

Iran's Foreign Policy towards Lebanon: Success Story of Synergy between Hard and Soft Power

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Abstract

One of the major reasons behind assassination of General Qasim Soleimani in US attack on Jan 3, 2020, was that he had projected Iranian hard and soft power in different parts of the world particularly in the Middle East. He was recognized as the architect of Iran's influence and presence from Lebanon to Syria, Iraq to Yemen and Bahrain. That is why, the killing of Qassem Soleimani has considered as an enormous setback to the country's regional ambitions. This study is mainly focusing on utilization of hard and soft power by revolutionary Iran as foreign policy tools especially in the Middle East. American war in Iraq (2003) and Hezbollah-Israel war of 2006 have provided Islamic Republic of Iran with an opportunity to expand its power in the Middle East in general and Lebanon in particular; King Abdullah of Jordan predicted that as "Shi'a Crescent" in 2004. Iran's successful resurgence is widely misperceived as sole reliance on hard power and Shi'a proxies and partners. This study argues that it's the effective use of "smart power" and complementary synergy between soft and hard power tactics, which has led to consolidation of Iranian influence in the countries like Lebanon. Hezbollah as the tool of Iran's hard power is being supported by soft power tactics like Education, Media, cultural diplomacy and bonyads (Foundations). The study also argues that Iranian success in Lebanon in terms of hard power greatly lies with its ideological inspiration for Hezbollah both for institution of Vilayat-e-Faqih and Iran's regional ambitions and being sole supporter for its followers.

Keywords: Iran, Lebanon, Middle East, Soft Power, Hard Power, Smart Power

Introduction

Middle East has witnessed immense increase in Iranian influence in the region after 2003 American war in Iraq. Arab Spring and rise of Da'esh posed some challenges as well as provided Islamic Republic of Iran with constant potential opportunities to consolidate its power in the region in general and in Lebanon in particular. This study

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aims to explore that despite US and European backed Israel has been regularly pursuing its regional hegemonic designs with especial focus on Lebanon, how Iran as an external power successfully achieved greater influence in Lebanon? And Why Iranian success in Lebanon is more than other external players? It is widely perceived that Iran only relies on Hezbollah to deepen its strategic depth in Lebanon but the study argues that Iran not only relies on Hezbollah but also relies on its soft power that actively pursues the tools and strategies to change the perceptions of the Lebanese people. Both the tools of hard and soft power employed by Iran in Lebanon are driven by its ideological orientations towards the region and Lebanon as it shares absolute convergence with Iran's strategic interest. To prove this argument, study will employ the lens of Joseph Nye's Smart Power that is an amalgamation of hard and soft power. Moreover interviews of concerned experts like Dr Adib Moghadam*** and Dr. Bahador Aminian Jazi **** have been used to support the argument.

According to Chehabi, both state and non-state actors played pivotal role in strengthening Lebanese-Iranian Relationship on socio-political and religious levels for last 500 years. It began with the immigration of Shi'a ulemas (clerics) from Jabel Amal to Safvid Shi'a Iran in 16th century to early 20th century when Beirut became a popular destination for young Iranians to seek western education. During Shah's era (1925–1979), both states cooperated on security matters but could not develop amicable relation due to relatively diverse political aspirations at domestic level. Moreover, Lebanon provided safe haven for anti-shah elements. However, the changing political landscape in Iran had greatly affected Lebanon. The rise of Shi'a consciousness in Iran led to the radicalization of Lebanese Shi'as in which clerics like Musa al Sadar played pivotal role during 1960's and 1970's. Lebanese Shi'a owes much to the Post-revolution Iran for its influence and organization which didn't solely rely on provision of funds and training to Hezbollah (Chehabi, 2006). Iran has smartly opted for smart power that power tools and hard goals in the region. Such smart exploration of foreign policy choices has earned Iran with Strategic depth in the region including Lebanon. This paper highlights the importance of hard and soft power in Iranian foreign policy formulation as well as in its implementation. It argues that how Islamic Republic of Iran with creating synergy between Hard and Soft Power is consolidating its influence in the Middle East in general and in Lebanon in particular. To analyze the issue, the concept

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of Smart Power presented by Joseph Nye has been employed as an effective way for states to pursue their national interests and foreign policy goals.

