

In spite of US sanctions, Iran is in the Middle East to stay

Fatima al-Samadi

Abstract: In May 2018, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo laid down twelve conditions for Iran to meet in order to end the sanctions that the U.S. had re-imposed after withdrawing from the nuclear deal. The conditions directly addressed Iran's power and influence in the region, taking aim at the coalition agreements Iran had concluded in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and Palestine. The U.S. administration demanded that Iran end these alliances with non-official political players, which it has been investing in for decades in order to expand its influence in the region. In other words, the Trump administration is demanding that the Islamic Republic entirely redefine its political and ideological framework and change a foreign policy that is still governed by revolutionary rhetoric largely inferred from the thought of Ayatollah Khomeini – a change that is inconceivable for the Iranian regime.

The re-imposition of U.S. sanctions on Iran in November 2018 has been aimed at limiting Iran's power in the Middle East by putting pressure on the economic, social and political life of Iranians. These sanctions were ultimately designed to exhaust Iran's economy to the degree that the regime would no longer have the capacity to sustain its support for allied groups across the region and that it would face growing domestic unrest. The tragic depreciation of the Iranian Rial is just one consequence of the second round of these sanctions.

The sanctions are not only aimed at the petroleum industry: they also include an embargo on foreign companies dealing with Iranian firms in other industries, putting any company that carries dealings with any Iranian company working in oil imports and petrochemical products at risk of sanctions. Furthermore, the sanctions also prohibit trading through Iran's ports, any dealings with its maritime industry, shipbuilding and the maritime transport services or affiliated companies. The financial industry and the banking system will also be hit hard, as the sanctions will prohibit any foreign company from carrying out any dealings with the Central Bank of Iran or Iranian financial institutions. These sanctions also prohibit money transfers, insurance services or any other dealings with the Iranian energy industry. According to Mike Pompeo, the new sanctions include a list of fifty Iranian banks and their branches. In the shipping and energy industries, the sanctions include

200 people, many ships and 67 Iran Air aircraft. In total, more than 700 Iranian nationals, companies, aircraft and ships are facing the burden of U.S. sanctions. Furthermore, 20 other countries are abiding by the U.S. sanctions and have stopped importing oil from Iran. More countries are expected to join the sanctions after a series of threats from U.S. Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin.¹

Furthermore, the SWIFT international transfer system will also be subject to penalties if it offers any services to sanctioned Iranian financial institutions. The implications of this could be overwhelming, especially after the complications and obstacles that the Rouhani government faced when it attempted to begin facilitating transactions between Iranian and foreign banks after the lifting of sanctions in 2015.

Iran’s Obsession with ‘Role’

Although it seems evident that the influence of Iran across the region takes on a revolutionary and ideological character, explaining Iran’s foreign policy requires more than understanding its underpinning ideological motivations and Iran’s foreign policy is complex to be reduced to ideology alone. Political science can provide us with an analytical framework for the understanding of Iran’s foreign policy, especially in terms of what has led to its continuous support for its allies despite the economic stagnation that has inflicted the country. The paradox raised by this tenacity has been the subject of disputes every time new sanctions are imposed on Iran.² In particular, we find that role theory can help us understand Iran’s foreign policy, given that it has been guided by the duality of threat and of opportunity in three manifestations: the land factor as constituent, the geography factor as

geopolitics, and the human factor as mediation.

Iran’s preoccupation with and interest in taking vital regional and recognized international roles is the motivation underpinning its continuous support for its allies despite the difficult economic situation the country faces. Political science scholar K. J. Holsti calls this phenomenon “role fulfillment”, referring to the political elite’s formulation of a country’s role as defined by its economic, social and cultural conditions.³

On this topic, I conducted a content analysis study entitled ‘Iran’s Foreign Policy orientations after the nuclear deal: on roles and priorities’.⁴ The figure below (chart n. 11) shows that 86 percent of Iranian politicians mention Iran’s role in their speeches while only 14 percent of these speeches include no mention of the subject.

