

## The Soft War and its Effect on the People Living beside the Arvand River

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### ABSTRACT

Today, the soft war and the psychological operation have been changed into the main strategies and policies of most of the superpowers confronting the target states and nations. Their objective of starting a soft war in the form of a media war, is to overthrow a political system and provoke a conflict between the people living in a land, so that, through the weakness or overthrowing the political system, or the ethnic and social conflicts, they would have a justifiable reason to penetrate and intervene in those countries' affairs. The enemy, in the psychological operation and the soft war, always has a precise and measured road map, and tries to have a careful and orderly plan for maximum effectiveness of all social groups and populations, even in different regions. One of the critical and important regions of Iran is the region near to the Arvand River and the cities of Abadan and Khorramshahr, in Khuzestan Province, southwest of Iran, which is strategically, economically, and socially important. The presence of several ethnicities and tribes, besides its contiguity with the southern parts of Iraq, and its energy resources, have highlighted the sensitivity and importance of this region for all. Since affecting the people living in the sensitive and strategic regions is among the main priorities of the enemies in the soft war, these people are attacked with the soft war and the psychological operations in the form of different tactics, such as: rumor spreading, big lies, calumination, catastrophic predictions, divisions, and contradictions, and so on. So that, by making problems in this region, they deprive the Islamic Republic of achieving the advantages and desirability resulted from this region. Also, regarding the extensiveness of the economic and social relationships and interactions between Iran and Iraq in the recent years, one of the priorities of the enemies in the soft war is creating disagreements and hatred between the two nations of Iran and Iraq, using different methods and tactics, in order to prevent the empowering of the two nations as a result of expansion of the mutual relationships.

**Keywords:** soft war, soft war tactics, the region near to the Arvand River.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Today, there are numerous think tanks and psychological operation headquarters in the United States and European countries in order to influence and penetrate the public opinion, and change the behavior and orientations of different governments and nations, especially those who are in conflict (Moradi, 2013, 25).

These think tanks try to influence the public opinion in different domains. Interestingly, the activities of these psychological operations think tanks include all political, social, cultural, economic, and even educational domains.

Undoubtedly, the resistance and endurance of Iranian leaders and people against the enemies in more than three decades have made them conclude that hard and direct confrontation with Iran is by no means successful, and perhaps, it has had opposite results. Therefore, they have followed their objectives with a new approach and in the form of soft methods. The phenomenon has been described by the Supreme leader of the revolution who has emphasized on it by using the terms such as "Cultural Invasion "," Cultural Raid", "Cultural NATO "and more recently the so-called "soft war ", and called the authorities to find a remedy to confront it (Naeini, 2012, 3).

The Supreme Leader has emphasized several times that the enemy has a plan for all the domains and people, characters, and populations in Iran, and seeks to instigate all of them against the Islamic Republic of Iran's system, and even against themselves and their own cultural and religious principles (Information Center of the Supreme Leader, Imam Khamenei). Maybe, it can be said that: the main reason behind the struggle between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the West is that the Islamic Revolution stopped the western powers from exploiting Iran's national resources and reserves. It is true, but it is not all of the truth, since the Islamic Revolution, in addition to doing so, challenged the fundamental thoughts and principles on which the western civilization was based on, such as non-realism, relativism, pluralism, humanism, the originality of pleasure and profit, secularism and liberalism, and besides doing so, provided a successful model based on the pure Islamic principles (Sharifi, 2013, 85). Moreover, in the new era, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union, The United States and the imperialism have put their maximum power and energy on soft and cultural confrontation with their enemies, and undoubtedly, the Islamic Revolution, due to its anti-imperialist and anti-arrogant essence and identity, has been placed at the height of the soft confrontation of the enemy (Mahpishanian, 2011, 255-6).

Therefore, the enemies, in their soft war programs against Iran, follow very complicated and cryptic objectives and yet, they have a per-planned plot. They have divided the country

based on the particular elements and components, and based on this division, they implement their plans.

