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The Shiite Geopolitics Present and Future

Mohammed Alsulami (PH.D.)

Head of the Arabian Gulf Centre for Iranian Studies

Abd Elraouf Elghonemi

Political Researcher at the (AGCIS)

INTRODUCTION

Historical and contemporary studies have shown that expansionist and imperialist powers follow certain interim procedures and policies to extend their power and influence within their dynamic regional and international domains to achieve their expected goals.

Nevertheless, the case is different for Iran as an expansionist power. The victory of the Iranian revolution in 1979 on the basis of Shiite doctrine was a turning point in Iranian foreign policy. The new, post-revolutionary Iranian leaders aimed at politicizing Shiite ideology and shaped Shiite geopolitics as a tool to carry out the supreme Iranian strategy of rebuilding its supposed historic empire.

This study presents an analysis of the present and future of the Shiite geopolitical strategy as a tool in achieving the Iranian regime's expansionist objectives since 1979. It focuses on the emergence of the expansionist Shiite geopolitical strategy since the fall of Iraq in 2003 as a turning point in the concept of 'exporting the revolution' and how the theory of Umm Al-Qura has been transformed into a geopolitical doctrine deployed by the regime in its pursuit of regional and international hegemony, especially over the Arab region.

Specifically, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the future of Shiite geopolitics in light of the current regional events, widespread crises, and newly established alliances in the Middle East region?
2. Will new conflicting Shiite Geopoliticss emerge in the Sunni and Arab countries as a result of the expansion of Shiite geopolitics?
3. Is Iran able to accomplish the successful transformation of the ill-fated and already devastated region into an area ruled by Shiite geopolitical doctrine?
4. How have the targeted countries changed as a result of Iranian geopolitics?
5. In the case of emergence of new regional and international alliances, will this force the Iranian regime to end its expansionist ambitions or is Iran now a superpower that can proceed within its aggressive policies toward the targeted countries?

Methodology

The methodology of this study has been based on analysis of the “Iranian State.” It focuses on current events and the regime’s practices through analyzing its philosophy and component parts and evaluating the information obtained in order to identify the points of strength and weakness and explore the future of the Shiite geopolitical doctrine.

In light of its methodology, this study is divided into six parts:

1. A general theoretical approach defining geopolitics, analyzing the difference between Political Geography and Geopolitics, if there is any, or to assess whether they refer to the same feature, as well as examining other geopolitical concepts such as Lebensraum, Dynamic Domain, and geographic barriers.
2. Definition and foundations of Shiite geopolitics
3. The dynamic domain of Shiite geopolitics
4. The motivations of the Iranian regime’s strategy shift toward utilizing Shiite geopolitics after the failure to successfully export the revolution and implement the Umm Al-Qura theory.
5. Analyzing the tools and techniques of the shift toward the Shiite geopolitics in the Iranian strategy such as Soft Shiism, Hard Shiism, and merging the Shiite militias within the regimes of the targeted countries.
6. An unbiased assessment of the Shiite geopolitics.

I. Theoretical Approach of Geopolitics

Geopolitics aims to study the impact of the political behavior of a country's decision-makers in efforts to expand beyond its natural geographic boundaries, promote the nation's interests, and meet its needs for development. By the use of geopolitical strategy, countries seek to expand their influence and, in Iran's case, to take control over strategically important land areas and fulfill the leadership's desire to become major players across an extensive region within the framework of their goals and ambitions ⁽¹⁾.

According to some literature, there is no difference between Geopolitics and Political Geography, with the authors suggesting that both terms refer to the same concept, reflecting a mutual relationship between Geography and Politics. Other analysts argue that the two are completely contrasting concepts: according to this analysis, Political Geography focuses on studying geographic data - size and natural resources such as oil, gas, uranium, waterways, passages, and straits - available in any country and their impact on foreign policy. In other words, it is the way at which the geographic realities affect the position and influence of countries domestically and externally, playing a major role in the balance of power within the nations in question. For example, historically the political geography of Athens allowed it to become a maritime empire and Sparta to become a military power, while political geography has involved other nations in long-term wars and conflicts over history up to the present day, more particularly in the Middle East, a region already fractious, unstable and rife with conflicts ⁽²⁾. Meanwhile, according to this analysis of political geography and geopolitics, geopolitics focuses on the impact of politics on geography. In other words, political geography focuses on reality and facts, while geopolitics is concerned with the abstract academic analysis, primarily devoted to assessing future objectives.

In this model, political geographers and decision-makers look at their country as a static unit with internationally recognized borders; most believe in defending and protecting their borders without intervening in or offending their neighboring countries ⁽³⁾.

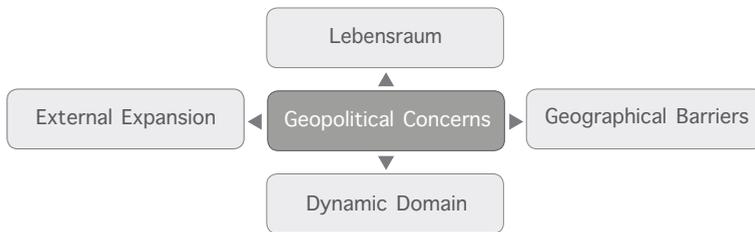
In contrast to this, geopolitical analysts believe in expanding beyond their country's natural borders, taking control over strategically important land areas, and fulfilling their desire to become major players in a widely spread area within their dynamic domain. In Iran's case and others, they are driven by sectarian, imperial, pragmatic, or nationalist aspirations to enhance their country's power and achieve its strategic

goals of building a superpower regionally and internationally or at least building geographic barriers against any future threat.

Because of the geopolitical views of decision-makers, empires and superpowers emerged and wars and conflicts erupted, leading ultimately to the breakdown of the subsequent enlarged empires and unions due to their wars for expansion and strategic depth and the major losses they suffered in lives and material.

Based on that assumption, geopolitics is concerned in the following factors: ⁽⁴⁾

1. Lebensraum
2. Dynamic Domain
3. External Expansion
4. Geographic Barriers

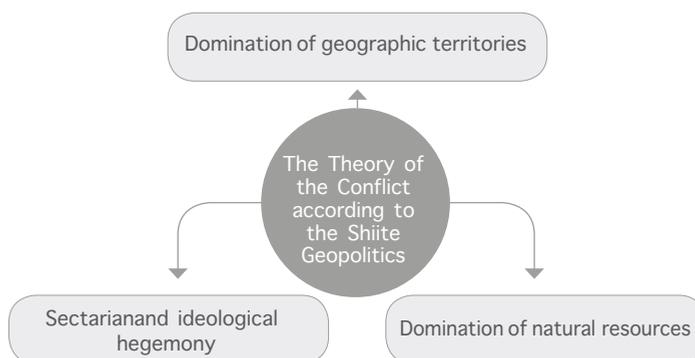


The following table explains the differences between Geopolitics and Political Geography

