



Iraqi Shiites and Islamic Republic of Iran Media Diplomacy towards them (2003-17): A Case Study of Al-Alam News Network

Ali Darabi

Assistant Professor of Political Science, Iran Broadcasting University, Tehran, Iran.

ABSTRACT

Iraq, which is one of the most populous countries in the region with majority of its population being Shiites, is located at the top of the Persian Gulf. As compared to other neighbors, this country is the most influential country on Islamic Republic of Iran's security and national interests, among its neighbors that is due, above all, the commonalities of culture, religion and the long borders between the two countries. For this reason, the Islamic Republic of Iran has always sought to use its media diplomacy in Iraq to promote its status and popularity among Iraqi Shiites as the majority of its society, regarding its historical-civilization background, and also the soft sociocultural power. Meanwhile, the use of media diplomacy as one of the most efficient ways to achieve this goal is on the agenda of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) and Al-Alam News Network as the IRIB World Service.

Method: *the current study, by the use of descriptive-analytical method, seeks to answer the following question: in the framework of the media diplomacy, and after the fall of the Ba'ath party in Iraq, what measures did the Al-Alam network take for supporting the Shi'ites of Iraq to help them achieve their sociopolitical rights, which have been trampled over during the past rule.*

Findings: *The findings indicated that, besides analyses and representation of Iraq's developments, the Al-Alam has been able to play an important role in the integration and identification of Iraqi Shiites by presenting various reports and programs in line with the official diplomacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and with consideration for national interest has prevented the transnational countries and media rivals to achieve their own goals, by providing appropriate coverage and reports.*

Conclusion: *In response to the main question of the research, it is argued that the Al-Alam network has played a major role in the convergence and identification of Shiites in post-Saddam Iraq.*

Keywords: *media diplomacy, Al-Alam News Network, Iraq, Shiite*

Corresponding author: Ali Darabi

INTRODUCTION

With the Iranian Revolution and the establishment of a Shi'ite government, the process of identification of Shiites in the region initiated. The Islamic Republic, too, understood this and, used its governmental rationality, to expanded the scope of influence on these Shiites. Regarding the Shi'ite nature of the Islamic Revolution, it was expected that the greatest impact of the revolution, as John El Esposito referred to in the book "The Revolution of Iran and Its Global Reflection", would take place in neighboring Shiite communities (Esposito, 2003: 90). Therefore, soon after the revolution, the effectiveness of the Iranian revolution on the Shiites of the world was manifested by the formation or strengthening of political parties and constitutions in Islamic countries, including Iraq.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has succeeded to, by the use of social and political position of these Shiites in their societies (who had lower positions and have been mostly dominated and second-rate citizens), as well as their empathy with Iran as the centerpiece of the Shiites of the world, expand its scope of influence in the region. So that today, Iran's fate is so closely tied to these Shiites, that every action in the center directly affect them. In general, the Iranian revolution created three general images in the minds of the Shiites, and these images played a very significant role in identifying the Shiites of the region:

government image (governmental rationality), religious image (Umm al-Qura'i), ideological and revolutionary image (anti-imperialism) In this regard and on the path to the restoration of identity and the revival of its values, the discourse making and the production of words and speeches is a necessity that can be achieved through various means, including media diplomacy and media tools.

Until the last centuries, the provision and edition of news and targeted advertisements has been limited to the exclusive monopoly of several Western media, however the triumph of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the adoption of independent policies against Western and Eastern actions have wreaked the worldwide monotony of Western-backed media. The tendentious western media, through reversing the views of the Islamic Republic views in public opinion, started a unilateral media war against Iran. Therefore, the Islamic Republic, in order to confront this enemy's goal, placed the employment a coherent and capable media in various fields on the agenda. Thus, the Al-Alam Network was inaugurated with the purpose of introduction of Islamic Republic of Iran and the proper reporting of news in the region and the world simultaneous with the US war against Iraq. The network, as an Arab-speaking Network, while quickly gaining a high position in the Iraqi public opinion, has been pursuing the most important events in this country, through the focusing on the policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and tried to counteract the news conspiracy of

the media of the West, revealing the Political facts and program behind the scenes of the Iraq crisis.

