

GEOPOLITICAL REGIONALISTICS: THE GREATER MIDDLE EAST AS THE “HEARTLAND” OF THE 21ST-CENTURY WORLD-SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

The author has applied the geopolitical regionalistics concept to the Greater Middle East as the new heartland within the geopolitical theory of Halford Mackinder and offered the following arguments: this region directly affects the political and economic processes unfolding in the world which, in their turn, are products of entangled interests of the great and regional powers and the much wider scopes of globalization-related interaction and interconnection of the countries of Central Asia, Transcaucasia and the Middle East. The Greater Middle East is a new geopolitical phenomenon

created by the end of the Cold War and the Soviet Union's disintegration, which allowed the main actors of world politics to reformat the regional space to the south of the Russian borders.

Inspired by the new horizons, Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia are waging an uncompromising struggle for regional leadership. Having analyzed the local situation and assessed the trends that will shape the future political context of the Greater Middle East, the author has offered his own forecasts of the future of the geopolitical situation in the region.

KEYWORDS: *geopolitical regionalistics, Greater Middle East, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, forecasts of the geopolitical situation in the region.*

Introduction

Geopolitical regionalistics, a new scholarly trend, is a symbiosis of geopolitics and regional studies, and their mutual enrichment. This article was written as an attempt to apply this new approach to the studies of the regional problems in the context of the struggle among the actors in international politics for the spheres of influence and regional leadership.

In the scholarly-applied context, geopolitical regionalistics as a new field of knowledge should analyze the military, political, social, and economic aspects to forecast possible development trends on the basis of which the desired future is predicted and the ways and means by which the regional states will ensure their national interests identified. Any expert working in this field needs a relatively clear idea of how the events will unfold in the multi-factor, turbulent, and non-linear regional and international processes. Regional trends unfolding in the global information society can be forecasted by an expert or an analyst with a predictive mindset on the basis of pre-history and the emerging trends of the regional geopolitical context.¹

The author has selected the Greater Middle East and the politics of the actors in regional policies as an object of study. Known for many centuries as the Middle East, it included the countries of the Arabian Peninsula and the Eastern Mediterranean. In the early 21st century the radically changed situation made the region's old name too narrow for ongoing geopolitical studies: today, the sphere of cooperation of and competition among the local states has spread to Central Asia, Transcaucasia, and North Africa.

The Central Asian countries became part of the region due to their close and growing economic and political involvement in the relations with the above actors in international politics and the considerable interest in the region displayed by the great powers. They are attracted by the region's strategically important geographic location and its rich natural resources. The countries of Central Asia, however, are geographically isolated, which makes them dependent on the transit of goods across the neighboring territories. China with its New Silk Road project, which it expects to use to reach the world markets, is one of the countries ready to profit from the Central Asian states' geographical disadvantage.

The above suggests that this regional space should acquire new geopolitical qualities. The Greater Middle East can be regarded as a new geopolitical phenomenon originating in the end of the Cold War and the Soviet Union's disintegration. The leading world and regional actors rushed in to divide the "Soviet legacy" by launching cardinal transformations. The world and regional countries hastened to confirm their geopolitical influence in what looked to them as an economic and political void. The U.S., China, Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Iran were the most active.

With the Soviet Union out of the way, it became possible to reformat the region's politics and economies. Disoriented by the unexpected independence that came like a bolt from the blue, the leaders of the newly independent states of Transcaucasia and Central Asia could not find their bearings far too long. When they finally regained their senses, the countries were already in political and economic disarray. Their ruined economics, the logical result of severed economic ties with Russia, forced their leaders to seek ways and means to join the world economic and political system through cooperation with the United States, Russia, China, and the European Union that, in their turn, tried to use the situation in their geopolitical interests.

