

## Iran and the Syrian Crisis

Abdul Hamid Al Eed Al-Moussawi  
University of Baghdad, Baghdad, Iraq

At a time when the Syrian crisis is still continuing because of the two interventions: regional and international, which have further complicated the crisis between the conflicting parties, Iran has been providing political, economic, and military support to the Syrian side, along with Russian support and some Iraqi parties; and it is therefore possible to ask the following questions: Will Iranian support push for a formula to resolve the Syrian crisis and preserve the legitimacy of President Bashar al-Assad's regime? In fact, Iranian policy towards Syria is likely to involve very complex problems: It is possible to move to the top of the West's priorities and, moreover, it is difficult to envisage Tehran's waiver of here support for Assad, especially since the Syrian file is not fully under the control of the president. That dilemma may hamper President Hassan Rowhani's efforts to advance in nuclear negotiations and in the same time reinforce the position of the Iranian hardcore.

*Keywords:* Syrian crisis, al-Assad's regime, Islamic Republic of Iran, President Hassan Rowhani, political support

Syria is an essential part of Iran's foreign policy in the Middle East. Tehran initially welcomed the Arab Spring revolutions and regarded it as a new opportunity for Arab countries. But it quickly denounced Syrian spring when the popular protests hit the Damascus regime, and Iran never hesitated but it had decided to support the Bashar al-Assad's regime by all political, military, and economic means available. And with the arrival of the new president, Hassan Rowhani, in August 2013, and the signing of the nuclear agreement in Geneva with United States of America and Western countries, the Iranian position seemed to be changing somewhat towards regional issues. What are the implications and effects of this on the Syrian crisis?

At a time when the Syrian crisis is still continuing because of the two interventions: regional and international, which have further complicated the crisis between the conflicting parties, Iran has been providing political, economic, and military support to the Syrian side, along with Russian support and some Iraqi parties; and it is therefore possible to ask the following questions: Will Iranian support push for a formula to resolve the Syrian crisis and preserve the legitimacy of President Bashar al-Assad's regime?

The Iranian interests have called for the strong intervention beside the Syrian ally to defend their strategic interests, as defending Syria as defending Iran.

The analytical descriptive approach will be relied upon to understand the motives of Iranian intervention, and underlying causes as well as the future of Russian role in the region, highlighting on the underlying causes and objectives, trying to answer this in the following items.

### **First: Iran and the Arab Spring: The Specificity of the Syrian Case**

Iran was morally sensed superior as the only revolutionary state in the region. But with the launching of

---

**Corresponding author:** Abdul Hamid Al Eed Al-Moussawi, Ph.D., assistant professor, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, University of Baghdad, Baghdad, Iraq; research fields: international and strategic studies, foreign policy.

the first spark of the so-called Arab Spring, Iran was surprised to be one of the influential states in the Arab region, which in turn is affected by the events in that region of the events (Al-Zuwairi, 2015). The Iranians have generally agreed to support the popular revolutions in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Bahrain. But the reformist mainstream differed in its reading of the causes and consequences of those revolutions about the reading adopted by the regime and the conservative current (Hilal, 2011), and the difference of the Iranian reaction to the events in Syria, Bahrain, and Yemen is the embodiment of Iran's approach concentrated of a factor interest on doctrine and the principle of championing the vulnerable (Al-Zuwairi, 2015, p. 23).

With the fall of the Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and the acceleration of the Egyptian revolution against the regime of the President Mohammad Hosni Mubarak, the Iranian position is crystallizing and clear in favor of the two revolutions and their celebration with them, which applies to the official side, and positions of two current: both conservatives and reformers.