The Role and Place of the IRIB in Media Diplomacy

The Islamic Republic of Iran is among the countries that are able to create soft power and it has the attractiveness of being a model, based on its specific characteristics. However, before a country moves towards giving the patterns in regional and international relations, the identities used by the State Department's ideological behavior should be initially approved by its citizens (Nye & Wang, 2009, pp. 18-22).

The media activities in Iran is focused in the IRIB, and this organization has a huge amount of tasks that, in addition to communicating with the local audience in Persian, tries to connect foreign audiences by launching satellite channels in foreign languages. (Soltani Far and Khanzadeh, 1392: 192).

2-1. IRIB World Service

The World Service is one of the sections of the IRIB Organization which broadcasts a program for foreign audiences in different languages. The mission of the IRIB World Service is currently designing and supplying sources of production and broadcasting of radio and television programs abroad, arranging and disseminating news in order to promote and introduce the Islamic culture, the introduction of the Islamic Revolution and achievements of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as the introduction of history, culture and Iran's natural attractions. Also, for the creation of peace among the Muslim nations through the recognition of Muslims to each other, the reflection of the news of the Islamic world and liberation movements, confronting the permeation of non-Islamic culture into the Islamic world, and the revelation against the arrogance and Zionism in the framework of the policy and the principles set forth, it produces programs in 30 languages. (Ismaili, 2009: 169-168)

The IRIB World Service has several networks, as follows:

- European and American radio networks, Central Asia, Caucasus and ...
- Sahar Global Network, including English, French, Urdu and ... displays
- Al-Kowsar Global Network
- Al-Alam, 24-hour display in Arabic
- Press TV, 24-hour display in English
- IFILM
- Hispan TV (Soltani Far & Forukhanzade, 2013: 193-192).

2-2. Al-Alam, the Powerful Media Diplomacy Tool of Iran in the Region

After the 9/11 incident, with the collection of great powers in the Middle East and the inclusion of Iran in the axis of evil by the United States and the consequent intensification of pressure on the Islamic Republic, the need to use soft power and media diplomacy by the Islamic Republic was increased. Transmission of Iran's look and view of the World, covering the news of the Islamic World based on a new and different view that can reveal the realities of the Islamic world to the Islamic countries and, at a later stage, global audiences, as well as the confrontation with the Western news monopoly, requires the activation of media diplomacy Iran in the world changes among the Muslim world were the necessities for the establishment of the Al-Alam network (Sadaty, 2012: 93).

In this regard, the initial idea of establishing and launching an Islamic satellite network based on Islamic ideology, which can meet the spiritual needs of the Muslim audience, will lead to the formation of common goals among Islamic nations, and will help

their relationship and mutual understanding was formed since mid-2000 with direct supervision of the World Service Section (Ismaili, 2009: 171). The design and implementation of the Al-Alam network is such that the news editors can receive various news in the form of text, images, graphics and audio directly from the satellite, and without the need to use the tape, directly broadcast them from the computer, on the antenna. In the US invasion of Iraq, this network has been able to unleash its position among prominent media as an independent and professional media and take effective steps to break the news monopoly of the Arab media (Ismaili, 2009: 173). According to a survey by the Arab advisory group, the Al-Alam Network is ranked fifth among the news networks in the Lebanon and Iraq, above the BBC, Al-Akhbaria and Al-Hara (US government news network) (Soft War and Psychological Operations Website, March 2011).

Also, the Al-Alam website was launched in November 2003 to strengthen communication with Arab and non-Arab audiences. This website has made it possible for the audience to access the latest news and events in Persian, Arabic, and English, and users can view the network programs and the latest news sections by visiting the site. The latest events, al-Alam network journalists reports from around the world, and exclusive interviews published on the Al-Alam network, are available through the website to users and audiences, as reports published on Al-Alam's website have now become one of the major sources of the press and many websites and international newspapers.

