

Artículo de investigación

Soft power and its effect on geopolitical developments of the Islamic Republic of Iran

El poder blando y su efecto en los desarrollos geopolíticos de la República Islámica de Irán

Soft power e seus efeitos nos desenvolvimentos geopolíticos da República Islâmica do Irã

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Abstract

One of the factors shaping and continuing the relationship between nations on the international stage is power. Power can be defined as the use of various facilities, ways and means to influence the mind and behavior of others in order to achieve the goals. The nations and, consequently, the states seek their own interests and desires in the international area, and the achievement of these interests is a function of the level and degree of national power, especially in comparison with other countries. If a country has a high national power, it can meet its demands unhindered. Governments seek to pursue and achieve their interests through cooperation, competition and conflict. But it is clear that national interests are not achieved on their own and in a vacuum, in order to achieve it, it is necessary for governments to enjoy national power at an acceptable level. The more a country can increase its power, the more it can ensure its survival and security and, on the other hand, the more it can pursue and fulfil its goals at the regional and international levels.

There are several ways to influence the behavior of others: they can be forced into an action by threats or by the use of force; the use of economic resources may force others to follow; or they can be attracted and made to accompany by taking advantage of the software components of power (Harsij and Tuyserkani, 2009: 172). The formation of relations between countries and the social order at the regional and international levels and the continuity of relations, as well as the role of each country in the international events are under the influence of power. Therefore, some consider the power as the most important component of the relationships and

Resumen

Uno de los factores que configura y continúa la relación entre las naciones en el escenario internacional es poder. El poder se puede definir como el uso de varias instalaciones, formas y medios para influir en la mente y el comportamiento de los demás a fin de lograr los objetivos. Las naciones y, en consecuencia, los estados buscan sus propios intereses y deseos en el área internacional, y el logro de estos intereses es una función del nivel y el grado de poder nacional, especialmente en comparación con otros países. Si un país tiene un alto poder nacional, puede satisfacer sus demandas sin obstáculos. Los gobiernos buscan perseguir y alcanzar sus intereses a través de la cooperación, la competencia y el conflicto. Pero está claro que los intereses nacionales no se alcanzan por sí mismos y, en el vacío, para lograrlo, es necesario que los gobiernos disfruten del poder nacional a un nivel aceptable. Cuanto más pueda un país aumentar su poder, más podrá garantizar su supervivencia y seguridad y, por otro lado, podrá perseguir y cumplir sus objetivos a nivel regional e internacional.

Hay varias formas de influir en el comportamiento de los demás: pueden verse forzados a una acción mediante amenazas o mediante el uso de la fuerza; el uso de recursos económicos puede obligar a otros a seguir; o pueden ser atraídos y hechos para que los acompañen aprovechando los componentes de software del poder (Harsij y Tuyserkani, 2009: 172). La formación de relaciones entre los países y el orden social a nivel regional e internacional y la continuidad de las relaciones, así como el papel de cada país en los eventos internacionales, están bajo la influencia del poder. Por lo tanto, algunos consideran el poder como el componente más

status of countries in the field of international relations (Pishgahifard et al., 2011: 192).

During the last decades, especially with the start of the 21st century, and the rule of globalization in international relations, the sources of exercising power have also been altered, and the governing equations of societies have been undergoing profound transformations, so that the intangible forms of power have become important. So that the means of power and achievement of interests and goals in international politics have changed, and the origins and methods of exercising power have changed from hard power to soft power. In other words, however the military and economic power that may have been formed on the basis of a lure or threat, often forces others to change positions, is called hard power. On the other hand, societies and governments peruse their powerfulness, not depending on the merely material resources of power, but also on the ability to change the behavior of other states, and this aspect of power is called soft power which is the product and outcome of an international credit gain and indirect effect coupled with satisfaction on others.

Currently, most of countries have made significant investments, even at regional levels, to improve their soft power resources. Undoubtedly, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been not immune from the effects of this spin to the manifestations of soft power globally. With its geopolitical position, ideology, Islamic religious culture, the Islamic Republic of Iran has considerable resources for exercising the soft power, which are well achievable in the case of accurate knowledge and appropriate investment. In this paper, we first attempt to identify the sources of soft power from different perspectives, and will further examine the effects of soft power on the sources of power for the Islamic Republic of Iran and the developments of these resources.

Keywords: Soft power, geopolitical, nations, international power.

Resumo

Um dos fatores que moldam e dão continuidade à relação entre as nações no palco internacional é poder. O poder pode ser definido como o uso de várias facilidades, maneiras e meios para influenciar a mente e o comportamento dos outros, a fim de alcançar os objetivos. As nações e, conseqüentemente, os estados

importante de las relaciones y el estatus de los países en el campo de las relaciones internacionales (Pishgahifard et al., 2011: 192).