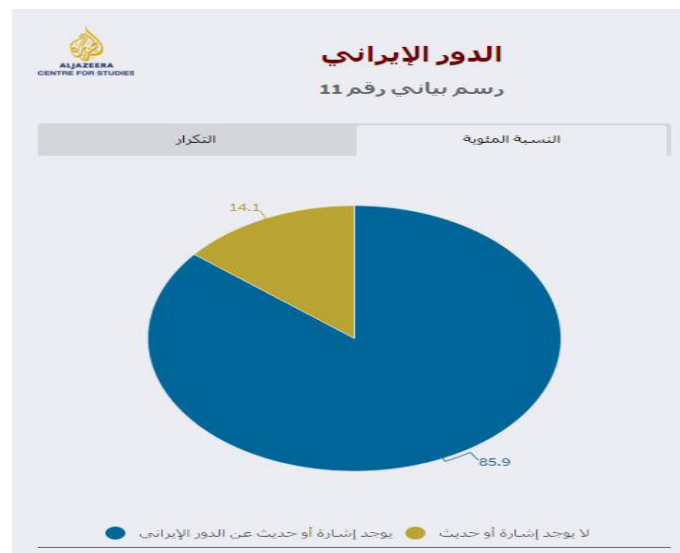


Figure 1 .Chart n. 11. showing the percentage of speeches making reference to Iran’s ‘role’, Al Jazeera Center for Studies

In the first quarter of 2017 (figure 2. / chart n.11/2017), 90 percent of Iranian politicians' speeches mention Iran's role while only 10 percent did not.

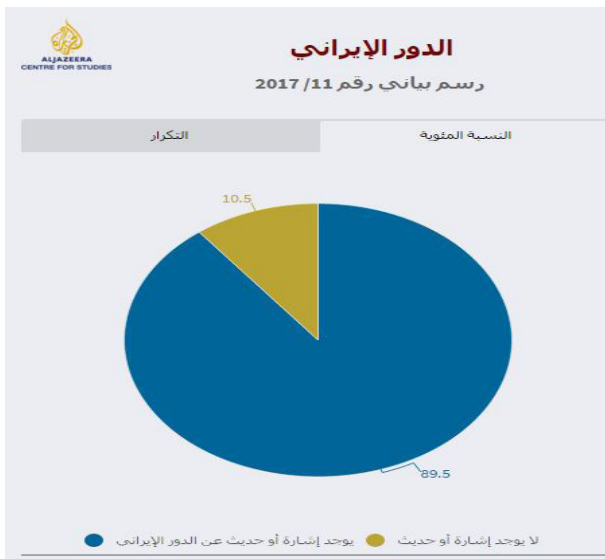


Figure 2 . chart n.11/2017 showing the percentage of speeches making reference to Iran's 'role'.

Going back to the nature of Iran's role, we can observe that the statements made in 2016 by Iranian politicians focus on Iran's leading role in the region and the world (41%), its role in fighting terrorism (40%), and Iran's integration in the international system (5%), while only 1% call on listeners to propagate its revolutionary vision. Whereas the first quarter of 2017 was marked by a surge in interest in Iran's potential leading role (52%) followed by statements focusing on Iran's role in fighting terrorism (29%), only 7% addressed the necessity of integration into the international community and 2% of statements were concerned with Iran's revolutionary message. Although we are now seeing negligible interest in Iran's revolutionary ideology compared to the first decade of the rise of the Islamic Republic, we can still argue that the state's mission has an ideological dimension that is indirectly implied through, what Iranian politicians call "Iran's leadership role".

Based on theories of state behavior that aim to understand states' behavior and explain the motivations driving their foreign policies – largely influenced by the region in which a state operates – we observe that Iran's relationships with its neighbors, especially Arab states, lack trust and are underpinned by a perception of mutual threat.

