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Demographic and Identity Changes in Syria and Iraq

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Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, the Iranian regime has not been shy about announcing its founding principle of "exporting the Revolution," and supporting Shiite "liberation" movements – through armament, logistical support, and propaganda, as well as the creation of loyal militias in the region. The Iranian regime has massively altered the concept of Iranian national security, seeking to exploit the chaotic situation in the region in the wake of the 2003 US invasion of Iraq and the Arab Spring in the region. Iran has leapt to take advantage of regional events, considering this is a decisive opportunity to change the demographic composition of the Arab region in order to intensify and embed its own regional presence and influence in the medium and long term, more particularly since the unstable security and economic conditions in the region make it difficult for other powers to focus on confronting the regime. This state intervention in the form of what might be termed demographic wars mean that the impact of the regime's actions in changing conditions on the ground across the region is more serious than its use of hard, military power alone. The regime has already begun establishing new supportive militias and loyalist groups, who are then utilized for political, economic and sectarian purposes, imposing pressure that serves the geographical and doctrinal objectives which the Islamic Republic claims are essential for its national security.

The aims of this study are: to analyze Iran's moves and its creation of loyalist strongholds in the region; to assess the regime's efforts to relocate and increase the Shiite minority, and to create other new entities so as to expand the Iranian regime's control throughout as many areas as possible, particularly those at the center of Iran's interests; and to extend the area of its influence and achieve the objectives of the Iranian leadership, with this expansionist doctrine growing in power in the collective mind of the regime's decision-makers.

First: The reason behind creating a demographic legacy

Put simply, demography is the study of populations,[1] with any nation's populace being, obviously, one of the primary pillars of the state and the backbone of its military. States' progress and civilization are based on their peoples' wellbeing and capabilities, and the stability of any state's security, economy, and political well-being is based upon ensuring harmonious coexistence among its populace.

Thus, the more that the worldview of the populace is established on strong shared cultural and civilizational foundations, and united with a unified religious heritage, the greater the level of peaceful coexistence and political stability amongst all the sections of the populace, with the power of society being more important than the power of any political theory propagated by the state.[2]

The greater the gap between the state's peoples in areas such as language, religion, and culture, as well as in their religious, national, and cultural legacies, the greater the possibility of political and sectarian unrest and conflicting loyalties, which can subsequently be exploited by other regional and international powers, more especially in third-world countries.

In regional conditions with no strong single power ruling, no framework to ensure peaceful coexistence, and no culture of respect for minorities, or any religious and sectarian pluralism, this highlights the seriousness of the changing demography and identity across the region, with this state of uncertainty posing a grave threat to public peace, and the stability of communities largely unchanged for centuries, with conflicts unfolding as a result, and the seats of power changing on the basis of demographic alterations.

The main objective of demographic wars is to dismantle communities and expel their population for the benefit of powerful forces seeking hegemony and expansion, who then have the power over these areas. Having achieved control, these forces can change the demographic composition of the population by replacing disloyal diverse groups who might support democracy with more submissive groups which are culturally, intellectually, and politically loyal to the new controllers, thus establishing

an entity with the same cultural, religious, ethnic, and civilizational heritage as the controllers; this is the de facto reality of the policies pursued by the Iranian regime in Damascus and Baghdad. With Iran well aware of the determining factors in any regional conflict, it seeks to establish a new fulcrum in shaping these factors according to geographical location and population.[3]

Demographic change also depends to some degree on the complete replacement of disloyal populations with other loyal groups. Sometimes the indigenous people are allowed to remain, although their community is largely dismantled and disempowered through deliberate neglect, impoverishment, and a very conscious strategy of denial of public resources, effectively making the indigenous people second-class citizens.

The policy pursued may be a combination of the two methods. If we look at Pakistan and India, formerly one country divided into two by partition in 1947, as an example of the seriousness of the threats inherent in such demographic wars, we see the upheaval and bloodshed that can result, as well as the divisions on all religious and sectarian grounds.[4]

Iraq and Syria are two major regional states, possessing massive human capacity, which were home to some of the best specialists in all fields; in recent years, however, the demographic war waged by Iran has largely destroyed both nations, leaving them with no dynamic forward momentum and robbing them of their political and economic influence in the region. Both are now effectively failed states, drowning in a quagmire of sectarian strife, resulting from unprecedented systematic relocation, deportation, and forcible demographic transfer of their populations driven by Iran.

Iran has a number of goals in pursuing this policy of demographic change through violent sectarian conflict in Syria and Iraq:

1. Dismantling the Sunni community: Changing the demographic structure, and effectively destroying the educational potential for an entire generation and the generations following it invariably pushes millions towards extremism, violence, and terrorism; without any intervention to stop this devastating process, this becomes a generational legacy, being passed on from one generation to the next, creating a chain of poverty and radicalization which disempowers and marginalizes the oppressed people.

2. Iran has waged a demographic war through forced displacement and demographic change,[5] eradicating the potential and life chances for an entire generation of young people, who, robbed of education and the most basic of opportunities, face a life of dispossession, powerlessness, and backwardness. Waging sectarian wars in Iraq and Syria is, for the Iranian regime, a viable means of accelerating demographic change and paving the way for Iran to destroy the national armies and empower its own

sectarian militias, destroying the social fabric and bringing in newcomers to replace the indigenous population who have fled their homes and areas.[6] In the absence of any unified Arab strategy to take control and reduce the chaos, Iran is able to exploit the chaotic situation and influx of population due to the war in the region to make large-scale changes in the demographic fabric to the Tehran regime's advantage. Arab countries have not resorted to such wars, perhaps realizing that engaging in conflicts of this nature will lead to rifts in the community, and international condemnation; instead they have continued to believe that it's preferable to utilize soft power, partly as a means of preserving the social fabric, and perhaps to maintain at least a minimal level of cohesion through citizenship, and cultural and social pluralism. The Iranian regime, however, disregards all of these values and ideals, even ignoring the condemnation of the international community, preferring to focus on achieving its expansionist objectives and to impose a fait accompli on the ground to disrupt any peace efforts. To sum up: the red lines, the concept of conflict, and the maps of the influence of the parties involved in the regional rivalry are radically different.

Second: Iranian pillars of demographic change in Syria and Iraq:

The Iranian regime's policy is based on a number of pillars which are key to understanding the practices observed in Iranian foreign policy, in which these pillars shape the military doctrine, as well as being steadfast principles in the mindset governing Iranian diplomacy, both as a form of soft power and, via the Revolutionary Guards, as a variant of hard power.

These can be described in the following manner:

The first theme is provoking and exploiting sectarian rifts:

Focusing initially on those states which contain Shiite minorities makes it easier for the Iranian regime to strengthen its political pillars; provoking and exploiting sectarian rifts helps Tehran to advance its policy of political and religious expansionism in an effort to secure the outlying vital areas of Iran's new regional empire. These elements, working on Iran's behalf, create a divisive thorn in the side of Arab states, especially in countries with Shiite minorities, as the Iranian regime will spare no expense in its efforts to shape and utilize these loyalist pockets to its own ends in order to form defensive geopolitical buffers for itself, thus extending the dynamic domain of Iran's sectarian empire-building.[7] One can understand the dimensions of the strategic objectives of the Iranian policy in creating these sectarian rifts through analysis of Khomeini's vision of the concept of the state and the theory of Shiite areas as sectarian basis for expanding the regime's founding Jurist Leadership [Velayat-e Faqih] doctrine, a theory initially propounded by Mohammad Javad Larijani.