Durante las últimas décadas, especialmente con el comienzo del siglo XXI, y la regla de la globalización en las relaciones internacionales, las fuentes de ejercicio del poder también han sido alteradas, y las ecuaciones gobernantes de las sociedades han experimentado profundas transformaciones, de modo que las formas intangibles del poder se han vuelto importantes. De modo que los medios de poder y el logro de los intereses y metas en la política internacional han cambiado, y los orígenes y los métodos del ejercicio del poder han cambiado del poder duro al poder blando. En otras palabras, sin embargo, el poder militar y económico que puede haberse formado sobre la base de un atractivo o amenaza, a menudo obliga a otros a cambiar de posición, se llama poder duro. Por otro lado, las sociedades y los gobiernos analizan detenidamente su poder, no dependiendo de los recursos meramente materiales del poder, sino también de la capacidad de cambiar el comportamiento de otros estados, y este aspecto del poder se llama poder blando, que es el producto y resultado de una ganancia de crédito internacional y efecto indirecto junto con la satisfacción de los demás.

Actualmente, la mayoría de los países han realizado importantes inversiones, incluso a nivel regional, para mejorar sus recursos de poder blando. Sin lugar a dudas, la República Islámica de Irán no ha sido inmune a los efectos de este giro en las manifestaciones del poder blando a nivel mundial. Con su posición geopolítica, ideología, cultura religiosa islámica, la República Islámica de Irán tiene considerables recursos para ejercer el poder blando, que son muy alcanzables en el caso del conocimiento preciso y la inversión adecuada. En este documento, primero intentamos identificar las fuentes de poder blando desde diferentes perspectivas, y examinaremos más a fondo los efectos del poder blando en las fuentes de poder para la República Islámica de Irán y el desarrollo de estos recursos.

Palabras clave: poder blando, geopolíticas, naciones, poder internacional.

buscam seus próprios interesses e desejos na área internacional, e a conquista desses interesses é função do nível e do grau de poder nacional, especialmente em comparação com outros países. Se um país tem um alto poder nacional, ele pode atender suas demandas sem obstáculos. Os governos buscam perseguir e alcançar seus interesses através da cooperação, competição e conflito. Mas é claro que os interesses nacionais não são alcançados sozinhos e no vácuo; para alcançá-lo, é necessário que os governos desfrutem do poder nacional em um nível aceitável. Quanto mais um país pode aumentar seu poder, mais ele pode garantir sua sobrevivência e segurança e, por outro lado, mais ele pode perseguir e cumprir suas metas nos níveis regional e internacional.

Existem várias maneiras de influenciar o comportamento dos outros: elas podem ser forçadas a uma ação por ameaças ou pelo uso da força; o uso de recursos econômicos pode forçar outros a seguir; ou podem ser atraídos e acompanhados aproveitando os componentes de software do poder (Harsij e Tuyserkani, 2009: 172). A formação das relações entre os países e a ordem social nos níveis regional e internacional e a continuidade das relações, bem como o papel de cada país nos eventos internacionais estão sob a influência do poder. Portanto, alguns consideram o poder como o componente mais importante das relações e status dos países no campo das relações internacionais (Pishgahifard et al., 2011: 192).

Durante as últimas décadas, especialmente com o início do século XXI e a regra da globalização nas relações internacionais, as fontes de exercício do poder também foram alteradas, e as equações governantes das sociedades vêm passando por profundas transformações, de modo que as formas intangíveis de poder tornaram-se importantes. De modo que os meios de poder e realização de interesses e objetivos na política internacional mudaram, e as origens e métodos de exercer o poder mudaram do poder duro para o poder brando. Em outras palavras, no entanto, o poder militar e econômico que pode ter sido formado com base em uma atração ou ameaça, muitas vezes força outros a mudar de posição, é chamado de poder duro. Por outro lado, as sociedades e os governos examinam seu poder, não dependendo dos recursos meramente materiais do poder, mas também da capacidade de mudar o comportamento de outros estados, e esse aspecto do poder é chamado poder brando, que é o produto e o resultado de um ganho de crédito internacional e efeito indireto, juntamente com a satisfação de outros. Atualmente, a maioria dos países fez investimentos significativos, mesmo em níveis regionais, para melhorar seus recursos de energia branda. Sem dúvida, a República Islâmica do Irã não está imune aos efeitos desse giro para as manifestações do soft power globalmente. Com sua posição geopolítica, ideologia, cultura religiosa islâmica, a República Islâmica do Irã possui recursos consideráveis para exercer o poder brando, que são bem alcançáveis no caso de conhecimento preciso e investimento apropriado. Neste artigo, primeiro tentamos identificar as fontes de soft power sob diferentes perspectivas e examinaremos mais detalhadamente os efeitos do soft power nas fontes de energia da República Islâmica do Irã e os desenvolvimentos desses recursos.

Palavras-chave: Soft power, geopolítica, nações, poder internacional.