Political Geography	Geopolitics
Studies geographical facts and their impact on politics	Studies politics and political decisions and their impact on geography
Analyses a country’s environment objectively	Concerned with the country’s goals and requirements on the international political level
Studies the country as it is	Aims to study the country as it should be
The origin of Geopolitics	Concerned with the country’s position on the international level

Geopolitics also presents a significant explanation for the twenty-first century's conflicts of geographic expansion and domination of resources, which is the role played by countries like Russia and Iran in the Middle East region ⁽⁵⁾. In fact, there are three major sources of regional and international conflict resulting from the Shiite geopolitics:

1. Domination of geographic territories
2. Domination of natural resources
3. Sectarian and ideological hegemony



In most cases, the Shiite geopolitics might come about from ideological, sectarian, or discriminatory motivations, such as Nazism, Fascism, and Zionism, or colonial motivations such as capitalism. Consequently, wars and conflicts break out due to these expansionist ambitions; taking control over strategically important land areas; the attempts of certain countries to occupy others via imperial conquest; the reaction of countries to defend their homeland security, interests, and dynamic domain; and other activities related to Shiite geopolitics ⁽⁶⁾.

II. Definition and Foundations of Shiite Geopolitics

1. Definition of Shiite Geopolitics

The term Shiite geopolitics refers to the Iranian regime's Shiite expansionist political doctrine by which the regime seeks to expand into territory beyond Iran's natural boundaries within its dynamic domain. Through employing this doctrine, the regime aims to take control over strategically important land areas of interest to Iran and to establish new territorial boundaries to achieve its ultimate goal of expansion, which is the core of the regime's Shiite geopolitical project since the Iranian revolution in 1979 ⁽⁷⁾.

Moreover, the Shiite geopolitical doctrine is a core feature of the general strategic policies drawn up by the Iranian regime's decision makers, who are fully aware of the sectarian, historical, and pragmatic dimensions within this area. The Iranian leadership adopts the principle of Lebensraum for geographic expansion to promote Iranian interests in the targeted countries and to shape the so-called Shiite Crescent. This can be achieved through 'Soft Shiism', which entails strengthening the morale and confidence of the Shiites in countries where they represent a minority, and encouraging Shiite peoples there to politicize, militarize, and integrate into the regimes of countries like Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen where they represent a majority of the leadership to strive towards changing the political formula of these nations to benefit Shia. As a result of implementing these policies, the Iranian regime aims to expand its sphere of influence across the region, stretching from the Syrian and Lebanese coasts on the Mediterranean Sea all the way to the western bank of the Arabian Gulf and heading south to the Arabian Sea, largely under the control of militias that report to and follow the directives of the Iranian regime in these territories ⁽⁸⁾.

The concept of Lebensraum, best known for its use by Hitler in WW2, refers to the land or territory, which a government believes that the nation needs to grow, flourish, and promote its interests in another independent nation in order to have complete control over its components and destiny. Some contemporary examples of Lebensraum are the Iranian presence in Latin America and Africa, the Russian and Chinese role in Syria, and the American presence in Central and East Asia. In addition to that, the American Congress' discussion of human rights and women's rights in other countries can arguably be viewed as another form of Lebensraum ⁽⁹⁾.

By analyzing the Iranian regime's literature concerning the Shiite geopolitical doctrine, it appears that the Iranians differentiate between Shiite geopolitics and the Shiite Crescent. The regime supports the first concept and rejects the second, which it considers -



Helal Alzubaidy, Shiite Crescent, Where to?
Source: Iraq News Network

according to the same literature – to be devilry propagated by the so-called enemies of the Iranian revolution, a theory strengthened by the analysis presented by Professor of Iranian international relations Diako Hussein in an article published in 2014. In his analysis of the regime’s Shiite geopolitical doctrine, Hussein reached two conclusions: the first was that the concept of the Shiite crescent does not conform to Iranian foreign policy and - according to the Iranian regime’s beliefs - contradicts the regime’s oft-cited doctrine of Islamic Unity, with Professor Hussein suggesting that the idea of the Shiite Crescent was devised by enemies of the Iranian Revolution, especially the United States, writing, “Iran is the center of Shiites and [the U.S.] began to incite all Shiite people in the region to use them as a tool to form the Shiite Crescent that extends - according to the Iranian literature - from Amil mountain south Lebanon up to the coasts of the Arabian Gulf, especially the oil-rich territories eastern Saudi Arabia and the Iranian plateau up to the Great Mountains of Khurasan”⁽¹⁰⁾. In other words, the Shiite crescent extends- according to U.S. National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski 1977-1981 and King of Jordan Abdullah II - from Lebanon dominated by Hezbollah the Iranian Shiite proxy, via Syria ruled by an Iranian Alawi regime ally acting as an Iranian regime agent, to Iraq ruled by Haider Al-Abadi the Iranian puppet, and to the Arabian Gulf. Based on that assumption, Shiite geopolitics is another term for the Shiite crescent, which has been transformed, under Tehran’s management and direction, into a vital area of power redistribution in the region. In reality, this directly pits Shiites against Sunnis, who reject the reemergence of Shiite theocratic rule and primacy in Iraq, Lebanon, and Bahrain. In essence, the Iranian regime’s practices reflect its desire to spread antagonism towards Iran since the Shiite crescent is - according to the Iranian regime literature - far from the regime’s thoughts.

Hussein’s second conclusion is that this concept aligns with regime policies because, in his words, “Shiites are influenced by the circumstances and concepts that accompanied the Iranian revolution in 1979 to restore their identity and citizenship rights, and reshape the neighboring countries’ regimes in compliance with the Shiite concepts of justice and struggle against oppression of tyrants, which align with the international values and democratic principles.” In fact, the principle of Shiite geopolitical supremacy targets all Muslim countries, aiming nominally to unify the entire world’s Muslims, thus validating the regime’s support of Hamas, the Sunni Palestinian group that resists Israeli oppression and struggles for retrieval of the occupied lands. Hence, the Shiite Geopolitics targets the sectarian identity but not the country, which differs from the first definition presented by the so-called enemies of the Iranian revolution⁽¹¹⁾.

The Shiite geopolitical doctrine - according to Iranian regime literature - has gone through three fundamental stages:

- A.** The stage of weakness - from the nineteenth century until the Iranian revolution in 1979
- B.** The stage of revival - from the Iranian revolution in 1979 until the fall of Iraq in 2003
- C.** The stage of emergence - from 2003 until now. Shiites represent two-thirds of the Iraqi population. After the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, they took control of Iraq, assuming a far greater influence over all Shiites in the region and paving the way for Iran to expand its influence as the nexus of the world's Shiite population. Furthermore, Shiites in the GCC countries increased their demands, influenced by the situation in Iraq ⁽¹²⁾.

