings, especially Shiite concepts (Heshmati and Rezaii, 1398: 12).

The main question of this research is: How is diplomacy in the martyr General Qassem Soleimani's school of thought? The present article is of an applied nature and a qualitative case study approach was adopted by the researchers. Documentary technique has been utilized for data collection. In order to conduct this research, some subsidiary questions have also been proposed. First, what are the characteristics of the security environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran? Second, in light of these characteristics, how are the main elements and axes of Martyr Soleimani's diplomacy defined? The hypothesis of this research is that Martyr General Soleimani employed a strategic Islamic diplomacy to create opportunities and prevent threats by integrating hard power, soft power, and spiritual power. A clear example of which can be observed in his active action in the fight against ISIS.

## **1. Concepts**

In this part, some concepts used in this research are defined.

### **1-1. Diplomacy**

The term "diplomacy" is derived from the Greek root "**Diploma**", which literally means folded page or sheet. In its conventional sense, diplomacy refers to a document resembling a scroll according to which certain privileges are given to someone. Later, this term denoted the charter or official document of ambassadors and envoys of governments to other governments. Despite the relative consensus on the concept of diplomacy, several definitions of it have been proposed, some of which refer to the nature of diplomacy and others refer to its specific function (Aladpoosh and Tootoonchian, 1372:6). More precisely, diplomacy means that states use peaceful methods, such as dialogue and negotiation, to achieve their goals.

### **1-2. Resistance**

In terms of expressing the lexical meaning of resistance, it should be stated that the term is originally Arabic, derived from the root "ق و م" (Qaf, Waw, Meem), and has entered into the Persian language over time. In the definition of resistance, Dehkhoda has listed the terms such as "persistence, opposed to, confrontation, perseverance,

standing, endurance, and stability ". (Dehkhoda, 1377: 21302). In Arabic glossaries, resistance (مقاومت) has been described as the infinitive form of the verb "قاوم، يقاوم" (qawama, Yaqavem) with "قواما" (qawāmā) serving as another infinitive form derived from the same root and based on "مفاعله" (Bab mufā'alah). The meaning of its verb in Arabic includes: "to confront, to fight, to overcome, and also to react to reduce the impact or harm of something." (Maaluf, 1395: Under "قاوم، يقاوم" (qawama, Yaqavem)).

In terms of conventional definition, no comprehensive and scholarly definition for the word resistance has been found in academic sources. However, due to the increase in the activities of the "axis of resistance" in recent years and their many successes achieved in the war against terrorist and takfiri groups, especially ISIS, the military-security meaning of the concept of resistance has dominated the public perception of this concept in the academic literature of Iran as well as the general opinion of society and other countries, especially Islamic nations. In other words, nowadays, due to the support and backing of the United States and the West for the opposing front against the axis of resistance, the concept of resistance is remembered as a confrontation and standing against the Western-American axis in the military arena in the region of West Asia, which has been extended to confrontation in the political dimension as well.