This division can have ethnic, geographical, religious, lingual, class-based, guild-based, or even political bases. Based on this division, and the plots they have, they plan for the psychological operation and soft war in different regions and domains.

Among the different types of the soft war, the soft war intends to influence different ethnicities and tribes which has been of a great importance, and it has been always addressed by various research studies and articles. For example, Elyasi (2011) and Amanat Behbahani (2014) in two separated studies, dealt with the objectives and tactics of soft war on Iranian ethnicities and the ways to confront it.

However, no separate and independent studies have been conducted on different effects and aspects of the soft war on a specific region of Iran. In the current study, it has been tried to provide a brief view on the subject of soft war with the aim of effectiveness on the residents of the people neighboring the Arvand River, especially the cities of Abadan and Khorramshahr.

One of the geographically, economically, politically, and ethnically important and sensitive regions of the country is Khuzestan Province, and especially the southwest area of this province, which is the bank of Arvand River and the cities of Abadan and Khorramshahr. The bank of Arvand River and the cities of Abadan and Khorramshahr are especially and extraordinarily important to the Islamic Republic of Iran, in at least three aspects:

#### a) Strategic:

The cities of Abadan and Khorramshahr, due to the proximity to the strategic and border river of Arvand, and having a common border with Iraq, and the fact that during the history, this region has been subject to border disputes and struggles between Iran and Iraq, and since the Arvand River is Iraq's only access to the free seas, and it has always tried to maintain this connection even through putting pressure on Iran, which is a very important matter, are strategically important.

In the recent years and especially after the overthrowing of Saddam, and emergence of governments convergent with Islamic Republic of Iran, the region near Arvand River, especially the cities of Abadan and Khorramshahr, has been always the place for extensive travels of Iranians and Iraqis, to each other's countries, and regarding the religious similarities between the southern provinces of Iraq and Khuzestan Province, whose majority of people are Shia, this region has been changed into a connecting corridor between the two countries.

Particularly, with the massive acclamation of the Arba'een ceremony by Iranian people, which is held annually, and regarding the religious similarity of the this region with the neighboring regions in Iraq, one of the main routes of commute to Iraq and participating in this ceremony is this very region.

#### b) Economic:

The placement of the old and historic refinery of Abadan in this region and the presence of large shipping companies and the marine transit in this region, as well as the presence of customs as well as establishment and creation of Arvand Free Zone in

this area, have massively added to the economic and commercial importance of this region. In addition, regarding the lifting of the visa requirement for the Iraqi people for travelling to this region, the extensive commercial exchange in this region can be observed. Also, the neighboring of this region to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia through the sea, and the commercial and economic exchanges with the neighboring Arab countries, it is of great importance to the Islamic Republic of Iran (Arvand Free Zone Information Center).

#### c) Social:

The presence of various ethnicities such as the Arabs, Kurds, Lurs, and Bakhtiari, on the bank of Arvand River, has changed this region into a plural one in social, as well as the cultural terms.

Furthermore, due to the placement of Abadan Oil Refinery, as well as the oil, gas, and petrochemical industries, the workers and technicians from around the country have got together there, and in other words, we can see a small Iran in this region.

Yet, after the end of Iran-Iraq war, which led to the homelessness and immigration of a large number of the locals of this region, some of them did not return and correspondingly, there is a dispatching of the crowds from every corner of Iran to this region.

Although the dominant ethnicity of the region includes the Arabs, other ethnicities are also present in the region and there is no conflict or adversity among them, and they have a peaceful coexistence.

Regarding the characteristics of this region, and its political, economic, and social importance, as well as its effectiveness on the development of Islamic Republic of Iran, and the importance of the economic and political relationships between Iran and Iraq in recent years, and the fact that the largest volume of trade and economic exchanges with Iraq is done through this region, the enemy has considered this region to be especially important for conducting the psychological operations, and has started the soft war in order to deprive Iran from exploiting the advantages of this region.

