

**Rethinking the Foundational Assumptions of the Islamic Republic of Iran's
Research on Middle Eastern Arab Countries: A Critical and Constructivist
Approach**

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Abstract

Over recent decades, Iranian scholarship on Arab countries has expanded significantly, yet it remains deeply anchored in specific epistemological assumptions. Using a mixed theoretical framework of constructivism and critical sociology, this study analyzes the underlying cognitive structures of Iranian regional studies. Through a qualitative content analysis of 50 academic articles and expert interviews, the findings reveal a predominant Hobbesian strategic culture in which 70% of the literature prioritizes security threats and 55% perceives Arab nations as existential rivals. The research argues that this othering process has led to an epistemological impasse, where even cooperative efforts are interpreted as temporary tactical maneuvers. This paper concludes that to reduce the cognitive costs of foreign policy, a paradigm shift is required—moving from an "absolute security-oriented" approach toward a connecting political economy and shared regional identity. Finally, the study suggests that institutionalizing "joint scientific diplomacy" is essential for replacing institutionalized mistrust with a framework of sustainable development and collective security.

Keywords: Regional Studies, Islamic Republic of Iran, Arab Countries, Hobbesian Strategic Culture, Epistemological Impasse, Constructivism, Scientific Diplomacy

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Introduction

Contemporary area studies can be traced to the colonial expansion of European powers during the eighteenth century and the accompanying scholarly efforts to understand the languages, cultures, and social organizations of colonized peoples. In this sense, area studies emerged as a "child of empire," largely driven by commercial and political interests as well as by the perceived civilizing mission of colonial powers. At the same time, the study of ancient civilizations, ethnic traditions, social hierarchies, and foreign languages formed part of the broader expansion of Western knowledge across the globe. While eighteenth-century European capitals began exhibiting the artifacts and artistic achievements of both ancient and "exotic" civilizations in public museums, the nineteenth century witnessed the institutionalization of colonial studies within European universities. In the United States, interdisciplinary area studies centers first appeared after World War I and expanded rapidly following World War II, reflecting the country's emergence as a global power. During the Cold War, understanding the societies of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East became an urgent strategic priority as the United States and the Soviet Union competed for influence in the developing world (Mehler & Hoffmann, 2015).

As noted above, area studies is an interdisciplinary field dedicated to the comprehensive study of a specific geographical region. Although its institutional origins date back to the establishment of the School of Oriental and African Studies in England in 1916, the field became firmly established as an independent academic discipline only after World War II and subsequently diversified in both scope and methodology. In the United States, the Ford Foundation played a pivotal role in shaping area studies programs during the 1940s and 1950s (Lagemann, 1992). By the mid-twentieth century, American universities had developed extensive expertise in Middle Eastern studies, one of the most prominent branches of area studies. Consequently, several of the world's leading centers for Middle Eastern studies—including the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University, the Department of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University, and the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of California—were established in the United States.

In Iran, no independent academic discipline known as area studies existed during the Pahlavi era, nor were there specialized institutions devoted to Middle Eastern studies. Research on the region was largely confined to occasional studies conducted within political science departments. Following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, however, a series of regional and international developments—including the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Iran–Iraq War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the September 11 attacks, the rise of Islamist movements, the continuing Arab–Israeli conflict, and the strategic importance of the region's vast oil and gas resources—substantially increased scholarly and policy interest in the Middle East. As a result,

numerous governmental and non-governmental research centers specializing in Middle Eastern affairs were established. More recently, Iranian universities have introduced graduate programs in Middle Eastern studies as well as country-specific programs focusing on states such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Egypt. The expansion of academic training, the education of policy specialists, and the organization of numerous national and international conferences all suggest Iran's growing commitment to understanding regional developments and informing strategic policymaking. This growing interest reflects both Iran's domestic and foreign policy priorities and the rapidly evolving political dynamics of the Middle East.

Since its establishment, the Islamic Republic of Iran has faced persistent political and security challenges arising from both its revolutionary ideology and the evolving geopolitical environment of the Middle East, particularly in relation to the Arab world. Several interrelated factors have contributed to the close association between regional crises and Iran: (1) the ideological foundations of the Islamic Republic and its policy of exporting the revolution, which generated concern among many Arab governments; (2) the expansionist ambitions of Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime, culminating in the eight-year Iran–Iraq War; (3) longstanding sectarian and historical divisions between predominantly Shiite Iran and the largely Sunni Arab states; (4) the strategic geopolitical significance of the Persian Gulf; (5) competition over regional energy resources and export markets; (6) Iran's position toward Israel and its support for non-state armed groups in the region; (7) Iran's adversarial relationship with the United States in contrast to the strategic partnerships maintained between Washington and many Arab governments; and (8) the continuing intervention of extra-regional powers in Middle Eastern affairs.

Against this background, scholarship on the Middle East and the Arab world in the Islamic Republic of Iran appears to have developed within a predominantly security-oriented framework characterized by perceptions of threat, insecurity, and geopolitical isolation. Consequently, much of Iran's academic and strategic discourse has reflected a persistent skepticism toward Arab states, a perspective that broadly corresponds with the country's official foreign policy orientation. This study seeks to examine the underlying assumptions that shape Iranian scholarship on the Arab countries of the Middle East. Drawing on qualitative content analysis and documentary research, it addresses the following research question: What are the fundamental assumptions underlying research conducted in the Islamic Republic of Iran on the Arab countries of the Middle East?

1. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to examine the fundamental assumptions underlying Iranian scholarship on the Arab countries of the Middle East. Qualitative research emphasizes the collection and analysis of

non-numerical data to explore meanings, perspectives, and experiences. Unlike quantitative research, which relies primarily on numerical data and statistical techniques, qualitative inquiry seeks to explain how and why social phenomena occur and is particularly well suited to investigating underlying beliefs, assumptions, and interpretive frameworks (Moser & Korstjens, 2017).

The empirical data were collected through qualitative content analysis of primary sources, including 50 academic articles published in reputable Iranian and international journals, 10 books on area studies and Middle Eastern studies, and 15 specialized research reports. These sources were selected on the basis of their scholarly influence, citation frequency, and direct relevance to the research question. To complement the documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 leading Iranian scholars specializing in Middle Eastern studies. These interviews were designed to provide additional insight into the intellectual and institutional culture of Iranian scholarship, identify the normative and ideological foundations of regional research, and explore the assumptions that shape scholarly analyses of the Arab Middle East.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study employs an integrated theoretical framework that combines constructivism, historical sociology, and Middle Eastern studies. The combination of these three perspectives facilitates a multidimensional analysis of the assumptions underlying Iranian scholarship on the Arab countries of the Middle East by incorporating ideational, historical, and regional dimensions.

2.1. Constructivism

Constructivism argues that knowledge is not passively acquired but is actively constructed through processes of interpretation and reflection (Mascolo & Fischer, 2005). In international relations, constructivism emphasizes the importance of intersubjective meanings, identities, and norms in shaping political behavior (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001). This perspective provides an appropriate framework for examining how Iranian policymakers, scholars, and strategic analysts construct and interpret the Arab world.

From a constructivist perspective, foreign policy is shaped not only by material interests but also by the beliefs, identities, and perceptions of political elites (Joseph, 2008). A state's perception of external threats, insecurity, and distrust within the international system therefore becomes an important factor influencing its foreign policy orientation (Ben-Itzhak, 2011). Accordingly, both ideational factors, such as beliefs and norms, and structural conditions contribute to the formation of state behavior and scholarly interpretations.

2.2. Historical Sociology

Historical sociology integrates historical analysis with the study of political and international structures to explain long-term patterns of social and political change. This approach enables an examination of how regional orders and historical interactions have shaped political institutions, social structures, and patterns of knowledge production (Rosenberg, 2006). By situating contemporary developments within their historical context, historical sociology provides a broader understanding of the evolution of state relations and regional dynamics in the Middle East.

2.3. Middle Eastern Studies

As a major branch of area studies, Middle Eastern studies face's a number of methodological challenges, including debates surrounding Orientalism, ethnography, and regional exceptionalism (Pape et al., 2020). Rigorous scholarship in this field requires careful attention to linguistic, cultural, historical, political, and socioeconomic contexts while avoiding reductionist and essentialist interpretations of the region. Pape and colleagues argue that renewed engagement with historiography and innovative methodological approaches can generate more nuanced analyses of imperialism, colonialism, and the political and cultural interactions that have shaped the modern Middle East. Greater attention to country-specific historical trajectories and cultural contexts also contributes to more robust and context-sensitive scholarship.

Taken together, these three theoretical perspectives provide a comprehensive analytical framework for examining the assumptions embedded in Iranian scholarship on the Arab countries of the Middle East. Constructivism explains how identities, beliefs, and perceptions influence scholarly and political understandings of the region. Historical sociology situates these perceptions within broader historical and structural processes, while Middle Eastern studies emphasize the importance of regional specificity and contextual analysis. By integrating subjective and structural dimensions, this framework facilitates a more comprehensive analysis of the intellectual foundations of Iranian research on the Arab Middle East and avoids overly deterministic or reductionist interpretations of this complex relationship.

The primary objective of this integrated framework is to provide a systematic interpretation of the assumptions that shape Iranian scholarship on the Arab countries of the Middle East. Given the significance of these assumptions for both Iranian foreign policy and broader regional developments, this analytical approach contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between knowledge production and regional politics.

2.4. Operationalization of the Theoretical Framework in the Analysis

While the previous sections introduced the three theoretical lenses of constructivism, strategic culture, and threat perception, this study applies them as analytical tools rather than as abstract perspectives. Each framework guided the coding, categorization, and interpretation of the textual data.

First, constructivist concepts—such as intersubjective meanings, identity construction, and representation of the "other"—were operationalized through textual indicators including: references to shared historical memories, framing of Arab actors as cultural or ideological counterparts, and language indicating symbolic boundaries or identity alignment.

Second, the strategic culture approach was applied by identifying recurring patterns of policy interpretation and normative assumptions in Iranian academic discourse. Indicators included: references to historical continuity in Iran–Arab relations, assumptions about geopolitical roles, and normative judgments regarding regional hierarchy and influence.

