

Iran's Naval Strategy

Eyal Pinko

Background

Iran views itself as an emerging regional power and accordingly it is exploiting the opportunity offered by the fighting in Syria in order to strengthen its position in the region, further its ambitions, gain influence and play a decisive role in the in shaping the new Middle East.

Iran's strategic ambitions include shaping a new Middle East in which it will have a significant long-term economic and military foothold and expanding its access to the Mediterranean Sea, by creating a Shiite sphere of influence stretching from Iran by way of Iraq and finally to Syria and Lebanon. Such a sphere of influence can provide Iran with freely accessible trade routes (by air and sea) in order to ship commodities, goods and weapons.¹

The maritime trade routes in general and the Strait of Hormuz in particular constitute a broad platform for Iranian activity and the realization of its strategic ambitions.

To this end, Iran maintains two navies. The first is the **Revolutionary Guard navy**, whose missions include guarding Iranian shipping, control of waterways in the Persian Gulf region, protection of the coast and confronting the enemy in this region in order to protect the regime and the State from naval aggression and to block the Strait of Hormuz.

The second is the **regular Iranian navy** which is one of the branches of the military. Its roles include protecting the oil facilities and other Iranian infrastructures at sea and the loading and unloading of cargo in the Persian Gulf, in the Gulf of Oman and in the Caspian Sea (jointly with the Revolutionary Guard navy); and supervision and monitoring of maritime traffic outside the Persian Gulf – in the Strait of Hormuz, in the Gulf of Oman and in the Caspian Sea.

In addition, the regular navy is assigned missions to prevent smuggling and illegal immigration, to project power at sea—which includes the ability to fight at long ranges, and to participate in Iranian diplomatic efforts, which are accomplished by visits to the ports of allies² and by joint naval exercises.

1 Tsimet Raz, *Iran in the post-ISIS era: goals, opportunities and challenges*, The Center for Intelligence Heritage (August 23, 2017). [Hebrew]

2 Ibid.

This article will provide a survey of Iranian naval strategy, its origins and the way it is being implemented by the two navies.

The maritime dimension of the Iranian culture

In the modern era, Iran decided to build a significant navy only in the 20th century. It sought a navy that would be able to project power in the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea. However, the roots of the Iranian navy go back many years and are rooted deep in history, during the peak of the Persian Empire in and around 500 BCE.

In ancient times, Persian seafarers traveled in all known seas, from Greece and the Mediterranean lands to the lands of Europe and Asia. Persian ships were involved in trade, spying and the capture of territory by means of landing forces from the sea. Xerxes, the fourth leader of Persia (465-486 BCE)³ had far-reaching political ambitions and his ships sailed the seas, taking with them soldiers who captured large amounts of territory, primarily in southern Europe. His soldiers invaded Greece by land and fought the Greeks on many occasions. The most famous of these battles are Thermopylae, Artemisium and the maritime battle at Salamis.

The various kings of Persia established large and elaborate ports and they controlled the sea routes, while establishing the status of the Persian Gulf as a bridge between the two ends of the earth, between East and West. Persia's maritime ambitions reemerged during the reign of Nader Shah, who ruled from 1736-1747. After the Western nations refused to sell ships to Persia, Nader Shah decided to develop an independent shipbuilding capability and to establish for himself a significant fleet of warships. This fleet captured Bahrein in 1736 and ruled the Arabian Sea and the Strait of Hormuz.⁴

Until the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, the Imperial Iranian Navy was insignificant and had no special regional importance. This fleet was almost entirely destroyed in its ports during the Second World War, as part of a joint Russian-British invasion of Iran. After the Second World War, the Iranian navy began to rebuild itself, primarily by acquiring small ships and hovercraft from the West. This buildup of power started to gain momentum in the early 1970s, with the intention of expanding the activity of the navy into the Indian Ocean and developing a strong navy. The renewed buildup of strength was based on the acquisition of large warships (frigates and destroyers) and

3 Haghshenass Fariborz, "*Iran's Asymmetric Naval Warfare*", The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (9/2008), 4.