The Iranian attitude does not differ towards the popular revolution in Libya and Yemen, while the positions of the various Iranian parties were in favor of these two revolutions, although the official position opposed the foreign intervention in Libya, but it continued to support the popular revolution, coinciding with the criticism of the use of military option by NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). However, the position in favor of the Arab popular revolutions of all Iranian parties does not mean the agreement of those parties on the basis of support, and also does not mean that the angle of view and analysis is the same as that of different Iranian parties. Iran has regarded the appearance of Islamists in the ruling political scene, after the Arab Spring events in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya, as an extension of the Islamic revolution or the Islamic Awakening in the region (Al-Zuwairi, 2015, p. 23).

The following landmarks can be read in the Iranian official positions, conservative current attitudes towards popular revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya:

(1) To affirm that the Arab revolutions are: "Islamic Awakening", inspired by the Islamic Revolution of Iran (NOW Lebanon, 2011), and "looking at those revolutions as part of the changes that have continued with the blessing of the steadfastness and hostility of the Iranian people in recent years", according to the top leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ali Khamenei, in his Friday sermon at Tehran University on February 4, 2011, marking the triumph of the Iranian Revolution. The focus has been on giving the popular Arab revolutions the adjective "Islamic awakening" derived from the Iranian Revolution in a lot of official conversations, and conservative current symbol statements (Al Aalam News Agency, 2011).

(2) Evangelizing with the Iranian style of "revolution" by advocating a "people-religion based" system in the Iranian way, and appealing to the "men of the religion" in Egypt "to play perfect role, by using mosques to echo the slogans of the people in the street", said the supreme leader of the Revolution, Ali Khamenei<sup>1</sup>. The President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad stressed that "the vulnerable in the world will be resolved to consolidate uniformity and justice". He also noted that "the land is preparing for the government of the righteous, and that the Islamic Republic of Iran represents the voice of the divine call to mankind to establish monotheism and justice" (Mehr News Agency, 2011). That official Iranian reading of the results of the popular revolutions came at the time, not even the transformations that will be produced by those Arab revolutions, whether they have

---

<sup>1</sup> For example: Khamenei's statements, "The leader of the revolution: Iran Islamic revolution is a model for the Islamic awakening in the region". Mehr News Agency, March 4, 2011, as well as Friday sermon delivered in Tehran by Islam Kadhimi Siddiqi, "The Middle East earthquake will shatter the West". Mehr News Agency, March 25, 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.mehrnews.com/ar/NewsDetail.aspx?pr=s&query1366235&=خامنهئي%31>.

completed their first mission in Tunisia and Egypt, or those that are still moving on its way for victory in Libya and Yemen, since the shape of the state and the nature of the political system in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen are still debated within the frameworks of political and party forces in those countries, and even within some of the parties themselves, especially the Islamic parties, in which the mainstream has declared that it seeks to establish a civilian state with religious reference as expressed by that current will represent a general framework that ensures the preservation of the identity of the Arab Islamic nation without giving the final reference to the clergy on the way of the Iranian regime<sup>2</sup>.