Theoretical Framework

To understand Islamic Republic's employment of smart power (combination of hard and soft power), the study will first define both terms separately and then the smart power itself. Joseph Nye defines Power, "*as an ability to affect others to achieve the outcomes one wants*". He divides Power into two forms, Hard Power and Soft Power (Nye, 1990). Joseph Nye in his book, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* defines soft power as "the capability to achieve what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments," and "the sources of soft power are the attractiveness of country's culture, political ideals and policies." So soft power depends on state's ability to act as a role model and shape others desire to adopt its values and style. According to Nye, Soft power as an alternative to the traditional "carrot and stick" tactic employed by states to pursue national interest (Nye, 2004). Nye also associates the sources of tangible power like culture, ideology and institution. To him, co-optive power is an equally important as hard power as it creates legitimacy for state's power and this legitimacy decreases resistance to state's wishes. State's mystifies their culture and ideology to make it appealing so that it earns more willingness among masses to follow its national interest ((Nye, 1990). So by using soft power, states contribute to construct positive image which creates space for states to enhance influence in global politics.

Hard power is commonly defined as, "*using military and economic means to shape the behaviour of others or use of cohesive political power, military aggression or economic power by one political entity against another*" (Copeland, 2010). Hard power can be defined as command power that is considered as the oldest form of power, enrooted and integrated with the idea of an anarchic structure of international politics. The size of population, territory and natural resources along with geography and economic strength remained important tools to evaluate the hard power of any state. Contrary to this, legitimacy is the core of soft power (Nye 2008). Hard power reliance on military and economic power to shield its security makes it fall under the realist school.

Despite the recent tendencies to enhance Soft Power, states have endeavoured to use soft power along with their Hard Power in their foreign policies for centuries. For instance, in the 17th and 18th centuries, France promoted its culture throughout Europe. French language not only adopted as the language of diplomacy, but was even used at some foreign courts such as Prussia and Russia (Nye, 2004). But in comparative manners, to highlight the significance of soft power, it is important to understand the

limitations of hard power. Whereas hard power remained one of the most predominant factors in the past socio-political events, but recent studies and experiences are showing that hard power is gradually deteriorating, in turn importance of soft power is in its rising mode. Some experts as well as practitioners are of the view that today use of hard power is much costly and dangerous than past and soft power could be logical alternative. Moreover, growing economic interdependence and the multidimensional process of globalization has also curtailed the use of hard power to resolve the conflicts and the soft power is day by day becoming an important tool of states international relations. However despite increasing importance of soft power, still state's expenditures on their hard power are increasing. This dilemma has forced some experts to find the way through amalgamation of hard and soft powers in pursuance of national interests.

According to Giulio Gallarotti, military power (the most traditional form of hard power) remains at the core of the idea of hard power. But the use of force can be divided into various forms, ranging from coercive diplomacy to the military intervention. Hard power, not always destroys positive perceptions, through military interventions, state may earn appreciation that creates substantial space for soft power. For instance, providing military and economic support to adversaries may lead to soften threat perception. Therefore, a properly managed combination of soft and hard power can be a smart way for states to pursue their national interest (Alanazi, 2015). Nye explains that he coined the term smart power in 2003 in order to challenge the misperception towards the conceptualization of soft power in such a manner that it alone can provide sufficient strategies for foreign policy as he defines Power as ability to affect other's behaviors in desired manner. Nye divides this ability in three modes, a. coercion, b. payment, and c. attraction. Coercion and payment can be categorized with hard power while attraction lies with soft power. States can't solely rely on carrot and stick or attraction alone for successful pursuit of national interest but it needs smart strategies employing the tools of hard and soft power simultaneously (Nye 2009).

Data and Methodology:

To comprehend Iran's ambitions in the Middle East particularly in Lebanon both primary and secondary sources are used for required data collection. About Iranian quest for hard and soft power some media sources and reports of state and non-state institutions are also employed. More over to validate the collected data, experts on Iranian affairs like Dr Bahador Aminian Jazi and Dr Arshin Adib Moghaddam were personally communicated and interviewed. While examining and analysing the data both descriptive as well as explanatory methods are taken into consideration.

Iran's Foreign Policy Objectives: Qodrat-e-Narm and Qodrat-e-Sakht:

To understand Iran's aspirations in region especially in Lebanon one must explore what Iran really desires and how Iran perceives its position in the region. Today's Iran may be the shadow of ancient Persian empires but Iranian nation enjoys great pride in its glorious political and intellectual past. Just like Russian nationalists who believe that Russia should have paramount influence in near abroad, Iranians also consider former imperial boundaries to be a natural sphere of influence of Iran. Such perceptions among Iranians staple the notion of "*Iranzamin*" (Land of Iranian) in Revolutionary Iran's rhetoric making it an important aspect of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's foreign policy approach (Rubin, 2017).

