

Martyr Soleimani's Hybrid Defense Achievements

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Abstract

War consists of defense and aggression. Therefore, when it comes to hybrid war, this war includes both defense and aggression, just like classical war. Hybrid defense has a nature corresponding to hybrid aggression and should be carried out based on the joint action of all members and stakeholders of the society, from the government to the private sector and civil institutions.

In hybrid defense, a comprehensive security plan should be implemented that includes all the key parts of the society in its planning and implementation. In this regard, the main goal of this article is to explain the achievements of Martyr Soleimani's hybrid defense at different levels.

The type of research was applied and carried out in a systematic qualitative manner using the historical method and content analysis, the method of collecting data was library research as well as interviewing 20 experts.

The findings of the research indicated that Lieutenant General Haj Qasem Soleimani was one of the prominent strategic hands of the hybrid defense because he blended three achievements: firstly, the destruction of terrorism and ISIS, secondly, maintaining the united front of resistance and thirdly, starting US withdrawal from the West Asia region.

Based on the results of the research, the hybrid defense of Martyr Soleimani, on the one hand, has turned the "balance of power" into a "balance of resistance" and on the other hand, has turned the "balance of threats" into a "balance of security" in the framework of a broad cross-border perspective and development of strategic depth. This strategy has led to the formation of an "integrated geography of resistance" in order to confront America's excessive demands in the region and the world.

Key words: Hybrid war, Hybrid Defense, Hybrid Deterrence, Martyr Soleimani, I.R. Iran

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Introduction

Hybrid wars are the latest and newest concepts that have been used in the last two decades in relation to war and defense. This phrase is in the text of the literature and strategic documents of NATO, the European Union and the governments of the world and has inspired many books, articles and political discussions.

Hybrid war, hybrid operations, hybrid attack and hybrid defense are close concepts. Hybrid war is actually the use and mobilization of all national capacities to achieve victory and political goals. In other words, hybrid war is the coordinated use of different power tools to hit and make vulnerable several areas of the target society at the same time through synergy. (Herta, 2017: 137)

In hybrid warfare, power tools include military, political, economic, social, and intelligence tools, and the targets are also political, economic, military, infrastructural, social, and intelligence. In this regard, "Jan Stoltenberg", the Secretary General of NATO in 2015 states that the combination of strategies is our comprehensive approach. We use a combination of military and civilian tools to stabilize countries, and others use the same tools for destabilization (Fleming, 2015: 11).

In connection with hybrid threats, the Islamic Republic of Iran is in a special situation today. Therefore, hybrid defense is completely relevant in this condition. Today, the enemies have used all their tools available, from the threat of military attack, to creating bottlenecks and economic sanctions, to fueling ethnic and religious divisions, to relegating religious cultural beliefs and weakening the family and social foundations. This is a perfect example of hybrid war which has launched against the entity of the system and the nation.

In this field, unfortunately, information has been placed in the hands of the enemy, intentionally or unintentionally, and vulnerable points have been reached, including economic vulnerability. The speed of action and our ability to respond in this situation in the form of hybrid and convergent defense will be very important and productive so that we can eliminate the weak points and reduce the vulnerability.

According to the aforementioned cases, the hybrid war has created important challenges for the Islamic Republic of Iran, for this reason, the officials of the system should prioritize the hybrid defense at this critical period, as Martyr Soleimani has well implemented a hybrid defense

against the enemy and through that has brought national, regional and global achievements to the system.

Therefore, what has obsessed the researchers' minds as the main research problem is that hybrid deterrence is placed between hybrid defense and hybrid aggression. For hybrid deterrence, a hybrid war room should be formed with appropriate combat formation and mobilization of all the country's facilities in cultural, media, political, social, security, intelligence and cyber fields.

Hybrid defense is the stage before hybrid deterrence, but hybrid aggression is the stage after hybrid deterrence. The difference between hybrid defense and hybrid aggression is deterrence. In hybrid warfare there is deterrence, but in hybrid aggression there is no deterrence, because this stage has been passed. The commonality of hybrid war with hybrid aggression is their tools, methods, principles and characteristics.

According to the mentioned aspects of commonality, in this research we are trying to explain the doctrine of hybrid defense in the strategy and performance of Martyr Soleimani. In this regard, the main question of this research is, what have been the achievements of Martyr Soleimani's hybrid defense for I.R. Iran at different levels?

The factors that rendered the importance and necessity of this research are: 1- It causes the identification of tactics, techniques, principles and characteristics of hybrid warfare. 2- It helps to identify the difference between hybrid aggression and hybrid defense. 3- Lack of attention to research results leads to neglect of hybrid deterrence and the tools and methods of confronting hybrid aggression.

The main purpose of the research is to explain the achievements of Martyr Soleimani's hybrid defense at different levels. The sub-goals are: 1- Explaining the achievements of the hybrid defense of Martyr Soleimani at the national level, 2- Explaining the achievements of the hybrid defense of Martyr Soleimani at the regional level, 3- Explaining the achievements of the hybrid defense of Martyr Soleimani at the global level.