Each of the leading actors in international politics followed its own way. Russia relied on the still existent cultural and economic ties coupled with economic, financial, and military-technical instruments of influence and capitalized on its extremely advantageous geographic location and common borders. Turkey came up with a model of state organization that combined the European politi-

¹ See: V.V. Karyakin, "Dikhotomia khaosa i poriadka—sreda formirovania mekhanizmov samoorganizatsii sovremen-nykh mezhdunarodnykh system," *Mezhdunarodnye otnoshenia*, No. 1, 2016, pp. 7-12.

cal system and Islamic ideology along with pan-Turkism, a concept based on the religious and cultural similarities between the Turkic-speaking peoples. Iran tried to tempt the newly independent states with a civilizational model of a Shi'a state. China preferred economic expansion and the active promotion of its civilizational project and a concept of joint flourishing of peoples under the aegis of the 21st-century Middle Empire.

When realized, these approaches made the region a different geopolitical unit, the fact that often looks like a purely technical political and economic transformation to the expert community. This superficial approach ignores the fact that the region is acquiring a new geopolitical reality, namely, the rivalry between the United States, China, and Russia against the background of the military-political and economic interests of Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia.

It should be said that the number of actors in regional politics is steadily growing, because of the multi-vector policy of the European Union. The leading EU members spare no effort in implementing their policy independent of that pursued by the United States, while the consolidating regional impact of Russia and China is not obvious enough. On the other hand, the region torn apart by deep-cutting contradictions is not an integral civilizational and political entity; there are deep-cutting contradictions between the countries of the Arab-Sunni world, the Shi'a ummah led by Iran, Turkey that preaches pan-Turkism and neo-Ottomanism, the Central Asian countries with their multi-vector policies and the Kurds that are fighting for national independence.

Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan are developing into new centers of power; they are building up the region's future configuration, defining their roles in the new regional world order and getting involved in large-scale economic projects, including China's New Silk Road.

Among these projects is the North-South transportation corridor that will connect India and Iran with Kazakhstan and Russia and the Greater Middle East with Europe (see Fig. 1).

A navigation canal that will connect the Caspian Sea with the Persian Gulf will cross Iran (the Iranian Suez, see Fig. 1). Russia is expected to join the project, the cost of which is estimated at \$7 billion and which will be commissioned in 2030. This means that the Caspian states (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Russia, and Iran) will move oil and gas by water, enlivening the economies of Transcaucasia and the Caspian states.

Eurasia, the canal that will connect the Caspian and the Azov-Black Sea basin will become a useful addition to the "Iranian Suez" (see Fig. 2). In 2007, in his annual address to the Federal Assembly President Putin pointed out: "This new transport artery ... would not only give the Caspian Sea countries a route to the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, thus providing them with access to the World Ocean, it would also radically change the geopolitical situation of the countries of the Central Asian region by enabling them to become sea powers."

In recent years, Russian, Chinese and Kazakhstani scientists and politicians have been actively discussing the project at bilateral and trilateral economic forums. The then President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev deemed it necessary to point out that, due to its importance, the Eurasia Canal should be implemented by the Eurasian Economic Union. Analysts from Kazakhstan believe that the canal, as an important rival of the Suez Canal and an important route for Chinese goods, will consolidate the geopolitical positions of their country.²

The Chinese Sinohydro company that conducts the project feasibility study insists that the "trans-Eurasian transportation corridor that incorporates the Eurasia Canal will become a convenient, safe and highly efficient route from China to Europe ... it will lower transportation costs and stimulate regional economies and sustainable development of China's trade with Europe." The results obtained by Sinohydro will re-orient the trade routes from the traditional maritime trade route by which China

² See: N.S. Bekturganov, A.V. Balaev, "Perspektivy i puti realizatsii proekta stroitelstva kanala Evrazia," *Ediny vserossiyskiy nauchny vestnik*, No. 1, 2015, pp. 125-131.