(3) Ideological politicization of the revolutions and a revolution over the subordination of the rulers to the West, by focusing on the attitudes of the regimes in the states ravaged by the revolutions towards the West and Israel, and abandoning their support for the Palestinian cause. This seems clear in the description of the supreme leader Khamenei that deposed President Hosni Mubarak was a “faithful servant of the Americans and of Israel in 30 years”. Some have echoed, for example, Ayatollah Sid Ahmad Khatami, who confirmed in Friday’s sermon on April 1 that: “The peoples of the region want Islam and glory, and that America does not have influence on their self-determination”; and in a statement returning to the mind of the idea of “exporting the revolution” that was part of the ideology of the Iranian Islamic Revolution at the beginning of the era, the supreme leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Khamenei, said: the inevitable transition of those revolutions and “awakening” to Europe because of their policies attributed it to Europe’s policies, and “the absolute surrender of its rulers to the cultural and economic policies of America and the Zionists”. The official Islamic Republic of Iran, and its conservative current has taken a stand in support of the Syrian regime in the face of the popular uprising in Syria since its launch on March 18, 2011, and that support had appeared by the public adoption of the official Syrian tale to the events; launching media campaign similar to the Syrian media model; description of the popular uprising as foreign conspiracy aimed to destruct the resistance of Syria against Zionists and the West; and looking at events as “a disorder similar to what happened in Iran in 2009”<sup>3</sup>. And by tracing the official Iranian media, we can observe how Iranian support for the Syrian regime, the Iranian media’s obligation to convey the official Syrian version of the events, and to change the views of the opposition<sup>4</sup>. Iran has urged on more than one occasion its belief in the ability of the Syrian government to deal with the situation and declared its support for the reforms announced by President Bashar al-Assad to ease the crisis<sup>5</sup> and the Arab people’s appreciation of Syrian policy positions towards the West and Israel. The official Iranian statements have focused on the fact that the Arab people are aware that: what is happening in Syria is an “American conspiracy to support the Zionist entity”, and it has confirmed its confidence in Syria’s ability to pursue its “historic role in the region” (Hilal, 2011). The Iranian position on the Syrian uprising has been very paradoxical when Iran accused the United States of America of duplication because of its talk of supporting the popular revolutions despite its “history of supporting authoritarian regimes in the region”, and that paradox was used by the reformist opposition in Iran, to accuse the regime of duplication, where supporting the popular

<sup>2</sup> View: Rashid Al-Ghannouchi statement, leader of the Tunisian Renaissance Movement, “Post-revolution Renaissance site in Tunis”. Al-Jazeera, May 3, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> “The Islamic Consultative Council calls for an emergency meeting of the Human Rights Council”. Mehr News Agency, April 31, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> For example, the following reports are being considered in the Iranian semi-official Fars News Agency: “A British Zionist scenario to overthrow the government in Syria”, Fars News Agency, April 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Following US allegations, the Foreign Ministry denies Iran’s repression of its citizens in Syria, Fars News Agency, April 3, 2011.

revolutions in Bahrain and Egypt, and its rejection in Syria, are suppressed in the Iranian interior (Hilal, 2011).

Iranian official media was the subject of a major attack by reformists, and an example was the essay written by the former deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Muhammad Sadr, criticizing the media coverage of the Syrian uprising in the official and semi-official media; he said: The position required of Iran is to advise President Assad to listen to his people and make real reforms in the regime (Hilal, 2011). The opposed reformist site, Mir-Hosseini Mousavi, compared the Iranian media, which spoke of a quiet Juma in Syria, and the official Syrian media; he said: A number of civilians were killed by clashes on that Friday (Hilal, 2011), and the Iranian position on the Syrian uprising was not surprising, because of the nature of the strategic relations between Syria and Iran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, and the fall or weakening of the Syrian regime will have negative repercussions on Iranian influence in Lebanon and the region on the basis that Syria is the geopolitical gateway to that influence. The attitude towards Syria was quite different, which was to support the regime of President Bashar al-Assad and to claim that there are those who try to exploit the events in the region in order to destabilize Syria, and to retaliate against the Syrian regime for reasons not related to what is happening in other Arab Spring countries (Al-Zuwairi, 2015, pp. 22-23).

### **Second: The Iranian Multi-form Assistance to Syria**

The Iranian intervention in Syria and the provision of political, security, or military assistance to the government of Bashar al-Assad were not based on the clan motive, neither on the basis of the sectarian victory, nor on the joint defense agreements between the two states alone, but on the basis of: The Iranian state has its own interests in Syria, since the beginning of the Syrian revolution, and Iran has declared its support for the country politically, militarily, and financially, as Iran is the downfall of Assad as a threat to its national security and, according to secret information, Iranian special units have moved to Syria to quell the revolution and extend its control over Syria<sup>6</sup>. In fact, the Syrian-Iranian relations have long been characterized by privacy and uniqueness, as they are divided by ideology—secularism of the Syrian regime and the Islamic regime of Iran, and their combination with interests and liabilities—the United States of America and Israel, and the mutual financial benefit; Iran sees Syria as the Iranian entrance to the Arab world, and Syria's view is that Iran is a paper of pressure in its negotiations with Israel (Al-Muayawi, 2013, p. 173).