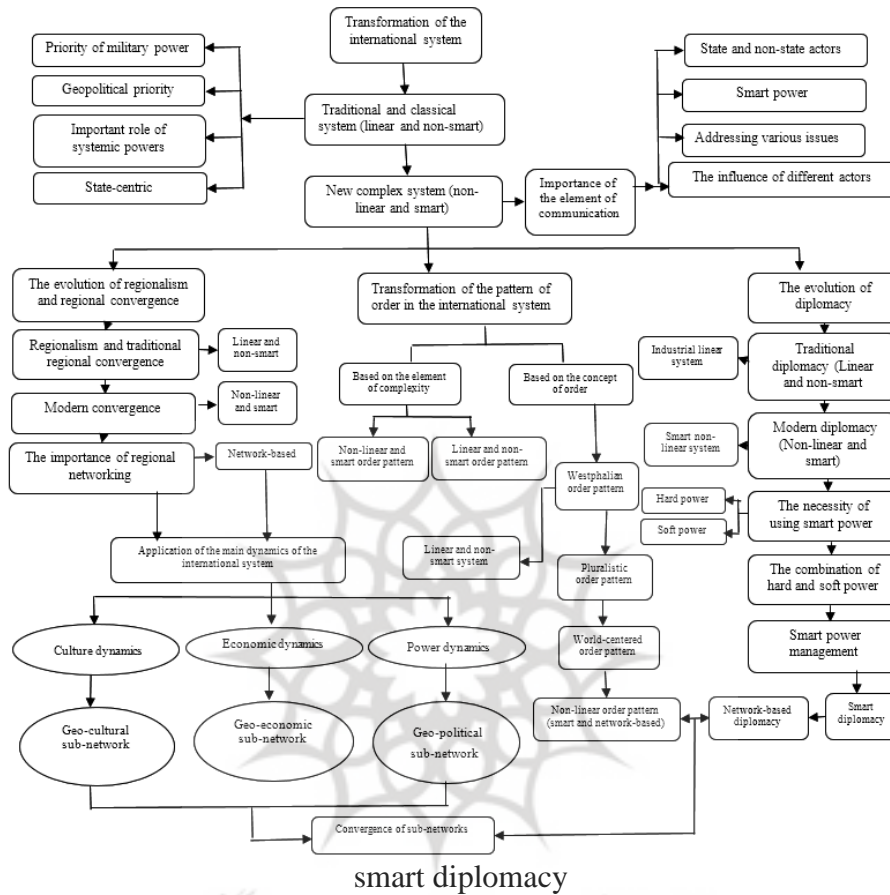
### **1-3. Smart Diplomacy**

Understanding diplomacy in Martyr Soleimani's school of thought requires the application of new theories in the realm of diplomacy and foreign policy. In fact, Martyr Soleimani's behavior and character cannot be analyzed with traditional concepts in diplomacy. In this regard, in this study the theory of smart diplomacy has been utilized to analyze diplomacy in Martyr Soleimani's school.

The concept of diplomacy is defined by power management in the system. Thus, it will be defined based on the type of structure, its constituent units and also the type of power flow within such a system. While the traditional model of diplomacy is characterized by a simple, state-oriented linear framework, changes in the structures of the international system, along with the diversification of its units and the emergence of communication flows among these units, have led to

a more significant and serious form of public diplomacy. Further, with the formation of network structures within the international system and the transformation of this system into a network of interconnected networks, along with the shift of power from hard or soft to smart communicative power, smart diplomacy has developed. This concept is defined by two fundamental pillars: the network structure and its smart power (Qasemi, Roknabadi, 35: 1396).

Smart diplomacy is understood as the synergy between soft power and hard power, as well as the utilization of all modern technical capacities. Different aspects of smart diplomacy have a significant impact on the powers of diplomats. Given the revelation of existing capacities for making more practical, precise, accurate, and accessible decisions, the diplomatic apparatus will be more successful in discovering interests and ways to achieve them, especially in terms of national security (Izadi, Takbiri, 1393: 41). In fact, under current conditions in the 21st century, hard and soft power alone are not sufficient to satisfy the demands of foreign policy. However, the combination of these two may be able to meet the needs of the foreign policy apparatus. If traditional and modern diplomacy including economic, political and security dimensions are considered as the implementation of hard power and public diplomacy as the actual state of soft power, then smart diplomacy can also be a combination of hard diplomacy (economic, political, security) and soft diplomacy. In fact, in smart diplomacy, the output of one network is the input for another, and all these networks interact and communicate with each other. In fact, smart diplomacy is based on establishing a link between different parts of a network or between various networks through the renewing process. In smart diplomacy, public, traditional and modern diplomacy simultaneously create a connection between different geographical issues (Qasemi, Lotfian, 1392: 119-120). The evolution of the international system and the position and function of smart diplomacy are drawn in the diagram:



it should be noted that smart diplomacy, focusing on the management of networks formation and evolution, facilitates a focus on the intricate algorithm of regional convergence within the framework of network convergence. In fact, the most important characteristic of smart diplomacy is its network-centric nature, or in other words, the relations within the system or between the units. In this regard, the principles of balancing, equalization, branching order and multi-level strategic representation within network systems contribute to this important issue (Qasemi, Rokabadi, 30: 1396).