Figure 1

The North-South Transportation Corridor

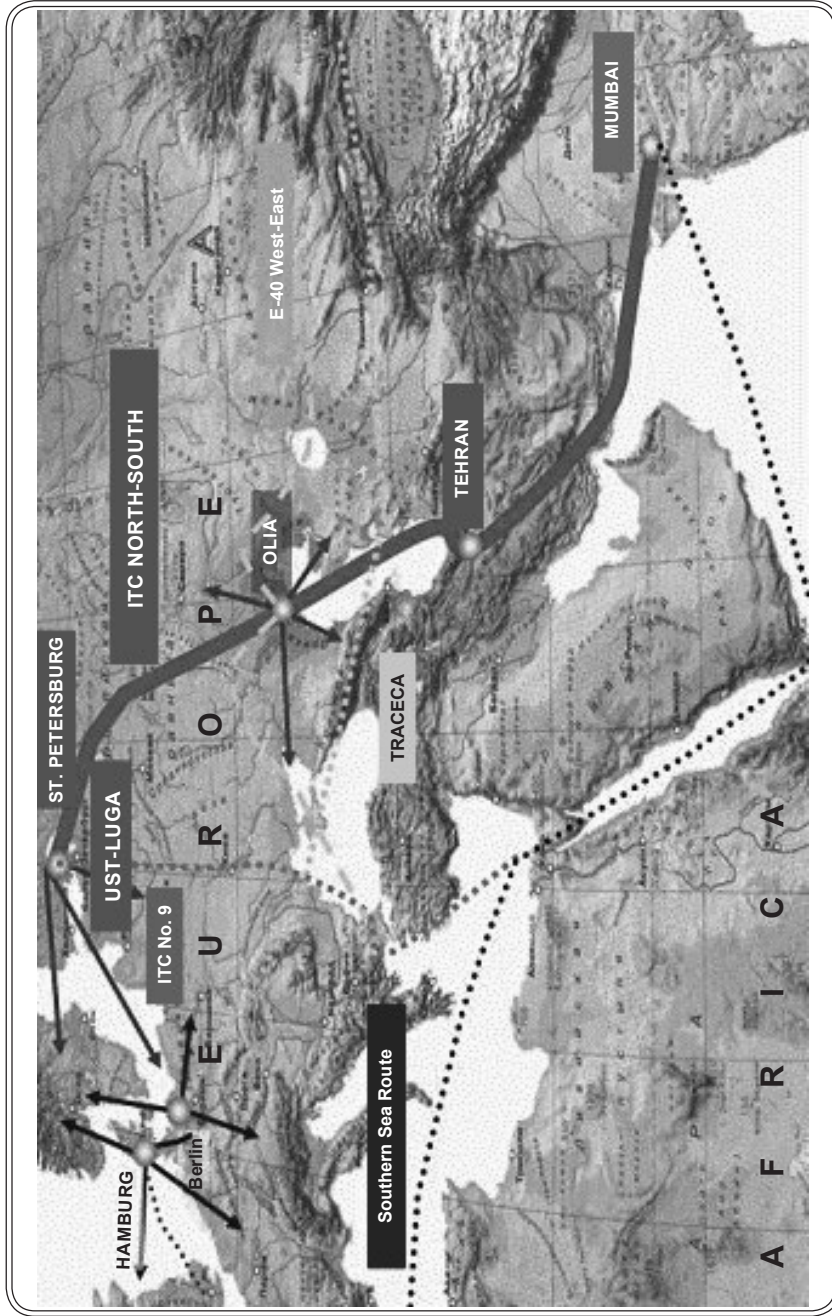
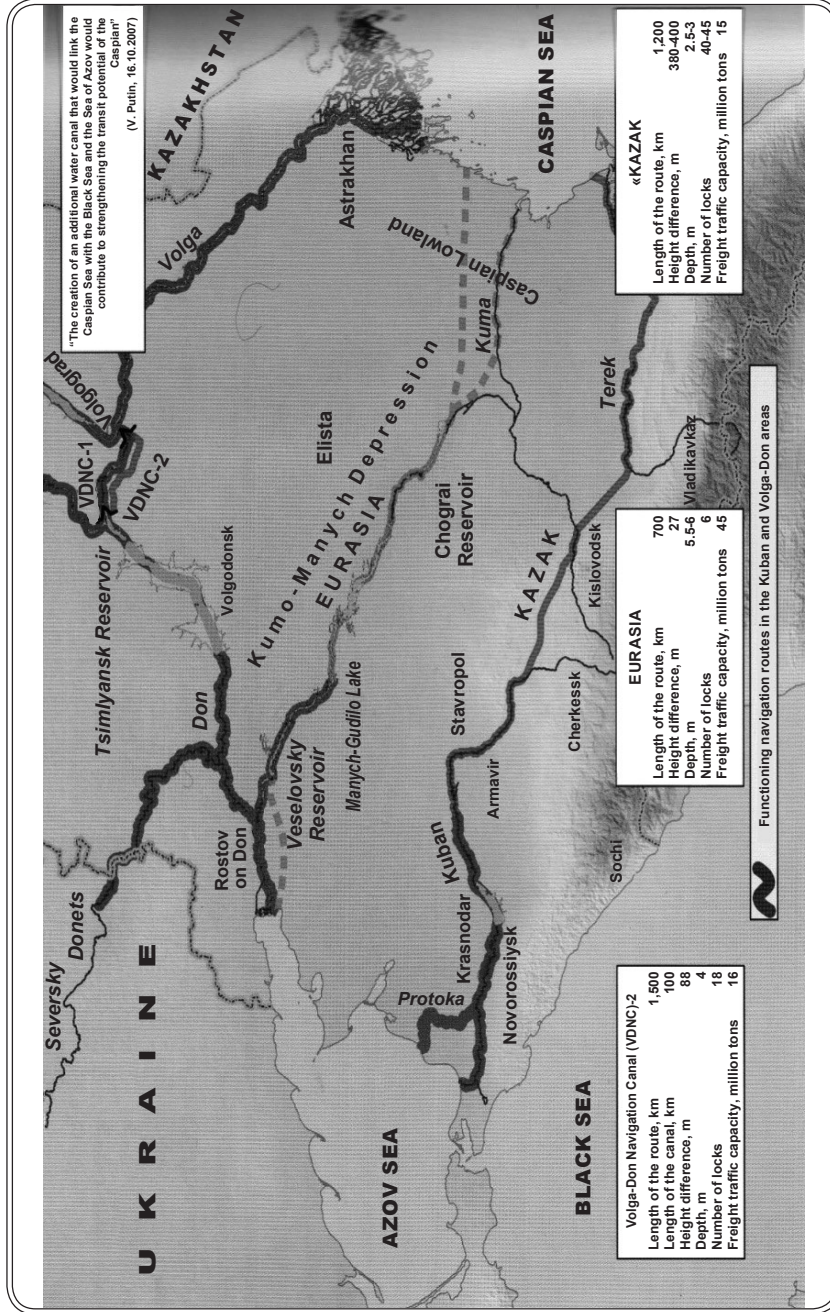