We should not overlook the ideological motivation at the basis of Iranian foreign policy, yet we should also be aware of the multifaceted nature of that motivation. The theory of classical realism in international relations, contending that power and security are the two main goals at the basis of states' behavior, offers an adequate analytical lens to understand Iran's foreign policy.⁵ In this regard, we can observe how Iran simultaneously boosts its power and attempts to impair its enemies as a way of gaining a competitive advantage in the region (consider Yemen as a case study of this). Accordingly, Iran's performance is best described as a state that perpetually aggregating power resources while perceiving other countries as competitors unless their power rests in its own hands.⁶

Based on theories of state behavior that aim to understand states' behavior and explain the motivations driving their foreign policies – largely influenced by the region in which a state operates – we observe that Iran's relationships with its neighbors, especially Arab states, lack trust and are underpinned by a perception of mutual threat

Iran's behavior can also be understood through what we refer to as a state's national interest. This rhetoric is formulated through familiar religious tropes, some relating to the "divine order" and others to the "natural order".⁷ As

such, we can expand the “role” analytical model to include two levels – internal and external – whereby the former refers to the internal political framework and discussion of its roles and their dynamics while the latter is concerned with the comprehensive format of political roles within the international system and focuses on the roles of politicians, groups and states.⁸ The Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) and al-Quds Force are two players operating within this interlocking system of internal and external conditions driven by the end goal of pursuing and boosting power.

It is no exaggeration to say that even though Iran’s foreign policy does not explicitly refer to its revolutionary motivations, the state’s ideology is what really drives its ambitious behavior. Iran’s sustained support for groups across the region seems to be intended to change the geopolitical map of the region. The deputy general of the IRGC, General Hassan Salami, expressed this himself, saying: “In Iraq, we have a popular army linked to the Islamic revolution. In numbers, the army is ten times greater than Hizbullah. In addition, [we have] the central resistance in Syria. On the ground we have dedicated people committed to the Islamic revolution.... This ashura-inspired resistance has the ability to change the balance of power in the region in favor of the Islamic Republic.”⁹

Although some IRGC generals refer to Iran’s regional ambition in geopolitical terms, others still refer to it in ideological terms as a means for the expansion of the Islamic revolution’s goals which, according to IRGC Major General Qasim Sulaymani, “should be clear to everyone by now; it has reached Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, Iraq and North Africa.”¹⁰ If it was not for this ideological dimension, Iran would

not be able to speak of an influence that “stretches from Yemen to Lebanon”.¹¹

Yemen: Saudi Preoccupation and Attrition

Iran’s intervention in Yemen has not incurred the same costs for Iran that the intervention in Syria has. We might instead say that the intervention in Yemen has cost Iran the least and borne it the most benefits. The competition over Yemen between Iran and Saudi Arabia brings to mind the conflict over Afghanistan between Britain and Russia a century ago. Similarly, the fight over Yemen represents an ongoing competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran – a competition manifested both in ideological and strategic terms.

Iran’s intervention in Yemen has not incurred the same costs for Iran that the intervention in Syria has. We might instead say that the intervention in Yemen has cost Iran the least and borne it the most benefits. The competition over Yemen between Iran and Saudi Arabia brings to mind the conflict over Afghanistan between Britain and Russia a century ago

Iran officially denies supplying the Ansar Allah group (Houthis) with arms, claiming that it only supports the group politically. In this regard, the editor-in-chief of Iran’s Fars News Agency contends that “the country [Yemen] that was the backdrop of Saudi Arabia and the Qaida is witnessing a revolutionary movement inspired by the principles of the Islamic revolution of Iran. The movement was able to bring down the old conspiratorial regime and is currently in the process of forming an independent popular-based government”.¹² These statements, denying any military involvement by Iran in Yemen, were discredited by those of



Iranian military generals praising Iran's achievements in Yemen. Furthermore, this non-interventionist rhetoric was also challenged by a report issued by the UN in 2017 showing the source of the missiles used by the Houthis.

