



Current Trends in Syrian Foreign Policy

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Abstract: *The global military-political, socio-economic changes taking place in the world have an impact on the political processes taking place in different countries, leading to their serious transformation. In such circumstances, the system of international relations is also changing, increasing the importance of organizing interstate relations from the point of view of ensuring the country's security and stability. The conflict in Syria is emerging as a component of the global transformation in the Middle East, creating dangerous trends. Under the influence of such complex and threatening processes, the deep and wide-scale research of political changes in the Arab countries, taking into account the specific characteristics of their societies, is gaining urgent importance.*

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Syria calls for a comprehensive peace treaty with Israel and compliance with the "territory for peace" principle, which includes the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from all territories occupied in 1967, leaving Israel's Golan Heights, a truce established in 1949 and lasting until June 4, 1967. He insists on going beyond the border. Once Syria regains this area, it will be able to control most of the water resources of Lake Tiberias, as the Golan Heights area is only one percent of the SAR area, but contains 14 percent of the country's water reserves. The issue of ownership of water resources is a security issue for both Syria and Israel [202; p. 102].

The completely opposite positions of the parties on the issue of the Golan Heights call into question the possibility of solving the Syrian-Israeli conflict in the current situation. Syria is using the Palestinian "Hamas" movement, which it supports, for its own interests. The lack of progress in negotiations with Israel over the Golan Heights has prompted Damascus to use the leverage of Hamas, which has already become a force to be reckoned with [225; p. 56]. So, in theory, Damascus has the potential to ease tensions in Palestine and between Palestine and Israel. This situation may lead to the acceleration of the negotiation process and, consequently, to a successful solution of the Golan Heights problem for Syria.

Behind the transformation and "new strategy" of "Hamas" is clearly the influence of Syria, which is waiting for a breakthrough on the issue of the seized Golan Heights. Syria appears to be calling for dialogue between the US and Europe by putting pressure on Hamas, curbing its aggression and changing its policies. Let us remind you that Syrian President B. On October 14, 2009, Assad called on the EU and the US to participate more actively in the peace process in the Middle East at a press conference organized after the visit of the Spanish Prime Minister to Damascus [241]. This could indicate that Syria is ready to start a new round of negotiations with Israel on the Golan Heights issue.

In 2009, President Bashar al-Assad said Damascus was ready to resume indirect peace talks with Israel. In December 2008 - January 2009, Syria cut ties with Israel in protest against Israel's military operation in the Gaza Strip. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for his part, positively evaluated this idea and said: "I negotiated with the old Assad, there is no reason why I should not negotiate with the young Assad." According to Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, "Establishing peace in relations with Syria is an integral part of any stable regional agreement. Israel has always wanted such an agreement, and will continue to support the establishment of peace." Ehud Barak stated that establishing peace with Syria is the priority task of Israel's foreign policy, but in his opinion, the dialogue on peace requires Damascus to "responsibly behave and solve the problem with Hezbollah" [245; p. 67].

During his official visit to France in July 2008, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad rejected an offer to meet with the head of the Israeli government, saying that Syria does not believe in Israel's good intentions, although Damascus is ready to start negotiations with Israel without any conditions, but at the same time, Syrians are not deprived of their rights. he said that they would never give up, but rather stand firm and defend [245; p. 74].

Now the situation has changed radically. The Assad regime is completely occupied with stabilizing the situation inside the country, and opposition groups are fighting on this path, calling for the overthrow of the regime. The situation in the country is lowering Syria's reputation in front of Hamas, which signed a reconciliation agreement with the Fatah movement. It can be considered a coincidence, but in the current situation, the initiative in relations with "Hamas" has passed from Syria to Egypt [245; p. 104].

Syria is an important player in the region and continues to influence the resolution of the Arab-Israeli and Palestinian-Israeli conflicts in particular. The main change in the harmonization of the regional situation is that Syria began to lose its influence on the Palestinian issue, and "Hamas" is gradually withdrawing from Syria's influence. On the other hand, the relatively more radical "Hezbollah" is making the situation even more tense with its statements about providing military assistance to Syria.

In the period under review, the dynamics of the development of relations between Syria and Lebanon were mainly influenced by the following factors: Syria's desire to gain a dominant position in the region, Israel's foreign policy in the Middle East, the internal political and religious situation in Lebanon, as well as the influence of forces in the region and beyond.

Historically, the establishment of long-term and close relations with Lebanon in various fields - military-political, trade-economic and humanitarian issues - is usually considered one of the priorities of the foreign policy of the SAR [202; p. 110].

We can talk about the fact that with the coming of President Bashar Assad to power in Syria, bilateral relations underwent a certain transformation, Syria's attitude towards Lebanon softened, and Beirut gained more independence in domestic and foreign political issues. At the same time, external pressure on Damascus increased with the demand to withdraw its military forces from the neighboring country.