Figure 2

Eurasia Navigation Canal Project



moves its goods to Europe. This will increase the annual volumes of transit of Chinese goods by 24-30 million tons by 2030 and by 43-51 million tons by 2050.³

The geopolitical factors that determine the transformations in the Middle East are explained by the politics of Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, the main moderators of the region's political developments.

Turkey's Regional Politics

Turkey's geopolitical location on the border of Europe and Asia and of the corresponding cultural and civilizational platforms gives it every chance to develop relationships with different states and peoples. Throughout its history, the Turkish ruling elite alternated between the East and the West and the relevant foreign policy preferences, while remaining loyal to the idea of an "in-between" state and a "bridge between Europe and Asia."

Since the early 21st century Turkey, driven by its ambition to become a regional power, has been demonstrating significant diplomatic activity in the Middle East. Its dynamic economic growth, considerable demographic potential and sustainable political system allowed Ankara to build up its international influence and inspired its leaders to move to an even more important place on the international arena.

Turkey, however, had to admit that the Kurdish factor was a spoiler. In the past, Turks and Kurds had been fighting side by side for the national interests of the Turkish Republic. Having won the struggle for independence and territorial integrity, the pro-Kemal elite pushed the Kurds and their interests away. The elite was building up the republic based on the idea of political citizenship, rather than on ethnic affiliation, which meant that all ethnicities, Kurds being no exception, should be assimilated. The armed resistance of 1984 and the appearance of the de-facto independent Kurdistan in the federative Iraq in 2003 pushed the Kurdish factor to the fore. It became abundantly clear that the Kurds would never be dissolved in the titular nations of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, or Syria. The armed struggle of the Workers' Party of Kurdistan played a great role in shaping the Kurds' self-awareness and their desire to set up an independent state they called Greater Kurdistan as a united Kurdish state with a total population of about 30-40 million.⁴

Greater Kurdistan meant a national emancipation and a consolidation of the Kurds into a unified state; so far they remain on the social and political margins in Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria. The Kurds, the region's intrinsic ethnicity with a long history could have, if they wanted, laid claim to much vaster territories than the potential Kurdish government claims today. These territories are "patches" of other ethnicities that live side by side with Kurdish majorities⁵ (see Fig. 3).

The Arab Spring has moved Turkey's hypocritical Kurdish policy to the foreground of the political process. Ankara supported the rioters to consolidate its influence in the region. The Turkish government treats these riots as the people's legitimate demand for social, political, and economic changes and the price that the Middle Eastern countries and their leaders had to pay for their procrastination: the situation should have been readjusted to the post-Cold War realities back in the 1990s. To achieve the sought-after status of a democratic outpost in the Middle East, Ankara insisted that it sided with the peoples, not with the regimes: it desperately needed profitable relations with the new regimes.

³ See: N.S. Bekturganov, A.V. Balaev, op. cit.

⁴ See: T.A. Ganiev, V.V. Karyakin, "Kurdskiy faktor i ego rol v formirovaniy geopoliticheskoy obstanovki na Blizhnem Vostoke," *Arkhot*, No. 2 (5), 2018.

⁵ See: T.A. Ganiev, V.V. Karyakin, "Problema sozdaniya nezavisimogo kurdskego gosudarstva i realnye vozmozhnosti," *Informatsionnye voyny*, No. 2 (46), 2018 [<http://pstmprint.ru/2018/07/09/информационные-войны-№2-2018>].

Figure 3

The Borders of the Kurdish Settlement Which May Potentially Give Rise to the Greater Kurdistan Project



The Arab Spring caused a sudden change of the Turkish foreign policy vector. It moved to the conventional South. In mid-September 2011, the Prime Minister of Turkey Erdoğan visited the “liberated” Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia, where he was greeted as the “savior of Islam” and “new Salah ad-Din” (famous 12th-century Muslim commander, the first sultan of Egypt).

Turkey’s attitude to Syria has changed considerably: Damascus, formerly Turkey’s closest military and economic ally, had become its main foe. On 24 September Turkish ships captured a Syrian ship with a load of weapons supplied by Iran. The Syrian side described Ankara’s foreign policy as a “severe case of schizophrenia” that did nothing good to their bilateral relations.

In the fall of 2011, the relations between Turkey and Iran, its eastern neighbor, have worsened: Turkey confirmed its agreement to station an American ABM system targeted at Iran in its southeast. Tehran deemed it necessary to warn Ankara that this would raise the degree of regional tension.

This means that Turkish political meandering is complicating the already convoluted geopolitical situation in the Greater Middle East. On the one hand, Turkey is a NATO member and a strategic partner of the U.S. On the other, it speaks of itself as an enemy of Israel, Washington’s best friend in the region and is opposed to Iran, an enemy of Israel and the United States. Indeed, there are none, nor can there be any permanent friends or permanent enemies in the world.⁶

The Turkish leaders hoped that Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia would adopt the Turkish political system. This did not happen and could not happen because the Turkish and Arab understandings of the role of political Islam are very different. In Turkey Islam is a modernizing force; the Turkish business elite was raised in the Islamic context; Turkish businessmen associate Islam with progress and are actively involved in the country’s economic, social and political development. In the Arab world Islam is seen not as a modernizing, but as a conservative force that protects traditional society.