Politically, the consolidation of the Houthi movement and its integration within the political order is ultimately aligned with Iran's interests in the region. Further investments in this political achievement would grant Iran a better strategic position in West Asia and North Africa

From 2004 to 2010, the six military confrontations that the Houthis led against Ali Abdallah Salih had, to a large extent, shaped their ideological identity. Constructivism shows how the changing dynamics underlying group's understanding of their own self-interest and identities. Following this logic, we can consider how the Houthis' identity formation and interest consolidation during the 2004–2010 period was marked by the group's identification of its own interests with Iran.¹³

Politically, the consolidation of the Houthi movement and its integration within the political order is ultimately aligned with Iran's interests in the region. Further investments in this political achievement would grant Iran a better strategic position in West Asia and North Africa. Along these lines, Iranian studies and other political sciences theses submitted at Iranian universities observe that the rise of Houthis in Yemen has led to the formation of a fourth pillar of Iranian alliances across the region. Consequently, Iran has gained strategic advantage in the region and secured a Shia presence in countries around

Saudi Arabia. The Yemeni-Houthi pillar will ultimately present a threat to Saudi Arabia and incite further competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran.¹⁴ The Zaydi presence in Yemen (approximately one third of the population) presents a strategic opportunity to Iran. The full integration of Zaydis in the government and the consolidation of its political role and power will likely lead to changes in Yemen's foreign policy in favor of a strategic alliance with Iran.

Iran views any attempts at suppressing or dissolving the Houthis in Yemen as a strategic and ideological threat to its interests. From this perspective, the presence of a strong, stable and influential Shia group in Yemen secures Iran's strategic advantages in the region; hence Iran's continuous support for the Houthis despite the economic turmoil the country is witnessing.

Syria: Regional and International Enmities

In 2015, the price of oil dropped by 50 percent. Despite this dramatic change, there was little evidence of Iran shrinking its military support to its allies across the Middle East. Iranian-allied groups however reduced their spending on their social programs and economic projects. In Syria, for instance, Iran continued supplying the Assad regime with arms and consultants. More than at any time before, Iran also appeared assertive about its continued support for the regime despite the fall in oil prices.

The Iranian regime was therefore perturbed by the uprising in Syria, given that its own stability depends in large extent on the stability of the Assad regime. Beyond its national security, the Islamic Republic's regional and international interests are closely tied to those of the Syrian regime



Despite Iran's ideological views on the Syrian revolution, its reactions and policies towards the political turmoil in Syria have reflected a commitment to political realism as expressed by realist theory and neorealism in political science.^{15,16} In other words, protecting the Syrian regime is correlated with protecting the stability of the Iranian regime and its national and regional interests. Furthermore, the intervention of other players in the Syrian war, coupled with the absence of any mutual trust among them have catalyzed into a geopolitical competition whose only outcome is win-or-lose.¹⁷

The Iranian regime was therefore perturbed by the uprising in Syria, given that its own stability depends in large extent on the stability of the Assad regime. Beyond its national security, the Islamic Republic's regional and international interests are closely tied to those of the Syrian regime.¹⁸ According to Randall Schweller's balance of interest theory,¹⁹ states' foreign policies are understood to be driven by fear (security) and greed (gains)²⁰ and the balance between the two.²¹ Along these lines, Iran's foreign policy is the result of the balance between its attempts to maintain power and seek its own interests. For that reason, Iran has continually invested in protect the Syrian regime in order to secure maximum stability and maximum power. Therefore, the Iranian regime has fostered alliances not only to maintain a strategic balance in case of loss but also in order to expand its gains and benefits.²²

And despite Muqtada al-Sadr's rhetoric against Iran, the truth is that he has been receiving support from his neighboring country for years. Iran has also supported the al-Sadr organizations and has helped built a network of social services for the movement's supporters

When the Syrian revolution caught fire, Iran was already under severe sanctions targeting its banking and oil industries. Iran's crude oil market was hit hard as oil exports dropped by 1.1 million barrels per day by the end of 2013 compared to 2.5 million barrels per day exported in 2011. Consequently, Iran's economy shrank 5 percent in 2015, its private sector struggled and fewer loans were granted amid general capital shortages. Despite the rough economic situation, these sanctions did not prevent Iran from supplying the Assad regime with money, weapons and soldiers. Similarly, Iran also maintained its support for Shiite militias in Iraq, the Houthis in Yemen, and other allied groups across the region.²³