Third, the framework of threat perception was operationalized by coding discursive signals of mistrust, securitization, or rivalry. These included: explicit references to security dilemmas, narratives emphasizing instability, competition, or containment, and expressions of uncertainty toward Arab regional intentions.

The integration of these frameworks allowed the study to move beyond descriptive categorization and toward interpretive explanation. Rather than treating identity, strategy, and threat as separate analytical domains, the coding process traced how they intersect within academic narratives. This integrative approach enabled the identification of discursive patterns linking identity construction with perceptions of cooperation or rivalry. The following analysis therefore examines not only what Iranian researchers say about the Arab world but also how their interpretations reflect deeper epistemic assumptions shaped by identity narratives, strategic memory, and perceived uncertainty in the regional order.

3. An Overview of Major Middle Eastern Studies Centers in Iran

The analysis below follows the operational framework outlined in the previous section. The coding of the selected texts was guided by three analytical dimensions: identity representation, strategic interpretation, and perceived threat narratives. Each dimension reflects the theoretical integration of constructivist, strategic culture, and threat perception approaches.

Middle Eastern studies in post-revolutionary Iran developed not merely as an academic field but as a knowledge domain shaped by ideological, geopolitical, and security concerns. The institutionalization of Arab studies coincided with the consolidation of the Islamic Republic's regional engagement, particularly in relation to the Palestinian issue, Lebanon, and

post-war Iraq. As a result, research production on Arab countries has often reflected policy-relevant priorities rather than purely disciplinary agendas. This historical context is important because it shaped the epistemic assumptions embedded in academic outputs, which the following sections examine through institutional case studies.

In order to identify the epistemic foundations of Iranian scholarship on Arab countries, it is necessary to examine the institutional sites where this knowledge is produced. Research centers and academic programs function not only as educational structures but also as discursive environments in which assumptions about the Arab world are formed, reproduced, and transmitted.

For this purpose, we first examine the first Middle Eastern studies center and subsequently the establishment of the Faculty of World Studies in Iran. Following this, we present a quantitative overview of the relevant educational and research centers. We then extract the core and fundamental assumptions of Iranian research on Arab countries by analyzing a sample of the qualitative output from these centers.

3.1 .The Centre for Strategic Research and Middle Eastern Studies

The first Middle Eastern studies center in Iran, established in February 1989 in Tehran, was the Centre for Strategic Research and Middle Eastern Studies. This center focused not only on theoretical issues in international relations but also made Middle Eastern studies a central aspect of its research, information dissemination, and investigative activities. According to the founders of this center, "The necessity of such a center from a specialized standpoint is very clear and logical because the Middle East is the most important and immediate geographical, historical, intellectual, and security environment for Iran, and a precise and specialized understanding of its various dimensions is a clear scientific and national duty" (<http://fa.cmess.ir>).

The center publishes journals in Persian, Arabic, and English with scientific-research and scientific-promotional accreditation. The center's journals include *Regional Studies Quarterly*, specializing in U.S.–Israel studies; *Middle East Quarterly*, focusing on Middle Eastern studies; the English-language journal *Discourse*, which articulates Iran's foreign policy in scientific terms for the international community; and the Arabic-language journal *Iran and the Arab*, aimed at strengthening and consolidating Iran's relations with the Arab world. The center also acts as a bridge between intellectual and academic elites and policymakers through specialized seminars, unofficially explaining the country's foreign policies.

3.2. The Faculty of World Studies, University of Tehran

In the academic field, one of the first university-based centers specializing in Middle Eastern studies was the Faculty of World Studies at the University of

Tehran. Javad Sha'er Baf, the head of the West Asia and Africa Studies Department at the Faculty of World Studies, states:

"The Faculty of World Studies, successfully modelling itself after leading faculties worldwide, opened a new path in country studies after the Islamic Revolution. With the expansion of its activities and increased attention to the country's needs, studies in areas such as Russia, Japan, India, Occupied Palestine, Egypt, Iraq, Turkey, Latin America, Germany, France, Britain, and others were added, and country studies at the University of Tehran were firmly established through the Faculty of World Studies. In this faculty, all matters related to country studies—including teaching, research, theses, and even dissertation defences—are conducted in the native language of the respective country. One of the faculty's advantages is its practical disciplines, which attract a significant number of students, with graduates experiencing minimal unemployment. According to statistical reports, the faculty has the highest employment rate among the faculties at the University of Tehran, with the lowest unemployment rate" (Mehr News Agency, 2024).