4 Haghshenass Fariborz, "*Iran's Asymmetric Naval Warfare*" (9/2008), 5-6.

maritime aircraft (planes and helicopters) from Britain and the US. This process was cut short by the Islamic Revolution (1979).⁵

Iranian strategy following the Islamic Revolution

The Iranian Revolution began with a series of violent protests against the regime of the Shah that broke out in 1978. During the protests, many army personnel abandoned the Shah's army and joined the grassroots uprising, which continued until Khomeini and his forces had taken over the government institutions and the army. In February 1979, the uprising succeeded in toppling the regime of the Shah and it was replaced by the regime that, until the time of writing, has ruled Iran.⁶

The Iranian strategy, as formulated by the Iranian regime after the Revolution, rests on three main elements:⁷

1. The desire to transform Iran into a regional power, with the ability to project power throughout the Middle East and even beyond. The Iranian leadership feels that Iran must have global influence in every facet of life and in particular over all Muslims in the world. From the viewpoint of the regime, Iran is a regional superpower, both geographically and demographically, and controls the natural resources in the Gulf region. The projection of Iran's power beyond its borders is based primarily on "proxies", i.e. armed organizations under Iranian patronage which operate outside of Iran (such as Hezbollah, the Houthis and Hamas) and which enable Iran to project power beyond its borders in areas of strategic interest.
2. The ability to overcome and neutralize threats from inside and outside Iran: Iran has placed emphasis on upgrading its naval capabilities, its non-conventional capabilities and its long-term missile capabilities, based on the understanding that they will allow it to protect its economic resources (primarily oil and gas) and to deter its adversaries, and in particular the US and Saudi Arabia, and to persevere against them if deterrence fails. The implementation of this strategic element—namely the neutralization of threats from inside and outside Iran—rests on a number of basic principles which have been formulated by the Iranian leader:
 - **The people's war:** The fear of an armed invasion by its adversaries and the capture of its territory led to the principle of using the people as a force for resistance and guarding the homeland (later to be called the Basij force).

5 Stewart Richard A., "Sunrise at Abadan: The British and Soviet invasion of Iran, 1941", New York: Praeger.

6 Kirsch Ephraim, "Iran: Anatomy of a Revolution", *Maarachot*, vol. 268 (4/1979): 20-22. [Hebrew]

7 Eisensatdt Michael, "The Strategic Culture of the Islamic Republic of Iran: Operational and Policy Implications", **Middle East Studies MES Monographs No. 1**, Marine Corps University (8/2011): 3-6.

- A navy that operates using **guerilla warfare**: The buildup of the navy, which uses asymmetric tactics in the Persian Gulf and operates near the coast, as a complementary force to the regular navy which operates farther out to sea.
 - **“Soft” power**: Use of “non-kinetic” elements, such as deception, psychological warfare, etc., in order to increase Iran’s military power.
3. The desire for **independence in all facets of life** in Iran (economic, industrial, technological, etc.). This desire is based on the Iranian understanding that it is alone in the global battle and that it has no real partners or a superpower that will assist it.

The Revolutionary Guard

In the context of Iran’s strategic approach, the leader of the Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, issued a directive in May 1979 to establish a body whose goal is to preserve the ideological purity of the Revolution, to maintain internal security in the State and to prevent an uprising.

