

## The Strategy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Middle Eastern Security Complex with an Emphasis on Smart Power (a Case Study of the Iraq and Syria Crisis)

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### 1-Introduction

The Middle East is one of the most important geopolitical regions in the world, having always been the focus of attention of regional and extra-regional powers. After the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the Middle East has become one of the most important regional security complexes in the international system. The Arab Spring and the subsequent tensions in West Asia have significantly changed the power dynamics and balance in the region. This research examines the Islamic Republic of Iran's strategy in the Middle East security complex (specially Iraq and Syria) with an emphasis on smart power. The main question is that How has Iran employed smart power to address these challenges and advance its interests?

### 2-Theoretical Framework

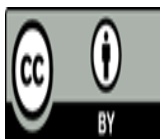
This research is grounded in two key theoretical concepts: smart power and regional security complex. These concepts will be examined separately and in conjunction with each other.

Smart power, a concept introduced by Susan Strange, involves the strategic blending of hard power (military and economic resources) and soft power (diplomacy, culture, and ideology) to achieve foreign policy objectives. This approach allows states to adapt their strategies to specific contexts, employing a mix of coercion and cooperation.

Regional security complex, as defined by Barry Buzan, refers to a group of states whose security is interconnected due to geographical proximity, historical rivalries, and shared security concerns. Factors

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such as economic interdependence, cultural ties, and military capabilities influence the dynamics within these complexes.

This research aims to analyze the Islamic Republic of Iran's strategic approach within the Middle East security complex, with a specific focus on the terrorist crises (2011-2016) in Iraq and Syria. It seeks to understand how Iran has utilized smart power tools to address regional challenges and enhance its security interests.

### **3- Research Method**

This research was conducted using Barry Buzan's regional security complex theory and a qualitative method and descriptive-analytical approach. Data was collected from credible scientific sources, including specialized international relations journals and reputable databases.

### **4- Discussion**

West Asia, a prime example of a regional security complex, has been significantly influenced by the United States and its allies. A key aspect of this influence has been the creation and support of terrorist and Takfiri groups in the region. Extensive U.S. and allied support, aimed at weakening Iran and potentially regime change, has involved military training, arms provision, and financial aid. The rise of groups like ISIS, fueled by this support, has led to widespread instability, exacerbated sectarian and ethnic tensions, and hindered the pursuit of political solutions to regional crises.

In this context, the West's relentless efforts, in collaboration with regional allies, to topple the Syrian government and destabilize Iraq reached a peak. The ensuing sectarian conflict in the Middle East sparked numerous divisions and alliances, aimed at isolating Iran and the Resistance Front. In response, the Resistance Front, led by Iran, directly engaged with the opposition forces in the region. Iran, determined to safeguard its national interests and leverage its capabilities, took decisive steps to counter the opposition's objectives in Iraq and Syria. By employing its regional smart power, Iran forged alliances with other countries to achieve its national goals. This strategy was grounded in preserving the territorial integrity of the regional states, maximizing national interests, and curbing extremism. As the

leader of the Resistance Front, Iran sought to mitigate the negative impact of opposition forces through regional and international cooperation and solidify its position as a major obstacle to Western interests.

## 5- Conclusion and suggestions

This research demonstrates that Iran's strategic approach has been instrumental in solidifying its central role in Middle Eastern affairs. . Iran's strategic approach to the Syrian and Iraqi crises involved several key elements. These include active participation in regional summits despite US opposition; convergence with Axis of Resistance in terms of military and technological capabilities; mobilization of popular support to influence the region's population; and taking the initiative in military action against terrorist groups. This strategy enabled Iran to strengthen its position in the Middle East particularly during the conflict with ISIS and other terrorist groups. By forming an alliance with Russia and strategically empowering the Resistance Front, Iran effectively countered the challenges posed by Western powers and their regional allies. The notable presence of Iran in Syria and Iraq has compelled the countries that previously dismissed Tehran's influence to reconsider their stance and engage in coordination.

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