There are no reasons, therefore, to expect that Turkey will realize its ambitious foreign policy aims to become the leading power in the Greater Middle East. The West, first and foremost the United States, however, will have to take Turkey, its independent foreign policy and its growing regional role, into account.

Iran’s Regional Policies

Due to its strategic military location of a Mid-Eastern, Caucasian, Central Asian and Caspian country Iran (also one of the Persian and Oman Gulfs littoral states) plays a very important role in the Greater Middle East and, in one way or another, is involved in all regional struggles, and has a decisive say on the region’s internal (ethnic, religious, military or economic) issues: the problems created by migrants, drug trafficking, terrorism and separatism. The Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) cannot be excluded from the collective efforts needed to cope with these problems.

Its geopolitical importance as a source of hydrogen natural resources cannot be overestimated. Its proven reserves of crude oil are 90 billion barrels, which makes it one of the world leaders in oil extraction (cheap because of high productivity). It comes second among the OPEC countries in oil extraction and is the world’s second biggest gas producer after Russia. Today, the proven natural gas reserves that are ready for extraction constitute 21 trillion cubic meters, or about 14% of the total world reserves.

Following the revolution of 1979, Iran armed itself with the idea of regional hegemony inherited from Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who was deposed by radical Shi’a. Under Khomeini the idea of a world Islamic revolution was transformed into an idea of regional domination of Shi’a

⁶ See: T.A. Ganiev, V.V. Karyakin, “Problema sozdania nezavisimogo kurdsogo gosudarstva i realnye vozmozhnosti.”

Persians. The regional component of this idea was pragmatically tied to nationalist ideas. After a while, pragmatism in state policies pushed aside ideological considerations, primarily, as far as the issue of unconditional support of all Shi'a Muslims was concerned. Tehran abandoned the idea of export of the Islamic revolution by the use of force; discontinued its unconcealed propaganda of Islamic fundamentalism and corrected its foreign policy (its pro-Armenian position in the Armenian-Azeri conflict serves as the best confirmation).

However, Iran, just as before, relies on the Shi'a factor within the region: it helps the Hazaras of Afghanistan, who are Shi'ites, and the Lebanese Hezbollah, and, at opportune moments side with Hamas, a Palestinian Sunni organization. Tehran skillfully exploits the fact that the Shi'a clergy in Iraq traditionally aligned with Iran.

Despite the still felt American influence in Afghanistan, Iran has preserved its positions and its influence there; this indicates that it plans to remain in the country and realize its interests there. Certain circles in the Iranian political establishment still look at Afghanistan not as an important political partner in the region, but as an important part of the Greater Middle East. Today, Iran can put pressure on various parties, movements and ethnic groups (mainly Tajiks and Hazaras). This interaction is primarily ideological, its economic aspects are secondary. The concept of Arian unity presupposes that in the future the Iranian-speaking countries of the Middle East will create an ethnic axis Tehran-Kabul-Dushanbe.⁷

Iran belongs to a small group of countries that refuse to accept the very possibility of Israel's existence, which forms the foundation of its Palestinian policy. It refused to endorse the Roadmap elaborated by Russia, the U.S., the European Union and the U.N. as a path towards a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian crisis. The continued peace process might damage the Iranian position in the region and tip the balance of power.

Iran wants to avoid isolation and remain included in all important political processes unfolding in the Middle East (including those related to the Palestinian issue) and, on the other, to acquire more weight in regional affairs. It confirmed that it was determined to support the Islamic opposition in the south of Lebanon and in Palestine, which is, in fact, one of the methods of demonstrating its influence. The world, however, treats the armed groups supported by Iran as terrorist or national-liberatory depending on their political orientation and the methods of struggle.⁸

Iran relies on the armed detachments of Lebanese Hezbollah to realize its policy related to the Palestinian-Israeli relations. According to different sources, they are between 3,000 and 5,000 strong; there is also a certain number of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) soldiers. The relationship between Hezbollah and Iran is based on the shared Shi'a doctrine and their refusal to recognize the state of Israel. Iran extends financial assistance to its Lebanese allies along with diplomatic and political support; it trains its ideological and military leaders, supplies them with weapons, armaments and extends humanitarian aid.⁹

We should not expect changes in Tehran's position on the Israeli-Palestinian issue any time soon: it will stubbornly oppose any agreement that will take Israel's interests into account, even to the slightest extent.