## **2. The Geopolitical and Security Dynamics of the Islamic Republic of Iran**

The dissolution of the Soviet Union was the end point of the bipolar system ruling the world. An event that apparently diminished Iran's geopolitical role, but coincided with the independence of the states of Central Asia and the Caucasus, as well as the promotion of the importance of two oil-rich regions, the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea, located to the South and North of Iran (Nasiri, 1386).

Various geo-economic attractions, along with the power vacuum created by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, fostered the competition among regional and extra-regional powers in this area. The presence of extra-regional actors in this region, which often seriously oppose to the Islamic Republic of Iran's stance, has a profound influence on the national interests and regional security of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The security environment always carries threats and opportunities which national units leverage based on their status and position. Three distinct outcomes of the treats and opportunities appear: zero outcome, outcome with domination of threats and outcome with domination of opportunities. Each of these, in turn, exerts decisive effects on the state of affairs, policies, and strategies of states (Asarian nejad and Targhi, 1387).

The Islamic Republic of Iran has constantly faced serious security threats due to its surrounding security environment, including the security complexes of West Asia, the Persian Gulf, Central Asia and the security complex of the East (Karami and Alizade, 1391). Due to its unique geopolitical and geostrategic position within its surrounding environment, this country has faced numerous enduring challenges and problems. These problems are constantly being regenerated across all sectors of this security environment. Hence, Iran has yet to witness the formation of a stable and desirable security framework or consensus-driven stability in any of these sectors. Although Iran's security challenges in its surrounding environment

previously included a spectrum of events ranging from border insecurity and temporary instabilities to long-term military attacks and wars, the same problems have manifested in new forms in the present day. Terrorism and extremism, weak states and the crisis of authority, as well as the interventions of extra-regional powers, are the three main security challenges in the surrounding environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Snider, 1384:123).

The complexity and divergence within Iran's security environment have placed the country in a trial-and-error situation and this has complicated the interactions with regional states. Therefore, the formation and proliferation of tension-causing and threatening hot spots, targeting the Islamic Republic of Iran through psychological operations are carried out in the following ways:

1. Propagation of Iranophobia and the conclusion of multilateral military and security agreements with the United States or NATO;
2. Implementation of psychological warfare and the utilization of public diplomacy to attribute instability to the actions and policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran;
3. Escalation of security tensions stemming from semi-hard threats within the surrounding environment (Karami and Alizade, 1391).

Therefore, the approach of the Islamic Republic of Iran in its surrounding environment is based on a security model rooted in cooperation and participation. According to this approach, the active involvement of all states in the region is prioritized for organization of an effective security architecture. Simultaneously, the presence of extra-regional powers in the region is always rejected and such presence is considered to escalate tensions and regional conflicts. Should the approaches of the Islamic Republic be given attention and consideration by the states of the region, it will lead to the establishment of a sustainable security system in the region.



The components of this approach are as follows:

1. Reducing the military presence of extra-regional powers, which leads to the escalation of extremism and terrorism.

2- Cooperation, interaction and mutual consultation of regional states, especially powerful actors such as the Islamic Republic of Iran, Türkiye and Saudi Arabia. (Vaezi, 1387).

The characteristics of the Islamic Republic of Iran's surrounding security environment are as follows:

1. Lack of a strategic alliance in the region and non-membership in any military-security pacts

2. The presence of extra-regional military powers in various surrounding countries

3- The existence of terrorist groups in the outskirts and borders of the country

4- The existence of different states with numerous religious minorities in the region

5- Possessing the central position and being a connecting link for five geopolitical domains: the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, the subcontinent, Central Asia and the Caucasus

6- The existence of fragile states in Iran's security environment (Afghanistan, Pakistan, etc.);

7- Border and territorial conflicts and disputes in Iran's security environment

8- A large number of neighboring countries (Azmi and Debiri, 2009)

These multiple circumstances have caused the Islamic Republic of Iran to adopt a smart diplomatic approach in order to advance its national policies and goals in the regional environment. Within this framework, smart diplomacy can maximize a country's national power in foreign policy by establishing a link between various dimensions of national power, on one hand, and engaging in multi-layered actions within the regional environment, on the other. In

this regard, an examination of the diplomatic approach of Martyr Soleimani provides valuable insight into this matter.

