

## Analysis-Base

# Tensions in Iran's National Security Strategy

## Executive Summary

1. This document deals with the Iranian National Security Strategy and the tensions among its components. The purpose of this document is to present a systemic analysis of the Iranian National Security Strategy and to map the tools which serve to realize Iran's ambitions for regional hegemony.
2. As part of this effort, the Reut Institute researched and wrote a number of documents, concepts and terms which complete a more expansive picture of the Iranian National Security Strategy.<sup>1</sup>
3. The National Security Strategy of Iran is based on the six following foundations:
  - a. Acceptance and recognition of the Islamic revolution and the Islamic regime;
  - b. Guarantees for Iran's territorial integrity and security;
  - c. Extraction of Iran's natural resources and conversion to economic welfare;
  - d. 'Regional hegemony' in the sense of influence and veto rights over occurrences in Iran's near environment and in the 'heart of the Middle East' (Syria, Lebanon, Israel, the Palestinian Authority, etc.);
  - e. Recognition of its leading international status;
  - f. Leadership of the Islamic camp.
4. The Iranian National Security Strategy suffers from a number of tensions among its components. Understanding these tensions is necessary for consolidating Israeli policy vis-à-vis the Iranian threat. The tensions are as follows:
  - a. Between Iran's desire for technological progress (including nuclear capacity) and the image of a rogue nuclear state;
  - b. Between Iran's need to integrate into the global economy and an international image that deters investments;
  - c. Between Iran's aspiration for legitimacy and international status and defiance against regional and world order;
  - d. Between Iran's desire to lead the Islamic world and its involvement in undermining regional stability.
5. These arenas are the disciplines in which it is incumbent upon Israel to define an organizing logic and to operate accordingly.

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<sup>1</sup> The list of Reut Institute documents accompanying this document are: 'Iranian Hegemony', 'UN Security Council Resolutions 1737 and 1747', 'Korean Precedent', 'Shiite Crescent', 'Moderate Axis', 'Resistance Network', 'Logic of Implosion', 'Iranian Economy', 'Soft Power' and 'ReViews: Tensions in Iranian Hegemony'.

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2. However, the content of this paper constitutes the analysis of the Reut Institute, and only the Reut Institute bears responsibility for its content.

## Introduction

3. The purpose of this paper is to outline the central objectives of Iran's national security and to identify the tensions within it. This is due to the threat Iran poses for Israel, which requires an appropriate Israeli response.<sup>2</sup>
4. In recent years, Iran has been expanding its regional and global influence. Iran's ability to promote this agenda derives from regional and international developments, such as the end of the Iran-Iraq war (1988); the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991); the war on terror and the democratization agenda advanced by the US in the Middle East (since 2001); the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq (2003); the rise of oil prices; and the tensions between China and Russia on one hand and US on the other.
5. Iran's aspiration for regional hegemony stems from its large territory and population, its important geographic location, its central status within the Islamic-Shiite world, its history as a regional empire, the natural resources in its territory, its past and contributions to human culture and its military power.<sup>3</sup>

## Part A: Foundations of Iran's National Security

6. In order to serve its national objectives, Iran designed a national security strategy which includes six components:
  - a. **Recognition of the Islamic Revolution and the current Iranian Regime** – Iran feels that it is subject to constant attempts by the US and other states to undermine the stability

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<sup>2</sup> For Israel's perception of Iran, see [Olmert's Herzliya Speech 2007](#) (1/24/07): "I would like to focus on a subject which I believe is of the important one,... with significant repercussions for the State of Israel ... I will present you with a report of the state of the Iranian threat ... The Iranian topic was at the top of our agenda and at the core of the meetings I held ... there is still time, while not unlimited, to stop Iran's intention of becoming a nuclear power which threatens its adversaries, first and foremost, Israel ... The Iran of today, whose leadership is motivated by religious fanaticism and ideological extremism, has chosen a policy of confrontation with us and threatens to wipe Israel off the map of nations. It supports terror and undermines stability in the region. The Iranian Regime is striving for regional hegemony ..."

<sup>3</sup> Iran's pursuit of regional hegemony began under the Shah, prior to the Islamic Revolution (1979), when Iran was seen as the "keeper of the Gulf." See Ephraim Kam, **From Terror to Nuclear Power: the Meaning of the Iranian Threat**, (Tel Aviv: INSS, 2004), pp. 31-33.