Introduction

Theoretical framework

Geopolitics

Geopolitics is the study of the geographical distribution of power among countries of the world, as well as the way of reading and writing international politics by authorities and thinkers and their influence on political decision-making at the national, regional and global levels (Darreh Mirheidari, 1998: 22). Paying attention to various definitions of geopolitics shows that in most definitions the geographic factors and their effects on the other two components, namely,

power and politics, have been emphasized. In this regard, one of the most important factors influencing the adoption of national and international policies is the human and natural factors, and in general the position of a country in the global system, which is interpreted as geopolitics. Hence, geopolitics can be defined as the method of analysis between geographic elements and political processes (Qalibaf et al., 2014: 57).

In principle, geopolitics is the study of power relations based on the opportunities offered by the geographical environment or opportunities

that can be derived from the geographical environment (Yazdani et al., 2007: 126). Some consider the concept of geopolitics in terms of "competition." By defining geopolitics from the perspective of power, the motivation and opportunity for states, which seek to gain and increase national power as well as capture geographical opportunities, instruments and levers, have been provided to compete, by regulating an appropriate strategy relying on geopolitical interests, to seize opportunities and possibilities in the geographical place and space and try to expand their influence in geographical spaces and add them to the realm of their will, and, on the other hand, expel competitors from disputed spaces. From this point of view, geopolitics is to study the competitive models, competitive opportunities and tools, incentives of competition, functions of place and space in shaping the processes of competition and its effect on the rise and fall of power (Hafeznia and Shams Dolatabadi, 2009: 180).

However, it seems that the most comprehensive definition of geopolitics has been presented by Hafeznia. According to him, the scientific definition of geopolitics can be explained in the form of a compound concept in which the three main elements of geography, power and politics have an inherent nature (Hafeznia, 2000: 84). Accordingly, the combination of the three criteria of geography, power and politics determines the behavior patterns of human groups to each other; hence the issue of geopolitics is formed by the interrelationship among the above variables and the behavior of human groups based on the combination of geography, power and politics. Therefore, geopolitics is the science of studying the interrelationships of geography, power, politics and the actions caused by combination of them (Hafeznia, 2006: 37).

Power

Power is one of the main concepts of politics, which means the ability to influence for change in the behavior of others in order to achieve the desired result. In other words, power is intended to make others obey in any manner and way. Countries have to implement policies and programs to enhance their national capability and power to maintain their existence, security and prosperity, and to deal with foreign threats. In this regard, Walter Jones considers power as the ability of an actor in international area to use tangible and intangible resources and

opportunities to influence the results of international events for personal desires (Jones, 1994: 3). Power can guarantee security, change the behavior of others, repel threats and so on. At the national level, power also has the same effects in a wider and superior form. Consequently, the more a country can increase its power, the more it can guarantee its survival and security and, on the other hand, the more it can fulfil its goals. The component of power at each level and in each dimension, in terms of production, application and pattern of distribution and ranking, is influenced by other elements, geography and politics, and influence them mutually (Hafeznia, 2006: 38). In today's world, power is taken into account considering the tools and possibilities as well as the way in which they are applied in two concepts of hard power and soft power.

Soft power

If power is considered to be the ability of influencing others in order to obtain desired results, we can say that soft power is the ability to obtain the desired outcomes through "attraction" rather than coercion or lure (Saeedi and Moghaddamfar, 2014: 109). Soft power is the ability to shape, influence and determine the beliefs and desires of others in such a way to ensure their obedience. At Joseph Nye's eyes, soft power is distinguished from hard power, in particular the economic and military powers that are based on "incentives" (carrots) and "threats" (sticks), respectively. Therefore, Nye proposes a triple division of power: military, economic, and soft. Both military and economic powers have a hard nature and soft power is different from them from this view that it is based on the ability to shape the preferences of others. The ability that produces attraction and leads to obeying (Nye, 2007: 163; Lukes, 2007: 90).

Soft power is rooted in various intellectual schools of political sciences and international relations, and some believe that it comes from liberalist approaches. In liberal attitudes, the main actors are not threatening the state and are not being threatened by the state, but non-state actors are the core of policymaking, and society is more important than the state. According to Joseph Nye, soft power is based on the ability to shape others' preferences, which are more related to intangible issues such as personal and cultural attractions, political values and institutions, and attractive policies that are considered legitimate. As a result, soft power is

beyond the cultural power and is not dependent on the government as much as hard power; it is not only confined to the state and the general culture of the society has a great influence on it (Mousavi, 2014: 163).

Hard power either appears in the use of military means, force exercise, deterrence, threat and intimidation, war and force-oriented policy, or shows itself in the exercise of economic power, putting under financial pressure, economic sanctions, bribery, financial assistance, and economic incentives and threats. The fundamental of the realism attitude is the most important intellectual source of hard power. The most important forms and sources of using hard power are military intervention, compulsive diplomacy, in which the government's overthrow is considered directly and indirectly, and economic sanctions (Pishgahifard, 2011: 196). But soft power has another nature, revealing itself through attractiveness, charm, cultural planning, promotion of a range of values to mediator of media, as well as public and multilateral diplomacy. Therefore, soft power means the ability of governments to achieve the desired goal through persuasion and attraction, not through force or payment (Harsij et al., 2009: 232). Soft power sources tend to cooperate and converge with a spectrum of behavior based on the attractiveness of values, cultures and policy (domestic and international), while hard power sources tend to converge with a coercive behavior based on coercion, encouragement, or economic allurements (Baki, 2010: 76).