There is another important factor of the country's foreign policy activities in the above directions: in recent years, the country has found itself surrounded by instability and conflicts—the Armenian-Azeri (Nagorno-Karabakh) conflict in the north; continued instability in Afghanistan in the east; ongoing squabbles over the islands in the Persian Gulf; instability in Yemen with a vague outcome

⁷ See: T.A. Ganiev, "Regionalnaia politika Islamskoy Respubliki Iran," available at [<http://csef.ru/ru/politica-i-geopolitica/484/regionalnaya-politika-islamskoj-respubliki-iran-4203>], 23 July, 2018.

⁸ See: *Ibidem*.

⁹ See: V.I. Iurtaev, "Osobnosti sovremennoy vneshney politiki Irana," available at [<https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/osobnosti-sovremennoy-vneshney-politiki-irana>], 23 July, 2018.

in the south of the Arabian Peninsula; conflict-entangled Iraq and the war in Syria in the west. Tehran's interests are affected by this to different degrees.

The revolutions in the Arab countries consolidate Iran's political and military positions and undermine the positions of its rivals in the struggle for regional leadership. If Iran consolidates its military and political position in the region, it may try to recover those parts of the territories of Iraq, Bahrain, and Oman that were parts of the Persian Empire a long time ago.

Regional Policies of Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia pursues its foreign policy in full conformity with its declared principles—good-neighborly coexistence, non-interference in domestic affairs of other states, development of contacts with all Gulf countries and the Islamic world as a whole, cooperation with friendly countries and involvement in international and regional organizations.

The Kingdom speaks of itself as a “conservative state” guided by the ideological norms of Islam. The country helps promote these norms and defend them. The religious foundation of this policy is firm to the extent that the rest of the world looks at the country as a carrier of the “grace of God” and, consequently, the custodian of Islamic holy places. Its monarch, the King of Saudi Arabia, has the title of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques (Mecca and Medina). Within the kingdom, religion is an instrument of ethnic mobilization; at the regional scale religion consolidates the unity of all “conservative” Arab and Muslim states.

King Faisal was convinced that the alliance of Communism and Zionism, which was based on similar aims and tasks, one of which was to destroy Islam and create a permanent threat to the Muslim and Christian communities, was an important element of the international relations system. The system itself was painted in the colors of the Muslim political thought: the land of peace—the Arab-Muslim community; the land of truce—the Western community, the mutually profitable cooperation with which was a must, and the land of war—the camp of Islam's enemies: the Soviet Union, its satellites and Israel.

The unprecedented growth of oil prices in the 1970s-early 1980s brought two important repercussions: Saudi Arabia entered the path of accelerated modernization to become the biggest donor of the Arab-Muslim region states. This created a large and socially diverse educated class that transformed the country into a business and intellectual center of attraction.

Its foreign policy includes four basic trends arranged according to their significance:

- The Gulf countries;
- The Arab countries;
- The Muslim world;
- International community.

The Gulf countries are treated as a foreign policy priority because of their geographic location, contacts rooted in the past, similar state and economic systems, common or similar aims of preserving security and resolution of conflicts and crises. It was with this purpose in mind that Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, the UAE, Oman and Saudi Arabia set up the Gulf Cooperation Council in 1981 in order to promote regional cooperation in the economic, social, political and military spheres.¹⁰

¹⁰ See: I.V. Kriuchkov, “Vneshniaia politika Saudovskoy Aravii na Blizhnem Vostoke v nachale XXI veka,” available at [<https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/vneshnyaya-politika-saudovskoy-aravii-na-blizhnem-vostoke-v-nachale-xxi-veka>], 23 July, 2018.

