

Summary **(Intermodal Results)**

In the last decades Iran has become one of the powerful states in the Middle East. Today Iran plays a significant role in political, economic, social, religious and ideological issues of the region. Iran's politics shapes major developments in regional security and international relations in the Middle East.

Since the end of the World War II Arab-Iranian relations have become a special subject of the regional and international politics in the Middle East.

Iran pursues an active policy towards Arab countries in the Middle East. Iran has become an active part in conducting military conflicts in several Arab countries (Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and Libya). Iran's involvement in the depth of Arab countries; their societies, security affairs and politics strengthens tensions and hostility between Arabs and Iran. Mostly Arab countries reject Iranian policy and some of them consider Tehran as their enemy. In view of their ethnics and sectarian differences the existing strains in Arab-Iranian relations provoke the religious strife in the Middle East that takes different forms like Sunny-Shiite conflicts. Worsening of Arab-Iranian relations encourage new conflicts; undermine power balance and destabilize security environments in the Middle East. The search for domestic and external power and security serves as the main drivers of Arab-Iranian relations and Iranian policy in the Arab World. Meanwhile, ethnic and sectarian differences and the historical Arab-Persian rivalry have provided imputes to the major orientations of Iranian policy towards Arab countries of the Middle East. The current situation in the Greater Middle East places it in the focus of world politics. Thus makes Arabs and Iran as an object of the influences of international political system and its key players. This fact complicates normalizations of Arab-Iranian relations. Nevertheless the long and rich history of Arab-Iranian interaction serves as the best guaranty from inevitability to their hostility.

Those factors and many others formed a subject of academic research by L.M. Kulagina (Ph.D.) and V. M. Akhmedov (Ph.D.), senior researchers in the Moscow based Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Science in their new book «The major orientation of Iranian policy towards Arab countries in the Middle East (1990-2000) ».

The authors show that the long history of Arab-Iranian relations has left its legacy that still influences Iran's policy in the Middle East. Until the Arab conquest of Iran interactions between Arabs and Iran had many positive dimensions. The Islamization of Iran and its partial Arabization dramatically changed Iran's cultural, social, political developments. These

processes challenged the behavioral patterns of many Iranians towards Arabs and vice versa. Since that time the ethnic identity of two people, their adherences to Sunnis and Shiites has acquired antagonistic characteristics. The historic Arab-Persian competition left their stamp on Iran's foreign policy in general and in the Arab World in particular. One of these implications was Iran's greater involvement in Arab politics after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The authors stress that the rise of nationalism and nation building in the Arab world and Iran strengthened the conflict aspects of bilateral relations and politicized their ethnic and sectarian differences. The modernization process and the establishment of independent states turned traditional Arab-Iranian rivalries in security issues of national identity and territorial integrity.

L.M. Kulagina and V.M. Akhmedov consider that Iranian revolution 1979 and emphasizing on Islamic feelings at the expense of particular nationalism didn't contribute Arab's amity for Iran. Moreover the revolution in Iran changed the basic roots of its political system and administrative governing. Iran has become an ideological state and its Mideast policy has changed as well. Iran appeared as a major source of revolutionary and radical ideas in the region with strong Islamic leverage. Meanwhile Arabs has passed their revolutionary phase and Arab republics considered to be secular states. These ideological leanings largely determined the character of Arab-Iranian relations.

The last decades witnessed complicated process of building Arab-Iranian relations and elaborating of Iranian political orientations towards Arab states. The authors show that the ethnic and sectarian differences, historical rivalries haven't primarily determined the above mentioned processes. The critically changing situation in the Mideast political transit from Arab-Israeli wars to "Arab Spring" strongly affected Arab-Iranian relations and pushed Iranian leadership to change its Arab politics several times. The influence of great-power policies on Arab Iranian relations grew stronger along with focusing their attention on the Middle East and deep involvement its politics. In other words, shifts in great-power priorities had rarely brought positive results for regional states, their security and ability to pursuit independent foreign policy.