3. Iraqi Shiites, Foreign Policy and Media Diplomacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran

3-1. Shiites of the region and the Soft Power of the Islamic Republic of Iran

Iran is strengthening and protecting the role of the Shiites in the Middle East, not only to promote the ideological context, but also to strategize the role of them in the development of the regional power and thereby, to consolidate and strengthen the its role and influence in the areas of competition and influence in the Middle East region, especially the Persian Gulf region. The rationale behind this argument is that future games in the Middle East region will be based not only on ideologies, but also on consolidation of scope of influence and attitudes (Adami, 2012: 162-161). Shiite religion, especially in the peripheral regions of Iran, is one of the main factors behind the soft power of the Islamic Republic of Iran. indeed, despite the fact that resorting to Shiite unification has strengthened Iran's position as an active actor in the region, the Islamic Republic of Iran relies and emphasizes more and more on shared values among the Islamic Ummah in order to avoid accusations such as provoking the Shiites of the region against Sunni and Western-affiliated governments, which besides more solidarity with the role of "Umm al-Qa'ray", causes less sensitivity (Tawal, 2005: 60).

3-2. Understanding and Investigation of the Position of Iraqi Shiites

Iraqi Shiites are the largest ethnic religion in Iraq with a population of over 65%. The decisive majority of Iraqi Shiite Muslim are the Arab people, 40% of the Turkmen people, and a minority of Kurds. After the invasion of Iraq in 2003, sectarian violence between Shiites and Sunnis has increased (Momen, 1985; Nakash, 2003). Besides, the holy cities of the Shiites of the world, such as Najaf and Karbala, are located and they are shrine of millions of Shiite Muslims.

Since the Shiites of Iraq constitute about 65% of the population, and the Pan-Arab Ba'ath regime had, in the past, kept this section of the population in the margin for political reasons, they are prepared to demonstrate a widespread political presence in the country. The Iraqi Shiites have different views within

themselves, belonging to the country's diverse political-ideological spectrum. Generally, these Shiites can be politically categorized to the political Islam and the less political Jurisprudential Islam. In both spectrums, there are political rivalries between the Jurisprudential Shi'ite Islamists and Islamic movements (Naderi Dost, 2015: 3), which will be briefly referred to in the following.

3-2-1. Islamic Dawa Party

One of the oldest political parties in Iraq is the Islamic Dawa Party. This party (IDP), based on the literature and statements of its members, was founded in the Holy City of Najaf, Iraq, in the late 1950's (al-Khatib ibn al-Najaf, 1980: 40), on October 12, 1957 / Mehr 20, 1336 S.H (Raouf, 2005). However, this date is mentioned by Ali Momen (Momen, 2004: 35-36), while Hana Batatu considered it to be the end of the 60's, and Abdullah Nafisi and Ahmad Mowassali have mentioned the foundation dates as in the years 1977/1356 S.H and 1968/1346 S.H, respectively (Mowassali, 1998: 291).

The Dawa Party began its public activity after the Ba'ath Party came to power in Iraq in 1968. With the US invasion and the collapse of the autocratic regime of Saddam Hussein on April 9, 2003, the Dawa Party was given an opportunity to convey its vision of the formation of an Islamic state, which was followed for more than 40 years.

