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Iran: the Doctrine of Strategic Pairidaeza

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Abstract:

Both the 2025 crisis between Iran and Israel and the 2026 crisis between Iran and the United States have highlighted Iran's resilience, even though its capabilities are far inferior to those of its adversaries. Neither Israel nor the United States has been able to achieve its objective: regime change. Furthermore, in both cases, they have suffered far more damage than anticipated, which, looking ahead, may lead them to conclude that a new military adventure might not be in their interests. Iran's 'success' is said to be based on the layout of the country's territory, as if it were a walled garden. Persian architecture developed the so-called Pairidaeza, gardens in the middle of the desert protected by several lines of walls that shielded them not only from the heat but also from enemies. In terms of security, Iran has built several walls to protect its territory, which it conceives of as a Pairidaeza.

Keywords:

Iran, Pairidaeza, US, Israel and Ormuz.

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Introduction

The Pairidaeza is an enclosed, symmetrical garden situated in the middle of the desert, created by the Achaemenids¹ in pre-Islamic Iran. It was regarded as a piece of paradise on Earth (chahar bagh) and, as such, was protected by high walls against the threat of enemies and the heat. The influence of the Pairidaeza has been enormous, as its use has not been limited to the Arab-Muslim world, but has also spread to places such as the Taj Mahal (India) and Brugelette Zoo (Belgium). The latter even retains the name Pairi Daiza.

Today, there are nine Pairidaezas in Iran, though their symbolism extends far beyond their physical presence. In fact, the territory that now forms the Islamic Republic of Iran is conceived by Tehran as a great Pairidaeza that walls must protect against enemies seeking to destroy it. In recent years, we have witnessed various crises between Iran and Israel, in which the United States has also become involved. Iran's security doctrine conceives of its territory as a giant Pairidaeza, protected from its enemies by several outer walls which, for the time being, have yielded the result Tehran had hoped for; for, despite the absolute imbalance of power compared with the American and Israeli armies, the Ayatollahs' regime has managed to hold out, thereby highlighting the limitations of the world's leading military power, the United States.

Historical security issues in Persia/Iran

Despite being a mountainous country, Persia (its former name) and Iran (its current name) have suffered major invasions. Perhaps the most significant in the Iranian collective imagination was that of the Arabs. Even today, for Iranian nationalists, the Arab invasion remains the end of a civilisation and a defeat at the hands of an enemy they considered inferior in terms of civilisation. The cause of this defeat was the Arab settlement across Mesopotamia and the subsequent campaigns launched through the Zagros Mountains and Khuzestan. Many centuries later, Saddam Hussein did the same: he attempted to conquer Iran via the Zagros and Khuzestan², a region which is also ethnically Arab. Iran learnt from this that its most vulnerable point was, without doubt, the west of the country, since. However, it is protected by the Zagros Mountains, which feature accessible valleys,

¹ BRIANT, Pierre, "From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire", Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, 2002.

² POURSHARIATI, Parvaneh, "Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran", I.B. Tauris, London, 2008.

such as those of Hulwan or Lorestan³, from which one can easily penetrate the heart of Iran. In addition to the Arabs in the 7th century and the Iraqis in the 20th century, the Greeks and the Ottomans also invaded Iran via this route.

The invasions that took place in western Iran made Tehran realise the need to control Mesopotamia, as Khuzestan and the Zagros Mountains were, and remain, points of weakness for Iran. This strategic necessity remains valid and has become even more pressing with the fall of Saddam Hussein.

In the thirteenth century, the Mongols entered Iran through Khorasan. Genghis Khan's attack took place following the assassination of a Mongol envoy who had been sent to Iran to protest an earlier attack on a Mongol caravan (the Otrar Incident⁴). If the Arab invasion had dealt a blow to Persian pride, the Mongol invasion was even more devastating, as while the Arabs preserved Persian customs and institutions, the Mongols laid waste to virtually every area they occupied. From a strategic perspective, Iran came to recognise the need to control its northeastern frontier through forward defences and buffer states, since once its borders were breached, invaders could penetrate the country with relative ease. However, the Persians also learned to resist. During the Mongol occupation, they not only preserved their identity but also gradually absorbed Persian culture and language, ultimately leading to the assimilation of the Mongols into Persian civilisation. This spirit of resistance remains present in Iran today.

In 1941, Iran was invaded by the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union. Although the occupation eventually came to an end, Iran was subsequently subjected to a form of neocolonial domination that prevented it from exercising full control over its natural resources. Iran became aware of the need for self-defence, military autonomy, and, above all, strategic depth to avoid foreign domination. This colonial experience at the hands of two European powers led both the Shah's Iran and, later, the Islamic Republic under the Ayatollahs to develop their own military capabilities, including missiles, drones, and the highly controversial nuclear program.