Regarding the establishment of the Saudi Arabia Studies programme at the Faculty of World Studies, Sha'er Baf states:

"In political science, there is a concept known as the 'security environment,' which posits that countries have a surrounding backyard. If the political units within that security environment cooperate and assist one another, the environment will remain peaceful and free from conflict, thereby minimizing the costs of peaceful and secure coexistence. However, if members of this security environment encounter problems with one another, the costs of development and welfare are diverted to military and security matters, ultimately leading to war, conflict, or unhealthy competition and hostility. Saudi Arabia is one of the most significant countries in the security sphere of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Persian Gulf. It is clear to all experts and specialists that Saudi Arabia has always had a serious rivalry with Iran, both before and after the Islamic Revolution, a relationship often strained due to external interventions or organized factions influenced by foreign interests that did not favour improved bilateral relations. The fear and anxiety among the southern Persian Gulf countries prevented the two sides from coming closer, resulting in biased knowledge being available to decision-makers. Besides the issue of neighbourhood, we are linked to Saudi Arabia in crucial and strategic areas such as the Hajj, energy and oil discussions, regional issues such as Palestine, political Islam, the foreign presence in the region, and regional rivalries. Naturally, establishing research centres, think tanks, and specialized research institutions is highly necessary in order to understand this country and provide appropriate solutions to decision-makers. These institutions and centres need specialized and well-trained experts, and the first effective step toward meeting this need has been taken by the University of Tehran".

He believes that our understanding of Saudi Arabia is limited, having been gained mainly through Hajj or oil experts attending oil meetings or through a few individuals participating in Islamic conferences. For many years after the Revolution, despite the importance of understanding a country such as Saudi Arabia, there has been no serious, in-depth academic insight into one of the most important members of our security environment. Establishing this programme paves the way for serious and multi-layered knowledge of this significant regional country and other Gulf countries. He emphasized that the faculty's duty is to provide part of the human resources needed by agencies involved in foreign policy and that it can perform scientific and academic work. More than 40 to 50 organizations in the country are involved in issues related to Saudi Arabia, yet they generally lack expertise based on academic studies of Saudi Arabia (Mehr News Agency, 2024).

Table 1- Major Middle Eastern Studies Centers in Iran

Row	Center name	Vision and goals	Website
1	Strategic Research Institute: Department of Middle East and Persian Gulf Studies	1-Development and expansion of research in the field of strategic research 2-Creating a suitable environment for the promotion of research activities in the field of strategic research 3-Research cooperation with educational and research institutions of the country in order to improve the quality of research activities	https://csr.ir/fa
2	Regional Studies Research Institute (Shahid Beheshti University)	1-Publication of authentic academic texts, 2-Transferring ideas and dealing with regional policy issues, 3-Facilitating public understanding of the country's regional policy at home and abroad, 4-Creating networks to transfer topics to the academic environment and Policy making, 5-Communication with foreign centers 6-Expansion of regional future research studies	https://regionalstudies.sbu.ac.ir/
3	Middle East Center for Scientific Research and Strategic Studies	1-Studying and researching the theoretical issues of international relations the 2-focus on studying and researching.	https://www.cmes.s.ir/
4	Iranian Regional Studies Association (IRSA)	1-Conducting scientific and cultural research at the national and international level with researchers and specialists, 2-Cooperation with executive, scientific and research institutions in the field of evaluation and review and implementation of projects, 3-Encouraging and honoring researchers and Distinguished professors, 4-Providing scientific and educational research services at the national, regional and international	http://www.irsa.org.ir/

		level, 5-Holding scientific gatherings at the national, regional and international level, 6-Publication of scientific books and publications.	
5	Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS)	1- In the studies field, the central mission of this center has been to help collecting, organizing and developing research and investigating in regional and international fields and help to better understand of Iran's foreign policy. 2-In the education field, this center tries to provide updated knowledge directly and indirectly through classrooms and educational workshops to students and foreign relations practitioners through the deputy of Education and the International Relations College and help knowledge increasing in this field. 3- In the documents field, this center, having about 50 million copies of first-hand documents on the Iran's foreign relations history, is a valuable source for researches history of Iran's foreign relations. This center moves towards helping the national memory of the country's foreign policy by preserving domestic and foreign documents, study resources, as well as first-hand copies of the international relations history.	https://www.ipis.ir/
6	Iranian World Studies Association (IWSA)	1-Organizing and absorbing new member along with the cooperation with the present members, 2-Establishing student branches of the institute in other universities, 3-Establishing study groups headed by board of management of the institute and student members, 4-Establishing national/international conferences on national/international subjects sponsored by related organization, 5-Holding speeches inviting boards of management of universities and institutes, 6-Publishing cyber/paper newsletter, 7-Establishing website and updating it, 8-Constant membership of international research centers focusing on study groups,	https://iwsa.ir/
7	Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies (IHCS): (Regional Studies Research Group)	1-Investigating new power developments in the international arena: opportunities and challenges for the Islamic Republic of Iran 2-The research future of regional and international developments. 3-Studying and monitoring developments in the Middle East region and the Islamic world. 4-Studying contemporary Islamist movements and currents	https://www.ihcs.ac.ir/191
8	International Peace Studies Center (IPCS)	1-Knowing the political and security conditions of Iran's surrounding environment. 2-Examining actions and mutual reactions between Iran and the Middle East, Europe, and America. 3-Knowing the political and economic relations between the Islamic world and the West.	https://peace-ipsc.org/fa/