### **Political Support**

The strategic relations between Iran and Syria are characterized as effective, non-psychotic, non-faltering, and effectively influential in the Middle East region over the past three decades, as the political observers regard Iran and Syria as influential players and strategic allies in the Middle East region; and in the belief of many observers, the efforts of the West, especially the United States of America, to strike or cause some disruption in bilateral relations between the two countries have failed completely and have been without result, and the process of removing Syria from Iran has become non-existence matter and it must be said that: Strategic cooperation between the two countries has been advanced and irreversible or reversed path (Safinez, 2010, pp. 52-53).

The alliance between Iran and Syria deepened in 2000, when President Bashar al-Assad assumed the presidency of Syria and made subsequent events, such as: the Iraq War, the "Rice Revolution", and the

---

<sup>6</sup> Iranian support for Assad: Backgrounds and means. Retrieved from <http://www.dw.com/ar>.

Lebanon War in 2006, which made two countries closer to one another. Syria has become increasingly dependent on Iran for political and military support since Assad was unable to maintain positive relations with other Arab countries during his reign<sup>7</sup>. On June 16, 2006, the Ministers of Defense of Syria and Iran signed military cooperation to deal with what they call “common threats” posed by Israel and the United States of America, and the details of the agreement have not been defined, but Iranian Defense Minister Najjar said:

Iran regard the security of Syria as security of Iran and we consider our defensive capability belonging to Syria, and the visit also resulted in the sale of Iranian military equipment to Syria, as well as the acquisition of military equipment, and Iran has continuously invested billions of dollars in the Syrian economy<sup>8</sup>.

Currently, Iran is involved in the implementation of several industrial projects in Syria, including: cement factories, automobile assembly lines, power plants, and silos construction; Iran has also established an Iranian-Syrian joint bank, and on February 17, 2007, the two presidents Ahmadinejad and Assad met in Tehran, and Ahmadinejad has declared afterwards: They will establish a coalition to fight against the American and Israeli plots against the Muslim world. Iranian President Hassan Rowhani said on August 3, 2013, the day of his inauguration: Iran’s alliance with Syria will continue. At the political level, there is significant support by Iran for the Syrian regime, which directly reflects its rejection of the idea of military intervention, which the United States of America adopted in August 2013, due to the proven use of the Syrian regime of chemical weapons, as well as that the Syrian crisis had been submitted at the nuclear negotiating table between the West and Iran, which is likely to most analysts that a settlement has been reached in order to achieve the compatibility of Iran’s nuclear project<sup>9</sup>.

### **Military and Security Support**

Syrian regime forces are also fighting alongside with special forces of the “Iranian Republican Revolutionary Guard” against Syrian opposition forces, and more than this, based on knowledgeable sources of the situation, Iranian infantry soldiers have moved to Syria to support the regular army, and are sent to Syria across the north of the country and the Kurdish part towards the Iraqi border, whose mission is not to take part in the battles, but to guard the weapons warehouses and provide military barracks with the supplies, and 48 Iranian hostages who were arrested in September last year in Damascus is evidence of the Iranian support for the Syrian regime. At the beginning of January, the hostages were released as part of an exchange of 2,000 Syrian opposition detainees in Syrian regime jails, and the Syrian regime described the Iranian hostages as “Muslim pilgrims”, while the rebels expressed that the hostages were members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, and one of the leaders of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards in a press interview with an Arab newspaper said: Tehran establishes “Syrian security and intelligence”, and Iran participates in the “Syrian war” at both levels: military and cultural; in the words of that leader, he did not explain what he meant by the cultural aspect. But it is certain that he did not mean pilgrims, but probably Al-Quds Brigades that support Assad’s regime.