The enemies of the Islamic Republic of Iran have considered a vast range of actions from hard to soft actions to overthrow the Islamic Republic of Iran or decrease its effectiveness or/and marginalize it. Regarding the high costs of a hard war on the one hand, and Iran's getting powerful in terms of military aspects in recent years, the possibility of an armed force and starting a hard war against the Islamic Republic of Iran is very low, however, based on the high effectiveness of the soft war and also the low costs of it, as well as the flexibility and changeability of its methods and tactics, and addressing all the social groups, including men and women, and the young and the elderly, the workers and the students, the experts and other groups of people, the enemy has especially counted on the soft war and the psychological operation on different societies, especially that of Iran (Naeini, 2012, 29).

In the soft war, the enemies of the Islamic Republic of Iran use all their powers and capabilities to have the highest effectiveness on the target society. The soft war is so important that it attacks the target society in different aspects and angles, and uses highly flexible, fluid, and psychological tricks and techniques. Unlike the hard and military war in which the enemy fights from a specific front, and its goal is to exhaust the

military and defensive forces of a country, in the soft war, the enemy attacks its target society from different aspects and angles, and besides, it plans for all the age, social, and guild groups separately, getting prepared to fire them with a bullet proportionate to their interests and morals (Mohamamdi Najm, 2011).

So, it can be briefly said that in the soft war and psychological operation, the main goal of the enemy is to change the reckoning of the planners and managers, and the people's political, social, and economic orientations through special media-based, artistic, psychological, and psychological operation methods.

In other words, beyond the soft war, the change in attitudes, behaviors, and policies has been intended, and finally, what the enemy has always sought by any means is to overthrow and change the political system (Eyvazi & Harati, 2012, 135).

Regarding the above introduction, the soft war and psychological operation have been among the priorities of the enemies of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and they have had a separate and pre-planned plot and objective for any society, based on the target region and population, or in other words for each society to affect it optimally in order to change its attitudes and behaviors. The main question of the current research is:

What are the most important tactics and tricks used by the enemy to affect and change the attitudes and behaviors of the people residing near the Arvand River (Abadan and Khorramshahr)?

The research hypothesis is that the enemies, through the media propaganda and media war, and tactics such as the big lie, exaggeration, calumny, comparison, partly expression of the truth, spreading rumors, division, hatred, and etc., have tried to change the attitudes and behaviors of the people residing near the Arvand River, and finally, based on the strategic, economic, and social importance of this region to the Islamic Republic of Iran, they have sought to deprive it from exploiting the pure advantages and opportunities of this region, and change it to a dangerous and challenging region for Iran.

The data collection method was library-based, as well as the field observations and investigations of the cyberspace, especially the Telegram channels, and the use of interview methods asking the opinions of the experts in the field.

#### **The Soft War Tactics for Affecting the People Residing near the Arvand River:**

After the end of Iran-Iraq war, and starting the reconstruction in Iran, especially in the border and war zones, and regarding the enormous damages inflicted by the war, the Islamic Republic of Iran's governments from 1989 onward, decided to reconstruct and restore the war zones (Mirsalim, 2005, 328). This decision and the implementation of the reconstruction policies and programs, even in a half-finished and incomplete form, was enough to attract the large population of the war-inflicted and locals who had left their homes since the beginning of 1981. Although with the passage of about 30 years from war, the population of Abadan and Khorramshahr never reached pre-war statistics; anyway, the promise of reconstruction and its implementation, even in an incomplete form, attracted so many people to return.