3-2-2. Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq

"The Islamic Supreme (revolutionary) Council of Iraq" was established in Tehran on Safar 1, 1403 Hijri, equal to 1982/11/17 (Nazemian, 2000: 87). Ayatollah Seyyed Mohammad Bagher Hakim says that the formation of this council took place when the martyrdom of Ayatollah Seyyed Mohammad Bagher Sadr by the ruling regime in Iraq had created a great deprivation in the leadership of the Islamic struggles in Iraq. Hence, a number of scholars and students of martyr Sadr and the leaders of the Islamic Movement of Iraq worked to compensate for this vacuum, and with the cooperation and coordination of the Islamic Republic of Iran, there was a great deal of discussion and efforts that led to the establishment of the population of Iraqi Mojahed Ulama and then "The Office of the Iraqi Islamic Revolution" and after that, the integration and development of all these institutions in the "Supreme Council of the Islamic Republic of Iraq". Among the founders of the Supreme Islamic Council of Iraq, parties and groups such as the Islamic Dawa Party, the Islamic Labor Organization, the Movement of the Mojahedin al-Iraqiyin, the Hezbollah of Kurdistan, plus a group of "Muslim Brotherhood" which joined the council after the Kuwaiti crisis, can be named (Nazemian, 2000: 88).

3-2-3. The Sadrist Movement (Al-Tayyar Al-Sadri Al-Raisi)

Some Shiite movements in Iraq claim that they are following Shahid Sadr's thinking, in other words, they call themselves "the Sadrist Movement". The most prominent of these collections are the following collections:

1. "The flow of Muqtada al-Sadr" (al-Tayyar al-Sadri al-Raisi) headed by Muqtada al-Sadr, in which there is a collection of theologian clerics and others, such as Abdul Hadi al-Darraj, Salah al-Obeidi, Hazem al-A'raji and Ýiāb al-A'raji. Specifically, the reference of this group, after the martyrdom of Seyyed Mohammad Sadeq Sadr, was Ayatollah Kazem Haeri, who now lives in Iran (city of Qom).
2. The "Al-Fazila Party", now headed by Hashim al-Hashimi, is led by Ayatollah Mohammad Ya'qubbi, a student of martyr Sadr (1st and 2nd). The movement is dominated by its leader in Basra, with its main influence in the city. Since the leader of this party is now in Basra, it has chosen this city as its center, with its most influence in this city. It was established in May 2003 in Baghdad, but the city of Basra is considered one of the most

important places for this party, because there are many followers of Ayatollah Mohammad Ya'qubbi there. (Latif, 2011: 289).

3. the collection of "Mahmud al-Sarakhi", a small collection that originated from Karbala, penetrated in some other places, heavily criticizing the rule of Iraq and Iran and other Shiite parties.

4. The "Al-Qazi El-Yamani" or "Jund al-Sama" congregation, as described in the Book of Wales of Al-A'lam, gained arms confronting other militant groups of the Shiite parties, and in this lineage, by employing their women and their children against other Shiite parties, completed their combat arrangement. The remnants of this group always act outside the control of official military forces, in some parts of southern Iraq. Understanding the thoughts of this group is difficult due to the fact that their activities are prohibited by the government and has face the opposition of other Shiite groups. Although this flow of political movement does not have a certain idea and attitude, it is based on Al-Sadr's role in Islamic activities of Iraq, and considers it to be the main factor behind the establishment of the Islamic revolution (Latif, 2011: 141).

5. Islamic Combat Organization of Iraq (Islamic Labor Organization)

This group is considered the second largest Islamic Shiite Islamist group in Iraq after the Dawa party, and it is considered to be a kind of split from it, according to some analyses. The murder of Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr and the lack of his leadership led to the establishment of this group by Grand Ayatollah Seyyed Mohammad Hosseini Shirazi - one of Shiite authorities in Iraq. After the death of Ayatollah Shirazi in 2000, Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Modarresi is leading this group. Shortly after the Iraqi Ba'ath regime collapse, he arrived in Iraq with his entourage. The Islamic Combat Organization is so powerful in terms of finance and organization, among Iraqi Shiites, especially in the southern Persian Gulf region (Ahmadi, 2003: 40).