For more information on the concept 'Iranian Hegemony' see Eli Podeh, **The Quest for Hegemony in the Arab World**, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), pp. 8-12.

of the Islamic Regime.<sup>4</sup> Iran's central objective is to obtain international recognition of its regime and stop the attempts to topple it. Iran aspires to achieve a status of immunity vis-à-vis the US, similar to the status of Putin's regime in Russia or that of the Communist Party regime in China; in other words, it is legitimate to criticize the Iranian Regime, but not to undermine it in order to overthrow it.

- b. **Security: military guarantees for Iran's territorial integrity and security** – Iran wants to secure its territorial integrity as a lesson from the war with Iraq (1980-1988), in which Iran suffered heavy losses, missiles were fired on its capital, and weapons of mass destruction were used against it.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, Iran wants to guarantee that its fate will not be similar to the fate of Afghanistan (on its Eastern border) and Iraq (on its Western border), which were occupied and their regimes toppled by the US. This comes at a time when Iran is surrounded by American forces on all sides (in the Persian Gulf, Iraq, Kurdistan, Turkey, South Asia and Afghanistan).

Iran's territorial integrity is also threatened by various ethnic minorities, whose origins are beyond Iran's borders. For example, Iran's Kurdish minority is located next to Iran's border with Kurdistan (Iraq).

- c. **Economy: extraction of natural resources** – Iran enjoys an abundance of natural resources, mainly oil and gas. Iran's central objective is to guarantee its control over its natural resources and energy resources, receive the necessary funding and technology for the extraction of its resources and to translate them to revenues and overseas sales.<sup>6</sup> However, extraction of these resources requires access to financing and technology found in foreign companies and states, as well as free movement to and from Iran by land and sea.
- d. **'Regional Hegemony'** – Iran seeks to influence its neighboring states and the heart of the Middle East (Syria, Lebanon, Israel and the Palestinian territories) on the basis of its interests and ideology.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The US and Britain's involvement in overthrowing the regime of Prime Minister Muhammad Mussadeq (1953), and their support of the Shah, is one source of the hostility between Iran and the US and Britain. (See Stephen Kinzer, **All the Shah's Men**, Jerusalem: Carmel, 2005). Iran is concerned about an American attempt to bring down the current regime, as it did in Iraq and Afghanistan (2002-03) (See [New York Times](#), 12/20/06, and [Ha'aretz](#), "US will fund opposition groups in Iran," 4/14/05).

<sup>5</sup> Restoration of the Iranian army and the launch of the nuclear program began shortly after the war against Iraq, and as a direct lesson from it. ([Washington Times](#), 5/31/06; [Ynet](#), 8/19/06, in Hebrew). See also Fariborz Haghshenass, "Iran's Doctrine of Asymmetric Naval Warfare", **The Washington Institute**, 12/21/06.

<sup>6</sup> Although Iran holds approximately 11.5% of the world's oil resources and significant reserves of natural gas, the Iranian economy suffers from difficulties and has to import gasoline. In 2005, Iran imported \$4.5 billion worth of gasoline, which represents up to 38% of Iran's internal needs. See Paul Rivlin, "Iran's Energy Vulnerability", **Meria**, Vol.10, No.4, (12/06), p.109.

See also: Melman and Javendafar, **The Sphinx**, (Tel Aviv: Maariv, 2007), pp. 65-79 and the presentation of Dr. Brenda Shaffer, "Russia and Iran," at the conference: **Iran From a Global Perspective**, Truman Institute and The Israel Project, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1/9/07.

<sup>7</sup> Iran's aspiration for regional hegemony is found in Iran's perception that it is impossible to make regional decisions without Iranian consent. See editorial article in the Iranian newspaper E'temad-e Melli: "The conference, which took place in Islamabad and was attended by foreign ministers from the seven Islamic states, dealt with important topics concerning the Middle East, without Iran's participation ... They have to understand that any regional agreement without Iran's involvement is meaningless." (**MidEast Mirror**, 2/27/07).