The recent unfolding of events in Iraq and the dismissal of Haydar al-Abadi after he released a statement confirming that Iraq would abide by U.S. sanctions against Iran all point to Iran's powerful influence in Iraq that it can deploy whenever necessary. And despite Muqtada al-Sadr's rhetoric against Iran, the truth is that he has been receiving support from his neighboring country for years. Iran has also supported the al-Sadr organizations and has helped built a network of social services for the movement's supporters.²⁴ A leaked U.S. report released on Wikileaks show that the Iranian support for Iraqi militias reached between \$100–200 million per year.²⁵

Iran's supreme leader representative in Iraq, Mujtaba al-Husayni, was quick to respond to al-Abadi's statement. He described al-Abadi's position as "irresponsible" and said that he regarded it as an "expression of his surrender to the U.S.". Soon after, it appeared that Iran was not simply criticizing political developments in Iraq: it took serious actions to protect its interests in the country.



“Changing Iran’s behavior”

Ongoing regional events marked by growing tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia coupled with an Israeli-Saudi rapprochement are demonstrating that Washington’s desired outcome from the sanctions; that is, changing Iran’s behavior, is unlikely to be accomplished. On the contrary, these sanctions might encourage Iran to further cultivate its influence in the region. While Washington perceives Iranian intervention as a threat to the stability of the region, Iran considers it a precondition for its national security and regional stability. Iran also views the Middle East as a region that should confront the U.S.

Ongoing regional events marked by growing tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia coupled with an Israeli-Saudi rapprochement are demonstrating that Washington’s desired outcome from the sanctions; that is, changing Iran’s behavior, is unlikely to be accomplished. On the contrary, these sanctions might encourage Iran to further cultivate its influence in the region

Inside Iran, not all policymakers seem to agree on the extent that Iran should intervene in the region while overlooking the demands of its citizens in everyday life. Iranian political science scholar Hasan Ahmadian refers to the harsh critique the interventionist vision has been subject to;²⁶ one example are the slogans condemning Iran’s foreign policy raised throughout recent demonstrations in July 2018. And while protestors oppose their government’s foreign policies, supporters of the interventionist policy claim that the investments Iran deploy in the region are negligible compared to what its regional competitors are putting in; and that Iran’s national security is more important than economic losses.

On the other hand, we cannot understand Iran’s intervention in Syria without taking into careful consideration the nature of the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Iran’s policymakers consider that the fall of the Syrian regime would threaten its regional influence vis-à-vis Saudi Arabia and weaken its alliances in Iraq. Furthermore, it is necessary to note that the Iranian–Syrian alliance has given Iran a strategic advantage over both Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

Many Iranian policy makers are openly articulating Iran’s economic interests in Syria. Former IRGC general Rahim Safavi has expressed Iran’s interest in investing in Syria’s phosphate industry and establishing long-term economic agreements with the Syrian government.²⁷ Safavi’s controversial statements sparked debates inside Iran. Ahmadinejad’s far right movement harshly criticized Safavi’s words, pointing to the shame his vision represents to the volunteers fighting in Syria for noble causes such as “protecting the family of the prophet” and “protecting the axis of resistance”. Iran’s media has also been a sphere for debates over the reconstruction of Syria. More than any time before, the discourse about interests prevails.

Conclusion

Gary C. Hufbauer, a specialist in economic sanctions, and his team believe in the effectiveness of sanctions. They make their case in the book “Economic Sanctions Reconsidered” that has become a reference for economic sanctions advocates.²⁸ Their analysis of one hundred cases (from WWI until today) shows that only one third of the countries under economic sanctions change their course of domestic or foreign policy. Other scholars, namely the director of German institute of global area studies research



program on peace and security, Christian Von Soest, challenge that percentage by claiming that only 5 percent of countries under sanctions alter their behavior.²⁹

In Iran, policymakers believe that maintaining Iran's influence in the region is a prerequisite for its national security and stability despite the undesirable economic repercussions the interventions might lead to. Beyond security, Iran does not shy away from its mission of changing the geopolitical map of the region in favor of its interests and advancing its power to negotiate on key issues. For these reasons, it seems likely that Iran will continue to support its allies in the region in spite of U.S. economic sanctions and their consequences.