The research questions correspond to the objectives. This article is exploratory and does not seek to prove a hypothesis, therefore it does not have a hypothesis.

Literature Review

Riazi et al. (2021) have written an article titled "Components and tools of America's Hybrid War against I.R. Iran" in the Defense Strategy Quarterly. In this article, psychological, intelligence, economic, diplomatic-political, cyber, regular military forces and special forces and support for internal conflicts are the eight most important components of hybrid warfare. In this regard, 53 tools from the mentioned components have been determined.

Kalantari (2023) has written an article titled "Martyr Soleimani's Jihadi Doctrine in Contrast with American Military Doctrine" in the Quarterly Journal of Scientific Studies of Holy Defense. According to the results of the research, the jihadi doctrine of Martyr Soleimani caused the failure of American hegemony and power in the region. Martyr Soleimani was the founder of aggression-based defense doctrine and discretionary fire deterrence doctrine.

The "soldier without borders" strategy means the formation of a multinational jihadi force to deepen the defense in the cross-borders. General Soleimani at a low cost caused the integration and networking of the local forces of the resistance front, the jihadi doctrine caused simultaneous victory in the three tactical, operational and strategic levels of the war.

Shah-Mohammadi (2022) wrote an article titled "Martyr Soleimani and regional and trans-regional security" in the international conference of Martyr Soleimani's School of Thought. In this article, Martyr Soleimani was able to create a new order of security at the regional and trans-regional levels with a combination of classical, asymmetric war strategies, popular mobilization, the link between nationalism and religious beliefs, and breaking geographical borders based on the principles of united resistance.

Abbas-zadeh (2022) has written an article entitled "The Role of Martyr Soleimani in the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran" at the International Conference of Martyr Soleimani's School of Thought. Martyr Soleimani has been active both in the field of struggle and in the field of diplomacy, his effective role in all types of diplomacy, especially in secret diplomacy, has been remarkable and he has achieved national, regional and global achievements for the I.R. of Iran and the

resistance front. The difference between this and previous articles is that this article deals with hybrid defense.

The common aspects of this article are dealing with the levels of war, and the depth of defense and the resistance front. The innovation of this article is to provide a domestic definition of hybrid warfare and hybrid defense, and also to differentiate between hybrid aggression and hybrid warfare and hybrid deterrence.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Definition of Concepts

Hybrid war: "Krokro" calls the hybrid war an unlimited war with innovative use of an unlimited number of military and civilian methods from all environments (ground, air, sea, space and cyber environment) with multilateral coordination of government, non-governmental, international and individual actors in order to achieve political goals. According to him, hybrid war is a combination of military and civilian equipment and operations, terrorism, guerilla tactics, cyber and criminal attacks. Hybrid war involves the combination of adversaries, the convergence of methods and equipment, the fusion of threats and capabilities in an ambiguous operational environment (Cruceru, 2014: 231-236).

According to Gerasimov, in the present age the border between war and peace is vague and unclear, because governments do not officially declare war on each other anymore, and accordingly, the laws of war have also changed. This issue has made the integrated use of military and civilian forces necessary. In general, Gerasimov describes the new generation of wars as follows: the widespread use of political, economic, intelligence, humanitarian and other civilian tools, supplemented by civil unrest among the local population and the concealment of armed forces (Klein, 2015: 3).

Hybrid Defense: Hybrid war includes the combination of aggression and hybrid defense, so hybrid defense is one of the important parts of hybrid war and includes a series of actions that neutralize or repel hybrid aggression. Hybrid war is a complex operation that first of all needs a strong leadership in order to be able to issue a license for a hybrid operation as soon as possible and allocate resources to it. Identifying the

enemy's vulnerability and listing its targets and key weaknesses is an important step in this regard (Kalantari, 2023: 255).

Theoretical Framework

Due to the complexity and variety of tools, actions and reactions in hybrid warfare, there is no single definition of hybrid warfare. Whenever a combination of the mentioned components is used, a kind of hybrid war is in progress; In other words, a combination of military, diplomatic, cyber and intelligence operations constitutes a hybrid war. It seems that a new era in the history of war is taking place. Complex and ambiguous wars, full of tools and complicated and diverse; these are the characteristics of hybrid warfare (Hoffman, 2017:134).

In his remarks, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution referred to the concept of "hybrid warfare" and stated:

"The enemy's aggression is a hybrid warfare, meaning it has an economic aspect, a political aspect, a security aspect, a media aspect, and a diplomatic aspect. They have launched a collective hybrid attack from all directions. We too must respond with a hybrid movement." (Remarks on February 8, 2022).

Hybrid wars are among the most common and complex types of conflicts in the international arena, which are nowadays employed by state and non-state actors. For years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been the target of hybrid wars by its enemies due to its type of activism in the field of international politics.