		4-Understanding international politics and economy in the Greater Middle East. 5-Scientific knowledge of each country in the Greater Middle East. 6-Establishing a close relationship with other study centers inside and outside. 7-Invitation to dialogue between global elites and international organizations.	
9	Institute for studies of the Contemporary World	1- Creating a suitable platform for using the abilities of professors and experts in the research and scientific studies department; 2- Helping to remove obstacles to the progress of the country's executive institutions; 3- Creating a suitable space for scientific activities to attract domestic experts; 4- Directing academic research towards applied and field research; 5- performing translation services in different languages; 6- Creating employment for graduates of humanities and social sciences.	https://jahanemoaser.ir/foreign-policy-group-of-iran
10	Research Institute of Strategic Studies (the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology)	1-Training of specialized human resources in the field of strategic studies, 2-Production and development of literature on strategic studies and national security and their localization, 3-Spreading a sustainable national security culture in the society, 4-Establishing a link between scientific centers and decision-making centers, 5-Scientific observation of the national security of the Islamic Republic of Iran and providing timely and accurate estimates of its strategic environment, 6-Monitoring and measuring the efficiency of the state administration system.	https://risstudies.org/
11	Tehran International Studies and Research Institute	1. To facilitate transfer of the viewpoints and attitudes of Iranian experts and specialists to foreign centers and organizations; 2. Facilitating collection, analysis and assessment of data related to international and regional issues as well as world countries; 3. Helping with the formulation of Iran's national security strategy in the area of foreign policy; 4. Influencing foreign policy trends in bilateral and international relations of the Islamic Republic of Iran; 5. Influencing foreign policy trends in bilateral and international relations of target countries; 6. Establishing contacts with creditable international research centers and institutes; 7. Implementing research projects on issues that help the national interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran with due emphasis on cultural interaction among nations and civilizations.	http://www.tisri.org
12	Institute of	1-Understanding the political, economic, cultural	https://pg

	Persian Gulf Studies	and social developments of the Persian Gulf countries. 2-creating discourse at the level of political elites. 3-Protecting the name and historical identity of the Persian Gulf and correcting fake names in the world. 4-Joint scientific research with domestic and foreign institutions, universities and research centers. 5-Holding workshops, conferences and specialized conferences on Persian Gulf studies. 6-Publishing specialized books in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East.	studies.ir/
13	Faculty of Law and Political Sciences, Shiraz University	1-Diversification and strengthening of educational fields with priority for postgraduate courses 2-Strengthening Iranian and Islamic culture in the content of educational programs 3-Expansion and development of physical space 4-Targeted recruitment of expert forces and efficient academic staff members in terms of expertise 5-Creating a suitable platform to improve the scientific and specialized level of employees and faculty members 6-Organizing the executive and research activities of faculty members 7-Diversification and continuous and sustainable increase of financial resources of the faculty 8-Strengthening the relationship of the faculty with prestigious universities (at the national and international level), private and public organizations and institutions 9-Orientation of educational programs in order to train creative, committed, expert and entrepreneurial forces	https://law.shirazu.ac.ir
14	Persian Gulf Strategic Studies Center	1- Modeling the successful activities of think tanks 2- Laying the groundwork for the development of the capacity and effectiveness of current think tanks 3- Creating space for the formation of new think tanks	http://www.isspg.ir/
15	Institute of Persian Gulf Studies	The main objectives of the Persian Gulf Research Institute, which indicate the general orientations of the research institute, have been formulated in four areas. These goals guarantee success in the fields of education, research and technology, infrastructure and national and international cooperation and brand creation.	https://pgstudies.ir/
16	Department of Regional Studies, Faculty of Law and Political Sciences, University of Tehran	Since 2001, under the title of Regional Studies, it started working as a subdivision of the Department of International Relations of the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of the University of Tehran, with the aim of training and educating various specialists and experts. This field of study has 13 fields that are currently in non-continuous master's degree in four fields «Middle East and North Africa», «Central Asia and Caucasus», «Europe» and «Southeast Asia» and in doctoral degree. accepts students in	https://lawpol.ut.ac.ir/44

		four majors «Middle East and North Africa», «Central Asia and Caucasus», «Europe» and «North America region (NAFTA region) ».	
17	Faculty Of International Relations: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Training of specialized human resources in the field of regional and Middle Eastern studies for the diplomatic staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.	https://sir.ac.ir/en
18	Faculty of History and Political Studies: Baqir Al-Olum University	1. Development and spread of Islamic sciences and humanities: helping to promote surface culture and community knowledge, develop and spread Islamic sciences and humanities; 2. Training of skilled manpower: Participation in training skilled manpower and elites required in a scientific and cultural field among the seminarians of the seminaries; 3. Laying the preparations for public participation for the development of education and research: cooperation in a suitable laying of preparations for all people to participate in the matter of developing and promoting education and research in the country; 4. Development of a higher education by making use of the capacity of the seminaries: making use of the present features and capabilities of the country as well as the latent capacities in the seminaries in developing a higher education; 5. Production and development of religious innovation: helping to produce and develop religious innovation in different fields of Islamic sciences and humanities, and provide its educational, research and preaching opportunities and facilities.	https://int.bou.ac.ir/
19	Department of International Relations and Regional Studies, Imam Sadiq University (AS)	With the formation of the Islamic Republic system, the need and necessity of scientific and scholarly compilation of existing political ideas as well as Islamic politics has taken a new form. Research in the field of foreign policy and international relations and updating studies in this field and training expert and efficient personnel who can be successful in the research and practical fields of this field also show their necessity more than ever. This necessity in the current era, when the Islamic Republic, as an independent activist, has an active presence in the global environment, and in order to succeed in the very complex and multidimensional fields of international interactions and to stand against the increasing pressures of great powers, it needs committed, revolutionary experts and diplomats. And he is motivated and at the same time experienced and familiar with modern knowledge and techniques of negotiation and diplomacy. The Department of International Relations of the Faculty of Islamic Studies and Political Sciences of Imam Sadiq University (AS) strives both in the form of educational classes and in the form of side programs,	https://isu.ac.ir/content/2534/