In recent history, Iran had to confront one final invasion: that of Saddam Hussein. The

³ ZARRINKUB, Abd al-Hossein, "The Arab Conquest of Iran and Its Aftermath." *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 4, 1975.

⁴ JACKSON, Peter. "The Mongols and the Islamic World: From Conquest to Conversion", Yale University Press, 2017.

Ba'athist leader sought to liberate “the Arabs subjugated by the Persians”⁵, although, to his surprise, he did not receive the support he had expected from his Arab-Iranian brothers. The eight-year Iran-Iraq War led Tehran to develop its capacity for sacrifice and martyrdom⁶, while also teaching it to use time as a weapon of war. Iran thus became highly proficient in wars of attrition and in the strategic projection of martyrdom.

The last two conflicts that have helped shape Iran's current security doctrine⁷ did not take place on Persian territory. The US invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan provided Iranian military strategists with a wealth of lessons. One of the main conclusions Iran drew was that, in the event of an invasion, the most effective approach is to decentralise decision-making centres, weapons stockpiles, and military units. This is known as the Doctrine...

The Strategic Pairidaeza Doctrine

After a history marked by repeated invasions, Iran has recognised its strategic vulnerability and its technological and military shortcomings. For this reason, Iran understands that the most effective way to deter its enemies is to make them fear the consequences of attacking it. This has led Iran to base part of its security doctrine on the concept of martyrdom. Martyrdom is deeply embedded in the Shiite tradition, which has enabled Iran to inflict suffering while, at the same time, ensuring that its own population can endure hardship without necessarily eroding its loyalty to the state. Attacks against Israel, despite knowing that Jerusalem's response would be devastating, or the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, despite knowing that this would damage Iran's own economy, are two examples of the idea of martyrdom as a means of overcoming strategic vulnerabilities.

At the same time, Iran conceives of its own security as if its territory were a garden surrounded by walls (Pairidaeza) designed to protect it from its enemies. Its geographical position on a plateau and, above all, the historical experiences of invasion described above have led Iran to develop up to four lines of protective walls intended to ensure its survival. Accordingly, this article argues that Iran has developed what we refer to as the Strategic Pairidaeza Doctrine: a prized and protected space—Iran itself—surrounded

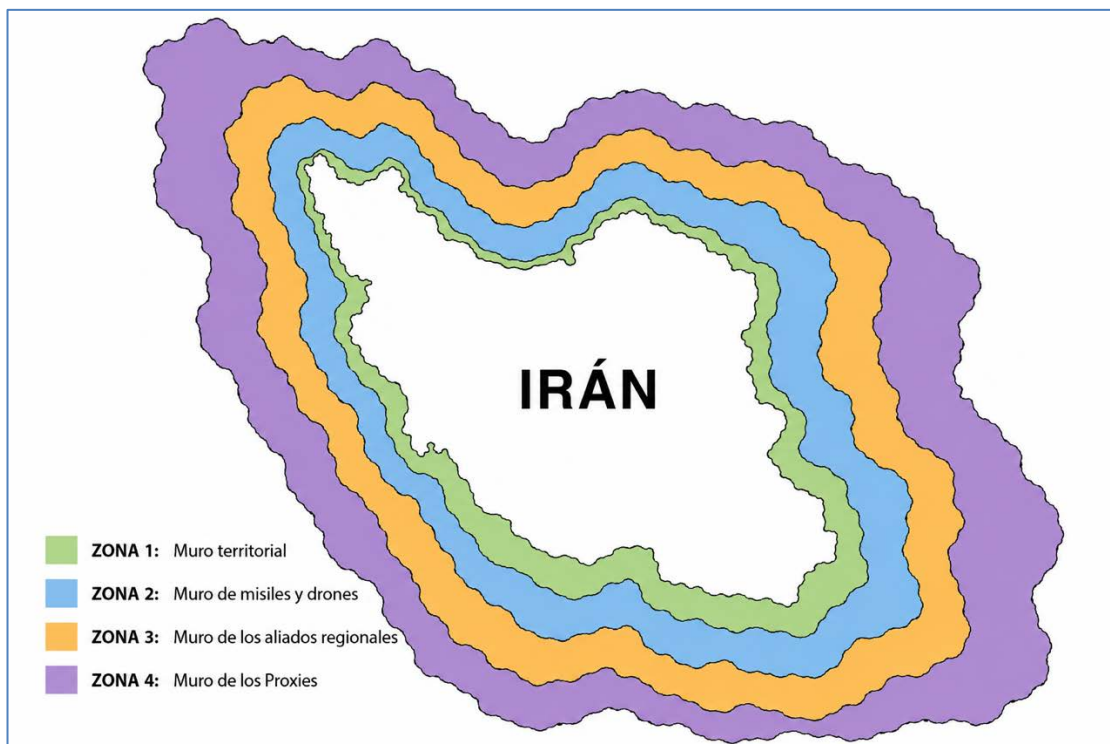
⁵ HIRO, Dillip, “The Longest War: The Iran-Iraq Military Conflict”, Routledge, London, 1991, pp. 40-45.