Hybrid wars are wars that the Supreme Leader has repeatedly emphasized the need for preparedness, prudence, and confrontation against them. His Eminence stated: "Today, countering the enemy's aggression to distort the realities, achievements, progress, and epic actions of the Islamic system requires a defensive and offensive hybrid movement centered on the urgent and definitive duty of jihad of clarification" (Remarks on February 8, 2022 among the commanders of the Armed Forces). Given the aforementioned points, the theoretical framework of this research is a combination of the Supreme Leader's remarks on hybrid warfare and the views of Frank Hoffman, a theorist of hybrid warfare.

Hybrid Defense Against Hybrid Warfare

In a hybrid war, military attack is not necessarily used, but the use of the term "war" indicates the serious and lasting hostile nature of the challenge and its effects and consequences are just like war. While the simultaneous use of violent and non-violent tools to achieve goals is an old phenomenon, their flexible coordination, speed of action, and method of targeting within the framework of hybrid warfare is completely new.

Hybrid wars are inherently victorious, achieving maximum goals with minimal fighting and even without military combat. In fact, hybrid wars occur due to a series of competitions and conflicts between actors at the international level. Many believe that hybrid wars will intensify in the coming decades, and at regional and global levels, rising powers or dissatisfied actors in areas where they can benefit from relative advantages will compete and advance their goals through hybrid warfare techniques and a wide range of tools. Through hybrid warfare, they will pursue various social functions, not to rebel against sovereignty, but to weaken norms and undermine laws and regulations. (Fridman, 2017: 4)

The first step in hybrid defense against hybrid aggression is identifying the dimensions of this threat. The second step is informing and raising public awareness about hybrid aggression. The third step is deciding how the enemy seeks to achieve its ambitions through hybrid aggression. In fact, the most fundamental strategic goal of hybrid defense against hybrid aggression is to maintain and enhance the capacity of the state and society for reciprocal action. The state and society must have the ability to resist and confront by assessing vulnerabilities and adopting a common and coordinated approach against the wide range of hybrid threats. A credible and robust defensive posture against hybrid threats cannot be built solely on military and security forces because the goals are completely dispersed.

For example, the Finnish government has precisely implemented this approach in relation to hybrid defense, and has secured its comprehensive security approach through cooperation between authorities, society, businesses, civil society organizations, and citizens (Ghasemi, 2022:75).

Another important stage in hybrid defense and hybrid defense strategic planning is preventing the enemy's hybrid aggression and taking deterrent actions. Deterrent actions against hybrid threats must also be hybrid themselves. The signs and information of hybrid wars are not like

traditional warfare methods; rather, identifying hybrid wars, recognizing thresholds in them, and how to enter them requires going beyond current and traditional approaches and requires high military intelligence. In hybrid wars, the emphasis is on creativity, exploiting ambiguity and deception, and innovative use of non-military tools to target all objectives in the targeted society. In hybrid warfare, the enemy tries to identify and target vulnerable points where there is the greatest asymmetry. The enemy places simple goals together that will have the greatest impact when combined. The enemy can obtain information about these seemingly simple vulnerable points through field operations or software operators and intelligence and communication techniques. In this regard, counter-intelligence operations must make every effort to prevent the enemy from obtaining important, practical, and necessary information from the context of society. Vulnerabilities and cyber firewalls, which are now recognized as a crisis by many countries, are in line with this, and cyber and media are now the battleground and foothold of hybrid operations. Perhaps the expression of emotions, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and criticisms that easily and insensitively occur in cyberspace and social networks can be a suitable and useful feed for hybrid attacks, and the audience, without realizing it, presents itself as a target and feed for the attack (Mohebbi, 2022: 5).

Martyr Soleimani's Levels and Stages of Hybrid Defense Against the Enemy's Hybrid War

Martyr Soleimani's hybrid defense was implemented at three levels: national, regional, and global, and in three stages. The only way to counter hybrid aggression is through hybrid defense, the full and sufficient efficiency of which requires the following formative stages:

The first stage is hybrid defense:

Undoubtedly, hybrid defense must have a nature commensurate with hybrid aggression, the understanding of which necessitates the formation of an operations room that can precisely monitor all lines of engagement, the enemy's position, the volume of forces, existing facilities and support capabilities, the extent of their advance, and their operational map, and create combat and defensive readiness in all areas. The current challenges and obstacles to hybrid defense include:

a) The diversity of the enemy's methods and tools in hybrid warfare, including psychological operations, propaganda, intimidation, sabotage and terrorism, identity stripping, atmosphere creation, rumor-mongering, street riots, espionage, infiltration, aligning internal elements, Iranophobia, exploiting foreign nationals, thugs, the deprived classes, religious, ethnic, and gender rifts, satellites, cyberspace, social media, strikes, sit-ins, insults and foul language, temptation and hype, money-throwing, currency war, sanctions, enticement and provocation, etc.

b) The predominance of the cultural nature and psychological and propaganda actions that have taken place as mental and intellectual preparation during this hybrid war.

c) Neglecting the groundwork of cultural actions, which at least began in January 2000 with the establishment of BBC Persian to block social strata in Iran and has gradually become more complex.