L.M. Kulagina and V.M. Akhmedov study the attitude to Iranian foreign policy in the Middle East. They stress that since the American invasion in Iraq in 2003 and for the last decades international community have considered Iran's geostrategic importance threw the prism not only its nuclear program, but Iranian regional policy as the most important element of Tehran's foreign policy, as well. Middle East is a main subject of

importance for Iran. That's why IRI's status and prestige are derived mainly from Iran's activities in and vis-à-vis the Middle East. At first, Iran's hostile attitude towards Israel and its rejection of any foreign, and first of all towards American hegemony in the region. That constitutes in eyes of international community, first of all in the West, the greatest threat to regional security. The very fact that an important part of the Iranian elite the Middle East is of major significance for ideological and biographical reasons, only approved the above mentioned attitude to Iranian politics in the Middle East.

The authors examine the influence of the "Arab Spring" on the Iranian policy in the region. They believe that at its very beginnings the "Arab Spring" in the Middle East initially had no repercussions for Iran's strategic position. Egypt's return to its role as a moderate Islamic power was greeted by Iran. Meanwhile, L.M. Kulagina and V.M. Akhmedov try to prove, that Syria was the real test for Iran's policy in the Middle East. The rebellion against the Assad regime and the decision of the Palestinian Hamas to opt out of the so-called "axis of resistance", have dealt severe ideological blows to Tehran. In the long term Syrian crisis has the potential to escalate into a regional or super-regional war waged on the basis of ethnicity and confession. This would be neither in the interests of the Russia, Turkey, Arabs nor of Iran. As in the case of Afghanistan it is likely to prove impossible to resolve the Syrian crisis without the involvement of Iran. In view of the new situation in the Middle East, therefore, a review of Iranian relations with Middle Eastern countries and powerful international players in this region would seem advisable, making a resolution of the nuclear issue all the more urgent.

The above mentioned developments force the authors to turn to the topic of Iran's foreign policy in the region and the possibility of its evolution. In this regard, L.M. Kulagina and V.M. Akhmedov analyze in brief retrospective the main directions of Iran's foreign policy in the Middle East and its evolution. In their opinion that may give some idea of Iran's policy in the region in the foreseeable future. L.M. Kulagina and V.M. Akhmedov study the evolution of Iran's policy in the region after the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979. They focus on the main directions of Iran's foreign policy and consider that it was determined, first of all, by the specific character of state power build on the basis of the person of the Shiite clergy, which took root in the country. Traditional Islamic values served as the main ideological justification for Iran's foreign policy. The external factor played a significant and sometimes decisive role in Iran's policy. In the most acute political moments, it was brought to the forefront, and the Islamic leadership

tried to get out of the internal political crisis with its help. In this regard, the authors consider that the fundamental principles of Iran's foreign policy, proclaimed at the beginning of the Islamic revolution, such as "neither the West, nor the East, but Islam", the export of the Islamic revolution, priority relations with the countries of the Muslim world have experienced certain changes. Iran's foreign policy in the 1990s changed and became more flexible and moderate, having lost the characteristic of the 1980-th radical character. L.M. Kulagina and V.M. Akhmedov show on concrete examples of Iran's policy in the key Arab countries that the main emphasis in Iran's foreign policy was placed on ensuring the country's internal security, its territorial integrity, maintaining good neighborly relations with the Iranian Border States. In 1997 a newly elected Iranian president M. Khatami, proposed a new foreign policy concept - dialogue between cultures and civilizations of the Western and Eastern worlds based on the principles of mutual understanding and trust. Iran's foreign policy was built according to these guidelines. Iran has intensified its relations with both Western and Eastern countries. Iran emerged from the international political isolation in which it was in the first years after the Islamic revolution. Relations with the EU countries were improving. This was of particular importance for Iran, whose economy needed foreign investment and technology. The most active cooperation with the EU was in the oil and gas industry. Business circles of European countries expressed their readiness to invest in Iranian infrastructure, construction and tourism. Certain successes were achieved by Iran in normalizing relations with Arab countries, primarily the Arabian monarchies of the Persian Gulf. Iran put forward the idea of ensuring regional security exclusively by the forces of the coastal states with the obligatory participation of Iran. An important step towards the implementation of a unified regional security system was the signing in April 2001 of the Security Pact between Iran and Saudi Arabia. In an effort to counteract the US plans to isolate Iran in the Middle East, Iranian Middle East diplomacy was actively working on the topic of the possible participation of Iran (as an associate member) together with Turkey in the work of the Arab League. In the implementation of its policy to normalize relations with Arab countries, Iran relied on Syria, which was one of the main Arab allies of Iran. L.M. Kulagina and V.M. Akhmedov investigate the impact of USA invasion in Iraq on the orientation of Iran's policy in the Arab World. They believe that the war in Iraq and its aftermath unpredictably changed the configuration of political forces in the region and made Iran fear for its security. In this regard, Iran's foreign policy priorities began to change. After the "conservatives" returned to power in Iran in