Because soft power, through the use of tools such as culture, ideology, ideal or moral values, indirectly affects the interests or behavior of other countries and societies, so the success in applying the soft aspects of power by governments is different considering the specific cultural, religious, political and social characteristics of each country or region (Tuyserkani, 2009: 23).

Soft power generating sources

Joseph Nye names three factors as soft power generating sources: culture, values, and foreign policy. Of course, Nye does not make any of these three components absolute, but gives them the conditions. In his opinion, they are considered to be among soft power sources, if culture is attractive to others; if values are taken into account at home and abroad and of course

are not undermined by inconsistent actions and procedures, and if foreign policy seems to be legitimate, internalizing and have moral authority (Nye, 2010: 4). Below, these three sources will be examined in greater detail.

First. Culture

Culture is a collection of values and practices that make society meaningful. When a country's culture includes values of the universe and policies promote those values and interests that others have share in it, then, due to creating attraction, the probability of achieving desirable results are provided for that country. Limited values and partial cultures are less able to produce soft power. Therefore, universal culture is an important source of soft power; but, as Joseph Nye emphasizes, the influence of culture as soft power depends on the context in which this power is exercised. Culture includes categories such as art, media, sports, or even things like the taste of food of a nation, national traits, historical and literary positions (ancient artifacts and tourism), and this is a very valuable and rich resource in soft power studies that provides a variety of types of power with titles such as media power, normative power, civilizational power and so on.

Nye believes that a country's culture can be called "powerful" that is appealing to the people of other countries. Of course, it should be noted that, first, the attractiveness of cultural resources is intrinsic rather than adventitious. That is, a culture is either intrinsically attractive or not attractive, and therefore it is not possible to easily change cultural resources and add to its resources through activities such as public diplomacy. Secondly, the attractiveness of culture is not absolute, it depends on the reception and interpretation of the audience. Therefore, the cultural products of a country may be considered attractive by the people of a society and unattractive to the people of another society. Therefore, the effect of cultural soft power should be measured in relation to the target societies specifically rather than in general (Saeedi and Moghaddamfar, 2014: 110).

Second. Political values

If the fundamental values that a state has embraced and put at the heart of its action are attractive and internationally recognized, can be

seen as the soft power generating sources. Responsiveness to people, respect for morality and administration of justice are examples of it. The most important part of political values is criteria, our judgment of behavior, speech and opinion of others is based on values. The choice of goals, methods and means of achieving them in society is measured by value criteria. Political values tell us what is desirable and which method is undesirable and faulty from the political point of view (Adami and Zolfaghari, 2012: 24).

According to Joseph Nye, power-generating values are embodied in the mirror of popular culture (such as individual freedom), domestic behaviors and policies (such as populism), how to function in international institutions (such as listening to others' speeches) and foreign policies of a country (such as advancing peace and human rights) (Nye, 2002: 9-11).

Third. Foreign policy

The effect of policy on soft power can be seen in both domestic and foreign areas. In the domestic area, the public opinion includes (its role in policy and extent of its effect and effect with government), respect for human rights, efficiency of the judiciary, accountability of government, level of hope for respect for justice among the population, positive immigration policies and tourism attraction, ideological attractiveness, extent of civil society involvement and lack of crime and violation of the law. And in the international area, these items are considered: volume and extent of interaction with international organizations, humanitarian assistance, cultural relations and exchanges, desirable and extensive diplomatic relations, design and adoption of acceptable strategic policies, holding and participating in conferences and international exhibitions and so on.

It can be argued that the values that a state supports in its domestic behavior, in international institutions and foreign policies, greatly affects others' priorities. It should be said that foreign policy of governments can have a dual function and lead to a reduction or increase in their soft power. Undoubtedly, irresponsible, irrational, frivolous and illegitimate actions of a state in the global area will weaken its soft power, but actions that, according to Nye, are legitimate, internalizing and have moral authority will lead to an increase in the soft power of the state. What distinguishes foreign policy from other sources of soft power (culture and values) is that it is more

likely to change than the two. Of course, due to the central role of the element of attraction in the concept of soft power, it seems that foreign policy activity can increase the soft power only when the target society is known as an attractive act. That is, regardless of the intentions of the operating state, audiences have to judge the benevolent, humanitarian, honest and non-self-interested nature of the behavior of foreign policy of the states (Saeedi and Moghaddamfar, 2014: 110).