Scholars like Dr. Aminian are of the view that one can't understand Iran's foreign policy, until he/she has not understood how Nizam ul Mulk of Toos served under Mongol rulers. Toosi's approach is one expression of Iran's pragmatic and smart choices (Aminian, 2019). Book of Government or Siyasatnama is a manual of Government written by Seljuk Vizier Nizam al-Mulk. The manual is comprised of 50 chapters dealing from the courtship of redressing wrongs and practicing virtue and justice to having a diverse army and dealing the heretics (enemies of Islam and state). The Persian rulers in 19th century not only kept such literature in their libraries but also read them (Amanat, 1997). For Michael Rubin, after analysing literature by scholars like, D.G Tor (who have worked on Islamisation of Iran's kingly ideals), Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei may not perceive himself as Persian King but his strategies for ruling and for exporting state's ideology are regarded by many as the continuity of Iran's past glory and intellectual legacy (Rubin, 2011).

To highlight the doctrinal feature of 1979's Revolution, the preamble and Article 144 of the constitution calls the armed forces of Islamic Republic as "*The Islamic Army*". So the armed forces constitutionally not only entitled to guard the Iranian borders but also to wage Jihad to spread the provisions of Islamic Law in the world. Article 3 bestows Islamic Republic with the duty of supporting the *oppressed* and strengthening the "*Muslim brotherhood*". Thus the military interpretation of the export of revolution in constitution shows the dominance of the clergy close to Supreme Leader (Iran's Constitution, 2019). Thus the constitution and the will of the Leader of Revolution illustrate the prerogative to export through both hard and soft means. The constitution and founding statues of the IRGC declares the export of revolution as *raison d'être* of the regime. Here the question arises, what is Soft Power for Iran? According to Dr Adib Moghadam for Iran, Qodrat-e-Narm or Soft Power is a derivative of the doctrines of "dawat" and "tabligh" (persuasion and preaching) which were central to Ayatollah Khomeini's efforts to export the revolution, without the "barrel of a gun".

Whereas the discourse of Khomeini was radical, Qodrat-e-narm translates into multilateral engagement and cultural diplomacy, for instance the network of Iranian bonyads (Foundations), cultural centres and universities with branches in different regions (Adib Moghaddam, 2019).

Iran's Soft Power in Lebanon

Tehran's sophisticated soft power strategies aiming at the expansion of the Islamic Republic's ideological and political goals in the region are often undermined as scholars mostly highlights Iran's military expeditions and hard power ventures in the region. Lebanon being a politically instable state provided fertile ground for Iran to enhance its influence through hard and soft power. Iran addresses Sunnis of Lebanon in general and Shi'as of Lebanon in particular. Wide range of tools from strengthening its proxy Hezbollah to developing cultural, religious and political ties with Lebanese people, Islamic Republic aims at enhancing the image and strength of Hezbollah and to justify Iranian presence in Lebanon. Its ties with Hezbollah and its quest to shape public opinion in Lebanon give it primacy over United States, Israel and Sunni Arab regimes (Majidyar, 2017).

For scholars like Cenap Çakmak, Iran's primary soft power tool is based on its self-perception defining its position as the leader of the Shi'a Islam. Moreover, post-revolutionary Iran perceives itself as the natural leader of the Muslim World. Islamic Republic views itself as the natural leader of the Middle East when it sees its Arab neighbours incapable to counter Western influence like Iran (Çakmak, 2015). Being an Islamic republic, Iran emerged as model that is potential to fill the void left by the failure of Arab nationalist ideologies (Aghsan and Jakobsen, 2010) Iran emerged as the leader of the Shi'a Muslims, and struggling Shi'a opposition parties in countries like Yemen, Lebanon, Bahrain and others. Being a role model for Arab countries and Leader of Shi'a Muslims are the two aspects of Iran's soft power closely tied to Islamic Republic's ideology (Masood, 2000). The identity crises in the Arab world due to poor nation building, more inclination towards sectarian and ethnic affiliations than towards their nationalities have created rift in state and society. This has led in considerations about the loyalty of Shi'a Muslims who are deemed as more loyal to Islamic Republic than their home countries. Iran not only has capitalised this opportunity but also endeavoured to champion populist Arab causes like Palestine's issue through Hezbollah a Shi'a resistant organisation of Lebanon (Çakmak, 2015). The narrow focus on the likelihood of directly replicating Iran's particularistic theocracy can distract from the reality under which Tehran has developed sophisticated ways of packaging its revolutionary ideals for its strategic goals. Although the doctrine of vilayat-e-faqih (Governance of Jurist) innovated by Ayatollah Khomeini was regarded as alien by most of Shi'a clergy

including many in Iran but it has gained pragmatic tributes paid by groups like Hezbollah of Lebanon (Mandaville and Hamid, 2018) Iran's Soft power tools aren't benign but are integrated with its strategic agenda in the region. From Education to Media, Iran utilizes all sophistications to attain its ends through soft power. Soft power tools employed in Lebanon are as under.