- e. **Recognition of a Leading International Status** – Iran aspires to receive recognition in its status a leading country in the world. This aspiration derives from Iran’s history and its contributions to human culture, its location and size, its resources and military power. Iran conducts a global foreign policy and weaves a network of alliances and agreements with China, Russia, India, countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Europe.<sup>8</sup>
- f. **'Exporting the Islamic Revolution' and Leading the Islamic Camp** – Iran perceives itself as the patron of the Shiites in the world and aspires to lead the entire Muslim camp. Since the beginning of the 2000s, a change began in Iranian policy in this field through the espousal of a more complex approach based on economic, politics and cultural elements, and less on coercion and military tools.
- Iran's aspiration to lead the Islamic world is congruent with its self-perception as a regional power.
- In this framework, Iran enlists all the tools at its disposal, including The Resistance Network, Iranian technological advancement and its nuclear project, and the struggle against Israel.<sup>9</sup>

## 7. Principal tools of Iran's national security strategy –

In recent years Iran broadened its regional influence:

In the Gulf and in Iraq, Iran benefited from the US defeat in Iraq and from the rise in oil prices (See Melman, "Direct Negotiations between the US and Iran on Iraq," **Ha'aretz**, 5/14/07 and "Iranian and Saudi Leaders Meet," **The Economist**, 3/5/07, and on Iran's President visit in the Gulf, **IRNA**, 5/13/07);

In the Middle East, Iran exploited the vacuum in the Arab world, which transpired since the fall of Iraq, and expanded its strategic relations with states and organizations such as Syria, Hizbullah and Hamas (See Issacharof and Harel, "Concerns about the Iran-Hamas rapprochement," **Ha'aretz**, 12/14/06);

In central Asia Iran expands its influence on its neighboring states, such as Afghanistan and Azerbaijan (See for example Rod David, "Iran is trying to expand its influence by investing hundred millions in Afghanistan," **Ha'aretz**, 12/28/06).

<sup>8</sup> See for example Ahmadinejad's statements on the international status of Iran: "They know that the Iranian nation...has the ability to transform very quickly into an undefeatable global power" (**MEMRI**, 11/10/06) or on Iran's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) with India and China (**IRNA**, 6/12/06).

<sup>9</sup> Exporting the Revolution was a basic tenet of the Iranian Revolution from its beginning (1979) however it has failed in almost every arena, besides its success with Hizbullah in Lebanon. Thus Iran halted its attempts of exporting the Revolution since the 90's. (See Shaul Shay, **The Axis of Evil**, (Herzliya, The Interdisciplinary Center, 2003) pp. 29-34)

Since the beginning of the millennium, it seems that the characteristics of exporting the revolution have changed: its aim and mode of actions are beyond Iran's strive to establish regimes that are similar to its own one throughout the Arab world.

Current exportation of the revolution is based on global and modern principles, which are meant to transcend the existing tensions between Iran and the Muslim world, in particular with the Sunnis. In this aim, Iran is using all the tools it has at its disposal.

In this context, Iran's nuclear project has to be seen as a method to gain respect and pride for the Muslim world, also loathing Israel and preaching its destruction is a method to recruit the masses in the Arab streets. (See the lecture of Dr. Eldad Pardo, "Mahdism in the context of the Middle East", at the conference: "**Iran, Hizbullah and Hamas**," Truman Institute and The Israel Project, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 4/17/07).

See in this context the concept 'Soft Power:' a state's ability to shape the preferences of other states via non-coercive means. In contrast to 'Hard Power,' in other words military power, which is a coercive power, Soft Power is obtained through cooperation. The central tools of Soft Power are cultural values, ideology, being a model for emulation and appealing to commonly shared values (See Nye, **Soft Power**, (NY: PublicAffairs, 2004), pp. 5-15).

- a. **The Resistance Network** – Currently, Iran is the principal initiator of the Resistance Network and supports it economically, militarily and politically. The Resistance Network is composed of countries and organizations that perform acts of terror against Israeli, American and Western interests, and undermine moderate regimes in the region, such as Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority, with the purpose of advancing an Islamic agenda and serving Iranian interests.<sup>10</sup>
- b. **The Shiite Crescent** – Iran is building a regional strategic political alliance based on Shiite ethnic groups in Lebanon and Iraq. This alliance provides Iran with significant presence and influence in countries near and far, including Iraq, Lebanon, the PA and Saudi Arabia.<sup>11</sup>
- c. **The Global Islamic Network** – Iran aspires to stand at the head of the Islamic world. To this end, Iran acts regionally and globally and nurtures a network of connections with Islamic communities throughout the world and the Middle East.<sup>12</sup>
- d. **The Nuclear Project and Military Build-up** – The nuclear project is the pillar of Iran's security system and the Iranian national security strategy, in that its scientific and modern characteristics transform it into an important tool for exporting the revolution. Completion of nuclear capability will serve Iran's aspirations to guarantee its security, economy, as well as regional, cultural-Islamic and international status.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Reut identifies the following characteristics of the Resistance Network:

- a) **It is a systemic phenomenon** – The Resistance Network comprises of a variety of actors – states and non-governmental organizations – that fulfill different roles such as 'initiator', 'facilitator', and 'executors'. Every actor can fulfill different roles i.e. to initiate actions, help with the execution or be the executor.
- b) **Challenging states and central governments** – The Resistance Network views the West and Israel as its enemies. It undermines moderate governments in the region by challenging their monopoly over the use of force.
- c) **It is global** – The Resistance Network spreads its nodes exploits around the globe. Its cells are often loosely interconnected by a de-centralized structure that allows for a variety of logics to coexist, as well as for fast flow of information and rapid mobility.
- d) **The expressions of the Resistance Network are diverse** – The Resistance Network advances its cause by terror, by basic de-legitimization of Israel, by thwarting Israeli-Arab political processes based on the Two-State Solution and by promotion of the establishment of an Arab / Palestinian / Islamic state in place of Israel.

Currently, Iran is the driving force and ideological source of inspiration of the Resistance Network.

<sup>11</sup> Currently, Iran is trying to widen its influence even beyond countries with large Shiite populations. In recent years, a strategic alliance was formed between Iran and Syria unlike any in the past, based on closeness of the ruling Alawite minority in Syria to the Shi'a. (See Issacharoff, **Ha'arets**, 12/10/06; Bar'el, **Ha'arets**, 12/11/06). See also the concept The Shiite Crescent.

<sup>12</sup> The global Islamic network acts in the Middle East and beyond, as in Chechnya, Yugoslavia, Africa, Asia and South America. (See the lectures of Shmuel Bar, Gioria Eliaz, Aryeh Oded, Meir Javendafar on the topic "The Universal Attraction of Iran" at the conference: **Iran from the Global Perspective**, Truman Institute and the Israel Project, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1/9/07).

<sup>13</sup> An Iranian commentator stated: "Today, the same state [Iran] which became known as barbarian by the West, takes pride in being one of the fifteen states which can develop local nuclear technologies." (**BBC Monitoring**, 2/2/05).

Iran's nuclear program was intended to increase Iranian national pride and unite the population behind the regime. See Shahram Chubin, **Iran's Nuclear Ambitions**, (Washington: Carnie Endowment, 2006), p.26.

On Iran's use of the nuclear project for the purposes of exporting the revolution, see the article from the Iranian newspaper **Resalat**: "The most important message of Ahmadinejad's visit to the UAE is that the regional countries

Simultaneously, Iran is building the largest military in the Middle East with impressive strategic capabilities.<sup>14</sup>

- e. **Global System of Alliances** – Iran is developing a network of economic, diplomatic and military agreements and cooperation with rising powers such as Russia, China and India,<sup>15</sup> in addition to other countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.<sup>16</sup> Iran uses this cooperation in its struggle against US efforts to place upon Iran sanctions or to consolidate diplomatic moves against it.<sup>17</sup>

## Part B: Tensions within Iranian Hegemony

8. **Tensions within Iranian Hegemony** – The Reut Institute identifies a number of tensions among the six components of Iranian national security. Ripening of these tensions is liable to complicate Iran's achievement of its goals. Following is a short description of the four tensions:

- a. **The tension between the aspiration for technological progress and its nuclear image as a rogue state** – From Iran's point of view, the nuclear project is an expression of its natural rights for technological advancement, as well as its entrance into the club of developed states with the capability of enriching uranium.<sup>18</sup> However, Iran's nuclear progress has been accomplished in conflict with the international community, positioning Iran as a rogue state. This tension is manifested through the possibility that, even if it succeeds in reaching the nuclear technological threshold and becoming a nuclear power, it is not certain that Iran will acquire the international status that accompanies such ability.<sup>19</sup>

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can be Iran's partners in different fields of science and technology. The purpose of this message is to bring about regional unity and to erode the American efforts to paint Iran as a threat to the region" (**Mideast Mirror**, 5/16/07).

<sup>14</sup> Jane's, [Iranian Army](#), 8/29/06.

<sup>15</sup> In recent years, Iran signed numerous contracts with Indian, Chinese and Russian companies (see [Iranian WS](#), 12/27/06; [Dawn](#), 9/7/06). Moreover, since 2003, Iran has been seeking solutions to ease US economic pressure by choosing "to transform the state's dollar-denominated assets into euros and to use the European currency for foreign transactions". ([EuroNews](#), 12/18/06). See also Anne Korin and Gal Luft, "Ahmadinejad's Gas Revolution: A Plan to Defeat Economic Sanctions," Institute for the Analysis of Global Security, 12/06. In contrast, Iran is not a member of the WTO, despite its request to join the organization in 1996.

