Description for the general public:

The proposed project includes an analysis of the security policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, both in its internal and external dimensions (the latter involving threats and challenges arising outside of Iran). The aim of the work is an in-depth analysis of a number of elements leading to the formulation and execution of the security policy of Iran, currently one of the most important actors in the Middle East. These include threat perception and the national interests of Iran in the security dimension. According to the theory of strategy, analysis will also cover decision-making processes and the implementation of security policy – not only its classic (military) dimension, but also the nowadays increasingly important "soft security" dimension, including cyber-security and "soft power", which has been increasingly used by Iran to enhance its power and thus national security. The author will also examine and assess the historical, economic, political, geo-strategic and psychosocial factors and determinants affecting the formulation and execution of Iran's security strategy.

The character of the proposed project is innovative and it will make an important contribution to existing knowledge, which is today very limited – both within Poland and internationally. The work is designed to help understand the current security policy of Iran, which is not yet accurately and comprehensively known or understood. Currently, there is no comprehensive work treating the subject of this research so widely. The few existing works tend to concentrate on the analysis of Iran's influence on the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, or on assessing Iran's behaviour from a Western perspective, whereas the ambition of this project is to reverse the vector of observation; to analyse actions and phenomena from the perspective of Iran and its goals, threats and interests.

The planned analysis will be undertaken at three layers. The first concerns the security of the regime itself (internal dimension) whose fear for survival leads Iran towards securitization. Two other layers will be devoted to national security as traditionally understood, concerning threats and challenges posed to the state and its citizens, both from internal and external sources. The analysis will cover, at the second layer, close neighbours of Iran, such as the Persian Gulf , including Iraq, where destabilizing factors can directly threaten Iran's national security. At the third layer, analysis will focus on more distant states, such as Syria and Israel, which play a much different role in Iran's security policy. They do not pose a direct threat to Iranian national security, but rather offer Iran an opportunity for political-military expansion and to increase its national power (in accordance with realism and neorealism).

The main hypothesis of this study is that subjective factors, i.e., those upon which the Iranian decision-makers have direct impact and control (the psycho-social dimension) are a major element shaping Iran's security and foreign policy, including goals and threat perceptions. Secondly, the hypothesis considers that objective conditions (i.e., those upon which Iranian decision-makers have no direct control, such as actions by external powers like the United States, economic constraints) (such as actions by external powers like the United States and European Union, or economic constraints),have a significant and sometimes sufficient internal impact (mainly on the Iranian economy), such that Iran's decision-makers are forced to re-evaluate their policies and sometimes introduce changes, however limited, despite their attachment to the psycho-social motivations underlying the Islamic Republic's foundations. The third hypothesis is based on the assumption that Iran, despite the opinions of various commentators and scholars, is rational in its security policy. An assumption that must be tested is that the first layer ("the core") is the most important for Iranian decision-makers.