Recognition of soft power resources of the Islamic Republic of Iran

The division made in the above is based on Joseph Nye's ideas. Although, according to some authors and researchers, the sources mentioned for the soft power were different, all the comments are based on these three sources. As a result, the sources of soft power of the Islamic Republic of Iran have been mentioned differently in the studies and articles of the authors. By summarizing the studies, as well as modelling the triplicate division mentioned in the theoretical framework, the soft power sources of the Islamic Republic of Iran can be explained at three levels as follows:

Islamic Iranian culture and Civilization

According to Nye, only that part of the Iranian Islamic culture and civilization can be used as a source of soft power that is attractive to the people of the foreign communities. Therefore, in order to estimate the soft power of Islamic Iranian culture and civilization, while excluding those parts that are merely used at home, only those items should be mentioned that are available at the regional and global levels. One of the most prominent and most important manifestations of Iranian culture and civilization is the Persian language and literature, Iranian customs and rituals, arts and antiquities. The origin of the lexical and structural synonyms of Persian language with other languages and the spread of Persian language in other countries can be evaluated from the natural history and social points of view.

Persian language is considered as the official language in only three countries of Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, but there are groups of Persian speakers in countries like Iraq, Turkey, Uzbekistan and Pakistan. Also, streaks from Persian are visible in other languages such as Turkish, Hindi, Urdu, Armenian, Georgian and

Swahili (Derakhsheh and Ghaffari, 2011: 20). The extent of its influence, however, is more regional than global, so it can only be efficient as a source of soft power of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Central Eurasia in relation to countries such as Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan or the sub-continent region in relation to countries such as India and Pakistan. In addition, a large number of Iranians speak Turkish, Turkmen, Kurdish, Arabic, and Baluchi, that from this perspective, other countries also feel close ties to the Islamic Republic of Iran. On the other hand, the attraction of Persian literature can also be a channel for influencing a number of educated people, students and litterateurs even in non-Persian language communities. In this regard, admission of students from other countries in different fields as well as the exchange of professors are considered soft power sources for Iran.

The customs and rituals derived from Iranian culture can be considered as cultural sources of generating soft power in the case of having the feature of foreign attraction. The most notable example of this is the Nowruz celebration, which, in addition to Iran, is also celebrated by many societies around the world. The products of the cultural and artistic industries of the countries, provided they have attraction for foreign audiences, are soft power sources. Iranian carpets are leading in these industries that have many enthusiastic people beyond the territory of the country. Also, as the inheritor of one of the oldest and largest human civilizations in the world, Iran has a valuable treasure of ancient artifacts that are reminiscent of a long history of Iranian culture and civilization. The existence of these artifacts, in addition to material revenues for the country's tourism industry, can attract the people of foreign societies, affect them and expose them to the realities of the Iranian society.

Alongside Iranian culture and civilization, Islamic culture as a source of soft power is of particular importance and can play a significant role in relations with Islamic countries. Islamic culture can be regarded as a set of ideas, beliefs, values, customs, patterns and practices arising from Islamic law. Based on this definition, if we want to consider the Islamic culture, which is regarded as the consistency of identity of the Iranian nation along with Iranian culture, as the source of soft power for the Islamic Republic of Iran, it is necessary to identify the attraction-creating

elements in this culture which, in addition to the Iranian Muslims, will also attract the attention of Muslims across the borders so the Islamic Republic can influence the people of foreign societies relying on them. The influence of Shiite authority is one of the things that can only be identified in the context of Shia Islamic culture. Due to its very important function considered for it in the Shia religion, Shiite authority has the extraordinary capacity to influence Shiite public opinion, to regulate their individual and social behaviors and to determine the agenda for them. Although this source has nothing to do with the Islamic Revolution naturally and it has already existed before, the victory of the Islamic Revolution strengthened it to the extent that today Shiite authorities in Qom have a significant influence throughout the Shiite world. Among other things, culture of martyrdom and anticipation are two essential elements in Shia culture and they have a high potential for creation of power. They consider the culture of martyrdom that stems from belief in eternal life after death, killing in the way of Islamic ideals and fighting the enemies of Islam as very good acts that lead to divine pleasure and fulfillment of eternal prosperity for martyrs. Along with the culture of martyrdom, the culture of anticipation or Mahdism also strengthens the feeling of powerfulness in Shiites. The Shia religion portrays a very clear and ideal end to the world, and believes that at the end of history, with the general uprising of the promised Mahdi as the last survivor of the divine leaders, all the outrageous atheistic systems will be overthrown and a universal justice state with sovereignty of Imams will be formed. In sum, the existence of two elements of martyrdom and anticipation in Shiite culture gives an extraordinary power to the Shiites.