Education and Iran's Soft Power

Education is an important tool for soft convenience. Iran has number of educational networks to promote soft image and win the hearts and minds. Al-Mustafa, headquartered in Qom, the theological centre and Iran's religious capital, Al Mustafa International has widespread network in Middle East. In Lebanon it has relatively modest presence due to Iran's reliance on Hezbollah that provides Islamic Republic with grassroots support among Shi'as in Lebanon. Two seminaries, Rasoul Akram seminary for males and Al-Zahra seminary for females operates in Lebanon under Al-Mustafa. As Al Mustafa's country director for Lebanon announced in August 2015, Al Mustafa's both campuses in Iran and Lebanon have produced 1500 Lebanese graduates. Another seminary named Imam Montazer seminary that operates in Ba'albek also works under Al Mustafa International. The Lebanese graduates of Al Mustafa International University play pivotal role as they served as missionaries in states where Lebanese immigrants constitute good numbers (Dai, 2015). Al-Mustafa network not only produces subjects loyal to the Khomeinist ideology of Vilayat e Faqih but also serves as a fertile recruiting pool for Iran's Quds Force which is the most significant foreign expeditionary arm of the IRGC. Such ideological underpinnings inspire students to fight for Iranian interpreted Islamic interests in conflict zones. Moreover Al-Mustafa trains clerics from the whole world to spread Khomeni's interpreted anti-imperialism in their native lands (Stekler, 2018). Apart from training Shi'as clergy, Iran is also investing in scientific studies to attract Lebanese student irrespective of their sect and religion. Very recently a Lebanese University signed an agreement with Allameh Tabataba'i University of Iran aimed at exchanging professors, students and creating a common PhD program and cooperation in scientific studies. Such ventures in educational collaboration in non-religious sphere are not new for both states as few years ago, both countries agreed to boost bilateral exchange on educational and university levels by signing an agreement on bilateral cooperation on Farsi language teaching (Lebanese Iranian Universities sign Cooperation Agreements, 2019). According to Payvand, Iran built 100 schools in Lebanon along with Mosques, Hosseniehs and Mossallahs after 2006 Hezbollah Israel war (Iran to Build 100 Schools in Lebanon, 2006).

Ali Akbar Velayati announced that Iran's Islamic Azad University's (IAU) branches will be opened in Lebanon and Iraq in July 2017. Velayati explained the purpose of IAU's new branches is to promote science and faith together. He stated the Islamic culture should be revived at the university as IAU will help to train the next generation of "resistance" in both Lebanon and Iraq to strengthen Iran's revolutionary struggle against the U.S. and West. According to Velayati, the Basij should have a leadership role in IAU campuses for Islamic revival through cultural, ideological and social activities (Stekler, 2018).

Charitable Foundations or Bonyads:

Bonyads are parastatal foundations or non-state actors, mainly the agents of Iran's soft power potential enough to bear significant influence on Iran's foreign policy conduct. They conduct wide range of activities, falling under culture, philanthropy, commerce, and media. They serve to expand Iran's ideology and generate the potent soft power ventures for Islamic Republic (Akbarzadeh, Shahram, and Conduit, 2016). Islamic Republic often chooses entities with weak society and state structure to expand its power. Lebanon in this regard can be cited as the perfect example where Iran has perfected this strategy by using Hezbollah, effectively creating a state within a state. In addition to its armed militia, Hezbollah has woven itself into Lebanon's social fabrics. Mostly charities set up by Iran and Hezbollah are concentrated in South of Lebanon, where Beirut's writ is comparatively weaker. Hezbollah have earned enough popularity through social services. This soft power has led Hezbollah's way to Lebanese political structure. Scholars have called it "Hezbollah model" as Iran has employed this in other weak states as well after successful expedition in Lebanon. Iran though Hezbollah and other charity organisations have built patronage networks loyal to the Islamic Republic and Khoeminist ideology through social services (Stekler, 2018).

The Imam Khomeini Relief Committee (IKRC) had its origins in underground charitable network organised by Imam Khomeini in pre-revolutionary Iran. The IKRC's mission is to "*provide livelihood and cultural support to underprivileged and needy, living both inside and outside Iran in order to earn self-sufficiency, to strengthen piety, preserve human dignity.*" (Majidyar and Alfoneh, 2010) The IKRC with an annual budget of \$2 billion provides aid to 9 million Iranians. Beholden only to the Supreme Leader IKRC can't face accountability from other branches of government. The IKRC is Iran's key aid distribution network outside of Islamic Republic's borders. It works to create goodwill among other nations and engender support for the Islamic revolutionary ideology. IKRC's charitable works target the marginalized strata of society along with orphans, elders and needy. IKRC provides services ranging from food aid, medical services, computer classes and vocational training, distribution of blankets and fuel,