		including holding workshops, meetings and scientific chairs, forming student study cores, meetings Lectures, scientific visit programs and cooperation with universities of foreign countries, as well as directing theses and research and writing activities Take steps in the direction of training talented and educated students in order to achieve the mentioned goals.	
20	The Institute for Islamic World Futures Studies	1-Tries to create an awareness movement in the Islamic world in various levels of government, elites and the public 2-Makes attempts to approximate the views and inter-subjectivity understanding among the Islamic world 3- Endeavors to introduce the capabilities of the Islamic world	https://iifwfs.com/
21	Mursad think tank	Mursad think tank has a strong connection with the institution of Shia jurisprudence, so that it becomes a pillar of the influence of the field in the policy-making mechanism and knowledge of the institution of religious authority. In this horizon, legal structures such as the leadership office, the Assembly of Experts and the Guardian Council, which were established to objectify the jurisprudence department in the power institution, will find the think tank as the source and reference for ideation and policy-making in the field of their major issues.	https://mursadcss.com
22	Imam Khomeini International University (IKIU): Research Institute for Future studies	1-Developing and expanding the boundaries of the Futures Studies' science; 2-Propagating providence and foresight culture; 3-Informing decision-makers to have a look at the future in decision-making; 4-Providing organizations, institutions, governmental and non-governmental agencies with their needs in the area of Futures Studies; 5-Helping with the process of future-building for achieving an optimal future state; 6-Propagating Futures Studies literature through publishing books, magazines, articles, etc; 7-Promoting the quality of education and research of Futures Studies; 8-Helping with the policy-making process through education and research in the area of Futures Studies; 9-Training experts in the area of Future Studies.	http://old.ikiu.ac.ir/en/page-view.php?pid=600
23	Islamic World Studies Association	1- Creating an opportunity for the gathering of experts in different fields and their cooperation to investigate an important interdisciplinary issue 2- Providing the necessary background for study and research in the aspects of political, cultural, social, economic, and legal studies of the Islamic world 3- Expanding the fields of knowledge according to the study and research needs in the field of political, cultural, social, economic, and legal issues of the	https://aiws.ir/

		Islamic world 4- Expanding familiarity with the field of study, concepts and issues of political, economic, political, cultural, social, legal sciences and... Islamic world 5- The most important concern of the founding board has been to create a study space to deal with Islamic views and examine the political, social, cultural, social, economic, and legal ideas of Islam and to create a space for scientific discussions, exchange of opinions and conflict of opinions.	
24	Center for World Islamic Studies	1.Decision making and providing advice to decision makers and effective institutions 2.Improving the level of elite analysis	http://cwis.ir/
25	Faculty of World Studies, University of Tehran	«Faculty of World Studies» was approved by the Board of Governors of Tehran University with the aim of training expert forces for the public, public and private sectors inside and outside the country.	https://fws.ut.ac.ir/
26	University of Religions & Denominations	University of Religions & Denominations, aims to obtain knowledge of religions and denominations and strives for interactions and dialogues with their followers based on common beliefs. Furthermore, it pursues to conduct research, and train specialists in order to establish human solidarity, strengthen peace, alleviate human sufferings, disseminate spirituality and morality, and provide a scholarly introduction to Islam in consonance with the doctrines of the Progeny of the Prophet Muhammad (Ahl al-Bayt); peace be upon them.	https://urd.ac.ir/en/about-urd/
27	Association of Secretariat Iran and the Arab World Thinkers	Creating connection between the intellectuals and elites of Iran and the Arab world and providing the basis for reaching a common understanding in cultural categories and publishing it among Muslim societies	http://asiawt.isca.ac.ir/Portal/Home/
28	Tabyin Strategic Think Tank	Tabyin Strategic Think Tank produces content on political, security, economic and cultural issues by using a network of analysts and experts specializing in regional, extra-regional and foreign policy fields, who are often among the young elites of the country's top universities. The productions of Tabyin Strategic Think Tank are available to the audience, researchers, decision makers and decision makers of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the form of articles, strategic reports, analysis of developments and monitoring of the contents of the most important regional and international think tanks.	http://tabyincenter.ir/

3.4. Major Journals Specializing in Middle Eastern Studies in Iran

It is worth noting that, alongside official academic journals focused on Arab countries, many unofficial channels and pages in Persian, Arabic, Hebrew, and English have emerged on social media in recent years. These platforms follow the developments in Arab countries and the Middle East, and many

experts and researchers track the information from these channels or contribute to their content. A comprehensive review of the quantity and content of these channels and pages requires separate consideration. However, here we list some of the most important official journals, where a significant number of published articles have been used to extract fundamental assumptions about research on Arab countries.

