

THE IRANIAN ROLE IN THE NILE BASIN COUNTRIES

Mahmoud Diaa el-Din Eissa Afifi Abd el-Magid

PhD student, Faculty of Economics and political science, Cairo University
diaaegypt@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study aims at clarifying the role played by Iran in the Nile basin region as it is an area of strategic importance in the eyes of those responsible for the Iranian foreign policy. This importance is closely linked with Iran's main interests (spreading its doctrine – regaining its position as a regional power in the Middle East in general and the Gulf Area specifically – achieving its economic interests). Not to mention that the Gulf area is appealing to Iran because of being an area which abounds with its natural resources and mineral wealth. Also, this area is an appropriate market for the Iranian commodities. Moreover, the area overlooks some international navigational routes that could be eminent paths that enable Iran to accomplishing its goals in the Nile basin countries. Accordingly, Iran was keen to sign several-joint-cooperation agreements with the majority of the region's countries in numerous fields (Economy-Trade-Energy-Agriculture-Religion & Culture-Social Work Services-Technical Approaches: like constructing dams). To meet these objectives the Iranian foreign policy uses several tools such as: the soft power diplomacy, developmental aids, oil diplomacy, augmenting the economic and commercial relations. Iran uses the following approaches: cultural - religious – doctrinal – Shiite expansion. Also, Iran employed several official agencies and charity organizations to achieve its goals. This paper was initiated on the assumption of considering Iran a medium-sized international power that can widely affect the Middle-East region. Consequently, this paper mainly questions the nature and characteristics of the Iranian role in the Nile basin region and how these aspects reflect on Iran's regional power and relative position among the other regional powers. My conclusion in this study was that Iran possesses the state's comprehensive power characteristics that make it a medium-sized regional power which is able to affect its surrounding regional range.

Keywords: Iranian role, Nile basin, medium-sized power, Iran's policy.

INTRODUCTION

The study tackles the employment of the "role" concept and the network of related concepts as an analytical framework that studies the Iranian foreign policy towards the Nile basin countries in the interval (2005 through 2016).

The choice in this study focuses on the role's approach that has been adopted in order to take advantage of the "role's concept" that enables link the different analytical levels, in regard to clarifying the relationship between the internal and external factors, or showing the interaction between the elements of cognition, capabilities and behavior. This reflects the interaction between substantive and psychological environments.

The medium-sized power concept is considered of increasing and significant importance in the academic realm - within the literature of international relations, after the cold war. Although the concept was and is debatable to a great extent among analysts and experts in the field of international relations, Experts did not disagree much about the impact and importance of the role played by medium-sized powers in the international system. But, some experts stress that indeed the international policies refer to the need of taking into account the increasing role and influence of those medium powers that contribute to forming the structure of the international system maintaining its stability. Consequently, experts started to wonder about the reasons and factors that make a medium capacity take the initiative and exert an effective impact on different areas: regional, international, economic and hard power. Despite of this strong impact on different regional, international and economic issues, such effects did not originate from having massive hard power and military capabilities.

In This Context, This Study Is Divided Into Three Sections:

- The first considers addressing the role's theory as a theoretical reference that provides a basis to study the regional roles.
- The second section addresses the explanation and definition of medium power and the areas' studies as a field of knowledge with distinct profiles and methodological foundations.
- And, the third section of the study aims at answering the questions: Is Iran a medium-sized regional force? Why does Iran adopt this policy of propagating for its pattern? What are the pillars of the Iranian policies conducted among the Nile basin countries to help preserve its national interests and objectives? What are the methods and tools that Iran uses in the Nile basin countries region?

1. First SECTION: APPROACH TO THE ROLE, FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS AND THE OTHER REGIONAL ROLES

The "role," from the Arabic language perspective, is the performance needed from an actor in a movie or a play, or a job that should be carried out by a person in a given situation. Origin of the word role relates to the French expression "roll" - meaning paper roll which was read in the theatrical performance⁽¹⁾. The role concept was transferred from dramatic context to psychological and social analyses in the first decades of the twentieth century to refer to "the expected behavior associated with a certain social status or dynamic system of recurrent and expected behaviors in a given social context.

The glossary of the recent dictionaries gives a modern political analysis that defines the role as "patterns of behaviors and attitudes expected from groups of people who occupy positions in the social structure." This role is distinguished from the status because the status describes the relative social Situations; whereas, the "role" describes the kinds of work within each situation. Individuals get to know such roles and how to play each during their social bringing up⁽²⁾.

1.1 The Role Theory and the Analysis of the Regional Roles:

The role of the National State within the international system includes the following: Understanding the foreign policy makers' attitudes and how they make use of their positions in the international system. And, how they strive to select resolutions and handle various obligations, provisions and activities in an appropriate way for their countries. It is important to perceive the roles to be played by the international or regional regimes.

Therefore, the definition and the national role of the state are structured through the following phases:

1.1.1 Exploration of the situation.

1.1.2 Defining the national role of the State, in light of the trends which draw foreign policy plan.

1.1.3 Adaptation of the national role to match with the nature of the surrounding environment's variables, or those affecting the different physical and societal capacities that might impact the State of the decision maker. That means, the role being played should be equivalent to the situation.

Through these stages, we note that the role theory began to offer solutions to the relationship between the practical environmental interpretations and those interpretations related to the psychological environment that belongs to the self-awareness of the decision maker. So, the identified role heavily depends on these two factors⁽³⁾.