### **3. The application of Martyr Soleimani's diplomacy in the Islamic Republic of Iran's political-security environment**

Given the explanation and clarification about the surrounding environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, this analysis will examine Martyr Soleimani's smart diplomacy for overcoming the challenges. Considering the current situation and the regional and global standing of Iran within the interwoven strategic network (geopolitical, geoeconomic and geo-cultural), it is arguable that the only type of diplomacy that is capable of assisting the Islamic Republic of Iran in achieving its foreign policy goals is smart diplomacy (Ghasemi & Roknabadi, 2017: 35). In the following, the most significant dimensions of smartness in Martyr Soleimani's diplomacy have been examined:

#### **3-1. Military-security networking**

A salient aspect of Martyr Soleimani's resistance diplomacy is its prioritization of defending the oppressed, rooted in the principles derived from Shi'a Islam. This approach, characterized by both formal and informal networks, finds examples in his support of the people of Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. According to the principles of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is derived from the Quranic and monotheistic (Tawhid) principles, Supporting Muslims, the marginalized and the oppressed around the world against oppressive powers is one of the principles of foreign policy (Article 154 of the Constitution). Several verses of the Holy Qur'an, including the verse 36 of Surah Nahl also addresses the struggle against tyranny.

The establishment and spread of terrorism in the region is an anti-Islamic awakening movement that is associated with the manipulation of religious and ideological prejudices. This factor is

considered as a pretext for extra-regional countries and powers, headed by the United States, for their military presence in the region. In this regard, the United States is following the approach of "creative chaos" in the region, for the effective pursuit of control. In contrast, the approach of the Islamic Republic of Iran is "constructive chaos" in order to maintain and strengthen stability in the region (Barnett & Reynolds, 2009: 4).

On the other hand, the presence of the Zionist regime in the region made the Islamic Republic of Iran and some countries in the region able to move in the direction of strengthening their ties and expanding regional communication, particularly through informal channels such as resistance groups. In fact, this regime's attempt to undermine the Islamic Republic of Iran and prevent the spread of the ideals of the Islamic Revolution to the countries of the region on one hand and the serious threat to the interests and existence of the Zionist regime posed by Iran's presence in the region on the other hand motivated this regime to resort to military option and counter-security measures to disturb the security and balance in the region. With the occurrence of a deadlock in the system and the formation of opposite poles, regional actors tend to create alliances and coalitions. In some cases, in order to overcome strategic deadlocks in their mutual relations, both bilateral and multilateral relations, states employ indirect strategies in the exercise of power on a regional scale in their agenda (Qassemi, 2014: 35).

One of the most pivotal achievements of General Soleimani was the formation of popular forces alongside the Syrian army, which created a unified military force within Syria. This strategy enabled popular forces to quickly reclaim territory and solidify the axis of resistance with the defeat of ISIS. This extensive networking with General Soleimani's tact was able to halt the ISIS war machine.

Despite repeated pronouncements from the United Nations Security Council, the Zionist regime, with its considerable lobbying

power in the United States and influence within the highest echelons of European countries, continues its inhumane actions in Palestine and Lebanon. Consequently, the utilization of popular mobilization in the form of resistance groups, has the potential to inflict significant damage upon the foundations of this regime. However, this does not negate the need to pursue such issues through diplomatic means and existing international regimes. It is certain that Martyr Soleimani, during his command of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, was successful to establish a coherent and extensive network for the greater unity of the ethnic groups in these countries to counter the Zionist regime and the United States. General Soleimani's attempts to strengthen Palestinian resistance forces during the 33-day, 22-day, and 8-day wars, as well as the formation and strengthening of the axis of resistance, particularly in the last 8 years since the start of crises in Syria and Iraq, were driven by the activation of dormant capacities in those countries. These efforts included networking and aligning diverse cultures with the discourse of resistance to defeat the enemy in the challenging security environment of West Asia. These attempts caused Martyr Soleimani to be among the few people who succeeded in building a state and nation in the region during three decades (Amiri, Kiani, 1398:11-19).