interest-free loans to marriage assistance. Apart from philanthropy, using charity as a foot in the door the organization also plays primary role to export Iranian culture and propagate about Iran's revolutionary principles. It uses incentive based techniques like sponsoring competitions among aid recipients based on testing knowledge about Last Will and Testament of Ayatollah Khomeini. The IKRC also organises ceremonies commemorating the Islamic Revolution and Khomeini's demise, coordinating Quds Day demonstrations and agitating processions against the Islamic Republic's chief adversaries U.S and Israel in host countries According to Hossein Anvari the IKRC's head, "The Islamic Republic formed IKRC's diplomacy, that is surely defensive diplomacy [which aims] to neutralize threats against the Islamic Republic" (Stekler, 2018). According to United States' Treasury Department, "The IKRC in Lebanon serves as a Hezbollah philanthropic organization, created by the government of Iran and managed by Hezbollah members. The IKRC also provides funds to Hezbollah youth training camps. Hassan Nasrallah, has aggrandised the role of Imam Khomeini Relief Committee in Lebanon and has acknowledged it as one of the Hezbollah's institutions financially supported by Iran" (Stekler, 2018).

Ahl ul Bayt World Assembly (ABWA) is another Iranian NGO or Bonyad which operates beyond Iranian borders through a network of religious, cultural, and educational institutions aiming to disseminate Iran's ideology round the globe. Ahl ul Bayt literally means *People of the House of the Prophet* while in the context of ABWA the term refers to the Shiites (Stekler, 2018). The goals of the ABWA according to its website are as under

- Revival of the pure Shi'a Islamic teachings
- Promotion of solidarity among all Muslims in general and the followers of the Ahlulbayt in particular
- Cooperation for development living standards, socio-political and economic conditions of followers of the Ahlulbayt, the Shi's across the globe
- Protecting the helpless Shia' Muslims against the propaganda and attacks of western media.
- To work for creation of and development of peace, cooperation among all nations. (Ahl ul Bayt World Assembly, 2020)

Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei established ABWA in 1990. ABWA is a trans-national propaganda tool to increase soft power of the Islamic Revolution. All four secretary generals of the organisation and advisors to the Supreme Leader are his close trusted confidantes (Stekler, 2018). Hassan Nasrallah is also member of Supreme Council of the organisation. Interestingly, the serving Secretary General of ABWA Mr Mohammad Hasan Akhtari, was among those who founded Hezbollah, and regarded as

the operational father of Hezbollah. Under the leadership of Hasan Akhtari, religious organizations, charities and cultural centres that operate under the network of ABWA collaborates with Al-Qods Force (IRGC's Unit). It is believed that Mr Mohammad Akhtari utilises his experience in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon to advance collaboration with the Qods Force, along with propagation of revolutionary ideology among local population (Stekler, 2018).

Media and Strategic Diplomacy

The Islamic Republic has strategically employed electronic media in order to disseminate its ideology and perceptions both at home and abroad. State owned international satellite networks are primary tools of strategic diplomacy of Iran. Islamic Republic, since its inception in 1979, to defend its interest in foreign lands and to construct positive and appealing image of Iran both at home and abroad has undertaken a multitude of cultural, educational, and religious initiatives (Pahlavi, 2012). Established after 1979, Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) also known as "*Sazman-e Seda va Sima-ye Jomhuri-ye Eslami-ye*", in Persian is regarded as the primary governmental agency or the mouthpiece to promote the audio-visual policy of the state (Iran: Constitution 1979, 2019). IRIB works under the direct supervision of Iran's Leader, and serves as a pivotal tool of Iran's media diplomacy through its World Service. World Service facilitates state's strategic interest by promoting Iranian reputation in positive manner. IRIB through TV channels like Jamejam, Sahar, Al-Alam, Press TV in English and Spanish Television targets millions in many languages. These television channels aim to promote Islamic Republic's image as "Moderate Islamic democracy". Iran has intensified its public diplomacy efforts through media after 2003. Like it has launched Al-Alam in 2003 and now it has offices in three capitals of Middle East, Tehran, Baghdad, and Beirut. Al-Alam targets millions of Arab masses. Al-Kawthar TV, another Arabic channel established in 2006 to promote revolutionary ideology and propagation of Iranian soft power. These satellite channels aim to shape the perceptions of domestic and foreign audiences as most important propaganda media tools of Islamic Republic. All these channels work under IRIB with extensive funding from the government like according to some sources Press TV receives more than \$25 million as its annual budget (Pahlavi, 2012). Sanctions relief and flow of \$100 billion to Iran has reinvigorated IRIB's global footprint. In January 2017, Iran's parliament voted to increase IRIB's annual budget up to \$750 million (IRIB Budget Doubles, 2017). Most of these media sources have special focus on projection of Hezbollah Lebanon as a symbol of resistance against Israeli aggression and US hegemonic designs.