Endnotes

- 1- F. al-Samadi, 'hal tuḥaqqiq al-‘uqubāt mā yuriduhu Trump?' (Will the sanctions achieve what Trump wants?), Al-Jazeera Center for Studies, 7 November 2018, <http://studies.aljazeera.net/ar/reports/2018/11/181107064614702.html>
- 2- F. al-Samadi, 'Limadha tuwāṣil Irān al-ma'zūmah iqtisādiyyan da' ma ḥulafā'ihā?' (Why does Iran continue to support its allies despite economic strife?), Al-Jazeera Center for Studies, 22 February 2015, <http://studies.aljazeera.net/ar/reports/2015/02/2015218999779800.html>
- 3- K. J. Holsti., 'National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy', *International Studies Quarterly*, v. 14 (3), 1970, pp. 233-309.
- 4- The sample includes 1400 statements issued by various foreign policy-making institutions in Iran right after the signing of the nuclear deal, from 2016 until the first quarter of 2017. al-Samai, F., 'al-tawajjuhāt al-siyāsiyyah al-īraniyyah 'aqb al-ittifaq al-nawawī: al-awlawiyyāt wa-al-adwār (taḥlīl maḍmūn)' (Iran's foreign policy orientations after the nuclear deal: on roles and priorities (content analysis), Al-Jazeera Center for Studies, 15 May 2017.
- 5- D. Boucher, 'al-nadhariyyāt al-siyāsiyyah fī al-‘alāqāt al-duwaliyyah' (Political Theories and International Relations), trans. R. al-Qaḥun, al-Munadhammah al-‘arabbiyyah li al-tarjamah, Bayrūt, 2013, p. 29.
- 6- P. Toledo, 'Classical Realism and the Balance of Power Theory', *Glendon Journal of International Studies*, vol. 4, 2005, pp. 52-62.
- 7- D. Boucher, 2013, p. 275, 276.
- 8- E. R. Adigbuo, 'Nigeria's National Role Conceptions: the Case of Namibia (1975-1990)', PhD thesis, The University of Johannesburg, 2005, http://www.wiscnetwork.org/porto2011/papers/WISC_2011-647.pdf
- 9- 'Salāmī: Khiyānat fitnah-i garān forṣat bi tahdīd būd' (Salami: The betrayal of conflict advocates was transformed from threat to opportunity), Mashriq, 9 dey 1394 SH, <https://www.mashreghnews.ir/news/375689/%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%DB%8C-%D8%AE%DB%8C%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA-%D9%81%D8%AA%D9%86%D9%87-%DA%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%A8%D8%AF%DB%8C%D9%84-%D9%81%D8%B1%D8%B5%D8%AA-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%AF>
- 10- S. Farah al-Zaman, 'Irān tubārik taqaddum al-ūthiyyin wa-tataḥaddath 'an taṣḍīri thawratihā' (Iran praises the Houthis gains and speak about exporting its revolution), al-‘arabī al-jadīd, 4 January 2015, <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/politics/2015/2/11/%D8%A5%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%83-%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%AF%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%AB%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%88%D8%AA%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%AF%D8%AB-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%AB%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%A7>
- 11- 'Wilayatiyataḥaddath 'annufūḍīrānīmin al-yaman ilā lubnān' (Vilayatispeaking about Iran's influence from Yemen to Lebanon), al-Hayat Newspaper, 16 December 2014, <http://www.alhayat.com/article/622905/%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%AA%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%AF%D8%AB-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D9%86%D9%81%D9%88%D8%Bo-%D8%A5%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89-%D9%84%D8%A8%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86> (accessed 11 February 2015).
- 12- The Director of Fars News Agency, 'al-mu'āmarah al-naftiyyah hiya al-wajh' (The oil conspiracy is the solution), Fars News Agency, 7 February 2015, <http://ar.farsnews.com/iran/news/1393111800168>
- 13- M. M. Aziz Abadi, 'Zhiyupulīk-i haviyyat va ta'sīr-i 'ān bar rāḥburd-i 'amniyyatī-i īrān va 'arabistān dar yaman (The geopolitical dimension of identity and its effect on the security strategy of Iran and Saudi Arabia in Yemen), *pajūhashay-i siyāsī-i jahān-i islām*, v. 2, 1394 SH, pp. 1-17.
- 14- S. M. al-Sayyid Ghafur, I. Kazemi and S. M. Mousavi Dahmavardi, 'tabyīn raqabat-i istiratijik-i jumhūriy-i islāmī-i īrān va 'arabistān-i sa'ūdī dar yaman (The strategic competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia in Yemen: a study), *Siyāsāt-i khārijī*, 22 September 2015, v. 29 (114), pp. 167-145.
- 15- F. al-Samadi, 'min tūnis ilā sūriyyā: kayfa ta'āmalat īrān ma' al-thawrāt al-‘arabiyyah (=from Tunisia to Syria: how did Iran approach the Arab uprisings?), Paper presented at the conference 'al-‘amil al-khārijī wa-ishkalāt al-intiqāl al-