### **Economic Support**

The relations between Iran and Syria are very strong, according to the previous Iranian diplomat Sayed

---

<sup>7</sup> Iran-Syria relations on Wikipedia website.

<sup>8</sup> Iran-Syria relations on Wikipedia website.

<sup>9</sup> Are we witnessing an Iranian era in the Arab region? The Iranian role in Syria is a strategic necessity. Retrieved from <http://www.masralarabia.com>.

Hadi Sayed Afqhey, who has seen them as strategic relations. Afqhey urged on the importance of Iran's economic support to Syria in the current situation. Referring to Iran's economic contribution to Syria, he said: Relations between Iran and Syria are strategic, including an economic, political, security, and military system<sup>10</sup>. Since the start of the crisis in Syria, Iran has been supporting and assisting the Syrian people, and Iran does not forget the positions of Syria in the late President Hafez al-Assad and the President Bashar al-Assad's ruling stage, referring that the volume of economic and trade exchanges between Iran and Syria is between 600 and 800 million dollars; and it is planned to reach exchange in the coming two years to two billion dollars, and it is expected that during the current Syrian Prime Minister's visit to Tehran, the signing convention on tariffs reduction from 20% to 4% is agreed, which is in fact the beginning of the reactivation of the regional economy to enter the global economy<sup>11</sup>. Iran is increasingly spending its foreign exchange, because of its continued support for the Assad regime and its militias in Syria. But how does its spending affect in the Syrian war on its economy?

First before explaining that effect, it is important to divide Iran's spending in Syria into two parts: direct and indirect financial support for the Syrian regime, and the financing and arming of Iranian or non-Iranian military formations.

The magnitude of the negative impact of the financing of the war in Syria on the Iranian economy cannot be resolved precisely, due to the absence of figures and reports by the Iranian government about its military activities, except the continued or increased funding of the Syrian regime and the militias which will have a negative impact and reflect on the living situation of the Iranian people under the current economic conditions (Badawi, 2015).

### **New Data After Rowhani Election**

From the first moment of Hassan Rowhani's receipt of his duties as President of the Islamic Republic, the indicators of the political track have emerged on the horizon; the first indicators are appointment of Mohammad Javad Zarif as Minister for Foreign Affairs, preferring to choose the method and diplomatic solution to resolve the crises rather than the former intransigence of the President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Khalil, 2016, p. 424).

Does the election of President Hassan Rowhani form a new opportunity to develop Iran's relations with Lebanon and the Arab states? Could Rowhani launch practical initiatives to address the Syrian crisis and contribute to easing the sectarian congestion in the region, especially since Syria has taken its case out of control (Khalil, 2016, p. 424)? In fact, Iranian reformist sources close to the team of the elected President Sheikh (Hassan Rowhani) went that the new president has a different vision of the policies of foreign affairs, and is ready to launch action initiatives, as well as wanting to bring about a change in Iranian policies, whether at the internal or external level.

---

<sup>10</sup> The Iranian ambassador to Damascus, Ahmad Moussawi, has already said: Syria is the strategic depth of Iran, stressing that the alliance between Iran and Syria has contributed to the frustration of conspiracies against the region, and Ambassador Moussawi has been engaged in a dialogue with the correspondent of Iran's era: The former projects of the United States administrations to create a new Middle East have dissipated, saying that the cooperation between Iran and Syria has led to thwart American programs to create a new Middle East, and there is now no new Middle East. This is only a map in the archive of foreign ministries of the United States of America and Israel, stressing that the new Middle East is determined by Iran and Syria; he promised that Iran and Syria are the main line of resistance in the region and said: We welcome the convergence of other states with that side and the promotion of cooperation. For further consideration: The new Middle East: The outcome of Iran-Syria cooperation, Iranian collection, tenth year, no. 125, December 2010, p. 53.

<sup>11</sup> Iran's support for the Syrian economy is very important in the current time. See more at: <http://www.alam.ir/news/1436771#STHASH.0ZYTIBUH.dpuf>.