1.2 The Role Concept, When Linked With The Attitude Of The National Contingents, Features The Following Properties:

1.2.1 It does not only depend on the perspective of the foreign policy maker who visualizes this role; it also comprises how this role will be played in the international arena. The decision maker might introduce the role concept of his country in the international context as a role to achieve world peace. This might reflect on acquiring benefits while doing nothing to translate the state's role into tangible actions.

1.2.2 The role concept does not only include the foreign policy maker's perception of the role of the State, but also it comprises the perception of the role played by other contingents, particularly the roles assumed by enemies.

1.2.3 It is envisaged that the State plays more than one role, and this is very common.

1.2.4 The State can play a certain role at the global level, and another role at the regional level⁽⁴⁾.

2. THE SECOND SECTION: DEFINITION OF THE MEDIUM-SIZED POWER CONCEPT

There is no agreement among scholars about the date of the first use of the concept of "medium-sized power" in international politics. However, some scholars refer this expression to the writings of the, Thomas Aquinas or Giovanni Petro (Renaissance philosopher). Also in modern times, the expression appeared in Jan Smuts' book, in 1918, under the title "The league of nations; a practical suggestion." And, this concept became more prevalent after World War II with the advent of the United Nations and other global financial institutions⁽⁵⁾.

Countries such as Canada, Australia and Norway sought to explain their roles during the war. Canadian and Australian diplomats were keen to confirm the positions of their countries after World War II, based on what they offered to the allies during the war. In parallel, these countries sought to consolidate the use of the medium-sized power concept internally. And, this concept started touch on the countries that use their diplomatic and administrative skills to help maintain international order and peace by providing solutions based on agreement, mediation and peacekeeping⁽⁶⁾. Therefore, many analysts believed that the concept was created to address countries like Canada and Australia as strong medium-sized powers. This would enable them to explain their role in the international system, and that reflects on their determination and perseverance in order to obtain recognition of their strong position. These efforts contributed to spread this reputation among the students in the field of international relations⁽⁷⁾.

Even at the academic level, the concept of medium-sized power is a controversial concept, where the definition of medium-sized power is linked with traditional problem in the international relations literature. Discussions rotate around the concept of power and how it is measured by the international system and also the ranking of countries for each other according to their strength sources. So, some theorists shed light on the Status of resources, especially physical ones that could be easily measured⁽⁸⁾. Others believe that the study of force assume the ownership of distinct force elements (Capabilities) and the ability to use them to achieve certain objectives, i.e. the ability to influence at the same time⁽⁹⁾. A third group picture the power as the space (distance) between States, where national capacities affect the external attitude of the state. Such capabilities are featured as of relatively different natures compared the national capabilities of other States⁽¹⁰⁾.

In connection with the above, we can outline five basic criteria that belong to the scholars who decided to classify the world's powers and determine the medium powers' standards. The scholars called them the five "C" elements⁽¹¹⁾ They combined elements of hard power and soft power as follows:

2.1 Capacity: This mainly includes hard power.

2.2 Focus: given that medium-power possesses relatively limited resources, It focuses its efforts on specific issues that it fully trust to handle with the utmost effectiveness.

2.3 Innovation: the ability to provide innovative solutions to resolve conflicts.

2.4 Build coalitions: This point is linked with participating in the multilateral institutions, seeking to strengthen ties with the States of thinking-like-minded situations. Also, it is important to believe that working for the global good is a supportive factor to the state's national interests.

2.5 Credibility: The medium sized power should succeed in demonstrating the coherence of its foreign policy options, and such options are based on constant principles⁽¹²⁾.

In the same context, Carsten Ansaraakhr Holbraad adds to the previous standards the recognition of this

status by other States in the international system. The State is not a major or average power by only depending on the resources owned, behavior and the way in which these resources are used. In other words, the direct or implied recognition of this status by other States in the international system is an essential element in considering this State of medium⁽¹³⁾.

The foregone conclusion is: evaluating a state as a medium-sized power is a controversial issue. However, the medium-power state can be defined as the State that possesses average sources for both hard and soft powers, and it is able to managed international issues through adopting patterns of attitude, based on compatibility. As well, the state is to be recognized as a medium power by other States in the international system.

3. THE THIRD SECTION: IRAN AS A REGIONAL/ MEDIUM-SIZED POWER

To begin, we need to specify the regional power. So, we encounter the question, "What is the relationship between regional and medium-sized powers, in the eyes of the international system? In this regard, it is worth distinguishing between conventional medium-sized power and escalating medium sized power which may be referred to as regional powers.

The regional power is the international contingent that possesses both power and influence within the borders of its region. This is similar to the major powers in the international system, but only at the level of its region⁽¹⁴⁾. The difference between conventional and emerging "medium" is mainly the capacity of the international contingent to lead, and acquire a regional power with some emerging skills. Whereas, the conventional "medium" lack the leadership, only they form coalitions to create compatibility, based on the principle of partnership to achieve common interests⁽¹⁵⁾. Given Iran's desire to play the role of an emerging medium-sized power in the international system; that requires meeting some stipulations, one of them is to become a regional power among the territories around. Iran has got its means to achieve that objective: Propagating for the Iranian political system is one of the means to achieve its ends, whether this is pursued at the regional or international levels.