The body was named the Revolutionary Guard or ‘Pasdaran’ (or ‘Sepah’). Another of its functions, and a not insignificant one, is to act as a counterweight to the standing army, which was a remnant of the Shah’s regime and which the Islamic regime did not trust.⁸ In addition, the Iranian regime sought to create new military and civilian capabilities in order to deal with the transition processes in establishing the new order.⁹ The Revolution Guard was also given the responsibility to export the Iranian revolutionary ideology to the rest of the world.¹⁰

At the beginning, the Revolutionary Guard consisted of irregular infantry units, which totaled about 10,000 men. They had a relatively low level of training and were armed with only outdated light weapons.¹¹ The initial members were young, religious and mostly from the lower class. They were inspired by Khomeini’s ideology and his message, which they viewed as divine, and by the possibility of religious redemption from the new way, in which the end justifies the means, whether or not this involves violence.¹²

8 The period of the Shah’s regime in Iran is the period of the Pahlavi dynasty, during the years 1921-1979, which ended with the revolution and the establishment of the Islamic regime.

9 Takeyh Ray, “How Powerful is Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps”, Council on Foreign Relations, (6/2016), Retrieved from: www.cfr.org/iran/powerful-iran-revolutionary-guard-corps/p38009

10 For the text of the law establishing the Revolutionary Guard, see: Islamic Parliament Research Center, “Statue of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Islamic Revolution” (9/1982) Retrieved from: rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/90595

11 Kam Ephraim, “From Terror to Nuclear”, *Maarhot*, 2004: 93. [Hebrew]

12 Takeyh R., “How Powerful is Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps”, 2.

The Revolutionary Guard navy

In 1984, the Revolutionary Guard navy was established. Its first operations involved amphibious missions on the coast of southern Iraq, in which landing craft delivered infantry forces and supplies.

In September 1985, the Revolutionary Guard navy was declared to be an independent fighting branch and it began to operate more aggressively and to carry out attacks using Chinese 'Stix' missiles on Iraqi vessels and even to operate against Iraqi commercial ships using missiles and rockets fired from launchers installed on the islands in the Persian Gulf and on oil rigs at sea.¹³

Despite the many attacks it carried out, the Revolutionary Guard navy was not a powerful force, due to its lack of weapons and vessels. Nonetheless, it managed in October 1987 to successfully execute a coordinated swarm attack against Saudi Arabia's gas fields. The attack was carried out as revenge for the murder of Iranian pilgrims in Mecca by the Saudi security forces (in July 1987), as well as the sinking of a minelayer by the US navy in September of that same year.

The Revolutionary Guard navy was in that year involved in numerous attacks on Kuwaiti and American oil tankers (including the use of mines), the most famous of which was the Bridgerton affair (in July 1987), in which an American tanker was damaged by an Iranian sea mine.¹⁴

At the end of the Iran-Iraq War, the Iranian leader had been convinced that the Revolutionary Guard navy had the power to carry out its missions, including the protection of Iranian shipping, control of the waterways in the Persian Gulf and confronting the enemy in that region.

This approach was first manifested in 1988 with a massive buildup of the Iranian navies, which was carried out on the instructions of the Iranian leader. This buildup included the acquisition of numerous defensive systems which facilitated defense and control in the Persian Gulf, including the closing and control of the Strait of Hormuz and including the passage of oil through it (which enabled it to achieve control and leverage over other Arab countries).¹⁵

13 Aryan Hossein, "Aggrandizement of Iran's Naval Threat on the Persian Gulf", CIRA Bulletin, Volume 13 No. 1, <http://www.cira-jira.com>, (3/1997): 30.

14 Haghshenass, "Iran's Asymmetric Naval Warfare", 4-11.

15 Aryan Hossein, "Aggrandizement of Iran's Naval Threat on the Persian Gulf", 28-31.

In order to achieve these goals, the Iranian ruler understood that Iran's two navies have a major role in this strategy. This buildup also included the creation of a radar network, which covers the length of the Iranian coast and whose goal is the detection of targets and the building of a uniform and integrative maritime picture for use by the two navies. Over the years, the use of unmanned vessels was added to the coastal control system. They are operated in coordination with the command and control centers along the coast, thus enabling detection at far distances and the confirmation of targets that are detected by the radar system.¹⁶

An example of the importance of the Revolutionary Guard navy's activities within the overall Iranian strategy can be seen a statement by an Iranian admiral in May 1988: **"Only non-conventional operations can compensate for our shortage in equipment and conventional weapons."**¹⁷

The Iranian admiral, like the rulers of Iran and the commanders of the navies, understood that this method of warfare, which was developed, exploited and upgraded during the Iran-Iraq War, is the only one that will allow Iran in a future conflict to confront the massive US navy in the Persian Gulf and the large Saudi navy, which possess naval and aerial superiority.