On the other hand, with establishment of full security in the region, especially after the overthrowing of Saddam in 2003, the bold presence of the investors and actors in the economic sector in the region can be seen. Besides, the re-flourishing of Abadan Refinery as one of Iran's oil industry poles during the years after the war, has attracted a large population to the region. In recent years, the establishment of Arvand Free Zone in this region, whose main objective has been to ease the import and export of goods, has transformed the region to a trusted and safe corridor for commercial and trade exchanges between Iran and its neighbors, especially Iraq; the importance of this special and strategic region has been more realized for Islamic Republic of Iran, and also, considering the large volume of trade and commercial exchanges between Iran and Iraq in recent years, especially when the United States seeks to, by putting economic pressures and imposing the sanctions, force the Islamic Republic of Iran's government to change its behavior and orientation, it is required from the authorities to identify the brilliance and capabilities of this region, so that by the maximum use of its economic and social power, to block the others from abusing it.

In the followings, some tactics and tricks used by the enemy to affect the people residing near the Arvand River, and make them involve in a conflict with either the political system or themselves, and pose disagreement between them, aiming to reduce the advantages and optimality of this region for the Islamic Republic of Iran, have been provided:

#### **1- Psychological War (Media):**

The media war is the most applicable way of confronting the nations in the process of the soft war, as it has been defined as follows: the use of media for weakening of the target country and exploiting their powers (including the Press, news agencies, radio, television, Internet and advertising) to create crises and worsen them, and to exploit the modern tactics for defending the national interests (Eyvazi and Harati, 2012, 197).

The media war is one of the prominent aspects of the soft war, and it is among the new international wars, mainly used more at the time of military conflicts. However, it does not mean that this type of war is not going on, or is not used. In the media war, each country uses the media with the highest power to promote its political goals. Thus, it is the only war that can be continued unofficially, even in the peace period (ibid).

Beyond the face of the media war which is going on in the radio, the television, news websites, and satellite channels, there lays a fundamental and big goal which is named the country's 'media policy'. This goal is followed by the huge expenses and through different means and programs, and even through the intelligence and security agencies.

The guidance and commanding of the soft war is not necessarily done by the military commanders, but by the propaganda experts, the social psychology experts, and the influential and powerful presenters and actors.

It is possible that the people under the media war bombardment and invasions do not notice the catastrophic effects and the heavy invasion of the enemy, or even fail to understand them. Sun Tzu believes that it should be tried to make the enemies desperate by any means possible, and make them lose their will completely. In fact, the art and the full

victory is the use of psychological factors to defeat the enemy without resorting to the war (Tzu, 2008, 102). Therefore, one of the phenomena happening at the time of war is the 'strategic bombing', which, in addition to demolishing the infrastructure, attacks the psychological targets, that is the very destruction of the enemy's spirit, the weakening of the will of civilians to participate in the war, and creating despair in society (Ziaei Poor, 2007, 12).

Regarding the fact that most of the people residing near the Arvand River are Arab speaking, the Arab media of the neighboring countries (Al-Arabiyah, Al-Jazirah, and etc.) have eagerly tried to form and induce the public opinion of Iranians living in this region, and generate a gap between the people and the government in the form of media war. Through exaggerating the problems and issues in this region, they accuse the political system of neglecting the problems, and also pretend that such problems do not exist in other regions of the country, and these problems are created due to the ethnic and lingual discourse of this region, and there is no will to solve them.

The induction of discrimination, misconduct, mismanagement, violence, injustice and inequality by the political system towards the people, are the measures eagerly followed by the foreign media in the form of news, movies, reports, and etc., through which they hurt the people's feelings, forcing them to act directly or indirectly against the government.

## 2- Big Lie:

In this method, the false and unreal message is expressed and it is repeated continually, so that the audience mind is attracted. Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda of Nazi Germany in Hitler's administration, highly emphasized this method. He said: the bigger the lie, the easier to believe (Mohammadi Najm, 2011).