2005, Iran, together with its Arab allies in the region, primarily Syria, pursued an active policy to strengthen its influence in the Middle East. This political line of Iran was reflected in Iraq, where a government controlled by Tehran was formed during the war in Lebanon in the summer of 2006, during the events in Beirut in the spring of 2008, when Hezbollah actually took power into its own hands, during the war in Gaza in winter 2009. Using the mistakes of Arab leaders and inter-Arab disagreements, the presence of a Shiite minority there as a pretext for intervention, Iran has achieved certain results in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen. The authors study the reflection of USA-Iranian relations on the state of Iran's policy towards Arabs. They show that the attempts made by the American administration over the past three decades to change the system of power in Iran and restrain the growth of Iranian influence in the Middle East did not bring the desired results. L.M. Kulagina and V.M. Akhmedov stress that Iran's activities in the Middle East were determined by a number of important factors that had a significant impact on its policy. L.M. Kulagina and V.M. Akhmedov emphasizes on the role of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, activity of Sunnites and Shiites communities and radical organizations in key Arab countries as a driver for Iranian political activity in the Middle East. This is Iran's support for Lebanese Hezbollah, which he used to strengthen his influence in Lebanon, as well as a tool to contain Israel's aspirations. Iran was involved in the inter-Palestinian and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. It provided international support and assistance to Palestinian Hamas. The authors consider that new developments in the Middle East significantly changed the existing balance of power in the Middle East. Social unrests in Syria, Jordan, Yemen; Bahrain had a direct impact on the course of events throughout the Middle East. They touched upon the most acute problems associated with the creation of a Palestinian state, the security of Israel, and oil supplies from the Persian Gulf. At the same time, these processes were directly related to the role of Iran in the region. The emerging situation in the region, according to the Iranian leaders, contributed to the implementation of Iran's far-reaching domestic and foreign policy plans. In particular, the world community, distracted by the Arab events, did not follow so strictly the implementation of the Iranian nuclear program. The risk of an Israeli military strike against Iranian nuclear facilities was significantly reduced. Using the current situation, Iran sought to strengthen its positions in the region, which has been one of the important directions of Iran's foreign policy over the past years. L.M. Kulagina and V.M. Akhmedov investigate core points of Egypt-Iranian relations. They show that resumption of relations between Cairo and Tehran can be attributed to certain successes of