Values of the Islamic Revolutionary

One of the richest productive sources of soft power in the Islamic Republic of Iran is undoubtedly the model of political Islam. This pattern can be considered as the fundamental achievement of the Islamic Revolution for the global environment. Since it introduced concepts and values that were unprecedented in the contemporary history of the world and very novelty for the nations. The political model of the Islamic revolution of Iran has various aspects, each of which somewhat leads to attractiveness and power-generating, including spirituality in politics. The Islamic Revolution was largely

separated from the benefit-oriented policy of Machiavellianism, which puts only the expense and material benefits resulting from the instrumental rationality at the heart of political action, and, by introducing religious concepts into the field of politics, gave policy a divine and holy background (Saeedi and Moghaddamfar, 2014: 110). Another aspect of political Islam model is Velayat-e Faqih. In the model that the Islamic Revolution presented to the world, a fully qualified jurist is at the head of the Pyramid of Power and undertakes the major political and religious leadership of the Shiite community. The extent of the influence of Vali-e-Faqih is not limited to the territory of the country under his rule, but his decrees may be acceptable to many Shiites who believe in the theory of Velayat-e Faqih throughout the world of Shia and this allows Vali-e-Faqih to determine the agenda.

Independence, fighting against arrogance and resistance to the domination of great powers are among the most fundamental values of the Islamic revolution, which emanate from the teachings of Shiite Islam and are closely linked to other value, such as freedom, justice, jihad, sacrifice and martyrdom, give the complete discourse system of the revolutionary identity and meaning. The protection of oppressed and underprivileged people of the world is another substantive value of the Islamic Revolution, which promotes its position among oppressed and underprivileged classes of the countries and attracts their attention to Iran. Since its inception, the Islamic Revolution was become known as an advocate of the oppressed people and defined the spiritual support of all oppressed nations as a fundamental value for itself. Since the support of the Islamic revolution for oppressed and underprivileged people of the world attracts their interest and enthusiasm for their revolution and its home country, Iran, this value can be considered as a source for the soft power influence on the oppressed and underprivileged classes.

Foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran

The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based on Islamic teachings on principles such as negation of any domination, preservation of the country's independence and territorial integrity, defense of the rights of Muslims, non-commitment to domineering powers and peaceful mutual relations with non-militant states, defense of right-asking struggle of oppressed people against oppressors, negation

of domination of aliens on natural and economic resources and culture (Jafari Panah and Pourahmadi, 2013: 106).

The strategy of confronting the domination system should be known as reflection of the value of independence and resistance in the foreign policy behavior of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In other words, since in the discourse of the Islamic Revolution the autonomous position and resistance to global superpowers are regarded as a value, the Islamic Republic of Iran of course has also drawn its own path in the international environment on the same basis, the general lines of which can be found in the constitution. The opposition to the domination system, which has been at the heart of the Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy as a continuous and unchangeable strategy for over the past three decades, is attractive to many individuals and groups fighting against dominance and critical to cruel and unfair structure of international politics in different parts of the world and leads to their attachment to the Iranian nation and government. This capacity can be used to exert soft power.

Spiritual and even material support for liberation movements is considered as one of the extraterritorial obligations of the country. The Islamic Republic's supportive approach to militant groups and liberation movements, especially in countries such as Lebanon, Palestine and Iraq, has promoted the reputation and position of Iran among these groups and their popular supporters, to the point where they see Iran as a model and guide. In this regard, the policy of supporting the liberation movements can also be considered among soft power sources of the Islamic Republic of Iran. On the other hand, the ethical, humanitarian and non-benefit-oriented actions of a country in the interaction with foreign societies will create the desired image of it in the minds of the peoples of these societies and will provide a suitable ground for influencing them effectively. Of course, humanitarian foreign policy may not be cost-effective in terms of instrumental rationality and cost and benefit considerations, and ideological beliefs are usually the basis for its implementation. Of course, experience shows that humanitarian actions, despite being costly, have increased the soft power of the country and promoted its influence on target societies.

Functions of soft power components on the geopolitical developments of the Islamic Republic of Iran

As stated in the definition of soft power, soft power is change in various dimensions of another society in line with its goals invisibly and indirectly. The use of soft power at the regional and international levels can lead to various developments and change the position of the country using the soft power. In other words, users of soft power seek to broaden their dominance with other nations so that they can achieve their own interests in this way. In the past content, the sources considered as soft power for the Islamic Republic of Iran were cited. The effects of the use of these resources at various levels of political, security, economic, ideology, and regional and international communication are discussed in following.

Islamic Revolution: A Model for Transformation (Islamic Awakening)

The Islamic Revolution of Iran is a source of soft power based on soft power, which is now advancing its policies in the domestic and foreign areas. In fact, what forms the soft power of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the field of public diplomacy has created a boom in power and a new order in the Islamic Revolution. The Islamic Revolution of Iran has become an influential and reference phenomenon in the Islamic world due to the regional and international conditions and the religious and historical commonalities as well as the attractiveness of rituals, goals, methods and effective achievements in all fields. These works and results have been intentionally or unintentionally reflected by individuals, organizations or in scientific, cultural and political relations in other countries, especially Muslim societies, and have affected the states and movements and religious organizations in those societies to varying degrees.