Another parameter taken into account by the Iranians in the development of asymmetric fighting capabilities was economic. The Iran economy, which was in poor shape, particularly following the Iran-Iran War, did not allow for the maintenance of the ships, aircraft and weapons of a conventional navy and didn't even allow for a significant naval buildup of power. The acquisition of fast and simple vessels that are cheap to acquire and to maintain allowed the Revolutionary Guard navy to build a significant force that could carry out its missions with high availability.

In order to fulfil the Iranian operational demands for control of the Persian Gulf in general and the Strait of Hormuz in particular, the Iranian ruler defined what is required from the Revolutionary Guard navy:¹⁸

- The ability to carry out quick and massive attacks on the enemy and quickly return to their place of concealment.
- A large number of anti-ship missiles of different types and on multiple platforms.
- Small high-speed boats, armed with rockets and/or missiles.
- High-speed platforms for the laying of mines.

16 Miller John, *"Iranian Maritime Improvements: Challenges and Opportunities"*, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, retrieved from: www.iiss.org.

17 Aryan Hossein, *"Aggrandizement of Iran's Naval Threat on the Persian Gulf"*, 33.

18 Haghshenass, *"Iran's Asymmetric Naval Warfare"*, 4-11.

- Submersible fighting capabilities using various types of submarines.
- Small and hard-to-detect semisubmersibles and unmanned vessels.
- Communication and coordination between all of the forces.
- Deception.
- Intelligence.
- High-level capability to disrupt the enemy's communication, command and control abilities.
- Offensive initiative.
- Avoiding direct contact between the Iranian naval forces and those of the US navy.
- The need to protect vessels from aerial attack, with emphasis on the US navy.¹⁹

In the analysis of the operational demands on the Revolutionary Guard navy, account was taken of a number of factors that influence the character of asymmetric activity in the Persian Gulf:²⁰

- **Geography:** the width, density and depth of the Strait of Hormuz, which restricts the maneuvering of vessels and facilitates the closing of the strait from the coast by means of land-to-sea missiles. The geographic dimension of the Iranian coast, namely its many inlets and islands, make it possible to conceal and construct small and hard-to-detect military bases.
- **Sea routes** that pass through the Gulf. More than 90 percent of the oil being shipped by tanker from the Gulf to the rest of the world passes through the straits. The blockage of these sea routes has serious global ramifications for the energy sector and the price of oil.²¹
- Along the coast of the Persian Gulf there are **three large naval bases** (of the regular navy); another three bases located on islands; and more than sixty seaports and small inlets, all of which require protection (see Figure 1).²²
- **Chokepoints** along the Gulf which make it possible to carry out attacks on the adversary's naval forces while he is restricted in his ability to maneuver and avoid attack.
- **Meteorological and hydrographic parameters** (high temperature and humidity) have an effect on the adversary's fighting systems (with emphasis on detection capabilities) which were not intended for use under such conditions.
- **Economic** effects and primarily the conveyance of oil from the Gulf to the rest of the world.

19 Cordesman A., "Iran's Military Forces in Transition", Praeger Westport London (1999): 207-208.

20 Haghshenass, "Iran's Asymmetric Naval Warfare", 4-11.

21 Nader Alierza, "Will Iran Close the Straits of Hormuz?", retrieved from: <http://www.rand.org/blog/2012/10/will-iran-close-the-straits-of-hormuz.html>

22 Kaplan Robert D., "Asymmetry at Sea - What War with Iran in the Gulf Could be Like", 10/2008, retrieved from: www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/10/asymmetry-at-sea/307093.