In the followings, a part of the soft war inductions to the people of this region, in the form of the Big Lie technique, has been presented as follows:

- In this tactic, it continuously induces the audience that they are the richest people in the world, and their resources and reserves are the largest in the world.
- Through dredging the Arvand River and selling the mud to Japan and other countries, the economic status of the people of the region can be drastically changed.
- The whole Iran can be run by the Abadan Refinery income, but the people of the region have no share of this income.
- The government policy is to hire the non-locals in the region, and all the quota are allocated for them.
- The government arrests and oppresses the region's social, political, and ethnic activists.
- No attention has been paid to the development and prosperity of the region, post-war.
- The government intends to change the demographic and ethnic texture of the region. In other words, the government, through making other Iranian ethnicities to immigrate to this region, intends to manipulate the demographic and social formation of this region.
- The reason behind water salinity in Bahmanshir and Arvand rivers is building so many unplanned dams and negligence of the interests of the region.

- The reason behind the dusts has been the government's wrong environmental policies.
- The government can solve the issue of the dusts in a year or six months.
- The educational and health services in the region are so low and scarce.
- The income of the families in this region is lower than that of families living in other regions of the country, and on the other hand, due to the lack of the supervision and the optimal management, the living costs are higher in this region, compared to the other regions.

Thus, it has been observed that the enemy, through induction of false news and repeating them in the form of the Big Lie in its media or the cyberspace, or direct spreading of these news among the people of the region, has sought to create despair and frustration, and generate a gap between the people and the government.

## 3- Rumor:

This tactic is the oral transmission of a message for irritating the audience's beliefs and influencing their spirit. The general content of a rumor is the issues to which the audience is highly sensitive. Each rumor may include a part of the truth (the levelling tactic in rumor-making), but its permeation rate depends on the level of its ambiguity and importance. In other words, to the extent that the rumor is about the vague and important issues, to the same extent its permeation rate is increased (Eyvazi & Harati, 2012, 199).

Various rumors are made based on the target society, such as separating, scary, encouraging, fiery, crawling, dolphin or scuba rumors (ibid), (Shayeaat Telegram Channel).

Therefore, as it was said the two elements of rumor are its morality and the importance of the rumor for the audience.

During the recent years, and especially from time of war imposed by Iraq, the enemies have intended to use the rumor tactic the most in order to scare and suppress, and finally defeat Iran.

At the time of the war, through exaggerating the power of the enemy, they intended to scare Iran by making the people believe that they are weak.

They intended to scare and discourage Iranian people, especially those living in this region, through magnifying the statistics and the number of Iranian martyrs and wounded, as well as degrading Iranians' measures against the enemy, and showing the enemy's casualties less than what it really was.

Some other rumors made by the enemy during the Iran-Iraq war have been as follows:

- The enemy is able to seize and occupy this region in a few days.
- Your defense and military capability against the enemy is very low.
- The enemy is able to impede and obstruct the economic cycle and livelihood of people.
- The friendly forces have not shown a proper and suitable reaction against the enemy's invasion (blaming the friendly forces).
- There are numerous disagreements and gaps between the high-ranked commanders.

After the war period also, the enemies have tried to obstruct the reckoning system of the people and the authorities through making rumors in different forms. Also, as was mentioned, in the rumor tactic, the reliance is put upon the elements which are especially important to the people, or in other words, those closely tied with the life and livelihood of the people, such as the economic, occupational, wage, energy, housing, food, and so forth, issues.

#### 4- Catastrophic Predictions:

In this method, through the use of unauthenticated statistics and other methods of psychological war, the catastrophic predictions are expressed, so that the audience sensitivity towards these predictions is increased, and the enemies direct the audience thoughts based on their own desires and goals (Eyvazi & Harati, 2012, 201). They intend to scare people and encourage the people to take measures in opposition of the political system, or surrendering to the enemy by provision of such fake and wrong news and statistics.