One of the main effects of the soft power of the Islamic revolution on the international thought was the diminution of communism and the spread of religious teachings in the Soviet Union. Until the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the disenfranchised and desperate people of the capitalist system had considered turning to the ideology of Marxism, which was the systematic form of communism, as the only way to save themselves. However, after the Islamic Revolution and sending a call to help the oppressed people and opposite to arrogance to the whole world, including the nations of the Middle East and Central Asia and the Caucasus,

given the historical and cultural proximity of the people of these regions to the identity of Iran, the influenceability of these people compared with other nationalities, in relation to soft power, Islamic Iran could more create the source of Islamic and liberation movements in these societies.

Believing in Islamic values expresses responsibility for the international community. In this regard, the concept of issuance of the revolution gives people the right to self-determination, by a clear and explicit method, and denies any kind of hardware and violent policies and methods from the point of view of soft power and by addressing the elites and the public of Islamic nations. On the other hand, the software idea of issuance of the revolution has a domestic effect, which means that issuance of the revolution will not be realized unless we see the realization of the values inside and make serious efforts to provide it and to spread it abroad. If Muslims become aware of the importance of establishing a political system based on Islamic ideas, from this perspective, the soft power of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran can create a factor for shaping and modeling for them.

The Islamic awakening in the countries of the region is considered as a spark in the gunpowder stock of these countries. The people who had been extremely plagued by dictatorship, conflict and bloodshed, economic pressures and hardships quickly entered the scene of the struggle against the ruling regime. Muslims in the Arabic countries of the region, such as Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Algeria, Libya and countries in the southern margin of the Persian Gulf, faced with domestic tyranny and abnormal economic conditions were inspired by the Islamic Republic of Iran and caused developments to change the situation of their countries. Sever corruption in Arabic regimes, inappropriate economic conditions, strong dependence on other countries, discriminatory policies of the government against ethnic and religious minorities and several other factors have led to revolutions and changes in several Arabic countries in the Middle East and North Africa. This issue becomes more acute when influenceability and attachment of the leaders of the popular protests in these countries to the ideological principles of the Islamic Republic are pondered and analyzed. Shiites in Persian Gulf are among the main factors of soft power and

strategic depth of Iran. Sheikh Ali Salman, the secretary-general of the al-Wefaq party in Bahrain, the most important opposition party of the government, has described the Iranian regime as unique and introduced it on the basis of the Prophetic tradition and Imams' jurisprudence. He considers the Islamic Republic's system as the best way to preserve humanity and respect it (Najafi and Bolandiyani, 2013: 200).

Expansion of Islamic Shiite Teachings

The most important effects and consequences of the Islamic Revolution have been restoration of the role of religion, spirituality and weakening and degeneration in the discourse of secularism. Based on the secular theory that was prevalent as the dominant theory among the countries of the region before the Islamic Revolution, religion was not considered to be a determining factor in the management of international affairs and the formulation and implementation of foreign policy, because in Western development theories, what are often based on the model of material development and modernization, modernity and social development have been inevitably associated with secularization, but the Islamic Revolution questioned the Western development model based on radical worldism by bringing religion to the text of society. Michel Foucault, by placing the Islamic Revolution in the form of "political spirituality," emphasizes that this happened when the element of spirituality has been forgotten in the West for centuries (Rafipour, 1997: 12). The Islamic Revolution has also undermined Marxist theories because the foundation of Marxist theories is based on opposition to religion and, in this regard, the role of the Islamic revolution in the collapse of the communist east bloc could also be emphasized (Malakutiyan, 2010: 45).

The Islamic Revolution of Iran took place at a time when most theorists and sociologists spoke of reducing religion to an individual level and its inability to govern the society. This was turned into a general belief not only in western and secular societies but also in some Islamic societies. By transforming this attitude, the Islamic Revolution revived and restored the identity of the Islamic community and introduced religion into the political, social and economic life of the Islamic community. Through the revival of divine and human values and the consolidation of the foundations of religious democracy and its expansion, the Islamic revolution provided the

prosperity and flourishing of Islamic civilization. By promoting the independence-oriented culture and thinking in the Islamic world, this revolution not only provided a kind of cultural self-esteem and intellectual autonomy for Muslims, but also introduced Islamic civilization as a powerful style against the claimants of the universe of Western civilization.

Regional superior power

The international environment is of particular importance in the regional and transregional status of countries, as it has effect on the behavior of their foreign policy. The effect of the Islamic revolution on the Muslim people of the region and the beginning of the awakening process in Islamic countries, in addition to endangering the colonial benefits and interests of the global domination system and domineering and occupying powers in the Islamic world, especially in Arab countries, but also has been influential on increasing soft power and the regional and transregional status of Iran. The Iranian government attaches particular importance to regional and international cooperation, especially when these interactions affect national security. Each country's access to communication channels at the regional and international levels is one of the requirements that in itself results in a kind of soft power. This issue comes from, more than anything else, the geographic location, natural resources, and, in general the conditions that lead to playing role in the regional and international areas.