The success of political Islam fronts in reaching authority in a number of Arab countries, after the so-called publicized Arab spring, has become a catalyst for the Iranian regime to benefit from the situation and practice a broader and deeper regional role in the area. The recent emergence of political systems to offices belongs to what has become known as the stream of political Islam which seems to be somewhat parallel to the elements of the Iranian regime, but with a different profile. That made Iran aspire to extend its influence over the region, and that was interpreted as the balance of power in the international system in general and the regional system, in particular. This Iranian perspective seeks to shed some light on the Iranian regime and promote its role in the region.

Iran's political system - according to its origin and constitution – is⁽¹⁶⁾ a system in which the religion's clerical authorities directly, clearly and strongly affect the state's critical decisions. Therefore, it is a governmental theocratic system, meaning that the State and its institutions are subject to the rule of the religion's clerical references. The leading religion's reference is the highest authority in the State, and is granted by the constitution political and religious sovereignty. The Iranian constitution provides in its article 5 "in times of absence of Imam Mahdi the highest religion's reference is the guardian and leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This reference is the fair-pious-brave jurist who is capable of foreseeing and managing. The Constitution refers in its article XII to "the official religion of Iran is Islam and the Twelver Ja'fari school," and it underlines that this article is forever immutable." Iran since the 1979 revolution has mixed its political and intellectual discourse, directed by a State of national character rather than an ideological one.

Iran addresses itself to the international community as the "political" guardian State which protects Islam. And, it claimed the responsibility for applying principles; as well, it had been continuously criticizing the Arab regimes, particularly those of pivotal States like Egypt and other Arab countries. Such practices were to prove that it plays the role of the region's "guardian." Practically speaking, since 1979 Iran has been trying to expand under the name of exporting its revolution, and propagating for the Shiite sect. Iran wants to convince the region that it is the only state that adopts the proper religious and political beliefs. This would give the Iranian State the position of an Empire with robust religious nature.

3.1. Why The Iranian Foreign Policy Propagates For The Iranian Pattern:

3.1.1. Virtual hostility against both the United States and Israel as if Iranian has got an opposite ideology: a quest to appear as a state of strong ideology based on religious slogans and involvement in the international political realm. This would provide support, and derive legitimacy for Iran's ideological power - through rivalry against a super power⁽¹⁷⁾. And it works on ceasing any international powers' penetration in the region. One

of Iran's main objectives is to get rid of the Zionist, capitalist and Communist ideologies. On the other hand, cooperating with Israel, the United States and other allies in the region is conducted, in quest for new-pro-Iranian-model regimes. Such regimes might support Iran's thoughts, wishing to eliminate the bullying phenomenon conducted by the West, particularly the United States⁽¹⁸⁾.

3.1.2. The Old Iranian dream is identified as revolutionary tides that export the Iranian revolution and end the conflicts. The underlying cause of those conflicts is the absence of religion, as long as, there are conflicts against tyrants in any spot on the Earth we (Iranian regime) live on⁽¹⁹⁾.

3.1.3. There was a recent agreement between Iran and the five countries, having permanent membership in the UN. This agreement opened the floor for Iran to regain its role as an effective regional power. However, this also requires attracting the region's countries to support Iran.⁽²⁰⁾

3.1.4. The Islamic Middle East⁽²¹⁾ : Iran works on this project in the Middle East, which has emerged in the wake of U.S. initiatives in the region in 2003 towards the project of the greater Middle East and the broader Middle East. The project re-surfaced again, after the Arab spring, due to the existence of new Arab rulers and the consequent presence of new regimes. This made Iran repeat the talk that the region is witnessing the emergence of a new Middle East, the Islamic Middle East, and it depends on two basic pillars which Iran was a fundamental building block for their success: the ideological pillar is the Iranian regime's belief that there should exist the Government of the Islamic world. And Iran being a theocratic state can pave the way for this pattern. Also, Iran works on creating a deterring security belt against intervention of enemies in the region or even encircling such an enemy by the States of the region.

It is clear from the presentation of the reasons for Iran's willingness to promote this model that this pattern serves Iran's national interest in working on strengthening its regional role. This positively reflects on its strength, based on ideological reasons to heavily involve religion in its foreign policy - including the promotion of the political system.

The Iranian tools used for achieving the state's objectives:

3.2. Soft Power

3.2.1. The official diplomatic tool is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the embassies of Iran in the Arab States. Khomeini says, "We do not mean by exporting the revolution to rally the armies, but we want to get our voice heard in the world. And, one of the institutions that we want to operate on world issues, concerning Iran and Islam and the Iranian people's suffering at the hands of East and West, is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The ministry's officials are responsible for informing the world on our approach and expectations⁽²²⁾. Another important tool is the cultural missions in foreign countries that work to produce good movies about Iran prepare and distribute them across the cultural attachés of Iran in the region, and benefit from great opportunities, such as cultural exhibitions and the established cultural exchange weeks to publicize the culture of Iran⁽²³⁾ ; that is part of the political system.

3.2.2. People's diplomacy: an Iranian special attention is directed to the diplomatic sectors, specifically on the cultural level. And, this work aims to develop the relationship between Iranian institutions and parallel institutions in the Arab and Muslim world, which would strengthen relations and raise the level of attraction towards the Iranian model. This opens the floor for the Iranian incursion into diplomacy and assuming guidance to parties, organizations, entities and institutions in other States⁽²⁴⁾. They are seeking to take advantage of media and newspapers to publicize Iran's role and the Iranian culture. Also, These efforts benefit from the Internet as there are many sites in different languages, specifically the Arabic language, that raise different cultural topics specific to Iran and Iranian thoughts - put forward effectively and impressively, based primarily on Islamic overtones.