Cultural Diplomacy

Public diplomacy According to Nicholas J. Cull 'is a well-organized set of communication activities with an end goal of changing external behaviour while also altering one's own behaviour through mutual learning and listening' (Cull, 2008).

Iranian government has strategically adopted policies exploring socio-political and cultural lines to proliferate its soft power in the region. Shared Islamic Shi'ite culture or historical and cultural ties to Persian civilization are employed by Islamic Republic depending on which country is in question (Golshanpazhooh and Esfahani, 2014). In Shia majority states, Iran's primary method is to promote Shia Islam through socio-cultural dialogue thus creating lasting loyalty among the local communities. Much of the mentioned activity of Iran's soft power works through the patronage of *Saazman e Ferhang o Irtebatat e Islami* in Persian or Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO) in English, which promotes Iran's cultural diplomacy. ICRO's offices are often co-located with Iranian embassies but they work under ICRO and these offices provide assistance and funding for wide range of activities (Islamic Culture and Relations Organization, 2019). Role of ICRO in Lebanon is very prominent and its centres are very popular even among non-Shia communities.

Construction of Museums is another initiative that is used by Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon to develop soft image of Islamic Republic and to shape perceptions in desired way of Islamic Republic. In East of Sidon, Hezbollah constructed a war museum in Mlitta (Southern Lebanon) where visitors including school children can examine Israeli military hardware captured by Hezbollah along with bunkers and caves used by Hezbollah fighters. The museum is true depiction of Iran's and Hezbollah's Resistance Narrative that subtly highlights its links with Iran with displayed posters and photographs of both Ayatollah Khomeini and Khamenei (Meier, 2015).

Hezbollah recently unveiled sophisticated missiles and drones in this museum of resistance that is located close Israeli border, promotes jihadi tourism and strengthens the Iranian narrative through display of military hardware in the minds of visitors (Karedo, 2018). The museum had nearly 300,000 visitors, from Egypt and the Persian Gulf, Lebanon, and other foreigners in first three months (Setrakian, 2010).

Despite of these ventures that attract Lebanese masses towards the narrative based on resistance and religious zeal, Iran's cultural influence through music and language couldn't leave visible marks on Lebanese society due to inclination towards Arabic, English and French music. Due to language barrier Iranian singers are not aired on Lebanese media. Although Iran's film industry has achieved fame in prestigious world festivals under Ayatollahs but Iranian films couldn't attract viewer ship in Lebanon.

Lebanese cinema is more inclined towards Hollywood making US dominant in this sphere (Frisch, 2018).

Iran's Hard Power in Lebanon: Hezbollah

Hezbollah is a military, socio-political organisation of Lebanon that shares ideological synergy with Iranian Revolution. It was founded in June 1982 amidst the Lebanese to respond the Israeli invasion of Lebanon during the same span of time. Hezbollah's command enjoys close relationship with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and it's widely believed that Hezbollah's Special Security Apparatus operates with fiscal support, training and military equipment provided by IRGC (Rizvi, 2012). General Qasem Soleimani of Al Qods Force of IRGC remained active in special operations in Lebanon and played important role in strengthening Hezbollah (Rizvi, 2012). Iran's support for non-state armed actors is motivated by three considerations

Support to anti-Israel organisations like Hezbollah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad enables Iran to garner greater degree of popularity in the Sunni Arab world that Iran can't achieve being a Shi'a Persian state by remaining aloof to Palestinian issue that is associated with religious emotionality of Arab masses.

1. Because of its self-perception of being de facto leader of Muslims especially oppressed Shi'a communities like Hazaras in Afghanistan, Shi'as in Bahrain and Lebanon.
2. Iran has to rely on pro-Islamic revolution armed non-state actors due to weakness in the domain of conventional military (Dvore, 2012).

The above mentioned reasons have driven Iran to exceptionality in terms of its reliance on such non-state actors and their role in Iranian foreign policy which is much more prominent in the case of Lebanon.

Until 1985 when it released its manifesto, Hezbollah remained loosely organized and clandestine. The manifesto revealed it's religiously, anti-imperialistic and anti-Israel inclination. The document served as defining ideological statements of the movement until 2009 when Hassan Nasrullah issued a new manifesto for Hezbollah. This group shares Islamic Republic's perceptions to world's power structure and its global outlook as its statements issued in 1985 has identified the US as enemies of Islam thus echoing the ideology of Ayatollah Khomeini, and demands for "elimination" of Israel. Hezbollah has also borrowed the narrative of being defender of the oppressed from the Islamic Republic. Specifically, Hezbollah defines itself as revisionist actor opposing to the regional and global order that favour US and Israel. Islamic Republic developed its ties with large Shi'a population of Lebanon right after Revolution. IRGC and Quds Force, being symbolised by Islamic Republic as the saviours of the suppressed

of the region and symbols of Iran's revisionism, played central role in creation of Hezbollah and provided the movement with financial aid, military equipment and training. Along with Qasim Solemani the commander of Al Quds Force, Hezbollah has also trained armed groups in Iraq, Lebanon and other regions. (Addis and Blanchard, 2010) The manifesto issued in 1985 clearly states: "*We are the sons of the Umma (Muslim community) the Party of God (Hizb Allah) the vanguard of which was made victorious by God in Iran.*"