Based on the Iranian regime's view, the Shiite geopolitical doctrine is now a geographic reality, while the Shiite crescent is a false concept devised by the regime's rivals and regional Sunni rulers in order to preserve their rule, and as an American tool to maintain US influence and presence in the Middle East region ⁽¹³⁾. Consequently, the Shiite geopolitical doctrine has again, - according to Iranian regime literature - afforded Iran the following advantages:

- A.** Increased Iranian interference in Arab Affairs
- B.** Increased Iranian influence toward Palestinian groups
- C.** Increased Iranian power and influence against the American policies in the region
- D.** Supporting the oppressed peoples of the region. ⁽¹⁴⁾

The same literature also criticizes the concept of the Shiite crescent by reporting a speech by King Abdullah II, in which he supposedly referred to a "Shiite crescent that controls the biggest fossil fuel sources in the world [the area stretching from the Hormuz Strait up to the Caspian Sea], which aims to destroy Israel through Iranian expansion and support of extending field operations of Hamas and Hezbollah". The article suggests that this is an unrealistic statement, which aims at enhancing rapprochement between the Arab countries, the United States and Europe in order to exert pressure on the Iranian regime on one side, and to oppose the demands for freedom in the Arab world on the other ⁽¹⁵⁾.

According to the Iranian regime's literature on the subject, the concept of the Shiite Crescent has resulted in the following:

- A.** Increased sectarian dissent between Shiites and Sunnis
- B.** Deviation of the so-called The Arab Spring Uprisings at the hands of the Sunni rulers in the region
- C.** Deteriorating relations between Iran and some regional countries

- D.** Promoting the concepts of ‘Iran-phobia’ and ‘Shiite-phobia’ in the region
- E.** Increased an arms race in the Arab countries
- F.** Severed national ties between Shiites and Sunnis of Iran

The concept of the Shiite crescent - according to the Iranian regime’s literature - is a pretext used by the United States and its allies to achieve their goals in the region, market their military industry in Arab countries, reduce regional pressure on Israel, and exert pressure on the Iranian regime through sanctions, while the Iranian regime (according to itself) regards the Muslim World questions within the framework of the Islamic unity.

In an attempt to identify the differences between the Shiite geopolitical concept and the Shiite Crescent in the eyes of the regime, we arrive at the following points:

A. Shiite geopolitics is realistic for the Shiite countries in the Middle East region, while the Shiite Crescent is an ideological and intellectual concept created by the West and its regional allies

B. Shiite geopolitics would bring harmony and stability, while the Shiite crescent is a temporary issue

C. Rapprochement in Shiite geopolitics is realistic, while in the Shiite Crescent it can only be an abstract concept.⁽¹⁶⁾

Theoretically, the Shiite Geopolitics relies on the concept of Lebensraum. The attempts of the Iranian regime’s literature to obscure fact that the Shiite geopolitical doctrine will lead directly to the creation of the so-called Shiite crescent are unreasonable in light of the fact that the Iranian regime has prioritized the concepts of exporting the revolution and (supposedly) supporting the oppressed peoples since the 1979 Iranian revolution. Furthermore, Iran is attempting to obscure the reality of its project and to legitimize its illegitimate practices through concepts like its supposed objectives to build an “Islamic Nation” and to confront Zionist-American tyranny, while in reality it is using these ideas to exploit the region’s Shiite minority in order to fulfill its real expansionist ambitions.

2. Foundations of the Shiite Geopolitics

Iranian regime decision makers need certain Shiite geopolitical foundations to implement the regime’s geopolitical strategy and achieve their expansionist ambitions.

Foundations of Shiite Geopolitics				
The relative weight of the central state (Iran)	Availability of the sectarian element in the targeted countries	Absence of the American role	Emergence of new active Iranian international allies	Awareness of the Iranian decision makers

A. The relative weight of the Central State,

Iran has a significant material and non-material power. As well as having a strategic location, vast land mass, extensive coastal areas along the Arabian Gulf and Sea of Oman, and complete control of the Hormuz Strait. Iran has huge oil reserves (158,400 million barrels according to OPEC reports), ranking fourth in the world after Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, and Canada. It also has significant traditional and non-traditional military power and soft power. These factors are considered major foundations in enhancing the Iranian regime's ideological expansion in the Sunni sphere and achieving the Iranian goals, borrowing elements of both American capitalism and Russian socialism⁽¹⁷⁾.

Iran is a major player in the regional and international political sphere based on the theories formulated by the US 'Heartland Institute' think tank, which stated in an article on this subject, "He who takes control of the coasts takes control of Al-Zahir territory and eventually, controls the heart of the world - the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, and the Arabian Sea"⁽¹⁸⁾.

Iran also has full control of the Hormuz Strait, the southern passageway to the Arabian Gulf, with the regime harboring ambitions to take control of Shat-Al-Arab, the northern waterway that runs for between 200 and 204 kilometers from its origin at Alqarneh to its estuary in the Arabian Gulf at Ras Albishah south of Fao. In width, the Shat- Al- Arab varies from two kilometers at its widest point to one kilometer near Basra⁽¹⁹⁾.

B. Concerning the ideological structure of the targeted regional countries housing Shiite communities, which either follow Iranian scholars' teachings or are sympathetic to them, followers of the 'Twelver' sect make up the largest number of Shia, followed by the Ishmaelite and a small number of Zaidiyyah. The number of Shiites in the world amount is believed to total around 150-200 million representing between ten and 13 percent of the total number of all Muslims worldwide. Between 115 million and 135 million of these, around 75 percent of the total, live in Asia, with a further 35-40 million in North Africa representing the

other 25 percent ⁽²⁰⁾. Most Shiites (68-80%) are concentrated in four countries: Iran, with 60-70 million and Pakistan, India, and Iraq, which collectively host around 90 million. Most Twelver Shiites are concentrated in Iran, Iraq, Azerbaijan, and Bahrain, with significant numbers in Kuwait and Lebanon. They are also concentrated in Katif, Ihssa', and Medina Monawara in Saudi Arabia, as well as inhabiting other GCC countries, and Pakistan, India, and Central Asian countries. Followers of the Ishmaelite sect are located primarily in Najran in Saudi Arabia and in India, while Zaidiyyah is concentrated in Yemen ⁽²¹⁾.

C. The absence of an American role,

The Americans' regional role declined, allowing the rise of Iran and its allies both regionally and internationally during the tenure of US President Barak Obama from 2009-2016. During this period, America's international hegemony diminished in the Middle East and in other parts of the world, particularly in comparison to the USA's major role after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. In fact, the United States is no longer the only major player that can settle regional conflicts and enforce international law. Meanwhile, some Iranian allies have emerged seeking a larger role in the international arena generally and in the Middle East in particular. Russia, the strongest Iranian ally and the largest country on Earth, is located in Eastern Europe on the fringes of the Asian continent and has a large population and long history. It has huge amounts of gas and oil and, most importantly, inherited the legacy of the former Soviet Union and its military and nuclear capabilities. Iran's second major ally is the Chinese giant, with China now the world's second-largest economy followed by France and Turkey. Unsurprisingly, the aforementioned factors have positively influenced Iranian geopolitics ⁽²²⁾.