Table 2- Major Journals Specializing in Middle Eastern Studies in Iran

Row	Name of the publication	website
1	Future Studies of the Islamic Revolution Journal	https://fsir.ihu.ac.ir/?lang=en
2	Scientific Journal of Middle East studies	https://cmess.sinaweb.net/?lang=en
3	West Asian Journal	https://www.wasj.ir/?lang=en
4	Middle East Political Review (MEPR)	https://en.jref.ir/21592
5	Scientific Quarterly Journal of Persian Gulf Studies	https://persiangulf.iranology.ir/
6	Quarterly Journal of Regional Studies	http://fa.cmess.ir/Publications/Journal.aspx
7	Strategic Translator	https://www.cmess.ir/Page/StrategicTranslator
8	Studies on Israel-US	https://www.remess.ir/?lang=en
9	Islamic Awakening Biannual Journal- Studies	https://www.iabaj.ir/?lang=en
10	Makran and Persian Gulf academic quarterly	https://nashriat.shirazu.ac.ir/article/3709772 https://cpg.shirazu.ac.ir/
11	Political Strategy Quarterly	https://www.rahbordsyasi.ir/?lang=en
12	The Quarterly Journal of Political Studies of Islamic World	https://psiw.journals.ikiu.ac.ir/?lang=en
13	Journals of political sociology of the Islamic world	https://iws.shahed.ac.ir/?lang=en
14	Quarterly Journal of Fundamental and Applied Studies of the Islamic World	https://journal.iwfs.com/?lang=en
15	International Journal of Iraqi Studies	https://ism.ilam.ac.ir/?lang=en
16	Mesopotamian Political Studies Quarterly	https://mps.razi.ac.ir/journal/about?lang=en
17	Journal of Countries Studies	https://jcountst.ut.ac.ir/?lang=en

4. Key Assumptions in Research on Arab Countries in Iran

Using the analytical framework outlined earlier and the coded examination of selected academic outputs, this study identifies a set of recurring epistemic assumptions within Iranian scholarship on Arab countries. These assumptions do not necessarily reflect the empirical realities of the region;

rather, they indicate the dominant interpretive lenses through which Iranian researchers conceptualize Iran–Arab relations.

A prominent pattern in the analysed texts is the representation of regional relations through identity-sensitive and security-centred narratives. Arab political behaviour is frequently interpreted as being shaped by ideological, sectarian, or geopolitical positioning vis-à-vis Iran, rather than as autonomous policy processes. Such framing constructs Iran–Arab relations as structurally predisposed toward rivalry, even when instances of cooperation are acknowledged. Within this discourse, religious narratives, geopolitical competition, and historical memory function as explanatory shortcuts that stabilize expectations of mistrust. These explanatory patterns form what can be described as a threat-sensitive epistemology, in which regional interactions are interpreted through the lenses of balance, containment, and symbolic competition.

The findings indicate that religious, ethnic, and geopolitical discourses are the most influential factors shaping Arab views toward Iran (Najafi Firoozjahi, 2009). In fact, the history of Arab politics shows significant discursive tensions between Iranian national narratives and Arab-centred regional identities. Iraq is considered a cultural fault line with Iran, the United Arab Emirates reflects territorial competition with Iran, and Saudi Arabia is seen as Iran's ideological rival (Motaghi & Postinchi, 2011). According to Arab perspectives, post-Islamic Revolution Iran has become a significant rival in the Islamic world, challenging Arab leadership. Structural factors, such as the power structure of the international system and the regional order, the nature of political regimes in the region that favour compromise, and historical, cultural, and religious contexts, are stable elements influencing the patterns of friendship and enmity toward the Islamic Republic of Iran.

For example, recent relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran have taken on new dimensions, including religious and ideological conflicts, competition over political and geostrategic interests, and an ongoing rivalry for regional hegemony (Aarts & Van Duijne, 2012). This strategic confrontation, manifested as geopolitical competition for regional dominance, undoubtedly stems from two sources: longstanding historical divisions and a Western-centred international system. On the one hand, Iran and Saudi Arabia have traditionally stood on opposite sides of the Iranian–Arab and Shia–Sunni divide. On the other hand, following the Islamic Revolution in Iran, another identity division emerged, whereby Iran was perceived as a revolutionary force advocating for the oppressed peoples of the region, while Saudi Arabia, alongside other monarchical regimes in the Persian Gulf, appeared as a counter-revolutionary force. This identity conflict strengthened perceptions of enmity within the Saudi monarchy to such an extent that, of the 70 billion dollars in aid provided by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to Iraq during the Iran–Iraq War, 30

billion dollars came from Saudi Arabia (Rahmanian, 2003, p. 126). Essentially, ideological rivalries between these two countries revolve around issues such as competition for Islamic authenticity and legitimacy, as well as conflicts between Shia Islam and Saudi Sunni-Wahhabi Islam, including Saudi Arabia's historical reluctance to recognize Shia Islam. From this perspective, Iran is viewed as pursuing its interests on the basis of Shia sectarianism and the revival of the Safavid Empire rather than the interests of the Islamic Ummah. In the Arab view, this notion of Safavidism combines Iranian (anti-Arab) and Shia (anti-Sunni) elements.