The second stage is hybrid deterrence:

If the Islamic Republic of Iran is always supposed to be in a defensive position in the hybrid war, we will occasionally witness the aggression or, more precisely, the escalation of this conflict, as this war was in its early stages and has been planned for the long term. Achieving a deterrent position in hybrid warfare is attainable if a hybrid war room is formed with a commensurate combat formation and the mobilization of all the country's resources in the cultural, media, political, social, security, intelligence, and cyber domains.

The third stage is hybrid offense:

Although the military doctrine of the Islamic Republic of Iran does not and has not included military attack and aggression, effective and real deterrence is not possible without achieving hybrid strike capabilities. The important point is that hybrid precision-guided strike will not be possible without conquering intellectual, cultural, and political Khorramshahrs (Kalantari, 2023:260).

Research Conceptual Model

Based on the objectives and questions, the conceptual model of this research has two levels. The first level includes the stages of countering hybrid warfare, which consists of three stages: hybrid defense, deterrence, and hybrid offense. The second level, which was obtained through interviews, includes the achievements of Martyr Soleimani's hybrid defense, which has been explained at three levels: national, regional, and global.

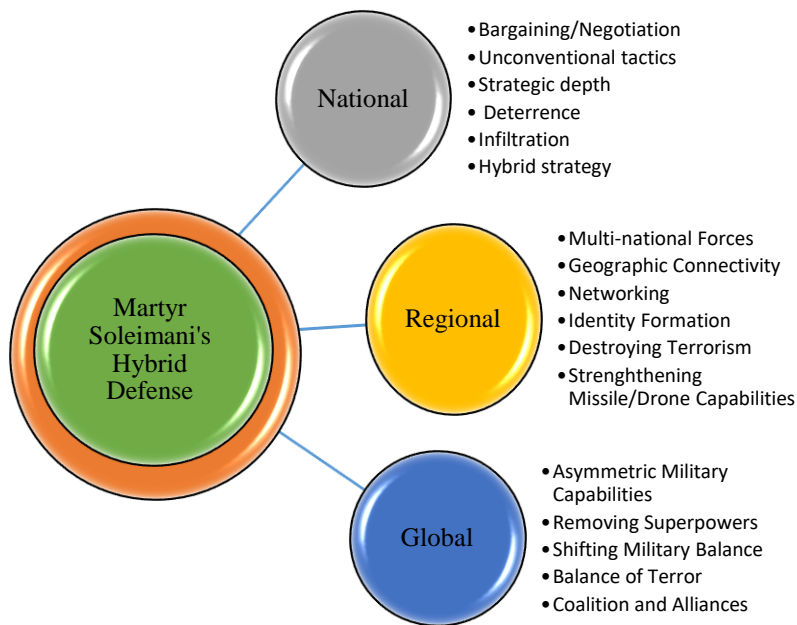


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Research

Research Methodology

This research has increased the existing knowledge regarding the research topic, and is therefore applied and decision-oriented. Theory development is not the aim of this research. Hence, it has been conducted qualitatively and systematically through the historical method and content analysis. The data collection method is documentary and library-based. The experts included 20 commanders and members of Martyr Soleimani's Specialized Meeting, who are the main organizers of the

International Martyr Soleimani School of Thought Conference. The researchers reached theoretical saturation after interviewing 20 people. The analysis of the findings and interview texts was carried out based on the content analysis method. In this method, the achievements of Martyr Soleimani's hybrid defense at the national, regional, and international levels were extracted as categories and propositions from the interview texts and documents, and then integrated. Therefore, it has the necessary validity and reliability. In terms of time, it covers the period from the September 11 incident in 2001 to his martyrdom in 2019, and in terms of location and subject, it includes the impact of Martyr Soleimani's hybrid defense at the global level.

Analysis of Research Findings

If we consider the basis of hybrid warfare to be the combination of strategies and methods, we must say that the late Lieutenant General Haj Qassem Soleimani was the greatest strategist of hybrid warfare, because he combined three strategies: first, the destruction of terrorism and ISIS; second, the preservation of a united resistance front; and third, the expulsion of the United States from the West Asian region. Martyr Soleimani simultaneously and successfully implemented the aforementioned strategies in the West Asian region. On the other hand, by combining new warfare methods, he prevented the United States from achieving its ominous goals in the region. In conventional warfare, states with their armed forces at the center confront each other, known as "state-state" warfare. However, Martyr Soleimani changed this method and, by devising and combining new methods, implemented a new hybrid defense against the system of domination in the West Asian region. He changed the "state-state" method to "actor-actor" methods (resistance groups against terrorism or against the United States) and "actor-state" methods (Hashd al-Shaabi and the Iraqi government). By combining multiple resistance actors and groups such as Hashd al-Shaabi, Fatemiyoun, Heydarioun, Hezbollah, Ansar Allah, Hamas, Fath, and other jihadi and militant groups, he replaced conventional warfare methods with unconventional ones, such as underground warfare, and replaced conventional warfare patterns with unconventional ones, such as the revolutionary warfare pattern. Through hybrid defense in the West Asian region, Martyr Soleimani created a "positive balance" and "power of influence." Usually, in wars involving superpowers, such as World War I and II, after the end of the war, a "negative balance" and

"hegemonic power" is created at the regional and global levels, such as a bipolar or unipolar world (Najafi Sayar, 2022: 23). Through hybrid defense, Martyr Soleimani succeeded in creating a positive balance at the global level and permanently removed the United States from being a "superpower and hegemonic power." For this reason, the United States left the West Asian region without any achievements, despite spending seven trillion dollars on the war.