Figure 1: Main seaports in the Persian Gulf²³

The Revolutionary Guard Navy has about 20,000 men, including a unit of about 5000 marines whose role it is to attack the enemy's ports and its oil and energy facilities.

The Revolutionary Guard navy has five command centers and is distributed among about eight permanent bases and at other temporary sites along the coast and the Strait of Hormuz, in which are located missile and torpedo launchers that are intended to block the sea routes when desired.²⁴

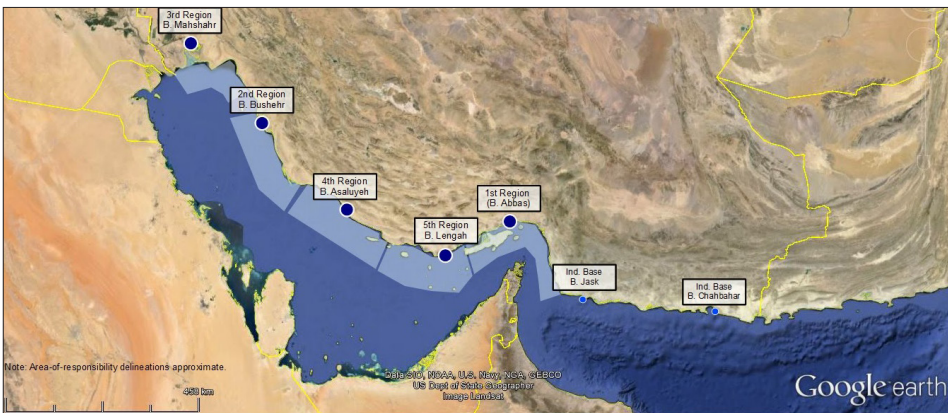


Figure 2: The naval command posts of the Revolutionary Guard²⁵

23 Office of Naval Intelligence, "Iran's Naval Forces", Retrieved from: www.oni.navy.mil/Intelligence_Community/docs/iran_navy_forces.pdf. Accessed August 10th, 2016. These seaports are for both civilian and military use.

24 Cordesman A., Kleiber M. "Iran's Military Forces and Warfighting Capabilities", 74-75.

25 <http://thearkenstone.blogspot.in/2014/07/irgc-n-naval-regions.html>. These seaports are for both civilian and military use.

The Revolutionary Guard navy operates hundreds of high-speed craft, which are equipped with a variety of weapons, some of which are very sophisticated (such as sea missiles of various types and torpedoes), including sea mines, rockets of various diameters and relatively simple weapons. In addition, it has missile launching vehicles that can fire land-to-sea missiles and which are camouflaged as innocent civilian vehicles and are highly mobile. This makes it possible to deploy them near the coast and to fire large quantities of missiles at targets at sea.²⁶

The regular Iranian navy

In parallel to the activity of the Revolutionary Guard navy, Iran also has a regular navy, which is under the command of the Iranian General Staff. The navy's operations are similar to those of a traditional navy.

Iran views its naval force as a main element in dealing with its adversaries. The regular navy plays a central role in Iran's ability to project power, particularly in the Indian Ocean and in the Arabian Sea, with emphasis on confronting enemy navies at long distances from Iran.²⁷

The role of the regular navy is conventional protection of Iran. On Khomeini's instructions, the regular army was preserved and its main function at that time was to defend against the invasion of the Iraqi army in 1980.

Following are the tasks of the regular Iranian navy:²⁸

- Protection of the Iranian coast, the oil facilities and infrastructures that are dispersed in the sea, cargo being loaded/unloaded in the Persian Gulf, in the Gulf of Oman and in the Caspian Sea, together with the Revolutionary Guard navy.
- Supervision and monitoring of maritime traffic in the Persian Gulf, in the Strait of Hormuz, in the northern Gulf of Oman and in the Caspian Sea, as well as protection and recapture if necessary of the islands in the Persian Gulf.
- In the case of defense, the achievement of control of the Strait of Hormuz, together with the Revolutionary Guard.