As we can see, the nature of Iran's political system and the attitudes and beliefs of the ruling elite are directly reflected in the state's foreign policies.[8] As Ayatollah Khomeini, the founder of the Jurist Leadership doctrine, stated, the doctrine does not apply only to the Iranian people, but to all of the world's Shiite peoples, for whom it is infallible and undisputable, meaning that Shiite followers of the Iranian regime's form of Shiism in Iraq, Lebanon, or elsewhere have no more right than their Iranian counterparts to question or disobey the Jurist Leadership or to reject its mandate. since this is for them a sacred duty. As Khomeini said, a Shiite person is "like a little child who needs the command of his father"[9] to decide their fate and govern their affairs.

The Jurist Leadership doctrine is confined only to the followers and scholars of the Iranian regime's school of Shiism, limiting the election process or appointment mechanisms of the supreme leader to the relevant appointed bodies within the Iranian parliament, the Assembly of Experts of the Leadership, and the Council of Experts; these are the only bodies empowered to designate or dismiss the Supreme Leader of Iran. Despite these limitations, the regime wants the regime's leadership and doctrine to be empowered regionally, not only domestically.

According to the current Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, Shiite doctrine means that it is incumbent upon all Muslims to obey the commands and prohibitions of the Iranian State's Supreme Leader, with this provision also including all Shiite sects, since commitment to the Jurist Leadership doctrine is inseparable from commitment to Islam and the mandate of the twelve infallible Imams.[10] Thus, Iran's foreign policy is based on the universal nature of the Jurist Leadership doctrine and its rulings, which apply regionally and globally to all Shia, allowing the regime to establish cross-border revolutionary Shiite groups loyal to Tehran, whose objectives form an integral part of the Iranian concepts of national security and international relations. As a matter of fact, the theory of the "mother of villages," part of the geopolitical theory of Khomeini, depends on the geopolitical perspective and is not ideologically sectarian.[11] The theory is based on:

1. The formation of a unified global Islamic government of Islamic nations ruled by Jurist Leadership, with Iran at its center.

2. The Supreme Leader of this Jurist Leadership-ruled global Islamic government has absolute authority over the state of the Islamic nation as a whole.[12]

We note here the predominantly populist and nationalist character of the Iranian policymakers, who place the base and center of their desired global Islamic government in Iran. Under such a government, an Iranian jurist appointed by the Iranian Council of Experts would have authority over the unified Arab and Islamic nation. Thus, the way

in which Persian nationalism continues to dominate the collective mind and memory of Iran is encapsulated by Iran's foreign policy and its international relations,[13] which assume the same expansionist approach, along with the "Persianization" of the region to facilitate its subordination to the central government in Tehran.

This policy is based on the philosophical foundations of the Iranian regime's relations with the Sunni Muslim world, in particular on the fact that the Shiite Twelver doctrine is not, at least in its origins, a missionary doctrine to convert non-Sunnis. Hence, Iran's ideological expansionism is often targeted solely at Arab and Sunni peoples rather than towards the Asian countries or other neighboring nations.[14]

Iran also recognizes that while its expansionist project may succeed in the medium term if it is limited to political expansion, its long-term survival and sustainability depend on large-scale ideological and demographic change on the ground.

While Safavid Iran's Fatimid caliphate ruled Egypt for more than 200 years from 909 – 1171 AD, it did not use systematic demographic war as a strategy,[15] with Egypt's people remaining predominantly Sunni, despite the Safavid Persian State ruling over the Persian Shiite State, which it established on Sunni soil largely through systematic demographic change and transforming Shiism into an ideology espoused by many of its senior military figures and policy- makers. Iran's Khomeini (an heir to the Safavid regime politically and religiously) sought, and his successors still seek, to revive and implement that doctrine in the region due to its profound impact and deep influence on the Iranian psyche.

From all the above, it is clear that there is a perfect harmony between the theory of rule by Jurist Leadership [Velayat-e Faqih] and the theory of Umm al-Qura [Shiite villages'], whose base and center is Qom city. The first doctrine is based on the centrality of religious rule and the global mandate of the appointed supreme jurist or Supreme Leader [Wali al-Faqih], meaning that the Supreme Leader in Tehran is the one who controls the decisions of Muslims worldwide, rather than simply within Iran. According to this doctrine, it paves the way for Shiites to rescue and save the weak and disadvantaged peoples of the world; in the view of the religious leaders in Tehran, these individuals would not be ruled according to Iranian law, but according to the universal mandate of the Jurist.[16] In fact, the ultimate objective of Khomeini's philosophical doctrine is that the subject peoples achieve contentment by complete submission to the rule of the Jurist.

The second axis: the national and populist political factor

One of Iran's primary goals is to expand its power to encompass Iraq and Syria and to change the demographic structure in both countries. This is driven not only by religious

and sectarian factors, and the regime's insistence that all Muslims should be subject to the rule of the Supreme Leadership. The strongest factor, in fact, is the national and populist influence that dominates foreign relations in all aspects of Iranian politics and national security issues. Economic, religious, doctrinal, and perhaps sectarian factors are simply various means to achieve the regime's expansionist dreams of rebuilding the Persian Empire in the region.[17]

The expansionist Persian obsession is the driving force in the mentality of the Iranian regime in Tehran, extending even to the theory of Supreme Leadership itself, which restricts the Jurist's nationality, selection, and appointment to Iranians, despite being nominally universal; the Jurist can only be elected by Iran's Assembly of Experts. This supremacist theory is rooted in the regime's unspoken but very clearly demonstrated idea that Persian Iranian ethnicity is naturally superior, possessing an innate nobility and leadership qualities not available to other nationalities and ethnicities, meaning that Persian Iranians alone possess the qualities necessary for a Jurist and guardian of all Muslims. Since the emergence of the Safavid State, Iran has been an incubator of the emergence of Persian nationalism as a cultural identity and political and strategic worldview, with the emergence of Safavid Shiism counters to the concepts of true universal Islam, both Sunni and Shiite.

This supremacist mindset (Pathological hate) is widespread among Iranians, more especially toward Arabs and other non-Western peoples.[18]

During his meeting with Pope Benedict XVI, the former Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad presented the leader of the Catholic faith with a copy of a historical work entitled "The Shahnameh."[19] During the Ahmadinejad era, his acolytes were given to boasting of Iran's greatness, its advanced civilization and its ability to lead the world. Ahmadinejad published and celebrated the so-called charter of Cyrus, the "Founder of the First Iranian Empire," ironically a work on the rights of citizenship and human rights.[20] This Persian supremacism is not limited to Ahmadinejad, with many regime leadership officials sharing similar views; another example is the 2015 statement by Ali Younisi, an adviser to President Rouhani, that Baghdad was once again the capital of the Persian Empire, with Younisi also demanding that the current design of the Iranian flag be replaced with the former symbol of the lion and the red sun, the symbols of Cyrus' dynasty formerly used by the Pahlavi regime on the national flag.[21]

As a result of this supremacist doctrine, the state has spent billions – despite its economic problems and the high rates of poverty within Iran – in order to realize its dreams of expansionist nationalism and populism in the region.[22] Despite being nominally concerned with spiritual issues and transcending narrow nationalism, the

Jurist Leadership doctrine also supports this worldview; no matter how far the regime's "Shiite nation" may expand, it must submit to rule by the Jurist in Tehran.[23]

Many Arab Shiite philosophers have recognized and objected to this sectarian, nationalist, and populist dimension embedded in the concept of Iranian national security, opposing the Iranian regime's policy not only towards Arab Sunnis but also against Arab Shiites.

It is clear that Iran's obsession with regional control is not only detrimental to Sunnis but all Arabs, with the regime using and exploiting Shiism as a tool to impose its projects on the ground and inciting sectarian division. A number of prominent Arab Shiite philosophers have noted that while the doctrine of the rule of the Supreme Leader is theoretically a relatively cosmopolitan religious philosophy, in practice it is divisive and sectarian.[24] This is because the Supreme Leader in Iran believes in his absolute right not only to appoint himself as the ruler of the world's Shiites but also to subordinate whole nations to his rule, with their peoples forbidden from appointing any domestic rulers, being wholly subservient to rule by the Jurist in Tehran. This doctrine effectively means that Arab and all other Shiites, along with non-Shiites come under the rule of Jurist Leadership.[25] Arab Shiite philosophers and thinkers, however, have realized that this doctrine threatens their own well-being, as well as being devastating to the millennia-old coexistence between Sunni and Shiite Arabs in nations across the region.