The power of General Soleimani's revolutionary and smart diplomatic mobilization and networking in the region was such that some experts believe that, just as Barry Buzan proposed the theory of regional security complex, Soleimani was also able to utilize "security complexes" to deal with tactical threats in West Asia, especially in the face of ISIS, regional conservative regimes, and their affiliated groups involved in proxy war process. The theory of tactical complexes is important because it mobilized the abandoned identity-driven forces that had regional action motives in the space of tactical planning (Motaghi, Amini, 2019: 91). This issue shows how much the power of

networking can disrupt the balance of power in political, military and geopolitical competitions.

### **3-2. Ummah-centrism**

Religion establishes a framework in which the individual is considered as a member. This framework is called Ummah. The Ummah is a community in the heart of which commitment, inspiration, and evolution are located. In such a community, if people have aligned beliefs and actions, the community progresses towards perfection (Nasr, 2015: 298). In such situation, the traditional Westphalian notion of boundaries is blurred.

There are four general approaches in the relationship between national interests and Islamic principles:

The first approach, known as the secularist approach: The proponents of this approach do not consider a common boundary between religious Islamic principles and foreign policy, and they do not generally consider any inherent connection between Islamic principles and national interests. The proponents of the second approach do not propose an ideal model. Instead, they believe that the avoidance of conflict between Islamic principles and national interests is sufficient. The third approach states that national interests are a distinct and genuine concept and can serve as a guide for foreign policy. However, the concept of national interests must be redefined in the framework of religious thought. The fourth approach is a maximalist approach. It does not consider the concept of national interests as a distinct and objective concept. It perceives the Islamic state as devoid of the concept of national interests. This approach argues that Islamic principles and objectives are the only decisive factors and national interests do not have a valid and genuine meaning (Khani and Mohammadi Sirat, 2016: 3).

In the Islamic system, national interests are defined in the framework of Islamic principles, and alongside these Islamic

principles, considerations of foreign policy have also been integrated. Consequently, attempts are consistently made to ensure that the country achieves a satisfactory level of national interests. The national interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran, along with the Islamic motivations, are defined based on three core factors: national unity, national security, and national authority. In the discourse of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, the concept of Umm al-Qura of the Islamic world, characterized by security, authority and unity, is hidden. According to the theoretical and practical legacy of Imam Khomeini, preserving the existence of Umm al-Qura is one of the obligatory duties (Khomeini, 1389: 146/15). On the other hand, the fundamental mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran, i.e. the globalist approach, should not be ignored; Because one of the significant dangers of Iran's Islamic Revolution is being confined within its geographical boundaries. Consequently, the national development of "Umm al-Qura" serves as a factor for the strengthening and success of its global approach (Khomeini, 1389: 20/331). within the Shia political ideology, the territorial and national state, which includes the nation and nationality, does not have legitimacy. The reason is that within the framework of Islam, the geographical boundaries that divide Muslims into distinct countries and nations lack legitimacy (Motahari, 2010: 65-86).

The Islamic revolution in Iran made some changes in the foreign policy. It turned the policy of establishing good relations with America, Israel, Europe and pro-American regimes in the Middle East into the foreign policy of confrontation with the West and Israel. These changes put emphasis on supporting revolutionary and reform movements in the Middle East region that targeted pro-Western states and secular regimes (Ramazani, 2016: 58). Imam Khomeini, while accepting the existing national borders as a necessity and striving to establish a unified global government of the righteous as an ideal, advocates for an intermediary policy. the most significant impact of

the victory of the Islamic Revolution on the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is the Ummah-oriented foreign policy, as opposed to a nationalistic foreign policy (Haji Yousefi, 2014: 80).

The Islamic Republic of Iran's serious confrontation with the aggression of ISIS in the regions of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) is a continuation of the principles inherent in the teachings of the discourse of the Islamic Revolution to defend the oppressed. In this regard, the Islamic Republic of Iran established and supported a movement called the defenders of the shrine. In addition to supporting this action, it has turned the fight against ISIS into a transnational issue and has spread it to the entire axis of resistance. In this regard, the Supreme Leader of the Revolution says: "We support the oppressed as much as we can. it is our duty to do this to the extent of our capabilities (statements of the Supreme Leader of the Revolution, 02/26/2014).