Furthermore, Hezbollah avowedly express its submission to the decrees of Valiye Faqih by stating: "*the one leader who is wise, just, our tutor and our faqih (jurist), Ayatollah Ruhollah Musawi Khomeini.*" (The Hezbollah Program Open Letter, 1988)

Hezbollah pledges its adherence to the institution and philosophy of Vilayat e Faqih. After Ayatollah Khomeini, now Hezbollah expresses its loyalty towards Valiy e Faqih, Ayatollah Khamenei. Hezbollah's adherence to the institution of Vilayat e Faqih is very deep that during an interview in 2012, its Deputy Secretary-General Naim Qassem, explicitly declared the Vilayat-e-faqih as the reason for establishment of Hezbollah. According to Hassan Nasrallah, Khomeini told the delegation that visited Tehran in 1982 before creation of Hezbollah, to "*rely on God and predict about the victories that we now see.*" After this meeting, Islamic Republic sent 1,000 IRGC soldiers to Lebanon to train Hezbollah fighters (Counter Extremism Project, 2019). Al Quds Force of IRGC acted and acts as a medium between Iran and Hezbollah. According to U.S. Department of Defence, Hezbollah received \$100 million to \$200 million from Iran in 2010 (Bruno, 2011). Hasan Nasrallah in June 2016, admitted in a publicly broadcasted speech that Hezbollah's sole reliance is on Islamic Republic by stating, "*all of Hezbollah's expenses, from its weapons to what it eats and drink comes from Iran.*" (Hezbollah brushes off, 2016) According to Anoushiravan Ehteshami, with Iranian assistance, Hezbollah has boosted its own "capability to deploy armed insurgents indoctrinated with revolutionary ideas among the Shi'a strongholds". Being ethnic Arabs, Hezbollah served as door that opened up for Iran in Arab world during its war with the Iraq (Ehteshami, 2002). Trump's sanctions of 2018 have greatly affected Iranian financial support to Hezbollah as reportedly cut its budget in 2019. Due to financial constraints, Al-Manar TV of Hezbollah that operates in Lebanon has reduced its staff and programming (Sly and Haidamous, 2019).

Iranian defence minister Ahmad Vahidi stated on 26 February 2012, that to strengthen the Lebanese army is one of the strategic interests of Iran so that Lebanon should be protected against any coercion. Quds commanders particularly Qasim Solemani assassinated by US in Iraq in January 2020 had played pivotal role in organizing

Hezbollah and creating unity among Shi'a militants in Lebanon. Khomeinist ideology and his narrative of violent resistance against Israel's occupation of Lebanon from 1982 to 1985 has provided theoretical grounds to Hezbollah. Al Qods force continues to assist Hezbollah with funds, training making it stronger than the Lebanese states. IRGC's final role is neither formally outlined in Iranian constitution nor does it is shared by regular Iranian army. It was after Iran-Iraq war when President Rafsanjani appeased IRGC by paving ways for its active economic role. IRGC established its foot prints in every sector from agriculture, transportation to industries and telecommunication. *Bonyads*, the charity organisations become tools for IRGC which operate as large holding companies in Iran. *Bonyads* are indirectly controlled by IRGC by appointing directors of these organizations. After Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, IRGC became truly omnipresent in Iran's economy with flow of billions of dollars (Negehban, 2017).

Hezbollah is not simply a non-state actor driven by the ideology of Resistance but it's a political party with roots in social fabric of Lebanon through its charities, schools and even satellite television station. Hezbollah model basically aims to delegitimize the state and to create a state within a state until is co-opted or over thrown (Rubin, 2011). Hezbollah began its political journey in mainstream Lebanese politics in 1992 when it won 8 seats in Parliament. Hezbollah won 23 seats in the 2009 election, U.S.-supported "March 14" alliance defeated Hezbollah and its allies. Many were surprised by this result. Hezbollah and its allies won 70 seats in elections held in May 2018. Though Hariri the leader of anti-Hezbollah future movement maintained his role as prime minister, but his alliance suffered decrease of seats from 33 to 21. Hezbollah termed its success in elections as "*moral victory*", and protection for Hezbollah "*the resistance*" against oppressors (Counter Extremism Project, 2019).