3-3. A Review of Islamic Republic of Iran Foreign Policy towards Iraq

The Iraqi country, as compared to other neighbors, has been most influential on Iran's security and national interests, due to the existence of cultural and religious commonalities and long borders between the two countries. The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has sought to use its religious and cultural soft power in Iraq to increase its popularity among the majority of Iraqi Shiites, and has thus gained an influential position. Culturally, the Shi'ism is the most important and pivotal component of Iran's soft power in Iraq. The majority of people in Iran and Iraq are Muslims and follow the Shiite religion. This has greatly affected the attitude of the Iraqi people towards Iran's policies and actions and, to a large extent, has created a sense of mutual trust between the Iranian government and the Iraqi people. The latter, especially after 2003, has shown its greatest impact with the establishment of the Shiite regime in Iraq (Pourtaieb, 2010: 2).

4. Review the Performance of the Al-Alam Network News in Iraq

The Islamic Republic of Iran, for expanding its influence and effectiveness, as well as describing and determining its foreign policy in Iraq, use several tools. Meanwhile, the medium is the most important tool used to convey messages, explain foreign policy, highlight the issues and show their significance. Nowadays, the communication is mainly done through media (Bahrami, 2011). Iran is well aware of the media as a tool for regional and international role in foreign policy. Iran is trying to achieve the following objectives in Iraq through the Al-Alam satellite network:

a) Access to national and international objectives: Because the media act like diplomats who provide the right context for implementing foreign policy.

b) Highlighting Iran's priorities in Iraq: The Al-Alam Network has attracted the Iraqi people mass to the issues such as terrorism and the withdrawal of foreign troops from Iraq as a source of insecurity and stability in this country through highlighting them, and conveyed this message to them that the establishment of a democratic and stable system requires the rapid withdrawal of the occupying forces from the country.

(C) promoting the cultural and religious ties between the people of Iran and Iraq: strengthening the cultural and emotional relations between the people of Iran and Iraq, especially the Shiites, and also eliminating negative views of Iran that were created during by previous regime in Iraq and the hostile media of the region against Iran were among the objectives of Al-Alam satellite network (Bahrami, 2011: 5-3).

Despite the fact that this network entered the international media simultaneous with Iraqi war, Al-Alam has been able to achieve a special place among Arab and international audiences in the region with the help of its experienced staff and journalists, and the transmission of news according to the principle of speed, accuracy and transparency. According to survey conducted on the after the Iraq war on the audience of al-Alam in this country, honesty, speed and accuracy in informing, paying attention to the events in Iraq and Bahrain, highlighting the political orientation, and professionalism of the network are the main strengths of this network (New York Times report of Al-Alam, 2003: 27).

Reuters News Agency in a report assert that: Al-Alam's network is so welcomed in Iraq in a way that in some areas, the people stand in queues for the boosters to boost waves (Public Relations of Al-Alam Network, 2006). The budget, the human resources, the technical facilities and even the small newsroom were intended for six hours work a day, however when with a fait accompli, it turned into a 24-hour activity. Live coverage of the first missiles hitting Baghdad and deployment of the news to different corners of Iraq, from Mosul and Kirkuk to Faw and Basra, and Najaf and Karbala to Kazemin and Baghdad was done in line with this purpose (Public Relations Network Al-Alam, 2006).

After the occupation of Iraq, Al-Alam showed a major effort to maintain the integrity of Iraq and to protect Iraq from the damages of the occupation. This network, for the purpose of affecting Iraq's incidents, dealt with revelation of the occupying countries policies and coverage of the people protests (Sadaty, 2012: 96).

Although the geographic proximity of Iraq as a news hub was considered as a comparative advantage for al-Alam, the instant policy-making for that was not as easy. Opposition to the United States campaign to Iraq, from the very early days, was among the key policies of the Al-Alam network. Iraq, as a Muslim country, still has borders and is a member of the United Nations whose occupation was not only a violation of international law, but also a threat to the national interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The implementation of this principled media policy led to a paradox that, in some cases, the opposition to the occupation of Iraq was interpreted in conjunction with the regime of Saddam (Heidari, 1394).