Martyr Soleimani, by combining superior hybrid defense methods and strategies, was the first in history to enter a war in which he simultaneously emerged victorious at all three tactical, operational, and strategic levels. If you examine all the wars in the world, there has never been a war in which a country has simultaneously won at all three levels of war. For example, Germany in World War II was trapped by the harsh Soviet winter at the tactical and operational levels and was destroyed. In the Soviet Red Army's war against Afghanistan in 1979, the Soviet Union was defeated at the strategic level but was successful at the tactical and, to some extent, operational levels. In the Baathist regime of Iraq's war against Iran, Iraq was defeated at the strategic level but had limited achievements at the tactical and operational levels. In the Baathist regime of Iraq's war against Kuwait, Iraq was defeated at the strategic level but was successful at the tactical and operational levels. In the Second Persian Gulf War, the United States against Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States was defeated at the strategic and operational levels but had relative successes at the tactical level. The only war in the world in which victory was achieved simultaneously at all three levels was the Resistance Front's war under the command of Lieutenant General Martyr Haj Qassem Soleimani. This simultaneous victory at all three levels of war is the greatest achievement for the Islamic Revolution, unprecedented in the world.

The model of irregular warfare is not unprecedented in the world's armies, but the model of revolutionary warfare was implemented for the first time by Martyr Soleimani in recent wars. In this model, small, self-sufficient, and operational teams, composed of members of liberation movements, carried out a compound irregular operation. A compound operation is a type of operation that is carried out in an organized manner between the armies of two or more countries. However, the revolutionary warfare model is a hybrid of jihadi and resistance groups with the Quds Force. That is why it is called the revolutionary warfare model, which carries out compound irregular operations. Based on the theory of

resistance, Martyr Soleimani formed a unified geography of resistance in the West Asian region and connected Tehran to the Mediterranean Sea and the Levant through land borders. This geography, as the new order of resistance, formed the basis for confronting America's unipolar order, leading to the decline of the Greater Middle East project and the removal of the hegemony of the system of domination in the West Asian region. Today, the order of resistance, of which the late Lieutenant General Soleimani was the founder and architect, stands in opposition to the American order and has led to the unilateral withdrawal of the United States from the West Asian region.

Achievements of Martyr Soleimani's Hybrid Defense for the Islamic Republic of Iran

The analysis of hybrid defense in Martyr Soleimani's performance in resolving conflicts is as follows:

a) Networking Resistance at the Trans-Regional Level: One of General Soleimani's prominent actions in line with the theory of active resistance was networking resistance at the trans-regional level. The American think tank "The Washington Institute for Near East Policy" notes in this regard: "Iran has spent the past four decades forging international alliances, bolstering its military partners, and cultivating a spectrum of proxy militias. I'm not in the habit of praising the Iranian regime. But let me say this: They have achieved their current position by staying focused on their objectives and investing in them for decades." (Akbari, 2022: 27)

The Combating Terrorism Center writes: "By mid-2015 in Syria, things were not going exactly as Soleimani wanted. Assad's forces kept defecting [and fleeing], leaving Iranian-backed Iraqi, Afghan, and Pakistani militias largely alone to battle Sunni rebels for control of Syria's largest city, Aleppo. These forces needed the backing of a larger foreign power with robust air capabilities. Naturally, the broker of this deal was none other than the number one general on the battlefield: Qassem Soleimani. In July 2015, Soleimani flew to Moscow (reportedly on a commercial airliner) to meet with Russia's defense minister and, according to some accounts, President Putin himself. Putin's intervention decisively turned the tide of the war in Assad's favor, and in December 2016, just days after Soleimani's proxies and the Syrian army recaptured Aleppo, images surfaced of him touring the remains of the city's historic heart. It was Soleimani who, in a 140-minute meeting with Putin in July

2015, persuaded Russia to directly intervene in Syria, with the understanding that Iran and Hezbollah would reinforce the ground forces while Russia provided air support. One month later, Russia entered the Syrian war and began to stabilize the teetering Assad regime." (Ghasemnejad, 2022: 25)

In addition to rebuilding formal trans-regional alliances, General Soleimani was able to utilize the capacity of informal multinational forces to ensure regional security, which was also a prominent feature of General Soleimani's revolutionary diplomacy. General Soleimani had a trans-national perspective in ensuring regional security. Not only did he achieve serious successes in engaging with multinational groups, but he also succeeded in forming multinational forces. The Atlantic Council think tank acknowledges: "Iran has performed successfully in the turbulent and shifting strategic environment of West Asia. The country today does not face a serious threat of attack or aggression (and a fortiori, occupation) by a foreign power. After the outbreak of civil war in Syria in 2011, Soleimani ordered some of his Iraqi militias to deploy to Syria to defend the Assad government. To this end, he also established new Shia militia groups, including the Fatemiyoun Division and Zeinabiyoun Brigade.