D. The Iranian decision makers' perception of the state's material and non-material capabilities, the sphere of Iranian influence, and the impact of regional and international conditions have paved the way for Iran to become a major player and expand its influence at the expense of the other regional and international nations.

The Arab States have tremendous amounts of oil and other natural resources, as well as possessing a rich, millennia-old history and cultural heritage; nevertheless, some Arab decision makers are unaware of the Iranian threat and expansionist ambitions, which reflects the absence of insightful leadership and lack of desire to design an efficient foreign policy, leading to a vacuum which has allowed Iranian influence to grow and intensify in the Arab World ⁽²³⁾.

III. Dynamic Domain of Shiite Geopolitics

Geopolitical theories are based on the dynamic domains determined by decision makers based on geopolitical analysis and awareness of their regional and international environment. The Shiite geopolitical strategy resulted from the Iranian leadership's Fifth Improvement Plan for the year 2003 within the framework of the twenty-year pact, which aims to establish Iran as the major regional power by the year 2025. Precisely, there are three Iranian dynamic domains:



Shiite full-moon map in the Arabian Gulf
Source: Al-Tahrir Website

1. The most important dynamic domain for Iran is its neighboring countries, communities sharing the same ideology such as Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, and the Arabian Gulf. According to the Iranian political dictionary, these countries are called the Shiite Badr (Full Moon) ⁽²⁴⁾, which is evident in the speech of Khamenei's International Affairs Advisor, Ali Akbar Velayati, who said, "The Southern costs of Iran, the Gulf, Hormuz Strait, and Ajman are our strategic borders and of great importance to shape the Shiite Badr (Full Moon)." Specifically, these countries represent the first Shiite geopolitical dynamic domain for the following reasons:

A. The ideological structure of these countries inhabiting Shiite groups that swear religious and political allegiance to the Iranian Supreme Leader.

Statistics show that Shiites represent 55-60% in Iraq, 20% in Syria, 30% in Yemen, 25-35% in Lebanon, and 55-60% in Bahrain ⁽²⁵⁾.

B. The close geographic proximity of these countries facilitates the implementation of the Iranian geopolitical project and expansionist ambitions due to its low cost and freedom of movement. It provides Iran with a variety of choices to respond swiftly in case of any unexpected developments to achieve its goals.

C. The absence of a Sunni project to counterbalance the Shiite one has paved the way for Iran to expand its influence in the Arab countries. The Sunni countries are unable or unwilling to react and take decisive action against the Iranian regime's expansionist ambitions. Their positions vary between those who confront the Iranian

project discreetly and those who actively support it in one way or another ⁽²⁶⁾.

D. There is a notable absence of any central Arab power or Arab project to counter the Iranian regime's ambitions and other sovereignty projects in the region such as those of Israel and Turkey. The Arab countries are seemingly unaware of the Iranian threat and the regime's regional ambitions (except for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which is exerting efforts and moving within the framework of the Arab and Islamic coalition). On the contrary, since the beginning of the Arab Spring Revolts in 2011, the Middle East has been in a state of turmoil and turned into a fractious, unstable region rife with conflicts, leading to the deterioration of most Arab economies and the decline of their political structure. The Arab region has become fertile soil and shelter for terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS, effectively a theater of nonstop violence and hostility. Because of this, the Arab countries have miserably failed to create their own project and enhance their position against the three other regional projects ⁽²⁷⁾.

2. The second Iranian dynamic domain includes Caucasia, Central Asia, Northwest Asia, and the Caucasian Sea. These territories are considered barriers against Russia's historical expansionist ambitions, as well as serving as ideological supply lines in favor of the Iranian project with their vast amounts of natural resources and economic revenues. However, this domain is a secondary priority for Iran due to its location within the Russian sphere of influence. Iran has subdued its ambitions in these countries due to its alliance with Russia on Middle East issues, especially the Syrian crisis. Three decades ago, Iran used the soft power technique to infiltrate these territories during the time of the Muslim Sunni uprising in the Islamic Republics of the former Soviet Union following its defeat by Afghanistan which is, according to the Iranian regime, part of Iran's history. In fact, Iran has allied itself with Russia in the confrontation with the Sunni Muslims in the former Soviet Union Republics.

3. The third dynamic domain includes countries hosting Shiite minorities such as Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and other Third World countries, which are employed as levers of pressure on the international community, more particularly on African nations, China, the United States, and the West where Shiites exploit the open and democratic environment to establish lobbies in favor of the Iranian regime and its ambitions ⁽²⁸⁾.



IV. Factors behind the Emergence of Shiite Geopolitics in Iranian Regime Strategy

There are many factors behind the shift in the Iranian strategies from expansionism and ‘exporting of the revolution’ since the victory of the Iranian revolution in 1979 to achieving Iranian superiority and rebuilding the Persian Empire toward the emergence of Shiite geopolitical strategy:

1. Failure of the principle of Exporting the Revolution: theoretically, the principal of exporting the revolution is one of the major principles that accompanied the Iranian revolution in 1979 and has remained a basis of Iranian foreign policy since then. Furthermore, there are other pragmatic and historical determiners used in spreading Shiite ideology outside the Iranian borders and encouraging the outbreak of other revolutions based on the Iranian model. The “Islamic Republic’s” regime also believes in fighting Muslims who maintain relations with the ‘Great Satan’, as it refers to the United States, and, it claims, to supporting oppressed people against the imperialist nations of the world. This hostile foreign policy was expressed in the speech of former Supreme Leader Khomeini on February 11, 1980, when he said, “We will export our revolution to the world,” encouraging other Muslim countries to rebel against their rulers on the Iranian model and unite with Iran as one country. Moreover, Article 154 of the Iranian constitution states, “Iran is committed to establishing a righteous government in the world and protecting the legitimate struggle of the oppressed people everywhere” ⁽²⁹⁾.

After the victory of the Iranian revolution in 1979, the new Iranian leaders benefited from the widespread anger among Iranians over the strong relations between Israel and the Iranian Shah. They rejected Shah Mohammad Riza Pahlavi’s foreign policy and adopted an anti-superpower strategy, severing relations with Israel and its supporters. Based on that assumption, Iran was dedicated toward

promoting its new values in the targeted countries within its dynamic domain but faced many obstacles leading to its failure such as:

A. The Iraqi-Iranian war 1980-1988. This war hindered the principle of Export of the Revolution and made Iran look for new allies, proxies, and organizations rather than countries as barriers to defend the new regime.

B. The state of distrust between Iran and most Arab regimes at that time. Most Arab countries believed that the new trend of Iran threatens the whole region and its future. They were aware of Khomeini's goals of either converting Sunni Muslims into Shiite or eliminating the whole sect on one side, and destabilize the Arabian Gulf due to the Iraqi-Iranian war on the other, which provoked the GCC countries to support Iraq in its war with Iran ⁽³⁰⁾.