Examples of this tactic and implementation of it in this region, have been as follows:

- You will soon face a massive cut of water or electricity.
- The government is unable to pay its clients wages.
- The government is not able to pay the subsidies, and from the next month, the cash subsidies would not be paid.
- With the establishment of Aravnd Free Zone in this region, prices are rising and the house and filed prices are not normal, which will be exacerbated in the future.
- The Bahmshir and Arvand rivers would soon completely run dry due to the wrong policies of dam building and water transition.
- Regarding the exacerbation of the dusts issue in recent years, and negligence of the government towards solving this problem, this region will be soon abandoned.
- The rate and statistics of the patients with difficult-to-treat diseases in this region will be enormously increased in the future.
- In the event of outbreak of a military war, this region will face the highest damage.

And so on.

#### 5- Provoking Division and Conflict:

Regarding the varied ethnic and demographic texture in this region, the enemies have especially counted on this tactic. In this tactic, through provoking the idea that an ethnicity or a group is hostile to the other ethnic group, or representing it as being evil, the enemy tries to set the fire of ethnic and tribal war in a society, so that after fueling this fire of civil and sectarian war, the ground for their interference in the country's affairs is paved, or they can isolate the political system of the country, or abuse the country in return for settling the quarrels (Amanat Behbahani, 2014).

Based on the ethnic plurality in this region, the enemy has repeatedly tried to provoke conflicts and quarrels between the ethnic groups, or make the existing gaps deeper in the form of the soft war and the media war. However, in spite of the ethnic and lingual variety and plurality in this region, the religion is the common factor and component between all the existing groups and tribes, and this religious commonality has

prevented from the exacerbation of the conflicts and emergence of large ethnic and social gaps (ibid).

#### 6- Character Assassination:

In this tactic, the influential and efficient people are chosen by the enemy and they do whatever propaganda and psychological measures to remove or nullify them. The financial and ethical corruption, lack of knowledge, lack of useful management and administrative experience, lack of logic and spirit of tolerance, accepting bribes, negligence of the public interests, being conspiratorial, not being manager and wise, and etc. (Naeni, 2012, 253), have been among the accusations and labels that the enemies attach to the particular characters, who endanger their interests (Eyvazi & Harati, ibid, 203).

During the recent years, especially with the boom in the use of cyberspace, the enemies have tried to defame the influential and powerful people in political, religious, and social aspects, especially the regional authorities, through this tactic, and finally remove them, so that they would not obstacle the enemies in their plans and programs.

#### 7- The Soft War and its Effectiveness on Iran-Iraq Relationships:

As it was mentioned above, the Iran-Iraq relationships are strategically and economically important for the both countries. Having common interests, common opportunities and threats, common enemies (extremist groups such as the ISIS and ...), and also, the religious and social similarity between the people of the two countries, have doubled the importance of these relationships. Particularly, in the years after the overthrowing of the former dictator, Saddam Husain, and the freedom of latent political and religious forces of the Shia, as well as the lack of a serious obstacle on the expansion of the relationships between the two nations, the ever increasing expansion of the relationships between Iran and Iraq in different political, social, economic, defensive, and military fields, from 2003 onward can be witnessed.

The vast volume of the trade and commercial exchanges between Iran and Iraq, which is being expanded, as well as the friendly and brotherly diplomatic and political relationships which are stemmed from the common interests, as well as the social and historical ties between the two nations, and the Islamic Republic of Iran's defense of the territorial integrity, independence, dignity, and identity of Iraq in the post-occupation period by the United States and its allies, and most important of all, the Islamic Republic of Iran's helps in the most critical period of Iraq's history, which is the time of ISIS invasion who intended to occupy and collapse this country, to the Iraqi nation and state, and helping with the establishment of stability and peace in that country, have made the relationships between the two countries to be at the best condition during the last 200 years. Today, both Iranian and Iraqi nations have reached the mutual understanding that short, mid, and long-term interests of the countries depend on the expansion and deepening of the all-out relationships between the two countries.

Since in the recent years, and after the collapse of Saddam, the ritual ceremony Commute of Arba'een is vastly and enthusiastically held, and yearly, about 2.5 million Iranian

people participate beside the Iraqi pilgrims, in this religious and spiritual ceremony (Hajj Pilgrimage Information Base), the relationships between the two countries have gone beyond the political and economic aspects, and it has got a doctrinal nuance to it.