⁶ AYOUB, Mahmoud M., “Redemptive Suffering in Islam: A Study of the Devotional Aspects of ‘Āshūrā’ in Twelver Shi’ism”, Mouton, . The Hague, 1978.

⁷ FIRAS, Elias, Iranian Military Doctrine” The Washington Institute. Frika Forum – Policy Analysis, 15/2017. Disponible en <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pdf/view/2573/en> (Consultado 13/07/2026)

by the following *walls* or *rings of protection*:

1. The Proxy Wall
2. The Regional Allies Wall
3. The Missile and Drone Wall
4. The Territorial Wall



Graphic 1: Depiction of the Doctrine of Pairidaeza

The first level, or Proxy Wall (Zone 4), consists of proxy groups that punish Iran's enemies in their own territories. Their nature is forward defence, seeking to "keep" enemies occupied in their own territories by attacking ships, embassies, companies, and other targets. These include the actions carried out by Hezbollah (Lebanon), Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (Palestine), the Houthis (Yemen), the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, and Shiite militias deployed in Syria⁸. Together, these groups constitute what has become known as the "Axis of Resistance," which, in a certain sense, coincided with what Bush termed the "Axis of Evil." Their training and, above all, their financing are handled by the

⁸ GIL IGLESIAS, Daniel, "Los proxies de Irán en Oriente Medio" The Political Room, abril de 2026. Disponible en <https://thepoliticalroom.com/blog/los-proxies-de-iran-en-orient-medio>

Quds Force, an elite branch of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps created by General Qassem Soleimani.

Their operations are not limited to traditional armed actions. They also employ terrorism as a means of conveying the idea that, if Iran itself is attacked, its enemies will also have to endure the consequences of martyrdom.

Year	Location	Attack	Proxy Group
1983	Beirut	Attack on the U.S. Embassy ⁹	Hezbollah
1983	Beirut	Bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks (299 killed) ¹⁰	Hezbollah
1983	Kuwait	Car bomb attacks ¹¹	Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)
1984	Beirut	U.S. Embassy building ¹²	Hezbollah
1985–1986	Paris	Attacks in Paris ¹³	Hezbollah
1985	Madrid	Attacks against the offices of U.S. and Israeli airlines ¹⁴	Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)
1992	Buenos Aires	Attack on the Israeli Embassy (29 killed) ¹⁵	Hezbollah
1994	Buenos Aires	Attack on the AMIA Jewish community center (85 killed) ¹⁶	Hezbollah
1996	Khobar, Saudi Arabia	Attack on the Khobar Towers (19 Americans killed) ¹⁷	Hezbollah al-Hejaz
2012	Burgas, Bulgaria	Attack against Israeli tourists (6 Israelis killed) ¹⁸	Hezbollah
2012	Bangkok, Thailand	Israeli Embassy ¹⁹	Hezbollah
2012	Delhi, India	Vehicle belonging to the Israeli military attaché ²⁰	Hezbollah

⁹ "Car bomb destroys U.S. Embassy in Beirut, killing 63" Reuters, 14th April 1983.

¹⁰ "Truck bombs devastate U.S. Marines and French headquarters in Beirut", Reuters, 23rd October 1983,

¹¹ "Six Bombings Strike Kuwait", The Washington Post, 13th December 1983.

¹² "Truck bomb destroys U.S. Embassy annex in Beirut", Reuters, 20th September 1982.

¹³ "Selon Antenne 2 Trois des auteurs des attentats de 1986 à Paris auraient été identifiés", Le Monde, 17th November 1988.

¹⁴ "Un muerto y 26 heridos en dos atentados en Madrid contra las líneas aéreas británica y jordana", El País, 2 July 1985

¹⁵ "Bomb destroys Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, killing 29", Reuters, 17th March 1992.

¹⁶ "Argentine prosecutor seeks arrest of Iranians over AMIA bombing", Reuters, 25th October 2006.

¹⁷ "Truck bomb kills 19 U.S. servicemen at Saudi base", Reuters, 26th June 1996.

¹⁸ "Israel accuses Iran after seven tourists die in coach bomb blast", The Guardian, 18th February 2012.