C. The growing Western role in the region following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the Decisive Storm Operation. These developments raised the Iranian fears and diminished the concept of Exporting the Revolution. Consequently, the Iranian decision makers became aware of the difficulty of the implementation of this concept. They were convinced that they would bog down into the same swamp of France when it tried to export the French revolution and suffered big losses in its wars in Europe. According to the Iranian leadership, the concept of Export of the Revolution became old-fashioned and would never accomplish, which made it look for new strategies to achieve its expansionist ambitions ⁽³¹⁾.

2. Failure of the Theory of Um Al-Qura:

Because of the failure of the concept of exporting the revolution in the Iranian strategy, the theory of Um Al-Qura or Dar Al-Islam emerged in the eighties of the last century on the hands of Mohammad Javad Larijani ⁽³²⁾. This theory was published in Larijani's book titled; "Sayings in the National Strategy" and was based on:

A. Turning Qum city- one of the Iranian most important religious cities with its scholastic Hawza as a religious center for Shiites after Najaf- into a holy capital city for the Muslim world instead of Makkah.

B. Establish one universal Islamic government for the Arab and Muslim world with Iran is its center.

C. The Jurist leader has the authority over the whole Muslim nation after taking its lead ⁽³³⁾.

In fact, this theory was a total failure. Iran could not implement any of its unreasonable terms because of its ill intentions and dishonesty of its goals. It

was completely rejected by the regional countries and alliances that oppose the Iranian expansionist ambitions. In addition to that, in the attempts to implement its project, Iran did not present an accepted model for development and lacked the sufficient and adequate capabilities. Based on that failure, Iran has interfered in four Arab countries; Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Lebanon; and created division and chaos in the whole region. It escalated the sectarian conflict through supporting the Shiite Militias over the Sunni population, so as to enable these militias from taking over these countries and achieve the Iranian ambitions.

3. The American Invasion of Iraq in 2003: The American invasion of Iraq and the fall of Saddam Hussein in May 2003 has paved the way for Iran to implement its sectarian strategy in this country and resulted in the emergence of the Shiite Geopolitics. The Iranian leadership used the American involvement in the war as a direct occupation force and expanded its influence to the inside of Iraq. Consequently, the Iranian influence in Iraq has exceeded that of the invader forces. Indeed, Iran has become the major player in Iraq through two main factors: the first is using the mistakes of the American administration in the Iraqi transition of power by reinforcing the sectarian division system; the second is the Iraqi electoral process when Iran used one of its most serious tools in Iraq, which is mobilizing the Iraqi Shiite Armed Militias. Moreover, Iran benefited from the long experience of the Iranian Intelligence services in the Iraqi political environment and sectarian divisions they acquired from the Iraqi-Iranian war in the eighties of the last century. The Iranian biggest achievement in Iraq was legalizing the Iraqi Shiite Public Mobilization Forces by the Iraqi government and officially merging them with the Iraqi army ⁽³⁴⁾.

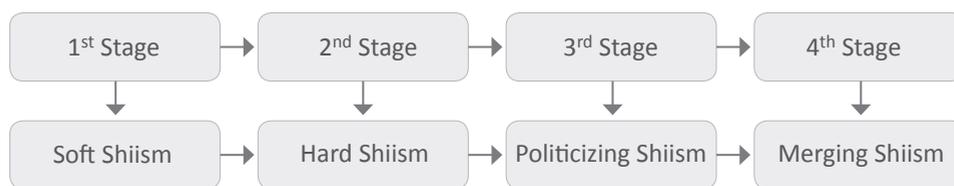
4. The Arab Spring Revolutions 2011: The Arab Spring revolutions broke out in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria in 2011 and paved the way for the Iranian expansion in the Arab World. Iran used the involvement of most Arab countries in their internal affairs and the involvement of the most international and regional influential players in the impact of these revolts on their interests. Iran provided support to these revolts in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen as an Islamic Awakening inspired by the Iranian revolution in 1979 and its concepts. However, the true face of the Iranian regime appeared following the outbreak of the Syrian revolution against the Iranian proxy Bashar Assad. It dispatched its Generals and military equipment to prevent the fall of its strategic ally ⁽³⁵⁾, which is a true evidence of the Iranian ill intentions and double standards in the region.

Syria- as will be explained in the next part of this study- occupies a strategic location for Tehran. It is the vital link between Tehran and Hezbollah the Iranian proxy in Lebanon and an outcome of the Iranian revolution, and an important leg of the Axis of Resistance against Israel and the Western ambitions in the region. In fact, Syria secures passage of the Iranian weaponry supplies to Hezbollah on one hand and stands- according to the Iranian strategy- against the Arab Regional Axis that aims to contain the Iranian growing Geopolitical power on the other. This is evident in the statements of the Iranian cleric Mahdi Taieb in 2014 about the importance of Syria in the Iranian strategy when he said, “If our enemies attack us to take either Syria or Arabistan (Khuzestan) province, the priority would be defending Syria because if we do so, we can easily take Khuzestan back, but if we lose Syria, then we will not be able to defend Tehran.”⁽³⁶⁾

v. Techniques and Tools of the Emergence of Shiite Geopolitics in Iranian Regime Strategy:

Both the export of the revolution and the Um Al-Qura strategies were complete failures, leading to the emergence of the so-called Shiite expansionist strategy, which is divided into four stages, which are respectively: Soft Shiism; Politicized Shiism; Hard Shiism, and Merging Shiism with the regimes of countries already containing Shiite communities. These tools have been used by Iranian decision-makers since the Iranian revolution in 1979, with the leadership taking into consideration the time and conditions in each targeted country; some nations are still in the early stage of promoting Shiism while others, such as Iraq, are at stage four.

Stages of Shiite Expansionism



1. Soft Shiism (Proselytizing for Shiism): This refers to the concept of ‘soft power’ developed by the American Professor of Political Science Joseph Nyein in the 1990s to describe the ability of a country to use economic or cultural influence to achieve its objectives peacefully without military force. Soft Shiism refers specifically to the promotion of the Iranian regime’s hardline ‘Twelver’ Shiite ideology in the targeted

countries through economic or cultural influence. This strategy is separate to the use of military power, being pursued by means such as:

A. Establishing centers and conducting conferences to eliminate psychological barriers and eradicate hostility from Sunnis toward Shiites

B. Establishing charitable organizations under the pretext of assisting the needy through building schools and hospitals where this can be used to promote Shiite ideology

C. Offering scholarships to attract students to Qum city and its 300 religious institutes run and financed by the Universal Islamic Center, which is controlled by the Iranian regime's intelligence service. More than 50,000 students from 70 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas are educated or, more correctly, indoctrinated in these institutes on an annual basis, before being sent back to their countries to proselytize on behalf of the regime.

D. Producing heavily sectarian movies and TV series using state-of-the-art technology targeting the beliefs of the audience in an effort to eradicate Sunni hostility toward Shiites and convince the audience to embrace Shiite ideology and concepts⁽³⁷⁾.

E. Launching dozens of satellite propaganda channels and websites such as Al-Alam channel to promote false and fabricated 'news' reports in support of the Iranian project.