Iran. The normalization of Iranian-Egyptian relations meant not only the departure of Cairo from the camp of “moderate” Arab countries created by the United States against Iran, Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas, but also the fact that Iran’s foreign policy in Arab countries received additional recognition and legitimization. This created a serious gap in the policy of anti-Iranian mobilization of the Arab countries, which was carried out by the monarchies of the Persian Gulf, often using confessional contradictions between Sunnis and Shiites for this, which in practice led to a split of the region into two camps - Sunni and Shiite. L.M. Kulagina and V.M. Akhmedov pay special attention to the situation in the Gulf countries and their relations with Iran. They presume that the process of ongoing changes in the Arab countries could not be considered in isolation from the results of the continuing confrontation between Iran and the Arab monarchies of the Persian Gulf, on the one hand, and between Iran and the international community, on the other. As a result of the events in Bahrain and the intervention of the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) armed forces in them, relations between Riyadh and Tehran have seriously deteriorated. Iran clearly underestimated the fact that the Arabs consider Bahrain to be exclusively their zone of influence. Arab monarchies feared that Iran could take advantage of their potential weakness as a result of the development of Arab revolutionary movements and use this circumstance to strengthen its position in the region. The events that took place in the states of the Arab Mashriq (East) were closely related to the situation in the Gulf. And the warring parties in the Levant and the Persian Gulf carefully watched for any signs of a change in the situation in order to reconsider their positions in time and react to it. The authors study the situation in Syria and Lebanon in view of its impact on Iran’s policy in the region. They believe that events in Syria have put Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas in a difficult position. The unrest in Syria showed the full extent of the severity of the divisions of the former alliances in the region. Although the West condemned Damascus for the excessive use of force against demonstrators, it, along with the GCC countries, until recently, generally viewed the Assad regime as part of the upcoming changes and reforms in Syria. Iran needed Syria for a number of reasons. Thanks to the efforts of the regime of B. Assad, Iran managed to thwart the emergence of a united front against USA and its Arab allies in the region. Damascus served as a conduit for Iranian policy in Lebanon. Iran has always viewed Damascus as an important link in the “axis of resistance” along the Tehran-Baghdad-Damascus-Beirut-Gaza line, in order to exert a deterrent influence on Israel, on the one hand, and to spread its influence in the region, including through the support of Shiite communities in several Arab countries of the region.

L.M. Kulagina and V.M. Akhmedov show the significance of the Syrian-Iranian alliance in regards Iran's political aspirations in other Arab countries and in the Middle East as a well. It is worth mentioning that Syrian-Iranian alliance was shaped due to the varying degrees the experiences and geography of the two states. As to their political elite's ideological and world views they played an important role in building the above mentioned alliance. Syrian and Iranian leaders share some perceptions and their ideologies overlap in certain respects. Iran has tried to spread revolutionary Islam to create Muslim unity in the region by surmounting Arab-Iranian political divisions. Tehran demonstrates its solidarity by actively participating in the Arab-Israeli struggle. Meanwhile, Syria, as the heartland of Arabism, has striven to overcome the political fragmentation of the Arab world by acting as a trigger for Arab unity. Hafez Assad, Ruhollah Khomeini regarded their alliance as a vital tool with which to increase regional autonomy by diminishing foreign penetration of the Middle East.

In their study the authors try to prove the fact, that many of Iran's actions in the foreign policy arena, including in Syria, were dictated by considerations of an internal order, the priority of which was the desire by any means to achieve the status of a nuclear power like Israel and Pakistan. L.M. Kulagina and V.M. Akhmedov consider that the participation of the Russian Aerospace Forces (RAF) in the Syrian armed conflict has fundamentally changed the situation in the region. Moscow has become a key player in the Middle East. Tehran was forced to listen to its position. Iran, not without reason, feared Russian military presence in the region and its growing political influence. Tehran couldn't underestimate that Moscow has become an active player in creation of new formats of international relations. This new situation could force Iran to seriously adjust its plans in the region. The authors studies the role of inter Arab relation and the policy of key world leaders in the region in determine Arab-Iranian relations. They believe that Tehran was forced to reckon with the new realities that arose in the United States after new President came to power. Iran was concerned about the unilateral US withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal and was closely following the reaction of the EU and Russia. In this regards L.M. Kulagina and V.M. Akhmedov focus on the Iranian ability to deter the external challenges examining the key characteristic of Iranian political mechanism. They attract special attention to the specificity of creation of Iranian diplomacy in the historical background and its developments in current days. They consider that Iranian foreign policy is distinguished by enviable pragmatism and cold prudence. This was clearly seen in the example of Tehran's interaction with various political forces in post-Saddam