3.2.3. Conferences and seminars: says Khomeini: The people are ignorant of many things; try to go among the people and let them receive from you, make a speech and lecture them. You should know that visiting once or twice is not enough; you must take the initiative at every opportunity⁽²⁵⁾.

3.2.4. Student exchange programs: Governmental cultural agreements were concluded between the Islamic Republic of Iran and various countries. On the basis of those cultural official agreements concluded with other States Iran seeks to redirect and rationalize its activities, such as cultural exchanges among students and professors⁽²⁶⁾.

3.2.5. Use of religion explicitly as a tool: It is either through employing worship rituals and imams, or religious slogans - thrown to attract citizens to the policies that they want to implement via their spiritual overtones. An evident example is the use of the terms martyrdom, and victory of Islam. Another example is the mobilization

of advocates, Islamic clergy men, writers, intellectuals and Islamic leaders to influence their ideological formation and change their ideas to be in line with the interests of the Islamic Republic⁽²⁷⁾ and accordingly promote the Iranian model.

3.2.6. The economic approaches are of great importance in the framework of the Iranian relations with the Nile basin countries: This economic tool is one of the most important tools the Iranian politics uses in the region. Such a tool enables Iran to achieve its goals, like acquiring some substantial commodities and exploiting the markets of the Nile basin countries to sell the Iranian products. As well, Iran augments its nuclear project through the guarantee attained by the region's countries support. This support enables Iran to claim the right of possessing the nuclear technology and obtaining uranium – an essential element for operating its nuclear reactors. Furthermore, this support avails Iran of the opportunity to reach the international waterways in the times of crises. Moreover, via such a support Iran can reinforce its regional and international power and reveal its capabilities to reach various geographical regions in which Iran might threaten some western interests⁽²⁷⁾.

3.3. Iran Used Some Hard Power Tools, Including The Following

3.3.1. Provide training, technical and financial support to the opposition such as: an annual financial aid of up to \$ 100 million a year to Hezbollah, Iran sent trained security groups to provide technical support and professional training to security forces, training Gulf God parties issued to Gulf Area for disturbances as in Bahrain and Kuwait - to remove the Arab regimes⁽²⁸⁾. Also, Iran backs up Iraqi Shi'a: Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), leading to increase the Iranian influence in Iraq, supported by the political officials. In addition, Iran provides humanitarian services to assist orphans and other support programs to establish a network of religious schools to spread Shiite ideology. Along with Hezbollah⁽²⁹⁾, Iran also supports the Houthis in Yemen. These groups serve as Iran's agents in the region.

3.3.2. Support the opposition and Shiite military groups: also in Yemen and southern Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and other Gulf States; the most notable example is Iran's support for Hezbollah in Lebanon and Shiite parties and groups - loyal to Iran in Iraq - with weapons. Iraq's Jerusalem Corps is a supported group with arms and ammunition - Such as anti-tank rockets, mortars, rockets, 107 mm, 122 mm and others. Also Iran provides weapons, modern military equipment and ammunition - including antitank rockets, anti-aircraft missiles, and the implementation of Hezbollah's defensive architecture in Lebanon⁽³⁰⁾.

3.3.3. Seek to acquire nuclear weapons: Iran is working on the development of its nuclear technological capacity to be capable of producing nuclear weapons. This could be done through increasing the volume of uranium and enriching it to 90% or above, so as to obtain the necessary quantity of nuclear weapons⁽³¹⁾. So it's an indirect tool to increase Iran's ability to promote its model in the region.

3.4. Pillars of the Iranian Politics in the Nile Basin Countries- To Maintain National Interests and Achieve Objectives

3.4.1. Promotion of the principles of the Iranian foreign policy: Highlighting that the state focuses on its aims for peaceful co-existence and dialogue among civilizations. And, it seeks to contribute to building a peaceful world and live in harmony with the different cultures. Along with ending the confrontations among people – Known as the clash of civilizations, Iran aspires to remove the tensions between itself and various States. Re-establishing Iran's international relations is a goal - based on the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs, equality and mutual respect to the universal principles of the Declaration of human rights. Also, Iran targets conflict resolution through international and regional peaceful mechanisms, without resorting to terrorism or violence⁽³²⁾.

3.4.2. Pointing out that national state of Iran is a developmental model: Iran rejected the existence of the only road to development that is associated with the Western model of capitalism. And, it represents a unique developmental model based on its vision. Also, the state seeks to diligently achieve development by relying on its national abilities and qualified young people in the political, economic, and technological fields. The Iranian regime believes that the State can depend on its youth to occupy a global elite position.

3.4.3. Economic assistance: Iran declared its commitment to provide economic assistance to the Nile basin countries, especially those that are suffering from severe economic problems. Also, a special attention is given to the countries that need to rebuild their infrastructure, after being subject to political and civil conflicts. Moreover, Iran provides the necessary assistance to promote development in the countries of the region in accordance with the ideas presented by the New Partnership Targeting Africa's Development "NEPAD". This assistance allows access to cutting-edge expertise in areas such as oil exploration, petrochemical industry, agriculture, irrigation and livestock breeding management. Uganda is an evident

example of a state that receives developmental aid.