Iranian sources stressed that the new president wants to launch new initiatives at foreign relations level. This was clearly demonstrated by his first press conference held after his election, where he stressed that the important relationship with Saudi Arabia and his call to give the Syrian people the right to choose their own political system, although he believed that the current government in Syria is a legitimate government and must continue until 2014 (Qaseer, 2013).

In an interview with radio Europe 1, President Hassan Rowhani said: The solution to the Syrian crisis is not centered on the fate of the President Bashar al-Assad, but on the need for a strong state in Syria to fight against terrorism. He added “We must all make efforts to eradicate terrorism in Syria and work to restore peace and stability to the region”<sup>12</sup>.

The Iranian president considered that: “Everything is in the hands of the Syrians, as the decision belongs to them by choosing their president and the form of the state”, and he added: “Do you think we can fight terrorism without a legitimate government in Damascus”? Here the question is asked: Which country has succeeded in fighting terrorism without a strong state? The Syrian state must be a strong state to be able to combat terrorism<sup>13</sup>.

However, even if Tehran takes steps to address its policy, its financial, intelligent, and military support for the Syrian regime will continue to undermine its status in the Middle East, since Turkey and Saudi Arabia, the two main forces in the region, are particularly sensitive with regard to the Syrian question—Ankara has strongly opposed President Bashar al-Assad’s regime, and Riyadh has provided substantial support to the Syrian opposition; Iran’s support for Assad’s regime has also brought the hostility from former allies, such as: Hamas in Gaza and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt; moreover, the presence of Hezbollah fighters in Syria has distorted the image of Iran in the area<sup>14</sup>.

Most importantly from the mentioned, President Hassan Rowhani may not be able to change Iran’s approach to Syria even if he wants to do so, as there are some signs that illustrate: Tehran’s Syrian policy is developed and implemented by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, for example: An official of the “Council of Experts” said: Qasem Soleimani—commander of the “force of Jerusalem”, the elite force of the “Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps”—was invited to talk about the current situation in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Egypt; this is an entirely unusual invitation, and it indicates to the central role played by Soleimani in the policy towards those countries, moreover, many leaders of the Revolutionary Guard Corps and former veterans have spoken of the importance of supporting Assad. The deputy commander of the Revolutionary Guard Corps General Hussain Salam stated that “the strategy pursued by the United States of America is to contain Iran, prevent Iran from implementing its policy in Syria, and reduce the influence of Iran”. Yahya Rahim Safavi, former commander-in-chief of the Revolutionary Guard Corps and military advisor to the supreme leader, described Syria as a battlefield where Turks and Arabs fight against Assad on behalf of Israel and America, and other officials stressed that allowing Assad to fall would encourage Washington or Israel to attack Iran’s nuclear facilities<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Iranian President Hassan Rowhani in an interview with French media in November 2015. Retrieved from <https://arabic.rt.com/news/800028>.

<sup>13</sup> Iranian President Hassan Rowhani in an interview with French media in November 2015. Retrieved from <https://arabic.rt.com/news/800028>.

<sup>14</sup> Mehdi Khalji, Syria, the soft flank in Iranian foreign Policy. Washington Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/ar/policy-analysis/view/syria-as-a-spoiler-in-irans-foreign-policy>.

<sup>15</sup> Mehdi Khalji, Syria, the soft flank in Iranian foreign Policy. Washington Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/ar/policy-analysis/view/syria-as-a-spoiler-in-irans-foreign-policy>.