F. Organizing religious tourism groups in the targeted countries to influence other people and make them accept Shiite ideology. For example, religious tourism has enabled Shiites to establish a presence in predominantly Sunni Syria. Around 1.5 million Iranians visit Syria every year, particularly the Sayeda Zainab shrine in Damascus, which has been ranked the third holiest Shiite shrine in the world after Najaf and Qum, giving the Shiite clergy a pretext for a permanent presence in Syria.

G. Using the relatively free environment in some countries such as those in Europe and the Americas to preach Shiite ideology and convert Sunni Muslims in these countries to Shiism, particularly targeting those who face financial problems. The Shiite centers in the Netherland, Belgium, Italy, and America play a major role in this field, using financial inducements to attract people to the Shiite ideology, despite the massive poverty in Iran itself⁽³⁸⁾.

2. Politicized Shiism (changing political loyalties):

This refers to the politicization of the Shiite doctrine, which takes place after Shiite

communities have been established in the targeted countries, with Shiite minorities in these nations being used to achieve Iran's ambitions. With Shiites indoctrinated to regard Iran as their spiritual homeland and the center of their religion, they are induced to betray their original countries and act as agents for Iran and its expansionist ambitions.

In other words, the Iranian regime has adopted a strategy of isolating Shiite communities in other nations from their wider societies and changing their loyalties to be primarily to Iran rather than to their original homelands. These Shiite communities have adopted hostile behavior toward their own nations and compatriots who hold other ideologies. The Iranian regime's strategy of politicizing Shiism in the targeted countries is achieved by use of the following techniques: ⁽³⁹⁾

A. Establishing loyalist political parties and movements in the targeted countries to change the domestic political landscape in favor of the Iranian project; consequently, a significant number of Shiite parties and movements have emerged in many countries of the world, especially in the Arab world, including Amal movement and Hezbollah in Lebanon; the Higher Council, Da'wa Party, Al-Sadr current and others in Iraq; the Islamic Labor and Da'wa Party, and the Shiite Reconciliation Association in Bahrain; the National Islamic Coalition and Peace and Justice Gathering in Kuwait; Al-Haq and Umma Party, the Believer Youth Movement (now Ansarollah) in Yemen; the Unity Party in Tunisia; Al-Sabireen Movement in Palestine; the Islamic Unity Party in Afghanistan; Applying Al-Ja'fari's Beliefs Movement in Pakistan; the Shiite Islamic Movement in Nigeria; and the National Iranian-American Council (NIAC) in the United States. The aforementioned parties and movements are dedicated to promoting the Iranian regime's interests in their own countries either by exerting pressure on their governments as with the Lebanese Hezbollah or by bringing down any political movements which challenge Tehran's interests like the Houthi rebels in Yemen, who, backed by Iran, have frustrated the GCC countries' initiative for a political solution in Yemen since occupying the capital Sana'a in 2014. ⁽⁴⁰⁾

B. Establishing alliances with other Shiite sects in the country, more particularly in predominantly Sunni nations, despite their differences, in order to form a homogenous Shiite core group loyal to the regime under the false pretext of protecting Shiite communities in these nations. In fact, these groups are part of the Iranian regime's effort to acquire new spheres of influence and to establish proxies to promote its interests in these countries, such as the group formed to call for the "Restoration of the Alawi branch to its Ja'fari Shiite origin" in Syria.

The work of the prominent Iraqi Twelver Shiite cleric, Hassan Shirazi, in the 1960s played a major role in building Iranian links with the Syrian Alawis and encouraging their talented sons to study in the Iranian city of Qum. In addition, Shirazi succeeded in making the Sayeda Zainab shrine in Damascus the third holiest shrine in Shiism after Najaf and Qum.

Other Shiite clerics such as Mousa Al-Sadr, Muhsin Al-Hakim, and Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah followed in Shirazi's footsteps and established the Al-Khusaibi movement among Nusairi people in Syria. These figures argued that the only theological differences between Twelvers and Nusairis are minor issues and don't touch the essence of Shiism. Consequently, a decision was taken in 1980 in the Syrian city of Qardaha, the center of the Nusayri sect and hometown of the Assads, to dispatch 500 young Alawi students to study at the holy sites in Qum to become experts in the Ja'fari sect ⁽⁴¹⁾. Hence, a long-term strategic alliance was established between the Nusayri regime in Syria and Khomeini's clerical followers in the wake of the 1979 revolution. This relationship turned into effective Iranian hegemony over Syria after the inauguration of Bashar Assad president of Syria in 2000, which recently turned into complete control following the outbreak of the so-called Arab Spring Revolutions in 2011 and Assad's brutal efforts to maintain power in which he soon became completely reliant on Iran.

3. Hard Shiism (Militarizing Shiites): This means to militarize the Shiite communities in the targeted countries and back them with enlistment, training, and arms, and transform them into military and paramilitary organizations. The objective of this strategy is to grab power in these countries or at least bog them down in internal conflicts to be easily invaded and impotent to counter the Iranian interference. In fact, Iran implements this strategy applying all political, social, diplomatic, media, and economic techniques ⁽⁴²⁾.

Militarizing Shiism is the essence of the revolutionary guards' scheme of action since the Iranian revolution in 1979 to accomplish its ultimate goal of reviving the Persian Empire. This ambition according to the Iranian strategic plans is stretching to not only the neighboring countries but also to the world.

For instance, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen are genuine examples of Militarizing Shiism to establish the so-called Shiite Crescent based upon the sectarian structures and existence of Shiite communities in these countries. These communities view Iran as the hub of the Shiite world. They report to its religious references, subject,

and undergo to their directives. Because of the Arab Spring Revolts in 2011, two of these countries [Syria and Yemen] have engulfed into extreme violence and high volatility. These blood-soaked events have simply paved the way for regional and international forces such as Iran and Russia to plant their feet in the region on the expense of stability and security of the regional countries. Although the historical differences between both countries, the interests of Russia and Iran have met in the Arab region and this is as a consequence of the sheer absence of influential Arab players against the Iranian ambitions and lessening of an American efficient role during the reign of president Obama.

The following are the most important indicators for militarizing Shiism in the aforementioned four countries:

A. Enlistment and training: Al-Quds Division, commanded by General Qassem Suleimani – the military organization assigned to undertake military duties outside Iran- provides military training for the Syrian, Iraqi, Yemeni, Lebanese, and Afghani Shiite militants either at home or in Iran in Imam Ali Military Camp northern Tehran, Amir Al-Mo'mineen Western Tehran, or in Mirsad in Shiraz, one of the most important training centers for foreign militants.

B. Supply and armament: Iran has given millions of USDs and weapons to the Iraqi armed militias such as Asa'ib Ahl Alhaq that receive about \$1.5 million monthly payment to fund 5-10 thousand militants in Iraq; in Lebanon Iran supplies Hezbollah with large amounts of arms for millions of USDs coming through Syria to be a thorn in the Lebanese side and leverage on the Lebanese political regime to subjugate to the Iranian demands; in Yemen Houthi rebels are entirely supported by Tehran and receive nonstop military supplies coming from Iran; in Syria Iran has and is still granting millions of USDs to Bashar Assad and the Shiite militias fighting on his side ⁽⁴³⁾.