¹⁹ "Bangkok bombers planned to attack Israeli diplomats", The Guardian, 16 February 2012

²⁰ Attack on Israeli Diplomat", *Lok Sabha*, 13th March 2012

2012	Tbilisi, Georgia	Israeli diplomatic vehicle ²¹	Hezbollah
2022	Istanbul, Turkey	Tourist facilities frequented by Israelis ²²	Hezbollah

Table 1: Attacks Attributed to Pro-Iranian Proxy Groups

The Houthis constitute another element of this first wall of the Iranian Pairidaeza. Their attacks (2023–2026²³) against U.S. and Israeli vessels in the Red Sea shift the confrontation away from Iranian territory, increase the costs of military intervention, and reinforce a strategy of defence in depth based on the use of allied and non-state actors.

The second level, or Regional Allies Wall (Zone 3), of Iran's protection system is based on the idea of cushioning potential invasions. To this end, Iran has sought to create satellite states on its most vulnerable flank, the west. Tehran has therefore attempted to establish allied states in Syria and Iraq and, to a lesser extent, in Lebanon. These cases can be examined separately.

Iran's western flank, namely its 1,459-kilometre border with Iraq, has been and remains one of the most vulnerable areas of the Persian state. The Ottomans already used this area in the seventeenth century to launch an invasion, and three centuries later, Saddam Hussein did the same. Iran has therefore consistently sought to secure this border by creating states favourable to its interests. The most recent manoeuvre took place in 2003, when Tehran interpreted the fall of Saddam Hussein as an opportunity to create a Shiite state in Iraq, which, rather than being hostile to Iran, would protect it.

Tehran's first action was to promote Iraqi elites sympathetic to its interests. Iran sought to promote Shiite political parties, including the Supreme Islamic Council of Iraq, the Dawa Party, and the Sadrist Movement; religious leaders loyal to Tehran, such as Kazem al-Haeri and Mohammad Baqir al-Hakim; and, above all, encouraged the return of Iraqi leaders who had been exiled in Iran during Saddam Hussein's regime. Some of these leaders, such as Hadi al-Amiri and Ibrahim al-Jaafari, subsequently held positions of responsibility in post-Saddam Iraq. The most significant case is that of Nouri al-Maliki²⁴, who became prime minister and had previously lived in exile in Tehran.

²¹ "Israel blames Iran after attacks on embassy staff", Reuters, 12th February 2012.

²² "Israel tells its citizens to avoid Istanbul over Iranian threats" Al Jazeera, 13th June 2022.

²³ "U.S. Department of _Transportation "2026-006: Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb Strait, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea and Somali Basin—Houthi Attacks", Maritime Administration, 26.03.2026.

²⁴ CORDESMAN, Anthony. H., "US Strategic Competition with Iran: Competition in Iraq", CSIS, 2011.

Second, Iran sought to secure the loyalty of the Iraqi military forces by promoting the so-called Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF), or Hashd al-Shaabi. These groups operate under the direction of the Quds Force. Indeed, the powerful General Soleimani was killed in Iraq while supervising Hashd al-Shaabi forces²⁵. Thus, Tehran not only maintained a force inside Iraq but also obtained first-hand information about developments on the ground.

Third, Iran's institutional penetration of the post-Saddam Iraqi administration should be emphasised. Some Iraqi leaders, such as Adel Abdul-Mahdi, Minister of Energy, and Hatem al-Maksusi, head of military security, acknowledged their close ties with Iran²⁶. Another indication of this influence was Soleimani's role in the formation of Iraqi governments. The Iranian general acted almost as a head of state, deciding who should form the government and who should occupy ministerial positions²⁷.

Although Iran and Syria have maintained an alliance for decades, the civil war led to a significant intensification of this relationship. Between 2011 and 2015, Tehran used every available means to preserve the Assad regime. To this end, it did not hesitate to deploy Hezbollah forces, Quds Force personnel, and Iraqi, Afghan (Fatemiyoun²⁸), and Pakistani (Zeynabiyoun²⁹) militias

Once a degree of stabilisation had been achieved, Iran sought to establish a governmental structure within the Syrian state itself, to ensure that, in the event of a change of regime in Syria, Iran would be able to preserve its position. To this end, Tehran attempted to establish permanent infrastructure in Syria³⁰—including military bases, weapons depots, logistical centres, religious organisations, and other facilities—that would allow it to retain decisive influence regardless of who governed the country.

²⁵ "El Hashd al Shaabi iraquí acusa a EEUU de haber matado a su número 2 y a general iraní Soleimani", Infobae, 3 de enero de 2020. Disponible en <https://www.infobae.com/americas/agencias/2020/01/03/el-hashd-al-shaabi-iraqui-acusa-a-eeuu-de-haber-matado-a-su-numero-2-y-a-general-irani-soleimani/>

²⁶ CHULOV, Martin, "Leaked cables reveal scale of Iran's influence in Iraq", The Guardian, 18 de noviembre de 2019. Disponible en https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/18/leaked-cables-reveal-scale-of-irans-influence-in-iraq?utm_source=chatgpt.com

²⁷ "Qassem Suleimani: the Iranian general 'secretly running' Iraq", The Guardian, 29th July 2011.