One prominent Shiite thinker, Hani Fahs, wrote: "Iran has colonized Arabs politically, describing them as "the Iranian community" in dealing with the Shiites of Lebanon. Iran justifies this by saying "Because Iran is a dominant power and the origin of these communities." Iran does not want to play a role, however, but to have supreme influence. A role means partnership; a role requires the other [partner], influence, and complementing one another and unity; Iran acts more like a customer who rents, who [thinks he] buys the neck and the mind together; it's interested in reaching its goal, very pragmatic, and preoccupied with the obsession of the empire, wanting to restore the logic of Persian or Shiite or Iranian power in exchange for Arab abundance."[26] Fahs also warns against the theory of Iranian cosmopolitanism, writing, "I've paid close attention to Iranian nationalism." He continues, "Personally, I was a cosmopolitan citizen, not a patriot; my country in my mind was a mythical place, without boundaries, without a definite location. I noticed that there's an Iranian nationalism, and I said to myself, 'I am a Muslim. Is their patriotism against Islam, against Sharia?' Why am I not paying attention to my Arabism?! I don't have to be a Baathist or an Arab nationalist, but I am an Arab and this is part of my identity. I decided to return to Lebanon without Arab hostility to Iran. But I insist on differentiation. And so I began

to change my former thinking and renewed my reading of the cultural meaning of Arabism, the emergence of the entity and its role and meaning, and the meaning of citizenship as a choice must become law."[27]

Third: demographic change in Syria

It seems probable that Iran exploited the outbreak of the Syrian Revolution to intervene openly and directly in the affairs of the Syrian state, and to effectively assume control of the security and economic system. The Syrian Revolution was an opportunity for the Iranian regime – in the absence of influential players in the region – to annex Syria to make it part of its demographic belt with Iraq and extend Iran's demographic borders to the Mediterranean.

For decades, Iran has been pushing for comprehensive demographic change in Syria to bring it within Iran's sphere of influence. Here we can observe the demographic changes in Syria and the factors that helped accelerate this in the wake of the revolution's outbreak, in the following ways:

History of demographic change in Syria:

There is no doubt that decisive demographic change was observed after the outbreak of the Syrian Revolution, but an observant individual will note that the process of covert gradual demographic change did not stop for one day throughout the rule of the Assad family, with the interests of the Iranian and Syrian regimes converging in this issue. We have already noted the interests of the Iranian regime. As for the interests of the Syrian regime, particularly since it faced a series of protests in the late 1970s and 1980s which included most of the cities of Syria, the Syrian regime realized that it ruled over and oppressed a Sunni majority. At that time, the Alawite sect accounted for about 7% of the total Syrian population. The Assad regime implemented a number of strategies in an attempt to raise this percentage:

1. By facilitating the recruitment of Alawites in Turkey and Lebanon, giving them Syrian nationality.

2. In 1981, Jamil al-Assad established the Al-Murtada Association, a body concerned with spreading the Alawite doctrine in Syria, and with propagating a wholly false narrative that Alawism was the doctrine of Syria before the Ottomans imposed the Sunni doctrine.

3. Offering financial incentives for Alawites: one example is Rifaat al-Assad's guarantee to pay the wedding expenses for Alawite soldiers in the regime army, with Alawites also offered additional bonuses for childbearing.

4. Appointing Alawites to military leadership posts and establishing sectarian military units and militias: All senior military positions within the regime were given to Alawites, while extremely well-armed, heavily sectarian Alawite groups, including the "Defence Brigades" and the Republican Guard, were provided with the latest weapons.

Basing these groups and their military leadership primarily around Latakia, Tartous, and Damascus effectively created sectarian belts around these cities. Damascus, for example, is bordered by Sumerian in the south, and Ash- Alwarwar in the north, both almost entirely Alawite, with the populations in Mezzeh to the south and the Al-Assad suburb to the north also nearly completely Alawite.[28]

The demographic change at that stage was wholly in the hands of the Assad regime itself; fearing the possibility of unrest among the majority of Syria's population, Hafez al-Assad realized that to maintain power, the regime needed to institute radical structural changes, both in geography and demography. Following the emergency of the Iranian regime as another crucial player in Syrian domestic affairs, a demographic change took another direction.[29]

The stage of Iranian intervention on the line of demographic change:

After the 1979 Revolution in Iran, an alliance was quickly formed between Ayatollah Khomeini and Hafez al-Assad. Damascus could not ignore the historical and political value of partnership with Khomeini and Iran. The Persian supremacists of the regime were overjoyed at what they viewed as this opportunity for entrenchment in historically Sunni Arab Damascus and its embrace of Persian political doctrine, which they saw as both a political and doctrinal achievement. After this historical decade, and the sectarian legacy, just as they viewed Baghdad as a present from the cities of Persia; in the words of Rouhani's advisor Ali Younisi,[30] Iran views Damascus as an Umayyad stronghold that must be demolished and annexed to its own castles and cities.

Following the 1979 Revolution in Iran and the promising start of relations with the Assads, Tehran rushed towards Damascus, desperate to maintain and strengthen its relationship with the Syrian regime, helping to found Hezbollah in the early 1980s to retain its foothold and its ideological and geographical proximity to its Shiite outposts in southern Lebanon, in order to strengthen Tehran's influence in the region. As usual, Tehran, implausibly, proclaimed this to be part of its "export of the Revolution,"[31] in support of the oppressed and disadvantaged.

The Assad regime needed Iran's support in light of the continued tension between Hafez al-Assad and Saddam Hussein in Iraq, as well as with a number of Arab countries, in addition to the domestic unrest that led to the Hama Intifada in 1986, in which the regime killed up to 40,000 Syrians. Hafez had a finely attuned understanding of

the sectarian proximity between his regime and the new Iranian regime; he wanted this to be based on a strong regional alliance with an ally whose political and cultural values intersected with his own, as well as prizing the sectarian support offered by Tehran; this coordination between the two regimes created a close bond, which led them to label themselves the "Axis of Resistance."

The decision-makers in both countries wanted the alliance between the two regimes not to be merely a temporary political or tactical enterprise ending with the conclusion of any passing upheavals or conflicts, but to be a long-term strategic partnership. To this end, the leadership in both Tehran and Damascus worked to strengthen sectarian relations, while attempting to shape positive public perceptions of the alliance by downplaying its sectarian aspects, although it was widely viewed as the "alliance of the Alawites and the Twelver Shiites." The new alliance also allowed Iran to overtly intercede in the country to promote Shiism across the country; this can be seen from the increase in the percentage of Shia in Syria, which rose from around one percent in 1970 to approximately 13 percent by 2011. This demographic change was also boosted by the massive exodus of Lebanese Shiites to Syria during the Lebanese civil war. Since the outbreak of the Syrian Revolution in 2011, the percentage of Shiites in and around Damascus has sharply increased, with Iranian Shiite missionaries and affiliated figures now intensively proselytizing in the capital and opening numerous religious centers.