- dimuqrāfī fi al-bildān al-‘arabīyyah ba‘da ‘ām 2011’ (The external factor and the problems of democratic transitions in Arab countries after 2011), Tunisia, 20-22 December 2018.
- 16- According to the balance of power theory, survival and security are the two main goals states pursue by allocating all their internal and external resources. For more on the theory, please see K. N. Waltz, *Realism and International Politics*, Routledge, 2008, p. 137 and T.V. Paul, ‘Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy’, *International Security*, v. 20 (1), 2005, pp. 46-71.
- 17- F. al-Samadi, 2018.
- 18- D. F. Abadi and S. Jalaluddin, ‘vaqi‘-i garāyī niyuklasīk va siyāsāt-i khārijīyy-i islāmiyy-i īrān’ (Neoclassical theory and the Islamic Republic of Iran’s foreign policy), *siyāsāt-i khārijī*, v. 25 (2), 1390 SH, p. 248.
- 19- Randall Schweller, along with scholars of classical realism, argue that small and middle-size states are not obliged to abide by strong states’ agendas. These states rather follow the “balance of interest” strategy” by employing what Schweller calls “soft power” that can challenge the legitimacy of strong states. For more information, please see H. Bilkhayrat, ‘istrātijīyyat al-duwal al-ṣuḡhrā fi muwājahat al-qiwā al-kubrā’ (Small states’ strategies against strong states), *al-ma‘had al-maṣrī li al-dirāsāt*, 30 April 2018 <https://eipsseg.org/%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%8A%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%BA%D8%B1%D9%89-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AC%D9%87%D8%Ag-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%88%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%89/> (accessed 6 June 2018)
- 20- R. L. Schweller, ‘The Problem of International Order Revisited,’ *International Security*, v. 26 (1), 2001, pp.161–185.
- 21- R. L. Schweller, ‘Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In,’ *International Security*, v. 19 (1), 1994, pp. 72-107.
- 22- D. F. Abadi, *ibid*.
- 23- K. Kenneth, ‘Iran Sanctions’, Congressional Research Service, 28 January 2015, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mid-east/RS20871.pdf> (accessed 30 February 2015).
- 24- M. Bazzi, ‘Iran will do what it takes to fight ISIS’, CNN, 4 January 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/01/03/opinion/bazzi-iran-iraq/>
- 25- Wikileaks report, ‘Iran’s Efforts In Iraqi Electoral Politics’, 13 November 2009, <https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=09BAGHDAD2992>
- 26- H. Ahmadian, ‘uqbāt Trump: hal tu‘addil sulūk ṭahrān al-iqlīmī ‘am tarfa‘ mustawā al-muwājahah?’ (Trump’s sanctions: changing Tehran’s behavior in the region or fueling the confrontation?), *Al-Jazeera Center for Studies*, 8 September 2018.
- 27- Rahim Safavi: ‘īrān bāyad hazīnihāy-i ki dar sūriyā kardi rā bargardānad / ham aknūn īrān az ma‘ādin-i fusfāt-i sūriyā dar ḥāl-i ṣādirāt ast’ (Rahim Safavi: Iran has to get back what it had invested in Syria / Iran is exporting Syrian phosphate), ‘aṣr-i īrān, 28 Bahman 1396 SH, <http://www.asriran.com/fa/news/593551/%D8%B1%D8%AD%DB%B8%8C%D9%85-%D8%B5%D9%81%D9%88%DB%8C-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AF-%D9%87%D8%B2%DB%8C%D9%86%D9%87%E2%80%8C%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C%DB%8C-%DA%A9%D9%87-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%DB%8C%D9%87-%DA%A9%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%87-%D8%B1%D8%A7-%D8%A8%D8%B1%DA%AF%D8%B1%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AF-%D9%87%D9%85-%D8%A7%DA%A9%D9%86%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%86-%D9%81%D8%B3%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%B8%8C%D9%87-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA>
- 28- G. C. Hufbauer, J. J. Schott, K. A. Elliott, and B. Oegg, *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered*, Peterson Institute for International Economics, third edition, 2009.
- 29- ‘Sābiqī-i ṭahrīm va ta‘īrī-i ṭahrīmḥāy-i āmrīkā bar īrān’ (Past sanctions and the effect of the US sanctions on Iran), *davichi vali-i fārsī*, 21 May 2018, <https://www.ecosia.org/search?q=9%2588-gD%2585%25-D%25C%251D-B8%258B%25D%258AD%25D%258AA%259D%2587%25-gD%2582%258D%258A%257D%258A%253D%258B%25D%251D-fa%2Fecom.dw.www%3A%2F%2Fhttps%251DB8%258B%259D%2585%252D%258A%25D-%25C%257DB8%258A%259D%2587%259D%2585%25D%25C%251DB8%258B%25D%258AD%25D%258AA%251D%25-8B%25D%25C%25DB8%258B%257D%258A%25D%258AA%25D%25-a4386566%2F9%257D86%258A%251D%258B%25D%25C%257DB8%258A%251D%25-8B%258D%258A%257D%25-8A%259D%25A%25DA%25C&addon=chrome&addonversion=2.0.3>