C. Dispatch of Militants: Iran has deployed professional military and paramilitary militants to aid its proxies so as to take control of their countries and expand its influence in these countries, which is indisputable through the following events:

- Arab and foreign media have published series of photos for the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Commanders while participating in battles in these countries under the directives of the Jurist Leader, particularly, the photos of Qassem Suleimani that have been taken in Fallujah, Mosel, and Aleppo.

- Senior Iranian Generals such as Mohammad Ali Jafari, the Revolutionary Guards Commander acknowledged, in September 2012, the presence and availability of senior Iranian officers participating in the war in Syria to provide support to the Assad regime. In January 2016 he also acknowledged the presence of about 200 thousand Iranian Revolutionary Guards soldiers in five countries; Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Pakistan, and Afghanistan ⁽⁴⁴⁾. In May 2014 another Revolutionary Guards Commander, Ahmad Hussein Hamdani - Killed in Aleppo in October 2015- affirming that his country is in direct combat in war Syria and will dispatch more Basij militants to this country ⁽⁴⁵⁾. In 2015, the defense committee in the Iraqi parliament announced having compelling and official documents that prove the availability of 30 thousand Iranian militants in Iraq.

- About 700 Iranian military commanders have been killed in Iraq and Syria since 2011 such as General Hamid Taqavi who was killed in Iraq in December 2014 ⁽⁴⁶⁾. Chief of the Iranian Higher Council for National Security Ali Shamkhani offered his condolences to Taqavi saying, “Had the blood of people like Taqavi not spilled in Samarra, our blood would have been shed in Iran” ⁽⁴⁷⁾. In February 2016, Khamenei praised and hailed those Taqavi and his companions saying, “They have sacrificed their lives there in order to prevent the enemies from arriving Iran, without them, we would have obliged to encounter those enemies in Kermanshah and Hamadan” ⁽⁴⁸⁾.

Establishing Armed Militias: Iran has consolidated tens of thousands of foreign militants with the Shiite militias to fight in Iraq and Syria. In fact, there are more than 50 Iranian-backed militias fighting in these two countries:

In Iraq: The Popular Mobilization Forces, Nujaba Movement, Asa’ib Ahlilhaq, Abu Al-Fadlilabbas Brigade, Imam Mahdi Army, Shabab Al-Risali Battalions, Ashura Companies, Al-Sama’ Companies, Al-Khurasani Companies, Saied Al-Shuhada Battalions, Zo-Alfaqr Brigade, Alsadiqeen Brigade, Imam Ali Brigade, Imam Hussein Brigade, Al-Wa’d Al-Sadiq division, and others.

In Syria: In August 2016 Iran established the Shiite Free Army in Syria under the leadership of Al-Quds Division Commander, Qasem Suleimani that consists of Fatimioun Brigade of the Afghani Shiites, Zainabyioun Brigade of the Pakistani Shiites, Haidarioon Brigade of the Iraqi Shiites, and Hezbollah Brigade that consists of two branches, the first includes the Lebanese Shiites and the other the Syrian Shiites who descend from the Shiites of Damascus. Furthermore, Iran has established the National Defense Militia of more than 80 thousand elements loyal to Bashar Assad,

notably from the Alawi Shiite sect as a duplicate copy of the popular Mobilization Forces “Basij”; the Public Defense Companies; the Syrian Asa’ib Ahlilhaq; and the Syrian Abolfadl al-Abbas Brigades ⁽⁴⁹⁾.

4. Merging militias in the regional regimes: This stage aims to produce a legal and official status to these militias and cover up their movements and activities to implement the Iranian strategies under the orders of the Iranian Supreme Leader; as a result, Iran has exercised massive pressure on the Iraqi government to consolidate the Popular Mobilization Forces into the Iraqi army. This was evident through Tehran’s warning letters to the Iraqi Prime Minister Haidar Al-Abadi to settle down the Popular Mobilization Forces status before the end of Mosul battle, leading to the official annexation of these militias to the Iraqi army after the approval of the Iraqi parliament on 11/26/2016. The law took 170 votes majority out of 208 representatives attended the session and stipulated: “The Popular Mobilization Forces is an independent military unit and is considered part of the Iraqi Armed Forces. It has its own leadership, staff commission, and Fighter Brigades and ⁽⁵⁰⁾.

The annexation of the PMF has resulted in adverse consequences on the Iraqi internal and external affairs and has given the Iraqi army a sectarian character. This was apparent in the statement of one of the PMF leaders, commander of Badr Militias Hadi Al-Amiri in August 2016 when he acknowledged that the PMF had become stronger than the Iraqi army had. In essence, the PMF law has legalized and empowered the Iranian influence in Iraq, which will become a significant factor in escalating tension in the region. This official status under the cover of the Iraqi army will considerably facilitate and enable these militias from moving to Syria under the guise of hunting the ISIS, but at the same time, provoke the other regional countries to consider them as cross-border forces fighting on behalf of Iran. In fact, the most critical point of the PMF law is that the Iraqi military institution, driven by sectarian considerations, has become part of the Shiite-Sunni disagreement far away from its essential duty of defending all Iraqi people and their homeland security ⁽⁵¹⁾.

VI. Unbiased Evaluation of the Shiite Geopolitics

List of strengths and weaknesses of the Shiite Geopolitics:

1. Points of strength:

A. The relative weight of the central state (Iran), total power, Geopolitics and Geostrategic capabilities, and its expansionist experience.

B. The ideological structure of the countries located within its primary dynamic domain including Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon, and the GCC countries.

C. Unawareness of the Shiites threat and state of weakness and disagreement in the targeted countries.

D. The absence of an Arab/Sunni project against the so-called Farsi/Shiite project and the absence of the central Arab or Sunni countries to bear the responsibility of their future ambitions- except the role of Saudi Arabia, leader of the Arab-Islamic coalition. This fragmented state of the Arab World resulted from their differences on interests and their views toward Iran. Some Arab countries see Iran as a source of threat motivated by its Shiite ideology, others see it as a regional power of balance, and others see it as a strategic ally.

E. Deterioration of the American role in the region, especially during the reign of President Obama and emergence of new efficient international players of Iran's allies such as Russia and China.

F. The awareness of the Iranian decision makers of the materialist and immaterialist national capabilities and the fractious regional environment has paved the way for Iran to expand its influence in the region.

2. Points of weakness: Although the Shiite Geopolitics has succeeded in certain points, it has many deficiencies and points of weaknesses. Some of these weaknesses resulted from the theory itself and others from Iran as the central state that sponsors and supports the Shiite project. Following are weaknesses of the Shiite Geopolitics:

A. The noticeable sectarian nature of the Shiite Geopolitics will eventually lead to the emergence of an opponent Sunni Geopolitics, taking into consideration that the Farsi Plateau is surrounded by Non-Farsi peoples inside the so-called Iran's Geography, and the outsider Non-Farsi nations of Central Asian, Pakistan, Turkey, and Afghanistan.