b) Development of Asymmetric Military Power:

Iran's asymmetric warfare doctrine and Tehran's use of unconventional military confrontation methods is one of the biggest challenges facing the United States. American analysts believe that while Washington has been able to achieve deterrent capability against countries like Russia and China through its extensive military power, Iran is an exception to this rule. In this regard, one of the important tactics of General Soleimani to achieve active resistance in the region was the development of asymmetric military power. According to a report by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Iran has been able to use offensive swarming tactics, drones, and cyber attacks to shape the region's geopolitics in its favor and increase its influence in the Middle East. General Soleimani reminds of this asymmetric power of the Islamic Republic of Iran in his speech in Hamedan: "Mr. Gambler Trump! ... You are well aware of our power and capabilities in the region. You know how powerful we are in asymmetric warfare. Come on, we are waiting for you. We are the men of this arena. You know that war means the loss

of all your possessions. You may start the war, but it is us who will determine its end."

c) Formation of Multinational Forces and Geographical Linkage of Resistance:

The emergence of ISIS as a terrorist-Takfiri current that was ideologically and financially supported by Wahhabi Saudi Arabia and enjoyed the special favor of the United States, the Zionist regime, and Turkey, despite the great damage it inflicted on true Islam, played a significant role in the realization of the destruction of the Zionist regime. This anti-Islamic and Western-backed current provided opportunities for the Islamic Revolution movement to operate in the geography of resistance that did not exist before. The Western-Arab-Hebrew axis, in order to eliminate the Shia Crescent, which they claim extends from Lebanon to Iran, formed the terrorist-Takfiri group ISIS. Before the emergence of ISIS, there was no solid geographical link connecting the axis of resistance, and many groups that later aligned with the resistance movement had not found the ground to emerge in the region's geography. On the other hand, the role of the United States in Iraq was very significant, and it did not allow the revolutionary movement to operate. With the emergence of ISIS and the entry of the Quds Force into the fight against ISIS, the Western-Arab-Hebrew campaign's prediction did not come true, and with the great victories of the resistance axis, their sinister plan was foiled. On the contrary, the Quds Force, under the command of the martyr Soleimani, created a geographical link between Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, which could serve as a secure and safe route for supporting the resistance axis against the Zionist regime. This geographical link is strategically and geopolitically very important and has terrified the Zionist regime and the United States. Therefore, the repeated attacks by the Zionist regime on Hezbollah's resistance bases in Syria and the American attack on the Hashd al-Shaabi forces inside Iraq and on the Iraq-Syria border are aimed at severing this geographical link. (Ghasemnejad, 2022: 25)

General Soleimani was able to utilize the capacity of multinational forces in the process of geographically connecting the resistance axis. He not only achieved significant successes in engaging with multinational groups but also succeeded in forming multinational forces. The Atlantic Council think tank acknowledges: "Iran has performed successfully in

the turbulent and changing strategic environment of West Asia. Today, this country does not face a serious threat of attack or aggression (and a fortiori, occupation) by a foreign power. After the start of the civil war in Syria in 2011, Soleimani ordered some of his Iraqi militias to go to Syria to defend the Assad government. For this purpose, he also established new Shia militias, including the Fatemiyoun Division and Zeinabiyoun Brigade.

d) Popularizing Resistance:

The late General Qassem Soleimani was one of the great commanders who learned unique experiences during the Sacred Defense and was well aware of the blessing of the Basij (mobilization) force during that period. The formation of the Basij was rooted in Imam Khomeini's defensive and military thought, and Imam believed that the war and defensive jihad against Saddam's aggression was a collective obligation, and therefore, the war should be managed by relying on the vast popular force and utilizing faith, spirituality, revolutionary spirit, and high public morale. The main pillar of this doctrine is the defense of Islamic ideology and belief, with the Islamic Republic system forming the center of this belief. This theory had a significant impact on the success of the Islamic warriors during the Sacred Defense. Therefore, Martyr Qassem Soleimani, drawing on the experiences of the Sacred Defense and his field knowledge of the governments in the West Asian region, sought to shape the resistance axis on a popular basis. Utilizing the ideological, religious, and political capacities of the people in the geography of the resistance axis, regardless of their religion or ethnicity, was emphasized by Martyr Soleimani.

In the war against ISIS, which appeared to be a Sunni Wahhabi force representing the Hebrew-Arab-Western current, Soleimani sought to command a combination of Shia, Sunni, Alawite, Christian, Arab, Afghan, Iranian, Pakistani, Syrian, and Iraqi forces together. In Iraq, with the emergence of ISIS, he rushed to aid the Kurds and, with the fatwa of jihad issued by Ayatollah Sistani, formed the Hashd al-Shaabi force under the command of Martyr Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis. In Syria, the National Defense Force, known as the popular mobilization, was formed upon the suggestion of Martyr Hamedani and under the guidance of Martyr Soleimani. The popular mobilization of Syria consisted of Shia, Sunni, Alawite, and Christian groups in different parts of the country.