<sup>16</sup> During Ahmadinejad's trip to Venezuela he stated that "they [the Americans] want to govern the world." Regarding the developing cooperation between Iran and Venezuela, he added "The message from what occurred today is that revolutionary and independent peoples, with mutual help, are capable of providing for themselves. Venezuela and Iran have shown that, together, beyond the reach of US hegemony and imperialism, they can work and progress" ([Washington Post](#), 9/18/06).

<sup>17</sup> Russia and China were the main objectors to the original version of the sanctions which were consolidated by Europe and the US as a consequence of Iran's refusal to halt the development of its nuclear program. As a result of their objection, the wording of the sanctions had to be toned down (**Ynet**, 11/2/06). Following UNSC Resolution 1737 to exert sanctions on Iran, the Iranian Minister for Oil announced that Iran would use the "oil weapon" if necessary. (**Ynet**, 12/26/06).

<sup>18</sup> Iran includes as well its satellite and missile projects as part of this technological progress. The Iranian missile alignment constitutes a direct threat for the international community as well, especially for the European Union, since the missile range, according to the intelligence sources, is capable of reaching great distances within Europe, and in the future, even farther.

<sup>19</sup> Note the difference between the "North Korean Model" and the "Indian Model" –

Despite achieving its nuclear might regardless of the accepted norms of the international community (NPT – The Treaty on the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons), India succeeded not only in preserving its nuclear capability over the years, but also to gain the full status of a leading nuclear power. (As an example, see: "President Bush and Indian Prime Minister Singh reached an unprecedented agreement, according to which the US will provide

- b. **The Tension between the need to integrate into the global economy and an image that deters foreign investors** – Iran is a country rich in natural resources; however, it does not have the ability to extract and produce these resources independently. As a result of this, a central condition for Iranian economic growth is foreign funding and technology. In opposition to this, Iran's international image has been damaged due to its conduct in the nuclear field, and has brought about the imposition of economic sanctions complicating investment and trade with Iran.<sup>20</sup> This tension is expressed by the growing difficulties of the Iranian economy despite high oil prices.<sup>21</sup>
- c. **The tension between the aspiration for legitimization and international status and defiance against the current world order** – Iran aspires to establish regional hegemony and to acquire a status of one of the most significant countries in the world. To make this happen, Iran depends on recognition from international institutions. In contrast, Iran undermines the current world order, exploits international divisions and defies norms of the international community. This tension is expressed by the complicating damage to Iran's international status, which has been manifested by UN-imposed sanctions, growing tensions with international organizations such as IAEA or the WTO, and cooling relations with states like Russia, France and Germany.<sup>22</sup>
- d. **The tension between leadership of the Islamic world and undermining regional stability** – Iran conceives itself as a patron to the Shi'a in the world and aspires to lead the Islamic camp against Western countries and their allies. To that end, Iran advances an ideology of technological progress and pan-Islamism beyond Shiite identity only.<sup>23</sup> In opposition, Iran's steps towards the states surrounding it, the Iranian nuclear project, activation of the Resistance Network and destabilization of moderate 'Addresses' in the

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India with all the nuclear energy necessary for upgrading its military-nuclear industry". (VandeHei and Linzer, [Washington Post](#), 2/3/06). Also, see Nicholas Burns' remarks in connection to strategic relationship between India and the US. ([Remarks to the Heritage Foundation](#), 23/05/07).

North Korea did not get the same status, and despite nuclear experiments and other technological achievements, it remained a rogue state in the eyes of the international community. Hence, in spite of its deterrent power, North Korean regime was not given proper international status.