²⁸ A Shiite militia composed of Hazaras refugees, trained and funded by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. It began deploying in Syria in 2014.

²⁹ A Shiite militia created in 2013 by Iran. It is composed of Pakistani refugees who have been taken in and trained in Iran.

³⁰ USKOWI, Nader "The evolving Iranian strategy in Syria: A looming conflict with Israel", The Atlantic Council, 27 de septiembre de 2017, disponible en <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/the-evolving-iranian-strategy-in-syria-a-looming-conflict-with-israel/>

The third line, or Missile and Drone Wall (Zone 2), is perhaps the foundation of the Pairidaeza. It contains most of Iran's military capabilities: missiles, drones, and limited air-defence capabilities. Essentially, the purpose of this third line is to deter the enemy from initiating a war, particularly if the enemy has already attacked Iran, threatened to do so, or acted against Iranian interests. This third line can be divided into two major categories of capabilities: missiles and drones.

About missiles, a distinction must be made between short-range systems (SRBMs, 150–300 km) and medium-/long-range systems (MRBMs, 1,000–2,500 km). The former include the Fateh-110, Fateh-313, Zolfaghar, Dezful, and Qiam, while the latter include the Shahab-3, Ghadr-110, Emad, and Haj Qasem.

It should be emphasised that attacks launched from this line are generally responses to a specific event, such as the death of Soleimani, the bombing of Iran's consulate in Syria, or the assassination of Sheikh Nasrallah. They also tend to be limited attacks, since large-scale retaliation forms part of the fourth defensive ring, which Iran activates when it perceives its very existence to be threatened.

The damage is not necessarily confined to the enemy state—for example, the United States—but may also affect neighbouring allied countries, such as the Gulf monarchies. Through these attacks, Tehran seeks not only to inflict damage but also to undermine its neighbours' alliances with Washington. In addition to the Gulf monarchies, Iraq, Pakistan, and Israel have also been targets of this type of attack, whose primary objective is to deter Iran's enemies from launching a larger attack.

Country	Date	Attacked Facility	Distance	Missile Weapons /	Outcome
IRAQ	08/01/2020	Ain al-Asad Air Base (Iraq) ³¹	270 km	11–16 ballistic missiles (Qiam-1 and Fateh-313)	100 American military personnel injured
IRAQ	08/01/2020	Erbil International Airport (Iraq) ³²	100 km	1–2 ballistic missiles	No casualties
PAKISTAN	16/04/2024	Jaish al-Adl positions in Pakistan	50 km	Missiles and drones	Two children killed
ISRAEL	13/04/2024	Attack against Israel	1,500 km	Missiles and	No fatalities;

³¹ "Iran fires missiles at U.S.-led forces in Iraq in retaliation for killing Soleimani" Reuters, 8th January 2020

³¹ "Statement by the Department of Defense on the Iranian missile attack against Al Asad Air Base and Erbil, Iraq". *Department of Defense*. 8th January 2020.

³² "Iran launches drones and missiles at Israel in first direct attack" Reuters, 14th April de 2024.

		³³ (in response to the attack on the consulate in Syria)		drones	one girl injured
ISRAEL	01/10/2024	Attack against Israel ³⁴ (in response to the killing of Nasrallah)	1,500 km	Missiles and drones	No casualties
IRAQ	28/02/2026	Erbil Airport ³⁵ / U.S. Consulate in Erbil (Iraq)	100 km	Missiles and drones	Missiles intercepted
IRAQ	02/03/2026	Victory Base (Iraq) ³⁶	280–290 km from Iran's eastern border	Drones	No casualties
Country	Date	Attacked Facility	Distance	Missile Weapons /	Outcome
IRAQ	08/01/2020	Ain al-Asad Air Base (Iraq) ³⁷	270 km	11–16 ballistic missiles (Qiam-1 and Fateh-313)	100 American military personnel injured
PAKISTAN	16/04/2024	Jaish al-Adl positions in Pakistan	50 km	Missiles and drones	Two children killed
ISRAEL	13/04/2024	Attack against Israel ³⁸ (in response to the attack on the consulate in Syria)	1,500 km	Missiles and drones	No fatalities; one girl injured
ISRAEL	01/10/2024	Attack against Israel ³⁹ (in response to the killing of Nasrallah)	1,500 km	Missiles and drones	No casualties
IRAQ	28/02/2026	Erbil Airport ⁴⁰ / U.S. Consulate in Erbil (Iraq)	100 km	Missiles and drones	Missiles intercepted
IRAQ	02/03/2026	Victory Base (Iraq) ⁴¹	280–290 km from Iran's eastern border	Drones	No casualties

Table 2: Iranian Deterrent Attacks

³³ "Iran launches barrage of ballistic missiles at Israel in retaliation for Nasrallah killing" Reuters, 1 de octubre de 2026.