In this regards, and in a context where many Iraqis were deprived of access to satellite networks, Al-Alam, in a fully opposed view to the coalition and the US, and in defense of the oppression of the Muslim people of Iraq and in order to portray the political situation of the country, dealt with the full coverage of Iraq News (Public Relations, Al-Alam, 2010).

Al-Alam, in the course of the state-building process in Iraq, confronted with it with a gentle tone and succeeded to preserve a positive face in Iraqi government. The MCN news website, with

distribution of a report asserts that: The Al Jazeera network has a new rival, but it does not compete with an Arab country like the United Arab Emirates, which has Abu Dhabi TV or Saudi Arabia, which has launched Al-Arabiya's network. It is the Al-Alam news network which means the "world", launched by Iran. Despite the similarities with Al Jazeera, surprisingly, the network offers more balanced analysis of state-building efforts in Iraq and a positive coverage of the government's council. Although this network criticizes US policies in Iraq and, unlike Al Jazeera, does not criticize the members of the Iraqi government, it has succeeded to achieve a better position in Iraq (Sadaty, 2012: 101).

Al-Alam's media diplomacy in Iraq was constantly progressing confronting with the psychological war by the invaders and has been able to exert tremendous effects on political equations in Iraq, and align public opinion with its goals. The Al-Alam's influence in Iraq led the US media to criticize its media policies in Iraq (Sadaty, 2012: 97).

One year after initiation of the Al-Alam Network and the height of Iraqi occupation, the western polling institutes announced that 75% of the Iraqi viewers watched Al-Alam and due to the rapid and accurate broadcasting of the Iraq news as well the ease in receiving its images in the country, it was the most viewed network in Iraq. On the second anniversary of the Al-Alam satellite network, a non-governmental organization called "Al-Mawad al-Watni al-Iraqi lel-Ta'ahil al-Tartib al-Aalami" (Iraqi National Institute for Qualification and Media Rankings) conducted a survey in Baghdad, Najaf, Kirkuk, Sulaimaniyah and Basra and concluded that 78.5% of Najaf residents, 66% of the residents of Kirkuk, 59% of Sulaimaniyah residents and 53.6% of residents of Baghdad and 2.43% of Basra residents viewed Al-Alam (Hezbollah journal, 2007).

Al-Alam had distributed 321 news items and produced news reports on the US-Iraqi security cooperation agreement in four months (August, September, October and November of 2008). Al-Alam's website in this regard had also published 268 articles and reports in the first six months of 2008 (Public Relations, Al-Alam, 2010).

4-1. News Activities

During this period, 60 news and reports on people, personalities, parties and political groups, as well as officials of the Iraqi government reactions, were broadcasted about this agreement by the network. Some of the major issues are as follows:

- Basra nomads, besides opposing to the US-Iraqi Security Cooperation Agreement, accused Washington of deploying a permanent base in Iraq.
- The Iraqi prime minister: there will not remain a single foreign soldier until 2011.
- The Iraqi government: Any agreement on security cooperation with the United States that ruins Iraq's sovereignty is rejected.
- Iraqi political parties and groups, besides condemning the spying on Iraqi PM, rejected the US-Iraqi security cooperation agreement.
- George W. Bush: 8,000 US troops will leave Iraq soon.
- The Iraqi prime minister said there were problems reaching the US-Iraqi security cooperation agreement.
- The Iraqi parliament stated that the issue of the US-Iraqi security cooperation agreement should be discussed in parliament. (Public Relations, Al-Alam, 1389)