Iran, as a country with a history and civilization of three thousand years, has a wide range of political and cultural range, including the geographical area of the Caspian Sea and the countries located in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Therefore, now that the region has become geopolitical and geostrategic competition of major global and regional powers, the Islamic Republic of Iran, as the most important regional power, is considered one of the key actors in the new big game, which also has good grounds in relation to the countries of the region. The Islamic Republic of Iran has an unbreakable link with Central Asia and the Caucasus through the use of soft power (proximity to religion, cultural relations and, in some cases, ethnic commonalities). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Iran has more focused on economic interests in line with creating strategic relations. Also, given that Iran is the shortest non-Russian route for the transfer

of energy resources from the Central Asian region to foreign markets, and on the other hand, along with Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, Iran is also one of the Caspian Sea states and has some rightful claims to the energy in the bed of this sea. Also, with regard to hostile relations with the United States, one of the primary goals of Iran is to develop economic and political relations with other governments, and in particular neighboring states. Based on this, it has focused on economic development with the countries of this region. The first serious Iranian effort to develop regional cooperation with the countries of Central Asia, as one of the key goals of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, is encouraging the Central Asian republics and the South Caucasus to participate in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). The special economic features of the region provided a high capacity for economic cooperation with Iran, and regional developments strategically provided the Islamic Republic of Iran with new opportunities at the regional and global levels. The above factors led Iran, using its soft power components, to consider the emergence of a new situation in Central Asia as a valuable opportunity for its national interests and strategically consider defending independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of these countries as its main goals in the region. Therefore, it was necessary for the Islamic Republic of Iran to strive for stabilization of the region that had become insecure and instable after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Accordingly, from the beginning of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of the newly established republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus, some measures taken by the Islamic Republic of Iran to stabilize the region include the establishment of political and diplomatic relations with them at the highest level, establishment and expansion of economic cooperation, playing a constructive and mediating role in existing regional crises, assisting newly independent countries to become members of regional and international organizations and expansion of security cooperation with the countries of the region in the fields of fight against terrorism and drugs (Moayyeri, 2004: 7-12)

Iran's role in international organizations

In the process of fundamental changes in international relations, the necessity of political, economic and cultural life requires that countries

interact with each other, and therefore international organizations are the focal point for international cooperation and co-thinking. The importance and necessity of joining international organizations is due to the fact that each of them, while being a focal point for interlocution and co-thinking, can meet a part of the needs of the members that they cannot meet alone and resolve some problems. Since today, more than 260 international organizations are active in the global area and almost 30 years have passed since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, an effective and positive presence in international organizations can lead to the strengthening of soft power in Iran. Since international organizations generate voluntary and collective will of a number of governments, the legitimacy and scope of activities and the movement towards the national interests of the member states, the provision of resources and the guarantee of the implementation of decisions are strongly dependent upon them. Governments have given a high position to international organizations in their foreign policy with the aim of presenting problems and disputes, exploiting experiences and facilities and also with the motivation of gaining international prestige and participating in regulating international rules and regulations as well as freely presenting policies and positions concerning various issues.

The course of Iran's presence in international organizations during the early years of the revolution was a challenging process, but in the years after the imposed war and the global understanding of the soft and hard power of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the acceptance of Iran's presence as a regional power, interaction of the Islamic Republic of Iran with international organizations has had a positive and influential trend up to now. Today, in addition to the United Nations, the Islamic Republic of Iran is influentially present in many international and regional organizations such as the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, OPEC, the ECO, and the World Trade Organization (as observer). The constructive and effective role that Iran has played in many international and regional organizations and also participation in many negotiations based on goodwill confirm that Iran, in the world area, has put the balance of interests and efforts to achieve collective interests at the heart of its foreign policy and has honored it. In addition, Iran's necessary and constructive role in various treaties and conventions related to the

prohibition of use and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and disarmament regimes, as well as human rights conventions are among this.

Conclusion

The new political, security and geopolitical developments have changed the structure of power and politics in the Islamic world, especially the Middle East, in favor of Iran, and this has provided grounds for increasing Iran's role and influence. Due to having some geopolitical features and the cultural, religious and historical structure of power and politics, Iran is considered one of the most important and most influential countries in the Islamic world.

As a regional power with effective potentials for playing role in international areas, Iran, in addition to influenceability from transformations of international relations, is seeking to influence existing relationships and structures. Some prominent characteristics of Iran in the international environment include the vast geography of Iran, the enormous resources of energy inside and around Iran, the composition and quality of the young and talented demographic structure, the ideological cohesion, the depth and breadth of the sphere of cultural influence, the geopolitical position with strategic mutual influences on regional developments and many other relative advantages. However, the stability and providing domestic and foreign security, economic growth and development, extensive communication with the domains of software influence and influencing on regional and transnational developments of Iran are realized when Iran designs and develops its stable development and domestic and foreign policies in the form of a comprehensive strategy based on geopolitical and geographical realities, relying on the relative advantages of the country, including soft power generation sources.

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