³⁴ "Iran launches barrage of ballistic missiles at Israel in retaliation for Nasrallah killing" Reuters, 1 de octubre de 2026.

³⁵ Rockets attack targeted U.S. forces stationed near Erbil airport in northern Iraq on Saturday" Reuters, 28th February 2026.

³⁶ "US, Israel attack Iran live updates", Al Jazeera, 2nd March 2026.

³⁷ "Iran fires missiles at U.S.-led forces in Iraq in retaliation for killing Soleimani" Reuters, 8th January 2020

³⁸ "Statement by the Department of Defense on the Iranian missile attack against Al Asad Air Base and Erbil, Iraq". *Department of Defense*. 8th January 2020.

³⁹ "Iran launches barrage of ballistic missiles at Israel in retaliation for Nasrallah killing" Reuters, 1 de octubre de 2026.

⁴⁰ "Iran launches barrage of ballistic missiles at Israel in retaliation for Nasrallah killing" Reuters, 1 de octubre de 2026.

⁴¹ Rockets attack targeted U.S. forces stationed near Erbil airport in northern Iraq on Saturday" Reuters, 28th February 2026.

⁴² "US, Israel attack Iran live updates", Al Jazeera, 2nd March 2026.

Although this line of defence usually responds to a previous attack, it is not always the case. On some occasions, Iran uses its missiles to exert pressure on its enemies or, more directly, to attempt to undermine its neighbours' bilateral relations with Washington. This is the case with Saudi Arabia, a country that Iran has attacked on at least three occasions without any apparent provocation. Some analysts have attributed these attacks to the U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear agreement.

Date	Target	Distance	Weapons	Outcome
14/05/2019	East-West Pipeline (Saudi Arabia) ⁴²	900 km	Drones	Disruption of supply
17/08/2019	Shaybah Oil Field ⁴³	1,200 km	Drones (launched by the Houthis)	Limited damage
14/09/2019	Abqaiq and Khurais (Saudi Arabia) ⁴⁴	900 km	Cruise missiles and drones	Oil production capacity reduced by 50%

Table 3: Iranian Attacks Against Saudi Facilities

Ultimately, this third line, or third defensive wall, of the Pairidaeza is intended to serve as a deterrent by anticipating the martyrdom Iran would inflict upon its enemies should they attack its territory or act against its interests.

The fourth level, or Territorial Wall (Zone 1), is located within the country itself and is activated only when the regime faces a serious threat. Essentially, it is based on the experience gained during the war against Iraq and on the lessons learned from the American interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. As acknowledged by the President of the Supreme National Security Council, Ali Larijani, Iran has been working on this doctrine for more than 20 years. Its essence is enshrined in the Constitution itself, specifically in Articles 143, 150, and 151⁴⁵, which address territorial defence, the role of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and popular mobilisation (Basij).

The mechanisms underpinning this fourth wall of the Pairidaeza have been responsible

⁴² KALIN, S., & EL GAMAL, R. "Saudi Arabia says armed drones attacked East-West oil pipeline pumping stations". Reuters, 14th May 2019

⁴³ CHMAYTELLI, M., & EL GAMAL, R., "Houthi drone attack on Saudi oilfield causes gas fire, output unaffected". Reuters, 17th August 2019.

⁴⁴ KALIN, S., EL GAMAL, R., & HOLLAND, S., "Houthi drones hit two Aramco plants, Saudis say fires contained". Reuters, 14th September 2019,

⁴⁵ Constitution of Iran (1989). Available at https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Iran_1989?lang=es

for preventing the United States from defeating Iran in a war that Trump planned to last four weeks, but which, to date, he has been unable to bring to an end. The logic of this fourth ring is what has been described as “decentralised mosaic defence” (*Defa'-e Mozaiki*)⁴⁶, an expression coined by Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi. The mosaic strategy rests on three complementary pillars:

Firstly the dispersion of resources. In 2007, Mohammad Ali Jafari reorganised the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, preventing it from being dependent upon a single centralised command based in Tehran. He therefore established 31 (subsequently 32⁴⁷) provincial commands with a high degree of autonomy. Although Sarallah remains the headquarters, other commands have been established, including the Ashura Force (in Azerbaijan), the Najaf Force (in Kermanshah), and the Imam Ali Force (in Sistan and Baluchistan). In addition to dispersing command centres, Iran routinely disperses its forces, which can operate autonomously even when not in contact with headquarters. To some extent, this strategy follows the approach employed by the Iraqi Republican Guard when it dispersed throughout the northern part of the country as a means of organising the insurgency against the United States.