4-2. Online Activities

Al-Alam has also provided 144 news and analysis reports in three languages: Arabic, English, and Persian on its website, about the agreement, of which 92 news items and reports, 5 interviews were in Arabic, 20 news reports were in Persian, and 32 news stories and news reports were in English. Also, the full

text of the security agreement has been posted on the website (Public Relations, Al-Alam, 2010).
 The network also contributed to highlighting the anti-American views and insights of the Iraqi politicians. An Iraqi MP said in an interview with the network that the US occupying forces still reject the people's opinions and try to retreat (Sadaty, 2012: 101).
 The impact of Al-Alam on Iraq's public opinion was such that US Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld stated: "We made a mistake about not entering the media war, perhaps because we saw ourselves superior, but a small network like Al-Alam was able to perform well" (Sadaty, 2012: 99).
 Also, according to another survey conducted in Baghdad, Basra, and Najaf (Shiite Residential areas) by IRIB Research Center in 2009, it was revealed that from among of 96 local, regional and international networks, Al-Alam was the sixth highly viewed network by people in the city of Baghdad, above the BBC Arabic, Al-Akhbariya and Al-Hara of Iraq. Based on this survey with 1,455 Iraqi citizens participating, aged 18 and over from Sunnis and Shiites, 30.5% of the respondents are Al-Alam viewers, of which 98.2% receive the channel from satellites and 1.8% via the Internet receives (IRIB Research Center, 2009).
 In this section, in the form of two separate tables, firstly the past developments and future scenarios ahead of Iraq as well as its impact on the political position of the Shiites of Iraq and also Iran will be investigated, and then a full conclusion of the media performance of the Al-Alam network about the Shiites of Iraq is presented [Table 1 And 2].

Table 1: The Iraq's developments and their influence on the Shiites power and position

Developments, current situation, and future scenarios	Impact on the Shiites' weight and position	The influence on Iran's geopolitical weight and position as the only Shiite government in the world
The collapse of Saddam's regime and the disappearance of the Sunni-based Ba'athist regime	Provision of the opportunities for the presence of the Shi'ites in the power structure	The increase in Iran's presence and influence in Iraq
Holding elections and taking over the Iraqi government by Shiites	Increasing Shiite Power in Iraq and the Region	Increasing the presence and influence of Iran in Iraq and the region
The withdrawal of American troops from Iraq	Increasing Shiite Power in Iraq	The withdrawal of Iran's most important trans-regional rival from Iraq, as well as a decrease in the influence of regional rivals such as Saudi Arabia and the consequent increase in the presence and influence of Iran in Iraq
The power struggle in Iraq, the civil war, the intervention of trans-national powers and ...	The decrease of Shiite power due to decrease in Shi'a presence in Iraqi power structures	Reducing Iran's presence and influence in Iraq

(Heidari, 2015)

Table 2: Al-Alam most important media axes in terms of Iraqi Shiites

Media axes	Related scenario
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Opposition to US invasion of Iraq	Preventing US influence in the region
Broadcasting of the first live video of US troops in Iraq and launch of first missiles to Baghdad	Gaining news superiority in the region and hones presentation of the news and facts of the Iraqi occupation
The introduction of America as the root of the spread and expansion of terrorism and the source of insecurity in Iraq	The withdrawal of US troops from Iraq and the formation of an independent state in Iraq, regarding the majority of Shiites in Iraq
Abu Ghraib's extensive coverage of human rights abuses by the United States	Changing the attitude of the Iraqi people toward the United States and give it real policies
Trying to eliminate negative views on Iran, especially among Iraqi Shiites	Strengthening cultural and affective ties between the people of Iran and Iraq
Covering people's protests against occupying policies	Influence on Iraqi developments by changing the attitude of the Iraqi people and preserving its integrity
Showing the Iraqi people's desperation and frustration caused by the occupation of American forces	The impact on the psychological atmosphere of Iraq on the need for the withdrawal of the invaders
Announcement of US officials meeting with 300 exiles of Iraqi tribal leaders on the future of Iraq after Saddam	Motivating the Iraqi people to intervene in determining their own destiny with respect to the majority of Iraqi Shiites
Positive news coverage of Iraqi elections with Iraqi experts and officials and Iraqi observers	Directing the public opinion of the Iraqi people and the Iraqi Shiites towards coming to power of the Shiite groups
Revelation of the transfer of ballot boxes to Baghdad by US troops	Instigating anti-American sentiment and inciteing political groups to confront US actions in Iraq
Continuous coverage of news of the withdrawal of US troops from Iraqi cities	Revelation of the weakness of the American Forces and the Intention of the Iraqi Forces to retrieve identity and