the transnational views of the Supreme Leader, and Martyr Soleimani, indicates that the country's national interests and security should not be established solely within the borders of the country. Until his martyrdom, General Soleimani dedicated his efforts to defense the essence of Islam and Shi'a Islam. Indeed, this feature enhances the international image of Martyr Soleimani within the realm of diplomacy. From Martyr Soleimani's view point, the region has been entrapped by the arrogance and colonialism of the West, and as long as the maliciousness of the West persist in the region and some states support these actions, peace and stability cannot be expected in the region. In Martyr Soleimani's school of thought, neither peace nor war has value, but within the framework of his smart diplomacy, the phenomenon of war and peace constitute the objective reality of human history. The resistance discourse of Martyr Soleimani, which was clearly manifested in the realm of diplomacy, was the product of his Ummah-centered view in the region. Indeed,

findings indicate that Martyr Soleimani's smart diplomacy was based on an Ummah-centric worldview.

The Ummah-centered approach, which is also seriously emphasized in the constitution and whose goal is to support freedom seekers and the oppressed of the world, was seriously followed by martyr Soleimani in the realm of diplomacy. In this regard, Abbas Moqtadaei believes that martyr Soleimani was able to follow and strengthen the Ummah-centered approach in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran (<https://www.Javann.ir/004Kvy>).

### **3-3. Simultaneous multilayered action (cultural, economic, military, informational)**

Geopolitics has served as a shaper of strategy for power management, and more optimistically, it has functioned as a strategy in the midst of political events and developments at various scales, aimed at the preservation of the status quo or the disruption of existing order (Sprout and Sprout, 1960: 145-161). The geopolitical value of Iran is such that any change in its governance could potentially destabilize regional and global balances. Shiite geopolitics is the extension of Shiite political geography across the Greater Middle East, centered around the heartland of Iran. This element has always been prominent in Iran's foreign policy throughout history. Some people believe that even the previous regime, despite not believing in the use of ideological tools for the advancement in foreign policy, somehow utilized Shiite tools to enhance its influence in the region (Pishegahi Fard and Rahmani, 2010: 276).

In fact, during the last three decades, the Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy has been influenced by various discourses, each shaped by specific historical conditions. Thus, geopolitics has played a prominent role in all discourses governing the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The most important geopolitical factors affecting Iran's foreign policy include: the long coastlines in the



Persian Gulf and the sea of Oman, the strategic Strait of Hormuz, cultural and ethnic diversity, cultural centrality, territorial extent and areas of potential fragmentation in the center, relative position and centrality in geopolitical theories, and Rich historical and cultural background (Siyadi and Sanai, 2016: 6).

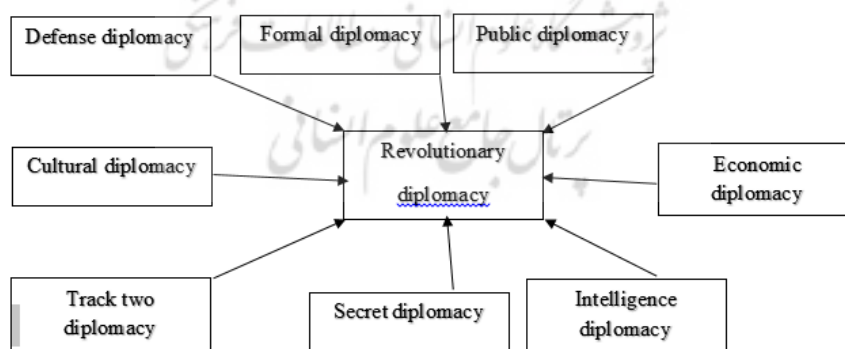
The soft power of a state is derived from three primary sources: culture, political values, and foreign policy (Nye, 2005: 110). The policies of the Islamic Republic for managing social diversity and enhancing national solidarity are based on the policy of religious unity that embraces pluralism. The Islamic Revolution of Iran was the catalyst for the rise and empowerment of Shia, and Shia in different countries of the region considered Iran as a sanctuary for them (Haji Yousfi, 1388: 162).

Culture is one of the terms that encompasses various definitions due to the variety and multiplicity of attitudes and approaches. However, the term "culture" is referred to as soft power in the lexicon and conventions of international politics (Khorasani, 2007). Nye believes that soft power is a particular focus on occupying the mental space of another country through creating attraction. A state achieves soft power when it can utilize information and knowledge to end disputes and frame them in such a way as to derive advantage from them (Nye, 2005: 10).