Another important element of this dispersion is the deployment of Iran’s missiles. Rather than being concentrated in a limited number of locations, they are dispersed across underground bases, tunnels, “missile cities,” concealed silos, and mobile transporter-erector-launchers (TELs⁴⁸). In this way, Iran seeks to prevent a pre-emptive attack from eliminating its principal strategic asset: its capacity for martyrdom.

Finally, Iran’s efforts to distribute material resources throughout the country should also be highlighted. Specifically, this includes ammunition, food storage facilities, fuel, and spare parts for its industrial infrastructure.

In the recent war with the United States, we have seen how, despite Washington targeting headquarters and major military complexes, Iran did not lose its ability to respond, as retaliatory strikes were launched from secondary military facilities located in provinces far

⁴⁶ HILOTIN, Jay “Iran’s war doctrine revealed: Decentralised Mosaic DEfence -what it means for US, Israel” *Gulf News*, 2nd March 2026.

⁴⁷ CONNELL, Michael “Iran’s Military Doctrine”. En WRIGHT, Robin (ed.), *The Iran Primer*. United States Institute of Peace, 2010, p.12

⁴⁸ TRADOC “Iran Likely To Employ Varied External, Internal Defensive Strategies in LSCO” *Intelligence Post*, June 2025.

from Tehran.

Secondly the use of retaliation as a response to an existential threat. This technique has three main elements. First, Iranian retaliation need not be a direct response to an attack, since delaying retaliation is itself part of Iran's strategy of punishment. Second, retaliation need not be directed against the actor who launched the attack. As we have seen on several occasions this year, Iran may instead target the territory of a country hosting forces that have attacked Iran rather than the direct perpetrator. In this way, Tehran seeks to encourage the population to rebel against a government perceived as hostile to Iranian interests, particularly in places such as Bahrain or Saudi Arabia, where significant Shiite minorities are present.

Third and finally, these are massive retaliatory attacks intended to inflict the greatest possible damage on Iran's enemies, even at the cost of sacrificing the defence of the Iranian population itself.

Date	Location	Distance	Weapon	Outcome
23/06/2025	Al Udeid (Qatar) ⁴⁹	700 km	Ballistic missiles	Retaliation for a U.S. attack
28/02/2026	Al Udeid (Qatar) ⁵⁰	700 km	Missiles and drones	Attacks against CENTCOM; no damage
28/02/2026	Ali Al Salem Air Base (Kuwait) ⁵¹	600 km	Missiles and drones	Interception; disruption of air operations
28/02/2026	Fifth Fleet (Bahrain)	350 km	Missiles and drones	Material damage to a radar; two Americans wounded
01/03/2026	Al Dhafra Air Base (UAE) ⁵²	750 km	Missiles and drones	Material damage
01/03/2026	Camp Arifjan and Camp Buehring	500 and 660 km	Missiles and drones	Material damage

⁴⁹ U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM). "U.S. and Qatari Forces Successfully Defend Against Iranian Ballistic Missile Attack on Qatar's Al-Udeid Air Base", 24th June 2025.

⁵⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Qatar) "Armed Forces Interrupted Waves of Iranian Missiles, No Human Fatalities Recorded" 1st March 2026.

⁵¹ "Kuwait says it intercepted missiles aimed at base hosting U.S. forces", Stars and Stripes, 28th February 2026.

⁵² ISW "Iran Update" Evening Special Report, 1st March 2026.

	(Kuwait) ⁵³			
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Table 4: Major Attacks Against U.S. Forces During the Iran–US War

Date	Target	Weapons	Known Outcome
10/06/2026	Fifth Fleet in Bahrain ⁵⁴	Drones and missiles	Most projectiles intercepted; civilian damage
10/06/2026	Ali Al Salem Air Base (Kuwait) ⁵⁵	Drones	Interception; no casualties
10/06/2026	Ahmad Al-Jaber Air Base (Kuwait)	Drones	Intercepted in the air
10/06/2026	Muwaffaq Salti / Azraq Air Base (Jordan)	Ballistic missiles	Jordan intercepted the missiles
10/06/2026	Vessels in the Strait of Hormuz ⁵⁶	Drones and missiles	Two oil tankers attacked