Today, it seems that Soleimani has restored unity among Muslims in confronting the Zionist regime. The destruction of the Zionist regime will be realized through the interaction and cooperation of all Muslim nations and all sects, and Martyr Soleimani laid its foundation. It was not without reason that "Ismail Haniyeh," the leader of Hamas, attended the funeral ceremony of Martyr Soleimani in Tehran's Friday prayers and gave him the title of "Martyr of Quds."

e) Increasing Bargaining Power in Diplomacy:

Given Iran's direct influence in preserving the governments of Syria and Iraq, we witness that the Iranian governments have an active presence in most regional frameworks for crisis resolution (such as the Astana process) and are considered an influential player in the developments in West Asia. Moreover, General Soleimani's activities demonstrated to other regional countries that security can be brought to the region by relying on intra-regional forces without the presence of trans-regional powers.

f) Increasing Extraterritorial Deterrent Power through Preemptive Defense:

The most prominent and important task of those in charge of a country's military and security sector is to select and implement an appropriate strategy to realize border and territorial security. In addition to deploying experienced military and intelligence units in border areas, Iran's political and defense decision-makers consider adopting an extraterritorial strategy to keep threats away from international borders as a suitable lever, the absence of which would make it difficult to maintain and stabilize security in such a crisis-prone environment. We observe a tangible example of this policy in the actions of General Soleimani. These actions were not offensive in nature; rather, their fundamental goal was to create a deterrent and defensive system to counter sources of threat and keep threats away from borders.

f) Paving the Way for Strategic Agreements with Iraq and Syria:

According to many regional experts, Iran should have designed strategic agreements with countries where it played a direct role in

preserving their governments, so that their policies towards Iran would not change after a change of government.

g) Formation of Non-Governmental Organizations for National Defense:

One of these organizations is the Hashd al-Shaabi. The result of General Soleimani's and his colleagues' efforts in this field is that Iran today benefits from an extensive network with rapid operational capability in the West Asian region. This is considered a strategic advantage and places Iran among the successful pioneers in designing and operationalizing the proxy warfare strategy. Supporting and strengthening allied and proxy networks is the most cost-effective path for Iran to implement and achieve its regional goals. In Syria, a 100,000-strong group called the "National Defense Force" was formed under the leadership of "Hilal Assad." (Najafi Sayar, 2022: 23)

h) Increasing Political Influence in Iraq and Syria through Proxy Groups:

In this regard, we can refer to the Hashd al-Shaabi, which consists of four pro-Iran factions: Kataib Hezbollah, the Badr Organization, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, and Hezbollah al-Nujaba. The fact that this coalition led by Hadi al-Amiri secured the second place as the political wing of Hashd al-Shaabi in the 2018 parliamentary elections is an indication of Iran's continued influence in Iraq's political structures through its allied groups.

Other achievements of Martyr Soleimani in realizing hybrid defense include:

-Presence in various regional arenas and changing the military balance of the region by influencing the outcomes of proxy wars, civil wars, and conflicts with extremists and terrorists in West Asia.

-Empowering and networking within the resistance front in terms of geography, thought, beliefs, and goals, thereby changing the military balance of the region.

-Creating a proxy war and a balance of terror against the Zionist regime.

-Building cross-regional alliances and encouraging powers such as Russia to play an active role in the regional security of West Asia.

-Increasing the regional influence and role of the Islamic Republic of Iran beyond its geographical borders, commensurate with its geopolitical weight.

-Establishing a school of thought for borderless soldiers and creating an intellectual extension of resistance to form a larger security circle.

-Networking local and indigenous forces (Zainabiyoun, Fatemiyoun, Haidarioun, National Defense) played a strategic role in shaping the resistance axis and its unified management under Haj Qassem Soleimani's leadership.

-Containing terrorism before it could establish a foothold within the borders of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

According to the information provided, Martyr Soleimani took two important and fundamental actions in the direction of hybrid defense:

1-Combining war strategies

2-Creating unconventional war methods and tactics

These actions led to four major achievements:

- 1- Simultaneous victory at all three levels of war (strategic, operational, and tactical), resulting in the withdrawal of the U.S. military from the West Asian region without any significant gains.
- 2- Maintaining the unity of the resistance front, with Quds Force fighters and resistance front forces operating alongside the barbed wires of the Zionist regime. The resistance road extended from Tehran to the Qaim crossing in Iraq, Bukamal in Syria, and ultimately to the Mediterranean Sea, giving the Islamic Republic of Iran operational oversight and an upper hand in accessing the Mediterranean.

- 3- Eliminating the hegemonic power of the United States. Regional and global developments indicate that the U.S. is no longer a superpower, and the power of influence has replaced hegemonic power. The Islamic Republic of Iran possesses the power of influence and strategic depth.
- 4- The destruction of ISIS and terrorism in the region.