A number of other factors such as the Israeli war on Lebanon, the siege of Iraq, the Iraq-Iran war, and the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, all led to radical changes in the form of the Syrian state. One example of the devastating policy of demographic change in action is the town of Jaramana, near Damascus; in the 1990s, Jaramana had a population of several thousand, mostly Druze and Christian; now it has been turned into a city of more than half a million people, predominantly Iraqi in terms of dialect, and Shiite in doctrine.[32] Then, of course, there is the neighborhood around the Sayeda Zeinab shrine in Damascus, which has now been turned into a Persian province inside Syria.[33]

The Iranian regime's exploitation of religious shrines is another important economic factor that cannot be ignored in its restructuring of Syria's demographic composition. More than half a million Iranians flock to Damascus every year to visit these shrines,[34] with the pilgrims wanting hotels with a Persian feeling to them. Catering to this tourism sector, Iranian businessmen have set up hotels in the capital, pumping massive sums in investment into these areas, as well as buying large numbers of properties and vast tracts of land around and near the shrines from the regime for peppercorn prices.

The main language used in these hotels and in the Syrian capital's markets nowadays is Persian. The Iranian embassy and Iranian cultural centers have become overtly sectarian, used for missionary work and proselytizing.[35] Trade in the vicinity of the shrines is brisk, with tens of thousands of Iranian pilgrims passing through, guarded over by Iranian troops and affiliated militias.

Demographic decisive phase:

Iran analyzed the Syrian Revolution not only from the perspective of its return to prominence as a player in deciding the regional balance of power and shaping the maps of conflicts and alliances in the region, but from the viewpoint of duplicity and pragmatic exploitation, although they publicly rejected the uprising and took a hostile stance against it.[36] In actual fact, Iran has benefited from the revolution far more than the Syrian regime, using it to justify appointing Iranian experts to the most prominent and sensitive positions within the regime army and to conclude economic agreements with Assad which heavily favor Tehran. Iran has used the Syrian Revolution as a means of attempting to decisively alter the demographic balance within Syria in its favor, possibly realizing that this is a unique opportunity to manipulate Syria's demographic composition far more rapidly than its efforts over the past 30 years.

Iran has achieved this by implementing a plan including a range of objectives and strategies. The most important of these are:

1. Dispossessing Syrian citizens by confiscating property: The Syrian regime has confiscated the properties of thousands of Syrian citizens at Tehran's behest, claiming that the properties belong to opposition figures or terrorist organizations. Article 4 of the regime's "anti-terror legislation" provides for the confiscation of the property of all those who support terror, a term used by the regime to apply to anyone opposing Assad. Under this legislation, the regime bans any efforts by the owners to reclaim their properties or bring legal action to prevent them being sold, transferred, or disposed of. This legislation has led to countless Syrian families being dispossessed, with more than 300 such cases in the towns of Yabroud and Qalamoun alone, and others in cities, towns, and villages across Syria.[37] The legislation means that the owners of the properties, many of them passed down through generations, have no chance of ever regaining them.[38] Often the regime confiscates properties and transfers them directly to Hezbollah terrorists or Iranian Revolutionary Guard troops working in the areas.[39]

The regime has also revived agrarian reform legislation last used in 1958 to seize agricultural land owned by "opposition-affiliated" individuals and groups, with the land seized also being transferred to Iranian "investors," and any tenant farmers or other residents being evicted.[40]

2. Displacement of indigenous peoples

The Assad regime, supported by Iran and Russia, has also implemented strategies specifically intended to kill or dispossess the population in towns, cities, and villages across Syria, with methods including:

A: Arrests and killings inside prisons.[41]

B: Kidnapping and torture.[42]

C: Starvation, siege, and bombardment, followed by "negotiation."[43]

D: Conscription or deportation.

E: Indiscriminate shelling.[44]

These are all stages leading to forced displacement,[45] in the form of "voluntary displacement." If the population refuses to leave, these are followed by forced public displacement.[46] This was the case with the city of Darya, where the regime carried out a mass deportation of the indigenous people for the benefit of the fighters of Iran and Hezbollah, which confirms that the demographic war is strategic for the Iranian and Syrian regimes, which is the main objective of the longevity and permanence of this war. In the view of the Iranian leadership and the Assad regime, once most of the population has been dispossessed and replaced with foreign loyalists, the Syrian regime will remain strong for tens and perhaps hundreds of years by creating a docile and subservient loyal population. The Iranian regime believes that the war will ensure that it is deeply demographically embedded in the fabric of Syria, socially, politically, and economically, transforming Syria from a political and strategic ally to a follower and merging it into the Iranian state, a model which Tehran has implemented in Iraq and Lebanon with varying degrees of success.[47]

A number of methods are used to achieve this objective, including:

1. The replacement of indigenous families with Shiite families from Iran, Lebanon, and elsewhere: Troops from the IRGC and terrorists from Hezbollah and other militias are "given" the homes of the dispossessed indigenous people by Iran as a "reward" for their efforts in "exporting the Islamic Revolution" and implementing decisive changes in the regional demographic map. This is evident in the neighborhood of Hall Bebrud, whose name was transformed into a "neighborhood of Zahra" after it was cleansed of its residents and repopulated by Hezbollah fighters and their families.[48]

2. The burning of official documents and registry offices: The Syrian and Iranian regimes not only confiscated properties but burnt down registry offices and other repositories of official property ownership documents. One example of this was the burning down of the land registry offices in Homs city,[49] in order to leave no trace of the documents

proving the ownership deeds and rights of the properties in the city and province in an effort to leave no trace of legal evidence that would allow the owners to reclaim their stolen homes, farms, and other properties.[50]

3. Granting Syrian nationality to foreign fighters and mercenaries: Since the start of the Syrian Revolution in 2011, the Assad regime has granted Syrian nationality to tens of thousands of Iranians, Iraqis,[51] and others brought in by the Revolutionary Guards while denying citizenship to millions of Syrians.[52] The aim of this policy is to offer Iran's militias a means of claiming legitimacy for remaining in Syria once the war has ended so that they can be part of Iran's new regional empire and components in maintaining its cultural, demographic, and military supremacism,[53] as well as pursuing its strategic and geopolitical interests.

4. Missionary and proselytism activities to gain converts to Shiism: Shiite missionaries have been extremely active in the neighborhoods of Damascus and other Syrian cities where they are based, with the Baath Party also extending its youth wing activities among school children, indoctrinating the younger generations into supporting the regime and endorsing political Shiism and the Iranian regime.[54] This is, of course, in addition to far greater political focus on the presence of the Husayniyat and Shiite shrines, and trips to the areas surrounding the shrines, such as the shrine of Sayeda Zeinab and the tomb of Sayeda Ruqaya and others, in addition to introducing and promoting Shiite rituals and rites and presence of Shiite Iranian panegyrists.[55]

5. Buying Property: Since the days of Hafez al-Assad, Iranians have been buying up property and land adjacent to Shiite shrines and working to expand and glorify the shrines. As soon as the 1980s ended, Iranian-backed Shiites took over the Sunni endowments body, which included the protection of mausoleums and tombs that they discovered and developed. The most prominent of these was the residence of Sayeda Ruqaya, with the buildings surrounding the shrine being deliberately vandalized in order to justify their being knocked down to make way for a huge building containing a school and a large mosque, whose construction was completed in 1990. This process was repeated in the shrines of Uday ibn Hajar al-Kindi in rural Damascus province, and Ammar bin Yasser in Raqqa. The history of Iran's property purchases in Syria has been extensive since the Iranian Revolution up to the present day.[56]

After the Syrian Revolution began in 2011, the Syrian regime openly offered tenders solely for Iranian buyers, allowing them an even greater penetration into the Syrian real estate market. The Iranian embassy in Damascus effectively established a residential neighborhood in the Mezzeh district turning the area into "Little Tehran," a fully Iranian district. In gratitude for the Iranian regime maintaining Assad in power, the regime

issued special laws to expedite Iranian property acquisitions in Syria, such as Law No. 25 of 2013, and issued presidential decrees allowing the sale and purchase of Syrian land on the basis of profitability and partnership. The Iranian regime encouraged Iranian investors to buy property in Syria and pumped large sums of money into real estates and lands.[57] Traders and investors bought luxury homes, villas, and apartments in vital areas of Damascus and along the Syrian coastline.[58] The economic factor was also present in the scene, as Iran took advantage of long-term agreements humiliating to the Syrian regime on quotas in the Syrian market, and signed deals and agreements in the government sectors and heavy industries.