Iraq. Another indicator of the flexibility of Iranian policy could be demonstrating by the evolution of Iranian paradigm of exporting of the Islamic revolution. This paradigm was one of the main instruments of Iran's foreign policy in the Arab East in the 1980-th. It was even enshrined in the Iranian constitution. Faced with rejection in a number of Arab countries, primarily in Lebanon and Syria, the monarchies of the Persian Gulf, the export policy of the Islamic revolution has undergone major transformations over the past decades. Having met resistance in the multi-confessional and multi-ethnic societies of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq with a strong centralized system of power (Syria, Iraq) and the monarchies of the Gulf hostile attitude to revolutionary Iran, whose security was provided by the United States, Iran abandoned direct and forceful methods of implementing the policy of exporting the Islamic revolution. L.M. Kulagina and V.M. Akhmedov investigate ideological dimensions in Iranian foreign policy and pay attention to the special role of the Shiites communities in Iran's policy in the Middle East. They site concrete examples of how Iran was working with Shiite communities in Arab countries to expand and strengthen their positions in Arab countries. In this regard, Iran has focused on the social, economic and humanitarian aspects of politics in Arab countries in order to facilitate and accelerate the process of socialization of Shiite communities, to increase their influence in the Arab society and create positions in the political systems of these states. The authors prove that Tehran successfully achieved the task. Lebanon and Iraq are examples of this, where representatives of Shiite parties and political organizations are included in the parliaments and governments of these countries. In a number of monarchies of the Persian Gulf (Qatar, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates), Iran has created from representatives of Shiite communities a whole network of its open and secret supporters, and a number of security issues and a positive trade balance of these countries, became largely dependent on the nature of their relationship with Iran. L.M. Kulagina and V.M. Akhmedov study the role of ethnic, sectarian, ideological, political factors in Iran's policy in view of the latest's developments in the Middle East. They demonstrate that in the wake of the latest's events in the Arab world in 2019-2021 and, especially, in the context of the of the Syrian crisis and the hostilities in Yemen, Arab-Israeli rapprochements, Taliban's achievements in Afghanistan the component of "direct force" in Iran's foreign policy began to prevail again. This gave an impetus to the revival of the idea of exporting the Islamic revolution, but already in an ideologically and politically transformed form as a means of strengthening the Iranian military-political positions in Arab countries and attempts to impose their own political model of state structure

and social life on them. The authors believe that Iran's successes in a number of Arab countries were undeniable. This has allowed a number of senior Iranian leaders to repeatedly declare that Iran fully "owns" Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen. Based on their original analyses of the current situation in the Arab countries and Iran in view of the specific history of Arab-Iranian interactions L.M. Kulagina and V.M. Akhmedov makes some forecast of the future perspectives of Iran's policy in the region and the state of Arab-Iranian relations. The author consider that today, as a result of strong pressure from the United States, Russia, international community and influential regional countries, Iran is forced to begin revising its power policy. Iran began to show more political flexibility and readiness to compromise in order to avoid unwanted complications in relations with its allies, primarily in the person of Russia and Turkey, and an increase in the direct military threat from Israel and Saudi Arabia, in the interests of protecting and maintaining achieved positions and its security.