However, since the main transmissions and the political, economic, and social exchanges with Iraq are done through the Khuzestan Province and the cities of Abadan and Khorramshahr, and the Arvand River, this region has become especially important during the recent years.

The unity of the Iranian and Iraqi nations, and the expansion of the economic, social, political, and defensive relationships and cooperation between the countries in the recent years have been in line with the national interests and promotion of the national security of both countries, and this increase in the relationships and cooperation, would convert Iran and Iraq into pioneer and influential countries in the Southwest Asia. Since for centuries, the relationships between the two nations have not been as close as it is now in terms of volume and quality, and the strategic policy of the enemies has been the "provoke the division and rule", the enemies have always tried to prevent from deepening of strategic relationships between the two states, through the soft war and psychological operation.

During the recent years, the enemies have always tried to provoke the hatred, discord, and conflict between the two neighboring nations, through the soft war, and the result of this conflict has been the outbreak of war, struggle, and animosity between the two nations, so that the enemies could achieve their goals through these conflicts.

In the followings, a part of the enemies' psychological operations and rumors, aimed at provoking conflicts between the nations of Iran and Iraq, especially in the Arvand region and the cities of Abadan and Khorramshahr, has been noted:

- The Iranian government has supplied the drinking water of the region to Iraq for free.
- The Iranian government, neglecting the residents in this region, exports the electricity vastly to Iraq, in the hot season.
- The fishing right in Arvand River has been issued to the Iraqi people, and the Iraqi fishing vessels are despoiling the aquatic resources in the Arvand River.
- The Iraqi people are using Iran's energy, fuel, water, and electricity free of charge.
- The government is selling some goods, especially cars, to Iraq in a very lower price than the Iranian market.
- The reason behind the expensiveness and the shortcomings in Iran is the excessive exports to Iraq.
- The entrance of Iraqi citizens to the region in the recent years has led to the expansion of corruption and anti-moral issues.
- The entrance of Iraqi citizens has led to the expensiveness and intensive shortage of chicken, fish, and protein in the region.
- The entrance of Iraqi citizens has led to the outbreak of social unrest in the region.
- With the expansion in entrance of Iraqi citizens and them using the health and treatment services, these services are quantitatively and qualitatively dropped.

On the other hand, the enemies have not confined themselves only to the soft war against the people living near the Ravand River, and through psychological operation and the soft war, they have always tried to affect the Iraqi people. In other words, they do whatever it takes to prevent from the development of the Iran-Iraq relationships and cooperation, and maintain a state of conflict and struggle between Iranian and Iraqi nations and governments, since by the increase in the cooperation and deepening of the brotherhood and unity between the two nations, the influence of the enemy in this region would be reduced and their interests, which depend on the division, would be endangered. Therefore, they also implement the psychological operations inside Iraq, aiming to distort Iran's face and position. They have made and promoted the following rumors and labels:

- Iran has seized the main oil wells in the border area between Iran and Iraq.
- The Iranians have found a dominant-like influence on Iraqes.
- Iranians sell their goods to Iraqis in more expensive prices than the global market.
- The Iranians stop the entrance of drinking water to Iraq from their headwaters.
- The Iranians export their low-quality goods to Iraq.

And ...

Therefore, it has been observed that the enemies have followed the psychological operations and the soft war in both Iran and Iraq in order to distort the relationships between the two nations, and they have done whatever it takes to achieve this goal. In other words, their interests have depended on the separation, segregation, and hostility between the two nations. Particularly, during the recent years, and with the resistance front getting bold in the Middle East, as well as Iraq joining to this front, and its key and pivotal role in the advancement of the front's goals, especially defeating the terrorist and Takfiri groups such as ISIS, all the efforts of the enemies have been focused on provoking a soft war against the people in this front (Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, and ...).