3.4.4. Show solidarity with Nile basin issues: Iran continues its commitment to show and confirm solidarity with hot issues related to the Nile basin countries, especially the issues regarding their legitimate right to renaissance and progress. This support is conducted apart from neo-colonialism exploitation of the riches of those States without developing their infrastructure. This solidarity is also with the States facing economic and military sanctions by the Western countries (e.g. Sudan). It should be noted that these sanctions are incompatible with human rights and comprise interference in the internal affairs of the sanctioned States, these sanctions also have negative repercussions on the economic and social security.

3.4.5. Focus on the active role of the civil society institutions or NGOs:

This has taken place via the Bonyads Iranian charity trusts that work separately, apart from the government. These NGOs work as macro-economic entities that compete with the capabilities of the state itself. Such NGOs are tax exempted and they are directly taken over by the supreme guide of the republic. These NGOs are in charge of developing and building fruitful relations with the Nile basin countries.

3.4.6. Employ Iran's distinguished geostrategic and geopolitical location, and the overall capacity of the State to play an influential role and attain a powerful position in the heart of the Middle East and Muslim world. This is closely related to Iran's greatest dream to re-establish the Persian Empire.

3.4.7. Establish Iranian joint committees with the Nile basin States.

3.4.8. Possess military power with its two dimensions the traditional and ultra-traditional to achieve its national security objectives and guard against any external or internal threats, through conducting balance among the regional forces. Also, this will enable retaining the capabilities for the positive participation to determine the future security arrangements and assist strategic allies in the region.

In light of the above and by following the Iranian activities and actions in the Nile basin countries, during the recent period, we can point out the relative success of the mechanisms used by the Iranian regime to reinforce its presence in the region. There is no doubt that the recent period of time witnesses the growing role of Iran's joint committees with many countries in parallel to the role played by NGOs to achieve the goals of Iran, especially with regard to the dissemination of the Shiite concept, as well as, its keenness to enhance relations with the States under pressure - like those faced by Western countries.

3.5. Methods and tools that enables Iran's movements in the Nile basin countries

In light of the foregoing highlights, It is clear that Iran seriously and actively move towards Nile basin region to achieve its planned objectives through multiple approaches in all areas (technical-economic-political-religious-cultural-etc.). This is essentially based on the following points:

3.5.1. Reliance on economic development to build diplomatic relations with regimes in the countries of the region. Iran reacts fast to link the severity of the economic problems faced by such systems with the urgent need for economic support.

3.5.2. Focus on the spread and containment of popular gatherings among various communities through developmental projects that target the humans' civilization and dire needs.

3.5.3. Exploitation of the presence among the grass-roots of communities to disseminate their ideas and beliefs - through cultural centers, experts and advocates in the field.

3.5.4. Ensure the investment of their success in spreading Iran's ideas for broadening and deepening the divide between the ruling and governed classes among the States of the region that abides by secular State regimes. And, The Iranian state adopts directions and religious beliefs contrary to Iran's approach in favour of creating power grabs, loyal regimes and allegiances. These emerging entities are closely linked to the pillars of the foreign policy of Iran and its methods. Accordingly, Iran can achieve its national goals and interests. This shows that Iran's approach is based on the implementation of its policy with the Nile basin – using both hard and soft powers as follows:

3.6. Hard Power

3.6.1. Diplomatic Policies Are Accomplished By Implementing The Following

3.6.1.1. Intensifying political and diplomatic presence in the Nile basin countries that is managed to establish resident and non-resident diplomatic relations with eight of the basin States (Egypt-Sudan-Ethiopia-Eritrea-Congo-Kenya-Tanzania-Uganda) as well as the Embassy of Burundi in Tehran⁽³³⁾.

3.6.1.2. Supporting and strengthening bilateral cooperation with the Nile basin countries through activating mutual visits between Iranian officials and the officials of the African States. Officials of the Iranian Foreign affairs Minister have toured four of the Nile basin countries (Kenya-Uganda-Burundi-Tanzania) in February 2015⁽³⁴⁾.

3.6.1.3. Diversifying the visits of officials to include all fields - via employing Iranian delegations with different specialties in the implementation of these visits. A high-level Iranian delegation - led by Hussein Abd el-Lihyan, Foreign Affairs official in Arab countries, With the second man in the Iranian air force Corps and some top security commanders - visited Sudan in March 2015⁽³⁶⁾.

3.6.1.4. Seeking to sign agreements and protocols of cooperation with Nile basin countries in accordance with the movement of the Iranian foreign policy. An example, Iran rents "Dahlak island" from Eritrea for supplying weapons and tanks to the Houthis across "MIDI " port⁽³⁷⁾.

3.6.1.5. Depending on the process of sending diplomatic missions – with specialists and investors - to the African societies. Those specialists and investors move among populations either for information or to publish their thoughts and penetrate the society.

3.6.1.6. Conducting exploitation conferences and building Islamic organizations to support and achieve its objectives in Africa. In addition, it provides its consistent support to African States which host World Islamic Organization Conference (Example is the support to Senegal for hosting the Islamic Summit held in March 2008).

3.6.1.7. Relying on Arab Lebanese Shiite communities - located in some States – to exert pressure on the leadership of the Nile basin States. In reality, the governing process is affected by the economic status - used to disseminate Iran's ideas and push towards accepting the Iranian option in various issues.