As an Iranian non-state partner, Hezbollah played pivotal role in protecting Asad regime during Syrian Civil War. Hezbollah's role isn't limited to Lebanon thus it's an important tool to enhance Iranian influence beyond Lebanese borders. In Syria, Hezbollah didn't only fight anti-Asad forces but also fought against ISIS, a potential Wahhabi threat to Iran. Hezbollah doesn't define its fight against ISIS as a fight for Syria and Iran but Hasan Nasrallah during an interview in 2014 deemed ISIS, a threat to the region and Lebanon both. Although in September 2017 Hasan Nasrallah declared victory in Syria over ISIS and anti Aasd forces but in September 2018, he declared that Hezbollah will remain in Syria with permission of Syrian government (Counter Extremism Project, 2019)

According to Simon Mabon an expert on Middle East, Lebanon has long been central to Iran's geopolitical aspirations. From the facilitation of Hezbollah since 1982 whose use of Shi'a history to create a resistance narrative particularly the Battle of

Karbala that is supported by the philosophy and system of *Vilayat al faqih*. The combination of Iranian political support and Shi'a history have not only empowered Shi'a groups across Lebanon but also positioned Hezbollah as a regional power. This gradual development sketches the scenario of contemporary Middle East and also reveals to which extent the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran is shaping the region. States of Middle East has historically been entangled in contemporaneous pressures of colonialism and nationalism along with debate over the role of religion in state and society. This left the space for political manipulation by blurring distinction between internal and external. This conflation of domestic and geopolitical agendas leads to an environment where loyalty may not necessarily be to the state. King Abdullah of Jordan has framed one such environment as a 'Shi'a Crescent', depicting Iranian influence as an arc that stretched from Iran across the Persian Gulf to Lebanon, making Shi'a groups united under the leadership of Iran (Simon Mabon, 2018).

<i>Lebanese Republic</i>	<i>Iran's Popularity in Lebanon</i>
<i>Sunnis of Lebanon</i>	16%
<i>Christians of Lebanon</i>	27%
<i>Shias of Lebanon</i>	93%

Source of information in columns: Spring 2017, Global Attitude Survey.

Conclusion

The current world order as characterized by Henry Kissinger involves three levels of sovereignty, above, middle and below. The state stands at middle level, struggling to claim its traditional characteristics, recognition of territory and population and above it floats international organizations. They are encroaching on the traditional realm of highest political authority claimed and once exercised by states. And at below it works sub-national groups and organizations with or without territorial claims but they work to reach on the second level (Zartman 2017). The state of Lebanon seems to be struggling with the middle and below level, a state that is struggling for its identity and largely depending on a sub-national actor like Hezbollah for its political stability and territorial integrity. And Hezbollah largely depends on a strong regional actor like Iran for its ideological inspiration and political determination. But the legacy of the moderate Shi's scholar and Hujjat ul Islam Sayyed Hani Fahs can't be diminished. He was among those who like others welcomed Iranian Revolution but rejected the bureaucratisation of its ideals and rejected the use of force to gain power led him to criticize Hezbollah the face of Iran's hard power and institution of Vilayat-e-Faqih that itself it's a source of Iran's soft power. He strongly believed that Shi'as should integrate and develop themselves in their own societies rather to fanaticize Islamic Republic (Eisenlohr, 2009). But such voices can't influence the widely the marginalised

Lebanese Shia's as scholars like Hillel Frisch believes that in "harder" aspect of soft power Iran seems to be more visible in Lebanon. According to a report of a Lebanese bank in 2014 Ayatollah Khomeini still show following but internet searches for him are highest in Nabatiyya or in Beka valley dominantly Shi'a areas although Islamic republic originally hoped to focus on marginalised irrespective of their faith and then on Shi'ism in Lebanon (Frisch, 2018). So from the above discussion the study can conclude that Iran's soft power is more visible in Shi'as of Lebanon as compare to Sunnis and Christians as depicted in the table above that shows the stratification in Lebanese society on the basis of religion. But Iran's hard power's face is not only successful in Iran's use of Lebanon and Hezbollah for its ventures in the region and Lebanon itself but also capable to decide the political fate of the country. In Lebanon, Iran's hard and soft power tools supplement each other. Iran's successful relation with Hezbollah can be driven by its ideological synergy with its proxy this synergy develops naturalness in patron client relationship that compels Hezbollah to advance Iran's regional aspirations. Moreover, Hezbollah solely depends on Iran for its finances deepen Hezbollah's vulnerability towards its client. Despite of the constraint Iran faces from domestic, regional and international factors, Iran remained successful in defending its land out of its borders by using its smart power as well as garnering its required influence to fulfil its regional aspirations specifically in societies like Syria.

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