On the other hand, in the current situation, economic diplomacy is considered as a tool for capitalizing on opportunities and reducing damages. Economic security is one of the most significant aspects of national security, to the extent that providing national security without economic development is impossible (Sane & Yia, 2002: 22). What occurred in the region of West Asia and the axis of resistance was the triple alignment of culture, economy and geopolitics. In fact, it is unequivocal that all the countries of the region are highly dependent on the Islamic Republic in various economic and cultural dimensions, and this factor can be effective in strengthening

the strategic depth of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Indeed, both coercive and persuasive resources, including military, economic, cultural, and ideological capabilities, must be coordinated in one direction so that the outcome guarantees the continuation of the state's superiority (Nossel, 2004).

As previously mentioned, martyr Soleimani defined and pursued diplomacy in multiple layers. Martyr Soleimani's resistance or public discourse is characterized by concepts such as openness, empathy, supportiveness, positivity and egalitarianism. It is a commendable method of communication and diplomacy. His approach invited people, domestic and foreign elites, and tribes to combat global terrorism through peaceful political methods and various agreements (Amiri & Kiani, 1398: 9). In addition to its soft dimensions, Martyr Soleimani's diplomacy was not devoid of hard power dimensions. He was successful to integrate Iran's military and diplomatic powers. As discussed in the explanation of smart diplomacy and its adaptation to the security situation in the West Asian region, without adopting such an approach, it was basically impossible to advance the strategies in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen (Majidi, 1398: 8). The conceptual and communicative network of the revolutionary smart diplomacy is presented below:



The Domains of Action in Smart Revolutionary Diplomacy  
(Motaqi, Amini, 1399: 20)

It can be argued that martyr Soleimani was able to connect the identity-related goals with the mechanisms of security, economic, diplomatic and cultural action of the countries through his revolutionary smart diplomacy. through this complex multi-layered action, he was successful to overcome threats in the realm of foreign policy. In other words, confronting threats is only possible where, on one hand, foreign policy demarcation is established, and on the other hand, the necessary grounds for the use of various tools within the framework of revolutionary diplomacy are created. General Soleimani attempted to utilize revolutionary mechanisms by diversifying power tools and linking them together within the context of regional security order (Motaghi & Amini, 1399: 7-9).

The multi-layered diplomatic action of martyr Soleimani provided the ground for the connection between strategy and diplomacy. This explains why at the time of Bashar Assad's arrival in Iran, there were no conditions for the presence of conciliatory diplomacy. Such a meeting can be seen as a symbol of the role of revolutionary diplomacy and appeasement diplomacy. Naturally, a country that is engaged in the revolutionary diplomacy will maintain its historical position due to its role in the balance of power. in any state revolutionary diplomacy is characterized by compromise, cooperation, participation, and tactical action, adhering to the principle of "one step back and two steps forward" (Motaghi & Amini, 2020: 24).

#### **3-4. Basic ideology diplomacy**

The Islamic Republic, which was an end to internal despotism, had a military framework with the spirit of Islam and the form of a republic. This development turned it into a political and cultural threat to the existing international system and structure and served as a model for and Muslim states and oppressed nations of the world. Consequently, the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran relies on principles and foundations that determine the orientation of politicians and

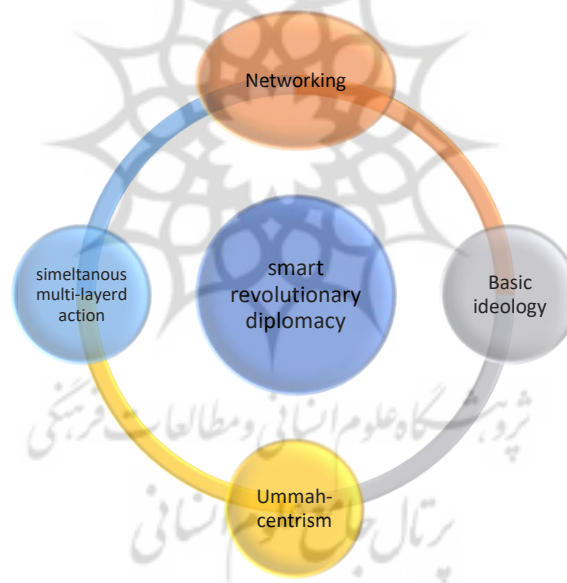
decision makers in this important domain. Foreign policy is a window through which every political unit pursues ideals, values and interests in relation to various actors in the surrounding environment and according to various situations. Each country requires design and planning to achieve its ideals, objectives, and values (Gharaiagh Zandi, 1392: 86).