3.6.1.8. The intelligence elements - specialized in African Affairs – work under the guise of diplomatic embassies in Africa. This is conducted to compile and analyze all data and information that serve Iran's schemes in the countries where they operate.

3.6.2. Economic policies

They are linked to the requirements of the Iranian economy, which constitutes one of the pillars that seeks increasing the exports' volume of the industrial products; as well, Iran obtains the imported raw materials needed for production. This reflects on increasing the size of their investment. Iran's policies in the Nile basin countries are focused on the following:

3.6.2.1. Exploiting most of the Nile basin countries - in need for petroleum products - and giving them preferential prices on the world market as well as grants and donations for some of those States⁽³⁸⁾.

3.6.2.2. Signing contracts of deals – based on equality - with several Nile basin countries to ensure conducting greater trade by air and sea – using navigational lines between Iran and a number of States⁽³⁹⁾. As well, Iran establishes holding companies in the Nile basin countries to oversee the implementation of projects agreed upon.

3.6.2.3. Addressing its willingness to finance developmental and infrastructure projects within the Nile basin States. There is no doubt that this is one of the popular categorized means that verifies the positive cooperation with Iran.

3.6.2.4. Furnishing countries with investing funds for the implementation of joint projects in various fields (agro-industrial products-oil-tourism-mining-transport).

3.6.2.5. Participating in the most diverse exhibitions organized by the Nile basin countries, along with some exhibitions, that serve the objectives and interests of those States (exhibition in Cairo in June 2015 for photographs under the title "Iran behind the picture"). The aim of the Cairo exhibition was to publicize Iran and its people⁽⁴⁰⁾.

3.6.2.6. Giving special attention to the developmental-agricultural and building and construction projects, on which lies the main focus of the African States.

3.6.3. Security and Military Policies

3.6.3.1. The security and military activities directed towards the Nile basin area are limited and they mainly focus on supporting some regimes associated with Iran and having strong ties. "The Sudan" is one of the foremost countries that are linked with Iran to seek military expertise in the area of military industrialization. Iran attempts to acquire the uranium - needed as a nuclear fuel for its reactors - from all the areas and

countries available such as: Sudan & DR Congo.

3.6.3.2. Relying primarily on the Iran Revolutionary Guard ⁽⁴¹⁾ to carry out training missions outside the Iranian territory.

3.7. Soft Power

3.7.1. Cooperation in the Religion's Realm:

Iran seeks within the framework of its policies to create the global Muslim community, and spread its beliefs and Shi'ism at the expense of other Islamic sects in the Nile basin States. Iran made use of the low level of religious awareness plus the widespread of paganism among the majority of African communities. This exploitation is implemented through the following activities ⁽⁴²⁾ :

3.7.1.1. Establishing Islamic centers⁴³⁾ and providing advocacy tools by sending missionaries to the Nile basin countries, as well as, granting scholarships and financial assistances to help disseminate Iran's beliefs - under the cover of Islam and Muslims (e.g. the Iranian cultural centre in Khartoum).

3.7.1.2. Establishing schools for teaching the Persian language and Quran memorization, plus offering scholarships to the children of those States, as well as distributing religious publications and recordings.

3.7.1.3. Ensuring to attract the leaders of religious groups in most of the Nile basin countries, in particular the scholars of those countries that are appealing to the Iranian interests – e.g. grants to establish rites of Hajj and Umrah.

3.7.1.4. Exploiting the Lebanese-Arab communities, especially to achieve convergence with the religious groups.

3.7.2. Cooperation in Social, cultural, and media areas⁽⁴⁴⁾:

Iran gives special attention to these areas as one of the most important elements of real payment for the development so it disseminates its ideas across the African continent, through the following:

3.7.2.1. In the social, cultural and media fields: highlights focus on seminars and conferences and invite officials and clergy in Africa to participate⁽⁴⁵⁾. And, Iran signed agreements for cultural and media cooperation with the States of the basin, as well as the distribution of leaflets, advertising & cultural studies, and furnishing the countries with the experts and specialists who can handle all aspects of cultural activities. As well, large delegations participate in national celebrations and events - organized by States. Iran also avails dubbing and subtitling, which hold the beliefs of Shi'a thoughts into local languages and that serves in the rapidly dissemination of the Iranian ideas and beliefs.

3.7.2.2. Cooperation in medical and health care improvement ⁽⁴⁶⁾ :

Iran gives priority to this area in the light of the humanitarian interface directed towards the Nile basin countries. This avails the potential to penetrate people's gatherings, especially in light of their needs for medical and health services. Implementing these activities is through the establishment of hospitals and medical centers. Also, Iran sends doctors, specialists, and nursing and public health care staffs to provide assistance in the different areas of treatment, especially in remote locations. In parallel with the provision of grants, medical assistance and participation in field research of some endemic diseases in those States, Iran provides emergency medical support to the countries affected by crises and disasters to quickly contribute and reduce the size of the the expected loss - arising from such disagreeable conditions ⁽⁴⁷⁾.

3.7.3. Technical cooperation

Iran seeks to support technical cooperation relations with most countries to serve the purpose of its presence among grass-roots of communities, through the signing of agreements of technical cooperation. This includes many activities (most notably: updating and developing farming methods and means used "agricultural mechanization" and strategies to increase the production of major crops and livestock - developing irrigation systems and using modern scientific techniques - providing medical expertise and contributing to building and equipping hospitals - offering the Iranian experience in oil exploration and energy saving – offering expertise in building and construction) ⁽⁴⁸⁾.