- 20 See UN resolutions 1737 and 1747, or American legislation "**The Patriot Act**" which raises difficulties for American investors in Iran (see [US Department of State](#), and the [speech](#) made by US finance deputy minister Stuart Levi in UAE, 7/03/07). The economic sanctions against Iran influence its internal tension between the political considerations of the regime and the national market stability. The outcome of this tension is centralization of the Iranian economy by its regime, at the account of the efforts improving national growth and development policies (see the Reut Concept "Iranian Economy").
- 21 The weakness of the Iranian economy stems from its triple reliance on the global economy: export of crude oil, import of manufactured goods and foreign investment in the energy industry (see the Reut Concept The Iranian Economy).
- 22 Iran is not a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), although it submitted its candidacy for membership back in 1996. Iran's potential membership in this organization was rejected 22 times due to vetoes imposed by the US ([Ynet](#), 26/05/05). Iran has threatened to ignore the Treaty on the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, because of the pressure put on it by the international community (Cohen, [Ynet](#), 9/4/07).
- 23 In the pursuit for regional hegemony, Iran needs to overcome the Sunni-Shi'a tension (see: Vali Nasr, **The Shia Revival**, New York: Norton, 2006). This traditional tension between the Shia and the Sunni is a major obstacle to Iran within the Islamic World. There is a widely accepted opinion that, at the end, the tension between the two will prevail on account of the strategic relationship embroidered today between Iran and Syria or Sunni Palestinian organizations such as Hamas (see: "The potential renewing of the Iranian – Egyptian diplomatic relations," Barel, [Ha'aretz](#), 4/6/07, or Rubinstein, "The dark period in the Palestinian history", [Ha'aretz](#), 15/12/06, and "The suitcases full of money and the strategic depth", [Ha'aretz](#), 11/12/06).

region create tensions and arouse concerns of regional states concerning Iran. These concerns are expressed in an arms race, political alliances and anti-Iranian political cooperation.<sup>24</sup>

## Part C: Arenas for Policy

9. An “Arena” is a space (diplomatic, political, legal, economic, civil or military) in which the organizing logic (alignment of interests) of the State of Israel may interact with organizing logics of other ‘actors’. In this space, every ‘actor’ tries to operate in light of its organizing logic and vis-à-vis the organizing logics of additional ‘actors’ in the Arena. These Arenas are places in which it is possible to design policy.
10. In light of the aforementioned tensions, the Reut Institute identifies a number of arenas in which Israel and the international community may consolidate policy.
11. It is important to highlight, that in the presence of the global characteristics of the Iranian threat, the response must also be primarily a global response. Therefore, the Arenas for Policy vis-à-vis Iran require close cooperation between Israel and the international community in designing policy against Iran.<sup>25</sup>
12. Following are the main Arenas in which it is possible to design policy vis-à-vis Iran:
  - a. **The Nuclear Arena: The ‘North Korean Model’, not the ‘Indian Model’** – In this Arena, the aim of Israeli policy is to deprive Iran of the fruits of its nuclear project. In this context, beyond the efforts of ‘political containment’ whose purpose is ceasing the project, Iran must be put on the aforementioned ‘North Korean Model’ track to deprive it of the fruits of its nuclear project.
  - b. **The economic arena: Increasing the economic pressures** – In this arena, the purpose of Israel's policy is to intensify the economic pressure on Iran, and to prevent from it the necessary resources for economic and political stability. In this context, Israel should exhaust its available tools directly and indirectly, by means of agents of influence or connections in the Jewish world, in order to increase the economic pressure on Iran.
  - c. **The Regional Arena: Damaging Iran's allies or removing them from the sphere of its influence** – Israel can initiate or exploit opportunities in order to damage Iran's allies in the region. Moreover, there exist a number of scenarios in which the maneuvering field of central allies of Iran – Syria and Hizbullah for example – are reduced and exit in one way or another from its sphere of influence.<sup>26</sup>
  - d. **Creating a viable military alternative.**

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24 In this context, see the articles about Iranian nuclear dispersion (“The Gulf States: We will develop nuclear programs for the purpose of Peace”, [Ha'aretz](#), 16/12/06), or Saudi, Egyptian and moderate regime's resistance to Iranian Hegemony. For example, see the reaction of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak at the Riyadh conference: “The Arab World is at the crossroads...The Arab States face major turning points and challenges... and the tensions are connected to the international crisis with Iran”, (Issacharof, [Ha'aretz](#), 29/3/07).

25 The Bear Hug Paradox – Israel needs to be careful to not become a lightning rod in the international struggle against Iran. Nonetheless, Israel should still create concrete policy consisting of state, legislative, civil, political and military characteristics that will serve her in the stand off vis-à-vis Iran.

26 Understanding Iranian difficulties in achieving the conflicting aims within its plans for regional hegemony will enable Israel to use leverages against Iran. Even so, Israel has to be careful not to become a leader of a regional struggle against Iran, due to the amount of antagonism it generates in the region.

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