In fact, Iran sees the view that the prospects for a Western intervention in Syria will change the rules of the game, as it will make the military threat against its nuclear program more realistic, and for that reason the Iranian leaders believe that: They have a vital interest in defeating the Syrian opposition; and for his part, Mr. Rowhani seems convinced that: In the event that the Syrian revolutionaries stumble, he will gain influence once again in his nuclear negotiations with the West, helping explain what Foreign Minister Zarif said to his Turkish counterpart: The rebels were the ones behind the chemical attacks in Damascus to cover up their failures in the battlefield and to justify for foreign intervention<sup>16</sup>. Of course, that is not the meaning that Tehran agrees with those chemical attacks. Iran's preferred method of narrowing the fight against the opposition seems more subtle and accurate—in contrast to the brutal methods of Assad, which have great repercussions not only on the Syrian regime, but also on Tehran.

Thus it can be said that: The new speech of President Rowhani has been moved towards a more open, flexible, and pragmatic view of regional and international issues after the world has used on the hard speech for the previous phase of the previous stage, the slogans that revolved around the export of the revolution, and assisting of vulnerable people all over the world wherever they exist (Khalil, 2016, p. 449).

### Conclusions

Iran realizes that its alliance with Syria gives its strength to form a unified front against the American and Israeli policies in the region, especially if we take into account the Iranian military force, as well as the Syrian arming, since most reports indicate that Iran is at an advanced level in the Middle East in military capabilities, as well as Syria; the reports of the Institute for Strategic Studies in London indicate that Syria has an effective air defense system, so we note that: Iran's policy is converging with Syria. Even if we leave aside the state of doubt and uncertainty regarding Mr. Hassan Rowhani's ability to make a fundamental difference in Iran's nuclear policy and reach critical agreement with the West, the challenges of Iran's foreign policy of the Islamic Republic cannot be reduced in the nuclear issue. In fact, Iranian policy towards Syria is likely to involve very complex problems: It is possible to move to the top of the West's priorities and, moreover, it is difficult to envisage Tehran's waiver of here support for Assad, especially since the Syrian file is not fully under the control of the president. That dilemma may hamper President Hassan Rowhani's efforts to advance in nuclear negotiations and in the same time reinforce the position of the Iranian hardcore.

### References

- Al Aalam News Agency. (2011). *Iran's revolution has changed the political equations of the world*. Interview with Sayyid Ali Khamenei (Arabic), February 5, 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.alalam-news.com/node/318358>
- Al-Muayawi, A. (2013). *Strategic alliances in Southwest Asia*. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Al-Alami, Publishing and Distribution.
- Al-Zuwairi, M. (2015). The governing factors of Iranian policy towards the Arab world, strategic shifts. *International Policy Annex*, no. 199, January 2015.
- Badawi, T. (2015). *Iranian involvement in Syria and economic cost*. Retrieved from <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/ebusiness/2015/4/30>
- Hilal, F. A. (2011). *Iran and the Arab revolutions: Positions and repercussions*. Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Doha, September 2011. Retrieved from <http://english.dohainstitute.org/file/get/9a915419-721c-45a6-aa11-1cbac8dbaac3.pdf>
- Khalil, A. I. (2016). President Hassan Rowhani's role in changing Iran's external political discourse towards the West. *International Studies*, no. 65-64, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, University of Baghdad.

<sup>16</sup> Mehdi Khalji, Syria, the soft flank in Iranian foreign Policy. Washington Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/ar/policy-analysis/view/syria-as-a-spoiler-in-irans-foreign-policy>.



- Mehr News Agency. (2011). *Mahmoud Ahmadinejad: The current era is the age of the demise of thee arrogant*. February 31, 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.mehrnews.com/ar/NewsDetail.aspx?pr=s&query1353535&=الثورة%31%فتد>
- NOW Lebanon. (2011). *Popular movements in Tunisia and Egypt Islamic awakening signs*. Retrieved from <http://www.nowlebanon.com/arabic/NewsArchiveDetails.aspx?ID=323232>
- Qaseer, Q. (2013, June 21). Does the new president offer new initiatives towards Lebanon and Syria? *Al Aman Magazine*.
- Safinez, M. (2010). Iran and Syria are the most important strategic allies. Iranian anthology, tenth year, issue 125, December 2010.