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fatima al-Samadi is a Jordanian scholar who specialises in Iranian politics. Al-Samadi is currently a principal researcher at the Al-Jazeera Center for Studies, where she supervises studies on Iran. She received her doctorate degree in Iran and her thesis discusses feminist tropes in Iranian cinema. Al-Samadi served as an assistant professor of Journalism and Media at the University of al-Zarqa' and an assistant professor at the Middle East University Media department. Her publications include books and articles, namely "Political Movements in Iran", "Women in the Midst of Politics", "The US-Iranian Rapprochement: the future of Iran's Role", "Iran and the Arabs" (co-author), and "The Islamic State: Its Origins, Influence and Future".

ABOUT ALSHARQ FORUM

The Sharq Forum is an independent international network whose mission is to undertake impartial research and develop long-term strategies to ensure the political development, social justice and economic prosperity of the people of Al-Sharq. The Forum does this through promoting the ideals of democratic participation, an informed citizenry, multi-stakeholder dialogue, social justice, and public-spirited research.

Address: Istanbul Vizyon Park A1 Plaza Floor:6
No:68 Postal Code: 34197
Bahçelievler/ Istanbul / Turkey
Telephone: +902126031815
Fax: +902126031665
Email: info@sharqforum.org

sharqforum.org



الشرق
منتدى
ALSHARQ FORUM