Until the triumph of the Islamic Revolution, Iran's security approach in the region was defined through its alliance and convergence with the West, especially the United States. Within the framework of the Cold War and U.S. strategy in the Middle East, Iran and Saudi Arabia, were regarded as two pillars of this state's security in the region. After the revolution, the Islamic Republic of Iran moved towards adopting an independent security policy centered on Islamic and Shiite teachings and attempted to define itself outside the strategies and approaches of the two global powers. In this vein, cooperation and partnership with regional actors to shape regional security arrangements was prioritized (Vaez, 1387).

One of the most important factors that influence the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran at the operational level is the ideological identity of the regime. The identity characteristics of the Islamic Republic play a prominent role in determining the nature of the regime, including its constitutional structure, state features, as well as its interpretations and perceptions of the external world, and the reception of other behavior and its responses to it. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, where the state and foreign policy are based on Islamic teachings, Islamic ideology means a set of thoughts and ideas about political and social order and action and how to implement it in social life. This ideology shapes the identity and essence of the Islamic Republic and establishes its legitimacy (Dehghani Firouzabadi, 1384: 51).

In the ideological framework of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic state has a divine and religious origin and Islamic governance means divine authority and Islamic law, which is exercised and implemented by the infallible Imam (peace be upon

him) during his presence and by qualified jurists as his representative during his absence. Within Islamic ideology, the state is not only devoid of secular and temporal nature but has a completely religious and Islamic nature. Politics is considered a worldly affair. However, in Islamic view, like other worldly matters, if politics serves as a tool for the hereafter and as a means for the salvation of mankind and closeness to God, it is not only recommended but also essential and a manifestation of faith. Otherwise, it is considered reprehensible. Religious and Islamic policy is based on monotheism (Nakhai, 1376: 109-112). This notion is exactly the manifestation of the words of Martyr Modares who asserted: Our politics is identical to our religion, and our religion is identical to our politics."



Martyr Soleimani's smart revolutionary diplomacy

The idea of an Islamic global government and negation of the artificial nature of the existing situation are considered the goal of the endeavors and attempts of the Islamic state, which intellectually has solid foundations in Islamic teachings. The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran - which

is one of the most important sources for delineating the direction of foreign policy - has also stated the strategic idea of an Islamic global government with inspiration from the monotheistic worldview and the principles of the Prophetic law (Mohammadi and Molana, 1387: 21). General Soleimani successfully aligned the ideological depth of the system with its strategic depth. Based on this, the conceptual model of martyr Soleimani's diplomacy can be outlined as follows:

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study indicate that during his command of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Martyr Soleimani designed and implemented a novel model of smart diplomacy based on the framework and the Geopolitical and Security Dynamics of the surrounding environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. While conventional frameworks of smart diplomacy only support smart power-based actions in geopolitical, geocultural and geoeconomic subsystems, the examination of general Soleimani's operational model reveals that he was successful to pursue a "revolutionary smart diplomacy" inspired by religious beliefs and ideals that transcend traditional constraints. With his diplomacy, grounded in ideology, martyr Soleimani fostered widespread influence among regional populations and established security networks. Moreover, he replaced the traditional concept of national interests with a focus on the interests of the Islamic Ummah. Based on this, he engaged in multi-faceted diplomatic actions, navigating complex, multi-layered issues simultaneously. Martyr Soleimani's deep understanding of threats, enemy identities, and strategies to deal with them made a well-established diplomatic reasoning. Finally, it can be concluded that the enhancement of national security and the expansion of the areas of influence will be possible only through this kind of diplomacy, and the conventional forms of diplomacy are not sufficient to serve the interests of the revolutionary and Islamic system of Iran.

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