On the other hand, the aforementioned Arab countries, as a result of prolonged destabilization and military crises, found themselves on the brink of economic and humanitarian catastrophe, faced with a real threat of their transformation into a "failed state". And the deep involvement of Iran in them poses a threat to the image and material components of the Iranian model and Iran's ability to implement it in other countries of the region. Indeed, many of Iran's calculations in its policy in the region are based in addition to the power factor, including the nuclear program, on its influence in the Shiite communities. So, one of the future footholds for Iran's advance in the region is Syria and Iraq, or rather the division of spheres of influence in these countries after the final withdrawal of foreign troops from there. And in this regard, Iran would rather prefer not to aggravate relations with the United States and Turkey because of the Assad regime, which can significantly limit the sphere of its interests in Syria and Iraq. Moreover, in recent years Iran has invested heavily in Iraq and Syria both financially and politically. By propelling the Shiites of Iraq and Syria to power, Iran was able to strengthen its political and military presence in the Levant. Since the withdrawal of some American troops from Iraq in 2019, Iran's position has been further strengthened in this region. For now Iran is not going to reduce its military presence in the region, but is striving to maintain and expand its positions in Syria and other Arab countries. Meanwhile, in view of the government in Tehran leaders of Britain, France and Germany, cosponsors of nuclear accord 2015, seems moving to be buying into the strategy of the Washington hardliners towards Iran. In other words, USA and European pressure on Iran will be sufficient to engineer a breakthrough in

efforts to avert escalating tension and a return to the negotiating table. Moreover it could put Iran's actions on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council and lead to a re-imposition of international sanctions. It is worth mentioning that since the signature of the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) in July 2015, pragmatic elements in Iran's leadership have showed that Iran was able to compartmentalize specific issues in its engagement with the West.

A key issue is Iranian engagement in global politics by recognizing its role in specific areas. And it is quiet possible that discussions on the Middle East might allow some sort of approach. The above investigated specificity of decision-making mechanism in Iran such trade-off is quiet possible while the decision-making supervised by the Supreme Leader and coordinated, notably through the Supreme National Security Council.

It would be worth mention that the danger of a blowing up of religious conflicts is equally high for the Russia, West and Iran. In view of this for Russia and USA would be quiet reasonable to work together with Turkey on strengthening Arab's positions in the region. Indeed, the reviving of Arab's role in the Middle East could bring positive results.

The rising Arab power would be in a position to counter the defamation of Arab Shiites by emphasizing their Arab-Muslim identity. In the medium term that could change and raise the status of Iraq as an Arab-Shiite country and thus restore the old balance between Iraq and Iran, only this time on the basis of identity. On the other hand, in this regard, it can be assumed that in the foreseeable future, Egypt, KSA, Turkey and Iran can actively influence the issues of war and peace in the Persian Gulf. At least all those countries are clearly seeking to increase their role in the region.

Even if there some options for optimism concerns Iran's role in the region and Arab-Iranian settlement is still exist, one has to remember that nevertheless on how difficult would be the transformation process the future of Iran's politics depend also on whether agreement can be reached on the nuclear issue. As for Iran this is a question of not only a politics but also much more appears as ideological bone of vital concerns.

L.M. Kulagina and V.M. Akhmedov came to conclusion that for the last decades Tehran has managed to safeguard the core components of Iran's politics in the Middle East and its latest developments that it has achieved in the region since the 1990-th XX century. The above mentioned developments in Arab-Iranian relations caused prime attention of the regional and international players to the Iranian activity in the Arab countries. Iran has managed to ground very deeply in the social fabric of the Arab's societies. Iranian political activity and deep involvement in the

regional politics has strained Arab-Iranian relations that have very specific historic background. Tehran has succeeded in strengthening its place and role in Arab society and political institutions. The stand of the Arab authorities regards given situations demonstrated its low abilities to influence developments in Arab-Iranian relations.

L.M. Kulagina and V.M. Akhmedov conclude that Tehran has managed to create in some Arab countries structures under Iranian control. The actions of Iranian diplomacy regarding fulfillments of the above mentioned goals helped to strengthen Iranian positions in the Middle East. Iran has a good perspective to safeguard its present position in the Middle East in contexts of the latest's developments of the regional situation and regarding Iran's relations with Russia and Turkey.