In conclusion, the Iranian regime is investing massively in every way in Syria, regarding the Syrian State as a key part of the strategic depth of Iranian national security. Mehdi Taib, a senior Iranian regime official who described Syria as Iran's thirty-fifth province, clarified the crucial importance of Syria to Iran, saying, "If we keep Syria then we will be able to recover Khuzestan [Al-Ahwaz Arab region occupied by Iran since 1925], but if we lose Syria then we will not be able to keep Tehran." Taib further asserted that although the Syrian regime has an army, "it lacks the ability to manage the war in Syrian cities," adding, "This is why the Iranian government has proposed the creation of 60,000 troops for urban warfare. Fighters, to receive the task of the street war of the Syrian army.[59] The revolution against Bashar is considered by the Iranians to be a revolution against Khamenei himself."[60]

Fourth: demographic change in Iraq

In its Persian-language literature, the Iranian regime has long routinely referred to Iraq as being part of the ancient Persian Empire and part of the ancient and modern Shiite Kingdom. These literary references have now translated into official regime policy.[61]

Two Persian and Safavid States ruled over Iraq during different periods of history. The Buhayyans came from Persia, ruled parts of Iraq and controlled the political decision-making during the period of Abbasid rule.[62] Thus, the Iranian regime's collective mindset and the folk memory of its policymakers are keenly aware of Iraq's geopolitical importance.[63]

Iran has changed the demography of Iraq to its advantage, using similar measures to those employed in Syria; quantitative forced displacement, and use of the "War on Terror" narrative to change the demographic balance in Sunni areas, which are then deprived of spending on basic public utilities, infrastructure, education, and health. This is leading to the creation of a younger generation lacking the education and life chances of their peers in the ruling south of Iraq, and the autonomous north of Iraq.

Iran's demographic change in Iraq was much simpler to achieve than in Syria, because Iran entered Iraq via the existing Iranian sectarian belt, especially after the US invasion

of Iraq, and was able to recruit and establish tens of thousands of militias affiliated with the Revolutionary Guard and the Iranian leadership. Through the establishment of sectarian loyalties and clan and tribal loyalties, in addition to the existence of the government-backed Dawa Party, Iran was able to implement its demographic policy under cover of populist sectarian, and authoritarian control of the levers of power.

Iran's strategy towards Iraq:

Iran is implementing qualitative demographic changes across the whole of Iraq. It is in Iran's interest to prevent Iraq from turning back into a strong country which might again confront Iran, whether militarily or politically, and limit its capabilities and influence, possibly thwarting its achievement of its objectives in the Arab region.[64] Through these policies, Tehran seeks to effectively destroy any Iraqi sovereignty, turning all of Iraq into an Iranian political and economic dependency[65] by utilizing a number of strategic affiliates that implement the Iranian regime's interests and demographic change on the ground. Iran has not given priority to quantitative demographic change in Iraq because of the existing large Shiite population blocs in Iraq, which are sufficient to achieve sectarian and political allegiances.[66] However, quantitative change began in some Sunni Arab cities after the bombing of the shrines of two Al-Askari imams in the city of Samarra in 2006, although these changes were slow to develop after the invasion in 2003.[67] Iranian policy has been based on a set of foundations for dramatic change on the ground. These can be summarized[68] in the following points:

First: Militarization of the Sunni cities:

Iran's strategy in Iraq works to isolate only the Shiite cities and provinces from tension and terrorism while immersing the Sunni provinces in the horrendously destructive fire of war – military conflict serves as one of the pillars and drivers of demographic change aspired to by both regimes. Even during the US occupation of Iraq, Iran was careful to shield Shiite areas from conflict, supporting Shiite militias' attacks on the US troops only in Sunni provinces. This policy, which has continued to date, helped to achieve Tehran's political and demographic interests in Iraq, leading to the mass displacement of millions of Sunnis in an unprecedented population transfer, all of which has gone unnoticed by the West, busy focusing solely on the "war on terror."[69] Another stage of decisive demographic change has been followed by Iran in the border provinces, whose security is a concern to the Iranian regime. In Diyala province,[70] for example, Iran has changed its usual approach to demographic change in the governorate, relying on its armed militias. It has carried out campaigns of arrest, destruction of Sunni mosques,[71] land-clearing, leveling, and bulldozing, all of which became systematic after the 2006 bombings and subsequent internal fighting.[72]

This already vicious campaign of forced displacement took a more sectarian and even more violent turn of events after the expulsion of the Islamic State organization from Diyala in 2014. The Shiite militias used this pretext to implement decisive and comprehensive changes[73] to the demographic make-up of the city, including killing based on sectarian identity, forced displacement, mass arrests, and preventing internally displaced peoples [IDPs] from the city from returning to their homes.[74] The same pretext has been used in all the Sunni cities under the excuse of combating terrorism, as happened in Mosul, Salah al-Din, and Ramadi,[75] but the cities bordering Iran and the Baghdad belt have suffered the largest share of forced and violent displacement; tellingly, the nominally Sunni "Islamic State" terror group has very rarely targeted Shiite areas, reserving its brutality for Sunni peoples.[76]

Second: Indirect displacement: This included a range of mechanisms such as:

1. Water Deprivation: Iran built dams on the sources of the Diyala River, which led to the rivers drying up, large-scale pollution, and widespread desertification, forcing many residents to leave and abandon their farms and homes.[77]

2. Iranian "cultural offices": In the era of Nouri al-Maliki, Iran opened three cultural offices in Diyala province alone, more than the number of Iranian offices in Najaf, Basra, and Karbala, where each city has one office.[78]

3. Redistribution of land to regime loyalist Shi'ites: Nouri al-Maliki distributed the territory and lands of the Sunni provinces – especially Diyala – to the citizens of southern Iraq loyal to the government in sectarian and doctrinal terms.[79]

The use of all of these "soft power" strategies led to massive changes in the demographic map of the Sunni Arab cities and to suffering for millions of dispossessed people, both of which are rapidly increasing in the absence of effective international and Arab pressure on the Iraqi government.

The consequences of demographic change

If the Iranian project succeeds in enforcing conclusive demographic change in Syria and Iraq – as it has gone a long way towards doing in Iraq – it will have disastrous political consequences, politically, economically, and ideologically, making it very difficult for the regime to return to its previous demographic shape and balance, or to restore any sort of unity, at least in the medium term. We can extrapolate the mentality of the Iranian decision-makers in their determination to annex Syria to Iran's territory and its demographic regional "belt," through the following points:

The Iranians believe that the region is experiencing a full strategic vacuum, in the absence of any joint Arab force confronting Iranian expansionism. Hence, the opportunity is ripe for hegemony over Iraqi political decision-making.[80]

By consolidating its political, military, and sectarian presence in Syria and Iraq, Iran guarantees its share of the two countries' wealth – in markets, oil, energy, minerals, and unequal trade – benefiting its companies and capital.[81]

1. Control of Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon, includes the removal of Turkey in whole or in part as a regional power, isolating it from being part of the Arab world and ridding Tehran of one of its biggest competitors in the region, which enjoys widespread popular support, and would deflect any Turkish efforts at penetration. This is felt to be particularly important since both Iraq and Syria were once under the control of the Ottoman Empire, and represent important factors in the Turkish economy, in addition to enjoying strategic depth and security.

2. Iran is depicting itself to the West as a strong regional player, which can serve as the region's policeman and can be relied upon to secure Western national security, particularly if there are consensus and division of roles, at the expense of the Arab countries in general and the Gulf in particular. This proposition reinforces Iran's hypocrisy in claiming to represent plurality towards the West, while offering only sectarianism, war, and "Islamic guardianship" towards its regional neighbors.