In addition to the qualitative analysis, to quantify Martyr Soleimani's achievements in hybrid defense at the national, regional, and global levels, interviews were conducted with 20 experts and analysts from the resistance front. The results are presented in the following table.

Table No. 1: Achievements of Martyr Soleimani's Hybrid Defense at the National, Regional and Global Levels

Levels	Achievement	Average	Relative Frequency
National	1-Increasing bargaining power in the diplomatic arena	3.2	51.4
	2- Simultaneous victory at all three levels of war	3.9	53.4
	3- Creating unconventional war methods and tactics	4.3	76.7
	4- Combining war strategies	4.4	61
	5-Increasing the influence and role of the Islamic Republic of Iran beyond its geographical borders	4.5	71.9
	6- Developing the strategic depth of the Islamic Republic of Iran by utilizing the "borderless soldier" strategy	4.6	80
	7-Increasing extraterritorial deterrent power through preemptive defense	4.7	51.4
Regional	8-Formation of multinational forces	4.1	50
	9. Geographical linkage and preservation of the resistance axis	4.7	67.8
	10. Networking and popularizing the resistance axis	4.6	88.4
	11. Providing an identity to the resistance axis	4.5	89
	12. Strengthening the missile and drone capabilities of the resistance axis	4.3	51.4
	13. Paving the way for strategic agreements with Iraq and Syria	3.4	50.7
	14. Formation of non-governmental organizations for national defense	3.5	58.2
	15. Increasing political influence in Iraq and Syria through proxy groups	3.7	60.3
	16. Destruction of ISIS and terrorism in the region	4.3	87.7

Levels	Achievement	Average	Relative Frequency
Global	17. Networking the resistance at a cross-regional level	3.2	70.5
	18. Development of asymmetric military power	4.7	51.4
	19. Eliminating the hegemonic power of the United States	3.3	79.5
	20. Changing the global military balance through proxy warfare	4.1	62.3
	21. Creating a balance of terror against the Zionist regime	3.2	54.8
	22. Building cross-regional alliances	3.4	59.6

Conclusion:

This article was an exploration of the doctrine of hybrid defense in Martyr Soleimani's performance and an explanation of its achievements at national, regional, and international levels. The results of this research indicate that Martyr Soleimani's hybrid defense was "security-centered." The security-centered approach, being opportunity-creating and capability-based, leads to "power projection, power building, and power augmentation." This approach is cost-effective, capability-based, and development-oriented, thereby preventing the enemy's aggression. The threat-centered approach, in addition to being costly, leads to deterrence and maintaining the status quo. If deterrence is ineffective, it leads to war.

Through hybrid defense, Martyr Soleimani repelled symmetric and asymmetric threats from the West Asian region. Hybrid defense transformed the "balance of power" into a "balance of resistance" on one hand and led to the formation of a "unified geography of resistance" at the regional and global levels on the other hand. Martyr Soleimani's hybrid defense, aimed at countering American excesses, was based on a "broad view of the geography of resistance," a "broad cross-border view," "not being content with our own region," and "extending strategic depth" and generalizing it to the region and the world. By creating defensive and operational capabilities within the resistance front, while establishing a balance on both sides of the equation, Martyr Soleimani increased the defensive and deterrent power of the resistance axis and eliminated the possibility of any overt aggression and invasion from the front of arrogance.

In response to the first sub-question, the national achievements of Martyr Soleimani's hybrid defense include:

- Increasing bargaining power in the diplomatic arena
- Simultaneous victory at all three levels of war
- Creating unconventional war methods and tactics
- Combining war strategies
- Increasing the influence and role of the Islamic Republic of Iran beyond its geographical borders
- Developing the strategic depth of the Islamic Republic of Iran by utilizing the "borderless soldier" strategy
- Increasing extraterritorial deterrent power through preemptive defense

In response to the second sub-question, the regional achievements of Martyr Soleimani's hybrid defense include:

- Formation of multinational forces
- Geographical linkage and preservation of the resistance axis
- Networking and popularizing the resistance axis
- Providing an identity to the resistance axis
- Strengthening the missile and drone capabilities of the resistance axis
- Paving the way for strategic agreements with Iraq and Syria
- Formation of non-governmental organizations for national defense
- Increasing political influence in Iraq and Syria through proxy groups
- Destruction of ISIS and terrorism in the region

In response to the third sub-question, the global achievements of Martyr Soleimani's hybrid defense include:

- Networking the resistance at a cross-regional level
- Development of asymmetric military power
- Eliminating the hegemonic power of the United States
- Changing the global military balance through proxy warfare
- Creating a balance of terror against the Zionist regime
- Building cross-regional alliances

Suggestions:

1-The first priority of the defense doctrine of the armed forces should be the implementation of preemptive and preventive hybrid defense.

2-Developing hybrid deterrence by networking resistance within the strategic depth of the resistance front.

3-Creating a balance of terror against the Zionist regime by increasing the missile and drone capabilities of resistance groups, in line with Martyr Soleimani's hybrid defense strategy.

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