Diplomatic relations with the rest of the world are no less important: Riyadh as an equal member of the international community fulfills its obligations and behaves within its rights in full conformity with the U.N. Charter. It wants to achieve peace all over the world and preserve it. As a matter of principle, the Kingdom strives to achieve transparency and fairness of its foreign policies and calls on other members of the world community to do the same. Very much in line with its strategy, Saudi Arabia recognized the right of self-defense as one of the principles of international law. As a member of numerous international organizations, Riyadh does everything in its power to preserve international security.

Conclusion

It was two hundred years ago that the French campaign in Egypt and Syria led by Napoleon Bonaparte opened up an era of the contemporary Middle East; the Ottoman Empire disintegrated some 100 years ago; the era of colonialism ended half a century ago; the Cold War—thirty years ago. The era of American domination in the Middle East is approaching its end; the West, which expected the region to embrace the Western democratic model and follow the politics of the United States and its allies, is disappointed. The Greater Middle East will probably follow its own road determined by its destiny.

This brings to mind the Heartland concept formulated by Halford Mackinder to define Western geopolitics on the Eurasian continent. The river of history has changed its waters. Mackinder's concept can be dismissed as outdated, as it no longer reflects contemporary political realities. Indeed, back in 1904, when he formulated it, he could not predict what would happen to the world 100 years later. His Eurasian Heartland is still a natural fortress despite the collapse of two great powers: czarist Russia in 1917 and the Soviet Union in 1991. Today, it has become more or less clear that in the foreseeable future the West will not occupy it.

The Greater Middle East is gradually turning into the center of world politics, its real heartland and, it seems, the cradle of a world order based on the principles of multi-polarity, which will determine the mankind's development paths:

- The United States will retain a lot of its present influence in the regional political and economic processes and will be opposed by the strong non-regional players (China, Russia and India) that will insist on their national interests, and by the influential regional actors (Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia). This region will become a “gravedigger” of the unipolar world order. The rivalry of international and regional powers for regional leadership and the spheres of influence is a “midwife” of sorts of the multipolar world. Today, the famous Mackinder's formula should run as “who rules the Greater Middle East, commands the world.” Multi-polarity will unlock the “coil of anaconda” around Eurasia. This is confirmed by the policy pursued by Russia, Turkey, and Iran in the Middle East, which aims to end the Syrian crisis;
- Iran will consistently move towards a stronger role in the region. Its natural riches and high moral, military and economic potential is a serious factor of influence in the Greater Middle East;
- Israel, with its competitive international-level economy, nuclear arsenal and the armed forces unrivaled in the region, will remain one of the influential factors. In the course of time it will find it much harder to oppose the security threats at different fronts, which will weaken its positions in the long-run. If Iran creates nuclear arms of its own and reliable delivery means, the situation will become even more complicated. At the same time, the example of India and Pakistan testifies that nuclear powers prefer well-balanced and reasonable policies;

- Oil prices will rise because of the growing demand of China, India, and the Asian-Pacific countries. It seems that it might go up to \$100, rather than drop below \$40 per barrel.
- Islam will remain the cornerstone of political and cultural life of region's states. Iran's ideological influence will become stronger, leading to additional tension in the Sunni/Shi'a relations in Bahrain, Lebanon, Syria and Saudi Arabia;
- The political regimes of the Greater Middle East will remain totalitarian behind the screen of democratic state institutions. Egypt and Saudi Arabia will set the trend and move further away from the United States due to the anti-American sentiments in these countries.

These are the main factors that will determine the world order of the Greater Middle East in the 21st century and the positions of great and regional powers. The World-System is moving away from America's global leadership towards multi-polarity. A steadily growing number of countries is turning into independent entities of international politics in line with their geopolitical potentials and civilizational principles. The World-System, however, will hardly be able to avoid the next stage of unipolarity based on the Chinese concept of joint flourishing and development. This issue, however, requires special studies.