Despite all the above, the Iranian project to annex Syria and Iraq as a regional demographic belt for the regime is fraught with problems and weaknesses that must be taken into consideration, and used by those who wish to defeat it, such as:

1. The huge and growing financial drain from the Iranian treasury in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen with the opening of new fronts, in the shadow of near-empty coffers and massive domestic inflation, along with internal problems which threaten the regime's own domestic power base.[82]

2. The massive, possibly irreparable damage done to Iran's reputation in the Arab and Islamic world by its support for sectarian militias in the region, and its position on the Syrian Revolution and other regional issues have put it in stark opposition to a billion Sunni Muslims worldwide, severely threatening the standing and image of the Iranian regime with other Muslims and damaging any efforts to use its soft power by proselytizing and missionary work.

3. Iran cannot continue to disregard international law and human rights conventions with impunity, meaning that if it does not succeed in enforcing conclusive and profound change on the ground, it will need to resort to a long-term policy of peaceful change and long-term strategies.

The opposite demography: tens of thousands of Syrian refugees have been forced to flee to Lebanon, threatening Lebanese demographics with major change. This

worries Hezbollah, prompting the terror group to demand the return of the Syrian refugees trapped in Lebanon to their homes, apparently unaware of the irony in the same group which forced many of the refugees to flee now calling for their return. This call is caused by fear of a demographic change in Lebanon, which threatens the demographic superiority of Hezbollah in Lebanon.[83]

Possible approaches:

Arab decision-makers can confront the Iranian project in Iraq and Syria through implementing a set of strategies which can be monitored and altered as required. Amongst these are:

1. Political and logistical support for Sunni Arabs in Iraq, along with opening cultural centers akin to the Iranian centers, which preserve the cultural and civilizational identity of the Arabs there.

2. Confronting Iranian media by exposing the regime's practices in Syria and Iraq by Arab Media.

3. Building a strong Gulf Arab-Turkish Islamic alliance to confront Iranian influence in the region and preventing its demographic expansion at the expense of coexistence, historical constants, and Arab cultural heritage.

4. Creating and supporting groups that support pro-Arab issues within the Iranian State.

5. The beginning of the collapse of any expansionist project begins with defeating it at its most sensitive pivotal point. In other words, the defeat of the Iranian project in Syria, or its suppression and its entirety, will guarantee a complete retreat in Iranian politics and the ideological cracks in its ideological system, followed by comprehensive reviews and the end of the so-called Shiite geopolitical project. This is likely to occur with the fall of the Syrian regime, with all the implications that would bring off the collapse of any bets on the permanence of the Iranian regional project.

The main findings of this paper can be summarized in the following points:

1. Iran has succeeded in creating affiliated loyalist areas and groups providing political and ideological support for Tehran in Syria and Iraq. This has been the fruit of long-term politics since the Islamic Revolution.

2. The imposition by the Iranian State of a new demographic reality in Syria and Iraq is difficult to change in the long term by buying houses and buildings directly belonging to the Iranian State, changing educational curricula, and displacing large numbers of people.

3. Iran's exploitation of Shiite groups in Iraq and Syria to achieve the so-called Shiite Cosmopolitanism, which serves Iranian interests.

The Iranian regime believes that Syria is Iran's 35th province and that Baghdad has become the capital of the new Iranian empire, demonstrating that confrontation with Iran is an ideological strategy. Iran's expansion in Syria and Iraq is not only for its political and economic interests.

4.Iran has worked to dismantle the Sunni community in Syria and Iraq, consciously stripping both communities of vital factors for the creation of urbanization, commerce, and industrialization, which has weakened the communities, leaving them in poverty and susceptible to financial inducements, and thus easy to control and direct.

5.Confrontation with Iran requires the formulation of a common vision by the Arab states, a precise concept of Arab national security, and military alliances based on a deterrent military force.

<p style="text-align:center;">·············· Endnotes ··············</p>

1. Demography is the study of populations. It seeks to understand population dynamics in terms of time and space including populations' structures and their distribution geographically and socially and their changes on the long-run. Demographics developed to include historical demography that studies all ancient peoples. As for the Differentiated Demography, it includes the diverse societies such as Switzerland, Belgium, and Lebanon where people are divided according to their doctrines including the representation of these sects and doctrines in the governmental organizations. This characteristic leads to a state of political, security, and economic instability in case the different sects do not get along with each other. Dr. Alexander Abi Younin: Alsultah fi Lebanon Wa Khareedat Aldemografia Altamaioziah, the National Defense Journal issued by the Lebanese Army, January 2016.

2. Aily Ihram, February 15, 2016.

3. Ashraf Keshk (Ph.D.), Dwal Alkhaleej Wa Iran: Qadhaia Alsira' Wa Istratejiat Almuajaha, The Iraian Studies Journal, 1st issue, December 2016

4. Nasr Aref (Ph.D.): Alhoroub Aldemografiah, Tafkeek Almujtama'at Wa Tafreegh Alsukan, Al-Ihram, January 23, 2017

5. Josef Olmet (Ph.D.), the Syrian Civil War and the Demographic Changes to Expect August 27, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-josef-olmert/syrian-civil-war-demographics_b_1833672.html

6. Nasr Aref (Ph.D.): Alhoroub Aldemografiah, Al-Ihram, January 23, 2017, Wa Alab'ad Aldemografiah Lilfawzah Alarabia, Al-Ihram, January 16, 2017

7. Iran Wa dwal Alkhaleej: Masadat Mazhabiah Ala Tasado'at Siasiah, Dr. Adel Ali Alabdallah, The GCC Council Secretary General's Advisor, page 306, a study within "The Iranian Project in the Region," Albasheer Publisher.

8. Mohammed Jawad Larijani (Ph.D.): Alidarah Alsiasiah fi Alsadr Alislami, a long debate within "Mutarahat fi Alfikr Alsiasi Alislami" book, for Haider Hoballah, Alintishar Alarabi Beirut 2015, p. 55.

9. The official website of Ayatoallah Ali Khameini, Alistifta'at, Ahkam Taqleed chapter- Wilayat Fiqih Wa Hukm Hakim. And Hassan alomari: Alqarar Alsiasi fi Iran Bain Althawrah Wa Aldawlah, Aljazeera Studies Center http://studies.aljazeera.net/ar/files/iranandstrengthfactors/2013/04/201343105119173879.html

10. Adel Ali Abdullah (Ph.D.): Almuharikat Alsiasiah Alirania fi Mantiqat Alkhaleej Alarabi, quoting from: Iran Wa Dwal Alkhaleej Masadat Mazhabiah Ala Tasado'at Siasiah, Omaiah Center, p. 313.

11. Mohammed Jawad Larijani: Maqoulat fi Alistrategiah Alwataniah, Alasr Center for Strategicuture Studies 2013, page 46. And Dr. Mohammed Alsulami: Algeopolitic Alshi'i: Alwaqi' Wa Almustaqbal, the Iranian Studies Journal, 1st issue, December 2016, p. 48.

12. James Warl, Dara and Khomeini: Exploring the Iranian National Identity, Alexandria Library 2016.

13. Iran Wa Dwal Alkhaleej: Masadat Mazhabiah Ala Tasado'at Siasiah, p. 313.

14. STNLY LANE POOLE: A HISTORY OF EGYPTIAN IN THE MIDDLE AGES, Publisher: New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1901.

15. Khomeini and his Mullahs companions classify themselves as the chosen ones by Allah to save people: (We are the chosen ones to save the oppressed, we are ordered to help them and confront tyrants) - Khomeini: The Islamic Government, p. 58.

16. By its diverse structure, Iran is an ambitious expansionist country; within the empirical arena, Dr. Jamal Hamdan: Muqadimat Mawsou'a Shakhsiah, Egypt, Alshorouq Publisher in Cairo.