CONCLUSION

We reviewed and employed the concept of "role" and the related network of concepts as an analytical framework to study the Iranian foreign policy towards the Nile basin States. As well, we examined the concept of medium and strong regional roles and how Iran seeks to achieve its foreign policy goals in the

Nile basin countries. So, our conclusion highlights that Iran possesses the potentials for acquiring the medium/regional influence in the territories surrounding its state. And such potentials enable Iran to maximize the strength of its relations with the influential countries to serve the purpose achieving its regional objectives and interests. One of Iran's objectives is to encircle Egypt and the Arab countries from the South by regimes that are pro the Iranian foreign policies ambitions. This will lead to imposing Iran's hegemony over the Middle East in general and the Gulf area in particular. Finally, this reinforces Iran's desire to even surpass the assumed national and regional role.

ENDNOTES

- (1) Khalil, Fawzy. (1991). The political role of the elite in early Islam. PhD thesis, Faculty of Economics and political science, Cairo University, pp. 44-45.
- (2) Edward, Giofr Robert walistri. (1999). dictionary of modern political analysis, translation: Samir Abd al-Rahim al-Chalabi, Arabic for encyclopedias, Beirut, first edition, p.399.
- (3) Al-Hadithi,Hani Elias. (1988). The regional policies of Pakistan 1971-1994, Beirut, The Arabs' Unity Studies Center, first edition, P. 34.
- (4) Salim, Muhammad. (2001). The analysis of the foreign policy, Beirut, Dar el-Geel, Second edition, PP 49-50.
- (5) Ravenhill,John. (1998). "Cycles of Middle Power Activism : Constraint and Choice in Australian and Canadian Foreign Policies", Australian Journal of International Affairs, Vol.52,No. 3, P.309.
- (6) P. Donner, Andre & C. Alain,Caroline. (1977). "Canda: A Reassertion of its Role Quests in Power", in Phillipe G. le Prestre ed. Role Quests in the Post Cold War Era: Foreign Policies in transition, Montreal:Mcgill Queen's University Press, P.225.
- (7) Neack, Laura. (2008). The New Foreign Policie, Power Seeking in Globalized, New York. Rowman&Littlefield Publishers,Inc.P.162.
- (8) Jones, Stephen. (1961). "PowerInventory and National Strategy" in James N. Rosenau ed. International Politics and Foreign Policy,New york: The Free Press of Glencoe,Inc.PP. 254 - 255.
- (9) N. Rosenau,James. (1971). "Capabilities and Control in an Interdependent World", International Security, Vol. I,Fall, PP. 32 -49.
- (10) Salim,Muhammad. (1989). foreign policy analysis, Giza, the institution of satisfaction for printing, pp.184-185.
- (11) They symbolize the first letter of the following five words (Capacity , Concentration , Creativity , Coalition Building Credibility).
- (12) Ravenhill,John. (1998). Op. 310 - 313.
- (13) Lotze, Walter. (2007). "South Africa as a Middle Power at the WTO Brokering African Interests" (MA Dissertation, University of Stellenbosch), P.36.
- (14) Abu Leila, SoaD Mahmoud. (2012). medium-power: the role of traditional and emerging medium powers in the international system after the end of the cold war, international politics, no. 189, vol. 47, p.15.
- (15) Ibid. pp.14-19.
- (16) State Structure from Netiran.
- (17) Imam Khomeini to export the revolution as he sees Imam Khomeini, founder of the Organization and dissemination of heritage of Imam Khomeini (sanctify the navel), International Affairs, Iran. International –dept@imam- Khomeini.ir.
- (18) Ibid.
- (19) Ibid.
- (20) Ibid
- (21) Abbas Nagi, Muhammad. (2016). deflation: the future of Iran's regional role after revolutions Arabic, available at <http://www.siyassa.org.eg/NewsContent>.
- (22) export of revolution as Khomeini Foundation, sees the Organization and dissemination of heritage of Imam Khomeini (sanctify the navel), International Affairs, Tehran. International –dept@imam-Khomeini.ir.
- 23 mustafawi, Mehdi.(2016). cultural relations Islamic Republic, available at, <http://www.alhiwaraldini.com/Portal/Cultcure/Arabic/CategoryID/6423/CaseID/71243/37551.aspx>
- (24) meraachli,Mahmoud. (2016). Iranian diplomacy School of international policy, available at <http://www.aktab.ma>.