26 Nader Alierza, "Will Iran Close the Straits of Hormuz?", retrieved from: <http://www.rand.org/blog/2012/10/will-iran-close-the-straits-of-hormuz.html>. Accessed 30th April 2016

27 Cordesman A. H., "Iran's Military Forces in Transition", Praeger Westport London (1999): 186-187.

28 Harmer Christopher, "Iranian Naval and Maritime Strategy", Institute for the Study of War, **Middle East Security Report 12** (6/2013).

- Coastal control tasks: prevention of smuggling and illegal immigration in Iran's territorial waters and in the forward sections of the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.
- Projection of naval power, including the ability to fight at long ranges.
- Diplomatic tasks accomplished by visits to the ports of allied countries.

The Iranian regular navy has about 20,000 men of which about 5,000 are crewmembers. Furthermore, it includes two brigades of marines (about 2,600 men) and an aerial force (including about 2,000 men).²⁹

The navy includes two main flotillas: the first constitutes the navy's main force and is located at Bandar Abbas where Iran's main warships anchor.

The Iranian intention in setting up their main base at this location was on the one hand the large distance from Iraq (to prevent aerial attacks) and on the other hand the relatively close proximity of the base to the Strait of Hormuz³⁰ which facilitates a relatively rapid response against threats from Saudi Arabia and from the Arabian Sea.

The regular Iranian navy has three Kilo-877 submarines (which were acquired from Russia in the late 1970s), three frigates, six corvettes, 11 missile boats, minesweepers, 13 amphibious ships (for landing the brigades of marines), six aerial patrol boats and 11 armed helicopters.

Most of the ships in the regular Iranian navy went into service during the late 1960s and early 1970s, prior to the Iran-Iraq War and as a result they are in poor condition.³¹

Although the Iranian regular navy has a large number of vessels, it is Iran's understanding that relative to its adversaries, the navy is inferior both quantitatively and qualitatively. This inferiority is a result of the fact that since the end of the Iran-Iraq War the focus has been on the buildup of the Revolutionary Guard, rather than the regular navy, and therefore its vessels, as well as its weaponry, are old and in poor condition.³²

29 Cordesman A. H., Kleiber M. "*Iran's Military Forces and Warfighting Capabilities*", Praeger Security International (2007): 120.

30 Cordesman A. H., "*Iran's Military Forces in Transition*", 191.

31 Cordesman A. H., Lin Aaron, "*The Iranian Sea-Air-Missile Threat to Gulf Shipping*", CSIS Center for Strategic & International Studies (2/2015): 19-32.

32 Cordesman A. H., Lin Aaron, "*The Iranian Sea-Air-Missile Threat to Gulf Shipping*", 13.

Only in recent years, and after decades of neglect, has the regular navy been given a budget that allows it to build up its force and to acquire new vessels (including submarines and aerial defense systems).³³



Figure 3: Firing of an Iranian 'Noor' missile from a Tir-2 missile boat (produced in Iran)³⁴

The relations between the Iranian navy and the Revolutionary Guard navy

At the beginning of 1987, the regular Iranian navy tried to establish a joint command with the Revolutionary Guard navy, with the intention of controlling its activities; however, the ambitious Revolutionary Guard navy refused and continued to operate independently, with the support of the regime which understand that the activities of the Revolutionary Guard navy serve its goals while the regular navy does not have the ability to carry out operations in the Persian Gulf at the regime's request.

Such joint command did come into being in January 1992 and its goal was coordination of Iran's naval defense efforts. Due to political infighting between the groups, the joint command was redivided in September 1997.