17. Joya Blandal Sa'ad: Sourat Alarab fi Aladab Alfarsi Alhadeeth, translatd by Sakhr Alhaj Hussein, Alahliah for publishing and distribution, Jordan, p. 16-28.

18. Abdullah Alnufeisi (Ph.D.), Wa Alsa'eed Edrees Wa Fatmah Alsmadi and others: Almashro' Alirani fi Almantiqah, page 13, Ibid.

19. Mohammed Alsa'eed (Ph.D.), Aljomhouriah Althalithah fi Iran, Egyptian General Committee for Books 2012, page 152

20. See: Rouhani Advisor's statements and their consequences: Russia today, March 17, 2015. The flag carrying the Lion and Sun slogans were used by the Safawi and Qajari states to revive the Persian symbols before Islam where Qajar announced that this flag is the division between good and evil since the time of Zoroaster. Later, it became the Iranian national symbol over the Ottoman crescent. Arond Ibrahimian: Tareekh Iran Alhadeeth, Alam Alma'rifah, Kuwait 2014, page 38 http://cutt.us/stOTv

21. See Shaza Khaleel, Ajindat Iran Tuhlik Iqtisadiha Wa Tuza'zi' Istiqrar Alsharq Alawsat, Alrawabit Center for Strategic Studies, January 14, 2017.

22. Bohouth Wilayat Alfaqih, prepared by Noon Center for Writing and Translation, 1999, section: "Kaifa Yakoun Alwali Alfaqih Almuntakhab min Majlis Alkhubara' fi Iran Walian Ala Ahl Balad Akhar?" page 114. It is noted that the Iranian authorities arrested Ahmed Alqabanji, the Iraqi thinker for his writings against the Jurist Leadership when he visited Tehran. See Dr. Ahmed Alkanani: Mahakim Altafteesh Ta'oud min Jadeed, Almuthaqaf Newspaper November 30, 2012.

23. Ilah Roustami: Ta'theer Iran wa Nofouziha fi Almantiqah, translated by: Dr. Fatmah Nasr, 2011. See also: Almashro' Alirani fi Almantiqah Alarabiah wa Alislamiah, Dr Sa'eed Edrees wa Fatmah Alsmadi and others, Ibid.

24. Cosmopolitanism: refers to loyalty outside one's own country. After the eruption of the Iranian revolution in 1979, Iran attracted the Arab Shiite sects in favor of Tehran through its proxy militias to implement its expansionist ambitions.

25. Hani Fahs: a meeting with the Lebanese Alnahar Newspaper, Seeptember 18, 2014.

26. Hani Fahs: Alnahar Newspaper, September 18, 2014. See also: Exclusive Meeting, a mmeting with the Iranian president Mohammed Khatami, May 23, 1999.

27. Imad Bouzo (Ph.D.): Awham Altagieer Aldemography fi Syria, Orient, January 13, 2016. See also: Obaidah Amer: Allo'bah Alkobra… Kaifa To'eed Iran Tashkeel Syria Demographian? February 20, 2017, Midan website.

28. See: Atef Mu'tamad (Ph.D.): Alshi'ah fi Almashriq Alislami, Tathweer Almazhab wa Tafkeek Alkhareetah, Nahzat Masr 2008, page 155. See also: Khareetat Alshi'ah fi Alalam Alislami, Amir Sa'ad, Alrisalah Studies Center 2013.

29. See the statements of Ali Alyounisi: Iran… Asbahna Empratoriah Asimatoha Baghdad, Alarabiah Net, March 8, 2015, http://cutt.us/qz83m

30. See: Alsulami (Ph.D.), Guneimi: Algeopolitic Alshi'i, Journal for Iranian Studies, 1st issue, page 32, The Arabian Gulf Center for Iranian Studies, Riyadh.

31. See: Imad Bouzo: Awham Altagieer Aldemography fi Syria, Ibid.

32. See: Hakaza Tabtali' Iran Asimat Alomawieen, Malaf An ALtashaio' fi Damascus" Orient, may 26, 2016, and see: Alo'bah Alkobra… Kaifa To'eed Iran Tashkeel Syria Demografian? February 20, 2017.

33. Midan website http://cutt.us/vZ18H, http://cutt.us/6ignn

34. See: Nisf Million Irani fi Syria Sanawian, the Middle East, December 4, 2009, http://cutt.us/bNX6

35. See: Asrar Altagalgul Alshi'i fi Damascus- Report May 5, 2011, https://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/60623.html

36. Mohammed Alsa'eed Edrees (Ph.D.) wa Fatmah Alsmadi (Ph.D.) and others: Almashro' Alirani fi Almantiqah Alarabiah wa Alislamiah, page 178, Omaiah Center for Strategic research and Studies+ Albashir Publisher, 2015.

37. Nizam Alasad Yosadir Mumtalakat Allaji'een wa Almu'aradah, Arabi 21, February 25, 2015, http://cutt.us/hEcgL

38. Alqalamon… Tahjeer wa Istinzaf wa Taskheer Lilharb, Aljazeera Net February 2, 2016, http://cutt.us/MuyD4

39. Ta'seed Alqalamon, Aljazeera Net, January 14, 2015http://cutt.us/9AcMG

40. Alasad Yusadir Amlak Almu'arideen Bimojab Qanon Ya'oud Lisitat Oqoud, Alarabi Aljadeed: June 29, 2016 http://cutt.us/auRjw

41.\ Sadnaya Prison, the biggest prison in Syria about 30 Kilometer to the North of Damascus. More than 13 thousand prisoners were executed in this prison in 2011-2015. It was described as a human abattoir by the Amnesty International. More than 10 thousand women are in the Syrian Prisons. See: the Amnesty International Report, Tuesday 7, 2017, Maslakh Bashari: Shanq Jama'i wa Ibadah fi Sijn Sidnaya, http://cutt.us/r3qwk, http://cutt.us/gb9Z7

42. See: Palmyra Prison… Almwt Arham min Alhaya, the Arab Present Program, May 23, 2015, Aljazeera Alfada'iah. And see: Sojoun Syria… Almawt Ta'zeeban, Comprehensive report, Aljazeera Net, http://cutt.us/HDvE4, And; Rights Organization Accuses Syrian Government of Mass Hangings, http://cutt.us/NAUum

43. Omar Koush: Alhudn wa Altagieer Aldimografi fi Syria, January 1, 2016, Aljazeera Net, http://cutt.us/rsOop

44. The attack included houses, lands, and hospitals in a random way led to they flee of civilians to other cities or outside Syria; in both cases, their properties were seized after they leave.

45. See: Hal Yas'a Alasad Lifrag Syria min Mu'arideeh? Aljazeera Net September 8, 2015, http://cutt.us/njuY2

46. Hezbollah fi Syria… Thjeer Alsukan Alanan, "Repor," September 20, 2016, http://cutt.us/dkd0X

47. Daria… Halaqah Jadeedah min Musalsal Altahjeer Li'qamat Syria Almufeedah, "Report", Alarabi Aljadeed, Sunday August 28, 2016. See: also Masro' Irani fi Damascus Yuhadid Ma'atai Alf Syrian Biltahjeer, Alquds Alarabi, August 29, 2015, http://cutt.us/xdfb8, http://cutt.us/K1eM

48. Alqalamoun… Tahjeer wa Istinzaf wa Taskheer Lilharb, previous reference. See: Omar Kokash: Alhudan wa Altagieer Aldemogaphy fi Syria, Aljazera Net, previous reference. See also: The Guardian… How is Iran Changing the Sectarian Structure of Syria, Arabi 21,January 15, 2017, http://cutt.us/kNys

49. Alnizam Alsoury wa Ta'deel Demographia Alsukan, Ma Wara' Alkhabar program, Aljazeera, July 17, 2013. See: Iran Tugaier Tarkeeby Syria Alsukaniah Bitaween Alshiite, January 15, 2017, http://cutt.us/LJBGC

50. Tagieer Aldemographia Alsukaniah Bisouria Abr Altahjeer wa Alihlal, Alwaq' Alarabi program, December 8, 2014.

51. See: Michael Nits: The Iranian Division: The Role of the Iraqi Shiite Militias in Syria, Institute of Washington for the Far East, June 27, 2013, http://cutt.us/1vGA5

52. Tagieer Aldemographia Alsukaniah Bisouria, previous Reference. Some reports reveal that the Syrian regime has granted the Syrian nationality for about 750 thousand people in from Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, and Iran in 2011-2013 only. See also: Alnizam Alsoury wa Ta'deel Demographia Alsukan, Ibid.