B. Using of the Shiite communities in the targeted countries needs big and constant support. Any crisis faces the central state (Iran) as a result of its intervention in the neighboring countries; it will end up in the same destiny of the former Soviet Union.

C. The Shiite Geopolitics does not represent any cultural needs for the Iranian people. On the contrary, military spending and support of the subversive elements in the neighboring countries hurts the Iranian economy, drains its resources, and negatively impact people's living conditions. Furthermore, the breakout of the Iranian

revolution itself came as a rejection of the Shah's Megalomania of expansion that led to the prevalence of corruption and rise of poverty and unemployment through the drain of the country's resources.

D. The central state (Iran) is facing several internal and external problems that result from:

d.1. The state of rivalry and ethnic conflicts between the Persian and the other ethnicities in the Iranian social structure such as The Arab, Azeri, Kurdish, Baluch, Lures, Turkmen, Bakhtaran Tribes, Qashqai's, and many others. In fact, Iran consists of diverse ethnic groups, sects, and religions. The Persians represents 48% of the Iranian population and inhabits central Iran; the Turk Azeri dwell in the North West and is considered the biggest ethnic minority in Iran with 24% of the Iranian population; 10% Kurds and 8% Lures in Western Iran; 4% Arabs in the West and South West; 2% Baluch in the South East, 2% Turkmen in the Northeast and 2% others, taking into consideration the differences in rates from one report to another due to the lack of precise statistics in this regard.

In reference to the aforementioned statistics, it is noticeable that most Iranian minorities are concentrated on the borders on all sides of the Iran, which represents a big challenge for the Iranian leadership due to separatist trends of some of these minorities. The biggest problem for Iran is the lack of any ethnic group related to the Persian ethnicity in the middle of the country; the Arabs are in the South and Southwest of Iran and extend to the GCC countries; The Baluch are in the South and the Southeast and extend to Pakistan and Afghanistan; the Turkmen dwell in the North and Northeast on the borders with Turkmenistan; the Azeri inhabit the North and Northwest and extend to Azerbaijan; the Kurds are in the West and have an ethnic extension in Turkey and Kurdistan.

Each of these ethnic groups has a dream of establishing its own independent country incited by their national armed wings, and religious and ethnic oppression practiced by the Iranian regime, especially the Sunni people, leading to a state of hostility against Iran by all other ethnic groups.

d.2. Iran relies on a mono-product economy (gas and oil) in its national income although the diversity of its economic activities. This form of economy resulted from the tough desert environment of Iran and shortage of drinking and irrigation water due to the salty nature of its lakes and lack of fertile lands, which have serious negative implications on Iran's security and stability and provoke People

to go on protests due to their harsh living conditions in these areas. In fact, the Iranian expansionist ambitions have added insult to injury and made things worse for the Iranian people.

Conclusion:

1. In its broad definition, Geopolitics refers to the expansion of countries to get to the state of lebensraum within their dynamic domains. They aim to expand their spheres of influence and achieve their strategic goals through imperializing other nations. However, The Shiite Geopolitics refers to the Iranian expansionist ambitions in the regional countries. The concepts of export of the revolution and assist of the oppressed people against tyranny and imperialism - as pretended- will eventually lead to the emergence of the so-called Shiite Crescent in a clear violation of the Iranian literature that rejects this concept.

2. Iran does not have sufficient and adequate tools and capabilities to implement the Shiite Geopolitics including internal economic capabilities, military capabilities, intellectual capabilities, and political capabilities to solve its internal crises and induce its regional and international strategies required for the success of the Geopolitical project. In fact, Iran suffers an internal economic crisis although lifting of the economic sanctions after the nuclear deal in July 2015, which is evident in the following consequences:

- A.** Deterioration of the Iranian currency exchange rate against foreign currencies
- B.** Decline of the standards of living beyond limits and prevalence of people sleeping in cemeteries phenomenon
- C.** Increase of unemployment rates
- D.** The reluctance of some foreign companies to make business with Iran.
- E.** Insufficient military power to enforce security and stability and make balance in the deployment of troops at home, restrain of the regime's opponent minorities, and deployment of troops in Syria and Iraq.

In fact, Iran has neither the ability to impose its strategies and maintain the balance of power to promote the Shiite Geopolitics nor does it have a model accepted by people, regimes, and the world, leading to the failure of the Shiite Geopolitics.

3. The Shiite Geopolitics usually provokes people in the targeted countries to defend their homeland countries. This might result in the failure of the expansionist

nations to achieve their strategic goals and ambitions. In fact, the Iranian Shiite Geopolitics has provoked the Arab/Gulf countries' feelings to stand against the Iranian expansionist ambitions. This position of the Arab countries has been commenced by Kingdom of Saudi Arabia through the establishment of the Arab coalition to confront the Iranian expansionist project in Yemen both politically and militarily.

4. The real goals of countries with Geopolitical views and expansionist ambitions are usually devastating to the targeted countries through targeting their unity, wealth, pioneers and thinkers; and expulsion of people through unorganized mass exodus. The Geopolitical view of the Iranian leaders has been disastrous in the targeted countries within its primary dynamic domain- Syria, Iraq, and Yemen- and their future. They have failed as countries and turned into battlegrounds for fighting between brothers in the same country through the Iranian use of a sectarian factor that is hijacking the entire region. In fact, the Iranian practices have toppled these countries down and severed their humanitarian crises. Instead of freedom and development, Iran has turned them into blood-soaked fractious territories and safe shelters for terrorists and extremist groups.

Finally, in light of the Iranian Shiite Geopolitics and expansionist ambitions- at least in the Shiite Crescent countries; nonstop crises and complicated questions in several regional countries after the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003; the eruption of the Arab Spring revolts in 2011; emergence of new Iranian regional and international alliances with Turkey and Russia, the Shiite Geopolitics is expected to expand and prevail.

On the other hand, the Shiite Geopolitics would decline under the following conditions:

A. The appearance of new Arab and Islamic coalitions under the leadership of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

B. The possibility of the new US president, Donald Trump to adopt a new foreign policy that differs from his precedent's toward the Iranian expansion in the region, especially after his statements concerning this issue

C. The Iranian severe economic conditions and military capabilities to expand and supply its forces and proxies fighting in the targeted countries

D. The possibility of the Iranian people to protest and reject their government's practices that negatively impact their standards of living

Indeed, Iran is a multi-ethnic country with diverse religions and ideologies. In addition to the Persian ethnicity, Iran comprises other ethnic groups from Arab, Turkish, Azeri, Baluch, and Kurdish origins that by no means can tolerate the Persian racist project, which is clear evidence that the Iranian regime is digging in the wrong place and does not meet its people's ambitions of freedom, equality, and prosperous life.

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