	independent state administration
Reflection of the destruction of the battle and the increase in civilian casualties	The inability of the occupying forces in provision of security and preventing the casualties
The emphasis on the common cultural and religious beliefs of the Shiites of both Iran and Iraq	Establishment of the coherence between Shiites and Islamic reunion and strengthening the strategic interactions between the two countries
Live coverage of Ayatollah Hakim City-to-city moving from Iran to Iraq	Representing the role of the Shi'a clergy and defending the power of the Shia community in Iraq
Disclosure of US-Iraq Security Agreement through coverage of people protests and opposition of Shiite authorities, experts, and scholars	Preventing US presence in Iraq and accelerating their withdrawal

(Heidari, 2015)

CONCLUSION

The Islamic Republic of Iran foreign policy is a two-folded. On the one hand, it seeks to ensure the internal security and stability of the borders, most of whose inhabitants are non-Shiite minority groups with more or less separatist tendencies and can be potential infiltration areas for potential enemies, and on the other hand, it intends to play a central role in the Muslim world. The challenge Iran's diplomacy is facing is the integration of Shi'ism and Islam, as there can be challenges between the interests of Iran and the Shi'ism. However, as mentioned, the strengthening and supporting the role of Shiite element in the Middle East by Iran is not only based on the strengthening of the ideological context, but also for strategizing the role of the Shiites in the development of the regional power system, thereby consolidating and strengthening the role and influence of Iran in the areas of competition and influence in the Middle East region, particularly the Persian Gulf. The rationale behind this argument is that future matches in the Middle East region will be based not only on ideologies, but also on consolidation of domains of influence and role. Iran, through its religious, cultural and political ties with these countries, including Iraq, has a significant soft power in this country, which has empowered it to pursue its foreign policy goals in that country as well as in the region. Iran needs to increase its soft power in this country and also needs to be accepted by the Iraqi public opinion and politicians, in order to bring Iraq together with its regional and international policies in such cases as fighting terrorism, preserving the land security, and confronting the US threats, as well as highlighting its role in Muslim and Arab World political equations. Indeed, the Islamic Republic of Iran, in order to avoid accusations such as provoking the Shiites of the region against Sunni and Western-affiliated governments, insists more on creating unity among the Islamic countries, which besides more solidarity with the role of "Umm al-Qa'ray", causes less sensitivity. It is also clear that the organized promotion of Shi'ism is not beneficial for the Iraqi country and other Shiites

in the region, and it will create many problems, regarding the presence of other Islamic sects in the region.

Accordingly, the Islamic Republic of Iran, more than ever, needs to use a smart and active diplomacy and a more prominent presence in the news and media section in order to maintain its superior position in Iraq, as well as to counteract the Possible threats and hostile policies of the regional and international actors. This diplomacy can help Iran to succeed in foreign policy and achieve the vital goals in the important country of the Middle East. In this regard, Al-Alam's network as a media tool for the diplomacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Iraq has tried to pursue a line of support for the Shiites in the region and in the countries studied, without causing religious disputes and with regards to the existing considerations, trying not to trigger the sensitivity among other Islamic sects. Therefore, the network has always emphasized the need for the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq, and with its revelations on the consequences of the presence of these forces, it has focused its attention on this issue and transferring the power to the Iraqi groups. Finally, it can be said that Al-Alam network in order to maintain the strategic interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the region, has supported the achievement of Shiites to their lost rights, including political freedom and inclusion in the government institutions and besides opposition to the occupation of these countries, has emphasized on the right of Shiites to determine their own fate. However, it should be noted that other regional and international actors whose interests are sometimes conflicting with those of Iran in Iraq and the Middle East, have not sit around and do nothing, but they are hugely investing in terms of exploitation of the media diplomacy in the form of some Networks such as Al Jazeera, Al-Arabia and etc.

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