## 2. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS:

Today, since the enemies are unable to face the Iranian people and government with military and hard methods, they have simultaneously approached the soft war and psychological operation, as well as the economic war against Iran. They have a plan for any age groups, and for any classes, guilds, genders, with any social position and rank, based on the precise plots of the soft war and psychological operations in order to affect them to the highest level. In other words, it can be said that the enemy has had an implementable soft war plan for all social groups.

Generally, by starting a soft war against a country, the enemy intends to overthrow its political system and make it surrender. And in case it fails to achieve its goals, it would opt for generating social, political, and cultural gaps, so that through these groups, reduce the power and inferentialty of that society, and finally, impose its will upon it (Naeini, 2012, 200).

Starting a soft war and psychological operations in each region separately, and based on the population of that region, with the preplanned goals, there has been the agenda of the superpowers or the regional opposing powers such as Saudi Arabia.

One of the regions the superpowers (The United States, England, and ...) and some neighbors (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Israel, and ...) are especially sensitive to, and continually have sought to affect its residents, is the region near the Arvand River and the cities of Abadan and Khorramshahr. This region, due to having enormous sources of oil and gas, and the importance of such resources to Iran, as well as its proximity with southeast regions of Iraq and the strategic river of Arvand, and the role it plays in Iran-Iraq relationships and exchanges, and also due to the demographic, ethnic, and cultural texture, it is especially important to both Islamic Republic of Iran and its enemies, and both sides try to use the capabilities and advantages of this region in their own favor to the most.

For stabilizing its national and regional power, the Islamic Republic of Iran is highly dependent on this region and its advantages, and on the other hand, the enemies have always tried to deprive Iran of using the advantages of this region, and one of the ways to do so, is starting a soft war and psychological operations aimed at affecting the people of this region.

The soft war and the psychological operations are implemented in the form of different tactics such as media war, rumor-making, spreading lies, exaggeration, labelling, false reasoning, and so on, and the enemies have always tried to impose their intentions on the rival without a military war and the high costs through induction of their will to their audience in this region, and also, in a separate objective, through creating a sense of hatred and pessimism towards the Iraqi neighbor, deprive Iran of the numerous advantages of relationships and exchanges with Iraq.

### 3. SUGGESTIONS AND SOLUTIONS:

- Upgrading the "media knowledge" and "cyberspace knowledge". The simple definition of the media knowledge can be obtained by answering the questions of this media network is established by whom, and what are its goals? Who are the people in front and behind the scenes in these media? How are the financial resources and their facilities supplied? What advantages they obtain through spreading particular news? In addition, in the event of acceptance of the message and persuasion of the audience, what we would obtain and what we would lose? (Amanat Behbahani, 2014).
- Expressing the history of the enemies' colonizing measures especially those of England's during the last century, and the fact that the direct and military colonization methods have been replaced by the soft war and inferentiality in the form of psychological and media operations.
- Expressing the fact that the enemy, in its actions, is acting based on a preplanned, precise, and well contemplated plot, and it has separate and psychological plans for all social groups (women, men, youth, student,

ethnicities, and etc.), which are aimed at imposing its will upon them.

- Accelerating the development of the region and using efficient and competent managers for the advancement of the developmental goals of the region, and the necessity of planning for reducing the aspects and consequences of the soft war, since there is a significant relationship between the society's prosperity, welfare, and progress and the effectiveness of the soft war and psychological operations on that society.
- Adding variety to the programs and products of the IRIB, especially the local radio and television networks in Abadan, and producing informative reports about the soft war and the psychological operations, and the ways to neutralize and confront them. In other words, the IRIB's products should be in a way that have variety to satisfy the audience, so that they would not feel the need to use foreign media and media products.
- Providing clear explanations and elaborations, in a simple and understandable language, about the issue of the soft war, for different social groups, especially students, teachers, university professors, and so forth.

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