In 2000, a joint command between the regular navy and the Revolutionary Guard navy was again established at a base near the Strait of Hormuz. The consolidation of the commands was carried out on the instructions of the regime in order to facilitate coordinated operations of the two navies. The Revolutionary Guard navy continued its activities in the Gulf, while accumulating operational experience; meanwhile the regular navy, which is building up its strength for a future war, was hardly active and

33 Iran Submarine Capability", retrieved from: <http://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/iran-submarine-capabilities> (8/2015).

34 From: <http://spioenkop.blogspot.co.il/2016/08/photo-report-syrian-arab-navy.html>

accumulated experience only in exercises. The peak of the regime's desire to unify the commands was reached in a joint exercise in November 2008, in which more than 35 ships and submarines from the two navies practiced warfare scenarios

Thus, the regular navy has been forced to compete (both politically and organizationally) with the Revolutionary Guard navy—and with its prestige, its power and its activity in the Persian Gulf region.

Until today, there is major tension between the two navies and despite the competition over limited resources, the waste in the acquisition of their equipment and in their operations, the two forces operate separately and without any significant coordination at any command level. The two navies and in particular the Revolutionary Guard, are adamantly opposed to the merging of headquarters and forces.³⁵

The competition between the navies, the separate acquisitions and buildup of power and the operation of the forces without coordination limits the ability of Iran to improve its military performance and cohesion and perhaps even its ability to realize its regional ambitions. Nonetheless, the regular navy is benefiting from the development of weaponry by the Revolutionary Guard, which it is installing on its vessels



Figure 4: Attack boat of the Revolutionary Guard navy³⁶

Conclusion

Iran views the waterways in the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf as important assets that enable it to realize its ambitions as a regional superpower. The Iranian naval strategy includes the asymmetric component of naval warfare, which is carried

35 Himes Joshua, "Iran's Two Navies - A Maturing Maritime Strategy", Middle East Security Report, 10/2011, 6-8.

36 Source: Iranian News Agency: ERA <http://en.alalam.ir/news/1866312>

out by the Revolutionary Guard navy. Each of the organizations has different roles and missions, which combine together into an overall strategy that provides defense of the Iranian coast, the Strait of Hormuz and Iran's essential infrastructures by means of the Revolutionary Guard, on the one hand, and the projection of power and activity far from Iran's shores, on the other hand.

As part of the grand strategy and the naval strategy, according to the declarations by the commander of the Iranian navy in 2016, Iran has an ambition to build permanent seaports in the Gulf of Aden and in Syria. To date, it has not realized these ambitions and a number of months later the intention to build a permanent seaport in Syria was denied by the deputy commander of the Revolutionary Guard.

The regular Iranian navy would very much like to increase its influence and its operational range, not only in order to realize Iranian strategy but also in order to achieve prestige in the eyes of the regime as its long arm that is able to realize its vision, even though today it is for the most part inferior to the Revolutionary Guard navy.

The increasing influence of Iran in the naval domain has a number of implications for the State of Israel:

1. The ability of Iran to control the Strait of Hormuz and to close it any time it wishes constitutes a major threat to the global economy and the supply of oil. This ability is used as a bargaining chip in the nuclear agreement, and especially with respect to Europe.
2. The increased Iranian presence in the Red Sea and in the Mediterranean, including Syria, which has a number of ramifications:
 - On the economic level, this presence supports Iran's maritime trade (despite the embargo placed by President Trump on Iran) and even more so if the nuclear agreement with Iran is renewed.
 - On the military level, Iran can assist in the rehabilitation and reinforcement of the Syrian navy and the reinforcement of the naval forces of Hezbollah and Hamas, through the unconstrained supply of weapons, infrastructure and training.
 - On the intelligence level, more intensive gathering of intelligence on the State of Israel from the sea and the carrying out of commando operations and the gathering of intelligence, whether on a routine basis or during battle (by means of, for example, the landing of soldiers from cargo ships or other vessels off the coast of Israel).