- (25) Ibid.
- (26) Aboud, Anisa. (2016). start progress to grant cultural exchanges with Iran. Egypt and Armenia, available at, http://thawra.alwehda.gov.sy/_kuttab_a.asp?
- (27) ran and violent groups in the Muslim world. (2004). available at: <http://www.altanweer.net/articles.aspx?>
- (27) The Iranian economic aids to the African continent. (2016). <http://www.nile.today/africa>.
- (28) sweilem,Hossam. (2016). the us assessment of Iranian military power, <http://digital.ahram.org.eg/articles.aspx?>.
- (29) sly,Liz. (2013). Iran supports "AAH" ask itself a replacement for the Sadrists politically, Middle East journal.
- (30) sweilem,Hossam. American evaluation of Iranian Force. <http://digital.ahram.org.eg/articles.aspx?Serial=485865&eid=209>.
- (31) Ibid.
- (32) Abul-ENEIN, Mahmoud. (2006). African Strategic report, third edition 2004/2005, African Studies and Research Center, Cairo University, , p.390.
- (33) Al-Taqi, Nasser Amri. (1373). external transformations in Iranian politics, translated by d. Mohammed Nour Al-Din Abdul Moneim (Tehran, Gap Foundation and spreads things beyond, visited 1373), p.60.
- (34) Abdelaziz,Mohammed. (2010). the dimensions of the Israeli-us move by Nile basin States, the Horn of Africa and its implications for the Egyptian national security and move to counter proposals,p.37.
- (36) Ibid. p.38.
- (37) Ibid. p.38.
- (38) Oil is the most valuable asset in Iran, Iran was the first Gulf oil discovery, when awarded William Knox class "British citizenship the first concession for oil exploration in 1901, and was the first discovery of oil in the region of" shostar "near arbstan in northern province roasted Gulf oil company was founded following English Farsi Iranian after the petroleum in Iran, Turnout increased by industrialized countries, and there is the fact that Iran, the fourth largest oil producer in the world, and contributes around 95% of oil of the total value of exports of Iran, Iranian oil exports represent of Africa during 2008 around 8%.
- (39) fair, Conference of Iranian moves in the East and Horn of Africa, op. cit., p.18.
- (40) Abdul Aziz, Mohammad. (2010). Iranian, Israeli us move the Nile basin and the Horn of Africa and its implications for the Egyptian national security and move to counter proposals, p.40.
- (41) menshawi,Gibraltar Aweys Abdul Samad. (2007). Iran between past and present trends dominate the Middle East, research leave Fellowship, National Defence College.Iran military forces possess large medium efficiency of around 650 thousand individual works under major commands (command of the Revolutionary Guard-uniformed armed forces command), the revolutionary guards, the main attention on the part of the Iranian leadership in terms of weaponry, training and in-kind benefits to its elements. Linked to loyalty to the system and its role in ensuring governance-also oversees Iran's activities in the field of development and modernization of traditional Benchtop weapons particularly ground-to-ground missiles operate regular ground forces through (4) field army command while the Revolutionary Guard in the number (3) a legion stationed the bulk of the ground forces (regular-revolutionary guard) in the direction of the fronts (North-Western) as the main direction of threat as well as the presence of Tehran and major nuclear and missile program. p. 79.
- (42) Abdelaziz, Mohamed. (2010). the dimensions of the Israeli-us move by Nile basin States, the Horn of Africa and its implications for the Egyptian national security and move to counter proposals, op.cit, p. 45.Spreading the Shiite communities in many African countries, despite the small number of Shi'a (%0.7, Senegal-Sudan %0.5 %1.9-Sierra Leone-Somalia %0.2 %0.1-Gabon-Zambia %0.5- %0.2of Ghana-Guinea Conakry %0.4 %0.5-Mozambique-Guinea Bissau %0.4 %0.4-Cameroon-Liberia %0.2-%0.1-Libya Mali .%0.5- Egypt Morocco 0.7%-0.2%-0.3% Malawi-Côte d'Ivoire 0.5% 0.1%-Mauritania-Ethiopia 0.3% 0.2%-Central Africa-Uganda 0.1%-0.9%, Burkina Faso-Benin 0.1% 0.3%-0.1%-Togo, Tanzania 0.7% 0.7%-Nigeria-Chad 0.2%-0.2%-Tunisia Algeria 0.1%-0.5%-Comoros, Niger 0.1%-0.1%), Djibouti for the Muslim population , They were and are loyal to Iran.
- (43) Fayaz, Ezzatollah. al-Sa'di,Ghazi. (2001). changes in Africa and its impact on relations with Iran, The first Conference of cultural relations between Iran and Africa during the period (20 April to 2nd of May 2001) is the first serious attempt to build an Iranian cooperation in media communication, organized by the Institute of international studies and Iranian political cooperation with the International Center for dialogue among civilizations in Iran, UNESCO United Nations Conference had discussed five areas (cultural dialogue between Iran and Africa-African cultural interaction-Iranian relations-the role of trade in development of Iranian cultural relations-the role of Al-Azhar and its influence on the cultural relations between Egypt and Iran). p. 102.

- (44) el-Saady, Ghazy (translated). (2005). the changes in Africa and their influence on the Iranian relations, My pride is derived from Allah's ultimate pride, by Cairo, P.102.
- (45) Fayaz, Ezatollah. al-Sa'di, Ghazi. changes in Africa and its impact on relations with Iran, The first Conference of cultural relations between Iran and Africa during the (20 April to 2nd of May 2001) is the first serious attempt to build an Iranian cooperation in media communication, organized by the Institute of international studies and Iranian political cooperation with the International Center for dialogue among civilizations in Iran, UNESCO United Nations Conference had discussed five areas (cultural dialogue between Iran and Africa-African cultural interaction-Iranian relations-the role of trade in development of Iranian cultural relations-the role of Al-Azhar and its influence on the cultural relations between Egypt and Iran). p. 102.
- (46) The ministry of foreign affairs, The Islamic Republic of Iran,
<http://www.ar.mfa.ir/index.aspx?fkeyid=&siteid=2&pageid=21636>.
- (47) the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran,
<http://www.ar.mfa.ir/index.aspx?fkeyid=&siteid=2&pageid=21636>..
- (48) Ibid.