53. Tajnees Aliranieen fi Syria, Alarabia Alhadath, August 25, 2015

http://cutt.us/ugqRW

54. Tajnees Almilitiat Aliraniah min Baghdad ila Damascus, Okaz Newspaper, February 1, 2016

http://okaz.com.sa/article/1041068/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%A3%D9%8A/

55. Alqalamon: Tahjeer wa Taskheer Lilharb, Ibid.

56. Almadahon Almutajihon ila Damascus Yad'on Li'iran, report, October 27, 2016, the Arabian Gulf Center for Iranian Studies

http://cutt.us/MMNL9

57. Alo'bah Alkobra… Kaifa To'eed Iran Tashkeel Syria Demografian, Ibid.

58. Iran's Plan for Syria Without Assad, http://nationalinterest.org/feature/irans-plan-syria-without-assad-14762 And: Iranians Fuel Property Frenzy in Syria.

http://www.voanews.com/a/iranians-fuel-property-frenzy-syria/3250125.html

59. See: Itiraf Irani Bimawjat Shira' Alaqarat fi Damascus, Arabi 21, March27, 2016. See also: Alhodan wa Altagieer

Aldemografi fi Suria, Ibid, http://cutt.us/jcMKJ , See also: Mashro' Istidani… Iran Tagzo Souq Alaqarat fi Damascus wa Hims, Huffington Post, March 26, 2016, http://cutt.us/8xD8, And Iran Tashtary Syria, report, Sasa Post, March 31, 2016.

60. See: Tasreehat Mahdi Ta'ib: Alarabia Net, Friday, February 15, 2013

http://cutt.us/voZZa

61. See: Alikhwan wa Iran, Almisbar Center 1st edition, 2015, p. 151.

62. Ali Alyounsi, advisor of the Iranian president said:"The Iraqi-Iranian geography cannot be separated and our culture cannot be broken down, so, we have to fight together and unite. Iran is today an empire as before and its capital is Baghdad, the center of our culture and identity." See the statements of Rouhani's advisor, Iran: we have become an empire and Baghdad is our capital, Alarabia Net, March 8, 2015, http://cutt.us/IGnbG

63. See: Albdulamir Kazim Zahid: Alfiqh Aldustouri fi Alijtihad Alshi'I, Alintishar Alarabi, p. 325.

64. See the Iranian Influence in Iraq, Dr. Arafat Jargon: Alalaqat Alirania Alkhaleejia, 1st edition, Alarabi Lilnashr wa Altawzee' 2016, p. 88.

65. Ishaq Naqash says, "The new formation of Iraq has been a challenge for the Iranian position in the Arabian Gulf and its economic interests in the region; the establishment of the Iraqi railroad and the construction of the road extending from the western borders up to Hamadan before 1921. They were as an elimination of the Iranian traditional northern trade roads resulted in the transfer of most of the exportation and transit in northwest Iran toward Baghdad and Basra and increase of the Iranian trade interests in Iraq. As a result, the Iranian government sought to escalate tension in Iraq through weakening this country and obstructing any attempt to build a strong Iraqi national army. Ishaq Naqash, Shiite Aliraq, translated by Abdulilah Alnu'aimi, Almadar Publishers 1996, page 180. (Ishaq Naqash: A Professor in History in the American Brandies University and Teacher of Historical Studies in the Advanced Studies Institute in the American University of Princeton; a Jewish Oriental from Iraqi origins.

66. Dayala wa Altagieer Aldemography, Barq Center for Research and Studies, "Study" http://cutt.us/ywJEg

67. Tagieer Altarkeebah Alsukaniah Lidayala Aliraqia: Alab'ad wa Aldawafi', Alwaqi' Alarabi, Aljazeera, October 29, 2015.

68. See: Altagieer Aldemografi: Aliah Ta'ifiah Litamzeeq Aliraq, Aljazeera Net, September 11, 2014.

69. See: Makhawif Iraqia min Askarat Alta'ifiah, Aljazeera Net June 16, 2014.

70. Diyala Province: lies to the northeast of Baghdad on the Iraqi-Iranian borders, its center is Ba'qoba city, 60 kilometer away from Baghdad and lies at the line of contact with the Iraqi Kurdistan borders. It shares Iran in 240 kilometers land borders and considered the gate of Pilgrims and visitors of the Holy places from Iran to Iraq and Syria. The Sunni Arabs represent 80% of the province.

71. The Shiite militias carried out massacres in the Sunni mosques under the leadership of Hadi Alamiri such as the massacre of Sariah mosque, Mos'ab bin Omair mosque, and Barwanah district. See: Ra'id Alhamid: Tehran wa Baghdad: Sa'I Lilikhlal Biltawazon Alsukani fi Daiyala, Aljazeera studies Center, March 20, 2015. See also: Makhawif min Tajadud Alhajamat Alta'ifiah Ba'd Majzarat Masjid Daiyala, Aljazeera Net, Saturday, August 23, 2014.

72. Tagieer Altarkeebah Alsukaniah Lidiyala Aliraqia, Alab'ad wa Aldawafi', Alwaqi' Alarabi, Aljazeera, October 29, 2015.

73. See: Daiyala: Qalaq min Altagieer Aldemografi Bilqwah, Aljazeera Net August 2, 2016, and Daiyala Aliraqia: Tagieer Demographi wa Tawator Ta'ifi wa Irqi, Aljazeera Net October 25, 2015, Wa Malazi Yajri fi Daiyala Aliraqia, Aljazeera Net, Thursday, January 14, 2016.

74. Daiyala wa Altagieer Aldemografi, previous reference. Statistics show the displacement of 350 thousand families from Dayala. See Ibid.

75. See: Sa'ad bin Abdulqadir: Ab'ad Altagieer Aldemografi fi Almousel, The Saudi Aljazeera Newspaper, October 22, 2016.

76. Ra'ed Alhamid: Tehran wa Baghdad: Sa'i Lilikhlal Biltawazon Alsukani fi Daiyala, study, Aljazeera Studies Center, March 20, 2015.

77. Roa' Haidar: Miah Aliraq Bain Fakkai Kammashat Turkey wa Iran, Sawt Aliraq Alhur radio, http://www.greenline.com.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?tp=7403

78. See: Daiyala wa Altagieer Aldemografi, Barq Center for Research and Studies, Ibid.

79. See: Ibid.

80. See: Tanafus wa Sira'at Lilhaimanah Ala Qarar Shiite Aliraq, the Middle East, October 10, 2016.

81. See: Alsila' Alirania Biliraq Bain Altijara wa Alsiasah, report, Aljazeera Net, June 26, 2012.

82. Shaza Khlil: Ajindat Iran Altawaso'iah Tuhlik Iqtisadiha wa Tuza'zi' Istiqrar Alsharq Alawsat, Rawabit Center for Strategic Studies, Ibid.

83. Alsourion Bilibnan: Hawajis Aldemografia wa Ta'qidat Alsiasah, a report on Aljazeera Net, February 13, 2017.