A certain segment of Lebanese society, mainly Lebanese Christians, has shown dissatisfaction with the heavy dependence on Syria, especially with the long presence of Syrian troops in Lebanon (since June 1976). The representatives of the Christian parties put forward the demand for the withdrawal of the Syrian troops from the territory of Lebanon as soon as possible and to move away from Damascus. At the same time, the leaders of Muslim political forces believe that only the unity of Syria and Lebanon can serve as a guarantee of Lebanon's sovereignty and security in the context of conflicts with Israel.

However, serious problems and conflicts gradually accumulated in the bilateral relations between Lebanon and Syria, and mutual distrust increased, which eventually led to a crisis in the relationship. On February 14, 2005, former Prime Minister of Lebanon R. Hariri's assassination exacerbated the crisis. As a result, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution No. 1559 on the initiative of the United States and France, which demanded the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Lebanon. At that time, both Beirut and Damascus assessed this resolution as interference in the internal affairs of both countries [202; p. 132].

Syria's implementation of the UN Security Council resolution has not brought stability to Lebanon or the entire Middle East region. Moreover, the international community, especially the United States of America, began to interfere more and more in the affairs of the countries of the Middle East. Representatives of the Washington administration did not ignore any more or less important event that happened in Syria or Lebanon.

In October 2008, Syria and Lebanon established diplomatic relations for the first time since independence from France in the 1940s. On March 16, 2009, the Lebanese embassy was inaugurated in Damascus.

Syria is the undisputed political "wrestler" of the Middle East region and sought to cooperate with the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in order to protect not only its national interests, but also the interests of the entire Arab world from the USA and Israel. In this, he showed not only determination, but also the qualities of diplomatic flexibility.

"Clash of interests" occurred several times between Syria and the member states of the FKADHK. The relations of the SAR with Saudi Arabia have developed extremely unevenly. On the one hand, Syria managed to establish military alliances with this country. This was the case in 1956 when a collective security agreement was concluded between Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia against possible Israeli aggression, or when the Damascus Declaration was adopted [202; p. 146].

On the other hand, the very structure of the SAR state would have angered Saudi Arabia, which is an absolute monarchy. In addition, both countries strive for dominance in the region, and some religious differences also hindered the establishment of unity. Saudi Arabia usually tries to present itself as the leading "power center" of the Arab-Muslim world, loyal to traditional beliefs. Therefore, any change even slightly reminiscent of democracy is evaluated by the Saudi ruling circles as a threat to the foundations of Saudi Arabia's national statehood and stability in domestic and foreign policy. This means that the foreign political activity of the kingdom at the regional level, although it is aimed at eliminating existing conflict situations and preventing the emergence of new hotbeds of tension, may, under certain conditions, be very aggressive and even aimed at overthrowing the ruling regimes.

Relations between Saudi Arabia and Syria have deteriorated sharply in recent years. One of the reasons for this is the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005, in which the Syrian special services are suspected to be involved. This relationship worsened after the Israeli military operation in Lebanon in the summer of 2006, when Syrian President Bashar Assad accused the Saudis and Egyptians of failing to stop the aggression. For their part, Saudi Arabia and Egypt have criticized Damascus for its close ties with Tehran, allowing Iran's influence in the Arab world to grow.

However, in 2005, R. To say that Hariri's death brought only political loss and exposure to Syria would not be quite correct. This tragedy, in a sense, became a catalyst that accelerated the rapprochement process of Damascus with the main players in the Persian Gulf region. At such a difficult time, Saudi Arabia has shown flexibility towards Syria. In particular, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prince Saud Al-Faisal, in February 2005, Saudi Arabia R. He said that he was

against an international investigation into Hariri's murder. A certain stagnation in Syrian-Saudi relations continued until 2009, when President Bashar al-Assad and the King of Saudi Arabia, Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, met at the Kuwait summit of the Arab states and announced that the "era of conflicts" in the Arab environment had ended and the era of "opening the doors of unity" had begun [212; p. 110]. In 2009, during the economic summit of the Arab states in Al-Kuwait, the Emir of Kuwait S. Al-Sabah Syrian President B. He assumed the role of mediator in the matter of reconciliation between Assad and the Saudi king. As a result, relations between the two countries normalized. In the same year, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, Prime Minister of Lebanon R. Hariri made his first official visit to Damascus after his assassination. The Arab Economic Summit held in Kuwait in 2009 was an important stage in the normalization of relations between the SAR and SAQ. In it, Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz called for reconciliation among the Arab countries. In addition, in March of the same year, President Assad met with Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal in Damascus, where it was decided that the differences between the Arabs should be resolved in order to fulfill their common duty, in particular, their duty towards Palestine and Iraq. Unfortunately, the friendly attitude was soon replaced by open aggression: Saudi Arabia actively supported the "Syrian opposition" trying to overthrow the legitimate government of the SAR.

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