Table 5: Attacks Against U.S. Facilities During the Iran–US War

Date	Target	Weapon Used	Outcome
08/07/2026	Three merchant vessels in the Strait of Hormuz ⁵⁷	Attack drones and anti-ship missiles	Damage to commercial vessels
08/07/2026	U.S. bases in Kuwait ⁵⁸	Ballistic missiles and drones	Majority intercepted; limited damage
08/07/2026	U.S. facilities in Bahrain	Ballistic missiles and drones	Majority intercepted
09/07/2026	U.S. military positions in the Gulf ⁵⁹	Ballistic missiles and drones	New wave of attacks
10–14/07/2026	Maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz ⁶⁰	Drones, missiles, and naval operations	Disruption of maritime traffic
15/07/2026	U.S. military facilities ⁶¹	Drones and ballistic	Resumption of the

⁵³ “U.S. troops had little protection from drone strike that killed 6, imagery shows”, The Washington Post, 4th March 2026

⁵⁴ “Tanker struck in Hormuz as Iran, US trade attacks in worst escalation of Gulf conflict”, Reuters, 27th June 2026

⁵⁵ “US strikes Iran again and Tehran launches attacks across the Gulf” Reuters, 11th June 2026.

⁵⁶ “US military says none of its warships struck in Strait of Hormuz”, Reuters 10th June 2026

⁵⁷ “US and Iran threaten return to war after fiercest exchange of fire since truce”, The Guardian, 8th July 2026.

⁵⁸ “US Military Says It Has ‘Defeated’ Iran Missile, Drone Attacks in Gulf”, Kyiv Post, 8th July 2026.

⁵⁹ “What remains of the Iran deal as fighting rages” Associated Press, 9th July 2026.

⁶⁰ “Why Iran is returning to war” The Financial Times, 15th July 2026.

⁶¹ “Iran launches fresh attacks after sixth day of US strikes” Reuters, 15th July 2026.

		missiles	campaign
16/07/2026	Bases in Bahrain	Ballistic missiles and drones	Attacks largely intercepted
16/07/2026	Bases in Kuwait ⁶²	Ballistic missiles and drones	Limited damage
17/07/2026	U.S. bases in Syria	Ballistic missiles and drones	Attacks against military facilities
17/07/2026	Facilities in Bahrain	Ballistic missiles and drones	Regional offensive

Table 6: Iranian Attacks in July

Prolonging the conflict by assuming its own martyrdom and projecting it onto the enemy to inflict the greatest possible damage. One of the most striking aspects of this strategy is that Iran allocates only limited resources to air defence. The few air-defence systems it possesses are primarily assigned to critical facilities, leaving its civilian population virtually unprotected. Once again, this can be explained by two factors: the limited resources available to Iran and the idea of martyrdom, which is deeply embedded in Shiite culture.

The Strait of Hormuz would also form part of this fourth line of defence. Although closing the Strait would indeed represent a severe blow to Iran's economy, Tehran is aware of the damage it would inflict on Western countries by disrupting maritime navigation and, consequently, oil supplies. For this reason, Hormuz constitutes another instrument within the protective framework of the Pairidaeza.

Conclusion

Iran is a state that, throughout its history, has suffered numerous invasions. It is therefore not only aware of its vulnerability but has also learned how to limit it. Its way of protecting its existence is to construct a Persian garden, a Pairidaeza, composed of several walls or defensive lines designed to protect it from external threats.

The first line of defence is based on attacks against its enemies. This first line serves a dual purpose: on the one hand, it demonstrates Iran's capacity for martyrdom, seeking to compel its enemies to devote resources to protecting themselves against Iranian actions;

⁶² "Kuwait says power and water desalination plant targeted in Iranian attack" The Guardian, 16th July 2026.

on the other, it seeks to deter them from attacking Iran. Most of these operations are not conducted directly by Iranian forces but by its associated groups, the *proxies*. These groups operate under Iranian training, under the command of the Quds Force, and with funding from Tehran.

The second line of defence consists of buffer states. History has taught Iran that its weakest point is its western frontier and, consequently, it has sought to establish satellite states in both Syria and Iraq. In both cases, Iran has sought to obtain political, military, and religious control.

The third line of defence is based on a series of missile and drone installations intended to deter Iran's enemies from attacking the country, particularly when they have already violated Iranian interests. Essentially, this line is designed to respond to previous attacks, but in a surgical manner. In other words, it serves as a preview of the martyrdom that Iran's enemies may suffer if they launch a massive attack against Iran or threaten the theocratic regime. Iran also carries out pre-emptive attacks against states that adopt decisions contrary to its interests or maintain alliances with its enemies, such as Saudi Arabia.

The fourth line of defence is activated only when the regime faces a serious threat. If this occurs—as is currently the case—Iran has instruments that prevent defeat, project martyrdom onto the enemy, and, above all, prolong the conflict for periods of time that are unsustainable for any other state.

All these elements constitute the Strategic Pairidaeza Doctrine, a Persian garden that Iran identifies with its territory and whose survival Tehran is prepared to preserve at any cost.

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