Some scholars argue that, in the post-U.S. invasion of Iraq era, the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt perceived that regime change in Iraq and the growing influence of resistance groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas in Lebanon and Palestine had expanded Iran's regional power and influence. Consequently, these countries sought to increase their own influence in key regional arenas, including Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, and the Persian Gulf, in order to counterbalance Iran. This approach undoubtedly stems from the logic of the international system and U.S. unilateralism, with Arab states in the region, owing to their structural dependence on the United States, acting as key players in balancing and deterring Iran. While the Islamic Republic of Iran has consistently called for the withdrawal of extra-regional powers, particularly the United States, from the Persian Gulf and has advocated indigenous security arrangements based on cooperation among regional actors, the Arab states of the southern Persian Gulf have generally welcomed the U.S. military presence by providing military bases and logistical support (Asadi, 2020).

At the beginning of the Obama administration, the Brookings Institution and the Council on Foreign Relations, in collaboration with a group of American Middle East experts, published a study entitled *Restoring the Balance: A Middle East Strategy for the Next President*, which continued the discourse of Iranophobia by portraying Iran as both a major threat and a potential regional hegemon while offering recommendations for preventing its regional dominance. Accordingly, efforts have been made to prevent the emergence of a regional hegemon in the Middle East, with the United States pursuing two complementary strategies: first, encouraging regional states to balance against Iran; and second, intervening directly to maintain a favourable balance of power and prevent Iran from achieving regional dominance (Barzegar, 2009).

In a related article published in the *Journal of Holy Defense Science* by Imam Hossein University (affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps), it is argued that, since the Islamic Revolution, various Iranophobia campaigns initiated by Western countries, together with regional and international developments—including the nuclear issue and the unilateral U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA—have led the GCC countries to pursue policies aimed at balancing against the Islamic Republic of Iran. Among the

GCC member states, the United Arab Emirates, owing to its territorial dispute with Iran over the three islands, has engaged more actively than the others in policies that heighten tensions with Iran. With military support from Western countries, the UAE has confronted Iran across political, economic, security, and military dimensions. According to the article, these developments have threatened Iran's national security and contributed to the securitization of the regional environment (hds.sndu.ac.ir, 1272).

• Quantitative Analysis

A review of research conducted in Iran on Arab countries shows a significant increase in the number of scientific articles published between 2011 and 2024. The Noor Specialized Journals Database, Iran's largest official database, aims to identify and provide online access to specialized journals in Islamic studies and the humanities. A search of this database reveals that, over the past 15 years, the number of articles published in Iranian academic journals under various titles related to Iran's relations with Arab countries in the field of political science is as follows:

Table 3- The number of articles published in Iranian academic journals under various titles related to Iran's relations with Arab countries

row	Title	Number
1	Arabia	3167
2	Arab League	2210
3	Arab world	3932
4	Gulf Cooperation Council	3553
5	Persian Gulf	4542
6	Syria	2094
7	Qatar	870
8	Kuwait	984
9	Iran and Arabs	10637
10	Iraq	5857
11	Oil and the Persian Gulf	6606
12	Israel and the Zionist regime	9068
13	Oman	1081
14	United Arab Emirates	1441
15	Egypt	3613
16	The September 11	3225
17	Iran - Iraq War	11519
18	Iraq and America	112421
19	Isis	966
20	Al-Qaeda	3067
21	Regional security threat	8563
22	The three Persian Gulf islands of Bu Musa, Lesser Tunb and Greater Tunb	8068
23	Iran and the Middle East	10758

Reference: (www.noormags.ir/view)

Table 4- Examples of articles that believe Arabs see Iran as a threat include:

row	Research title	Author	Research source
1	Arabs and Choice in the Condition of Threat Balance: Iran's Threat and Normalization of Relations with Israel	1) Fariborz Arghwani Pirsalami 2) Hasan Arayesh	A Quarterly Journal of Foreign Relations: Volume 14, Issue 4 - Serial Number 56 https://frqjournal.csr.ir/article_166418.html#arinfo_pnl_cite
2	Military threats of the United Arab Emirates and security-defense considerations of the Islamic Republic of Iran	1) Hadi Muradpiri 2) Amir Mushtaqi	Journal of Holy Defense Studies, Volume: 6, Number: 4 Publication year: 2019 https://www.magiran.com/p2242844
3	Regional balance policy in Iran-Saudi Arabia relations	Abbas Mossalanejad	Political Quarterly, faculty of law and political science, Volume 46, Issue 4, January 2017 https://jpq.ut.ac.ir/article_59942.html?lang=en
4	Arab developments and Iran's regional policy	Kayhan Barzegar	http://www.irdiplomacy.ir/fa/news/1910498/
5	Threat perception in Iran-Saudi relations in the Middle East and Central Asia	1) Ali Karami 2) Mohammad Reza Aqrabparast	Scientific Quarterly Journal of Central Asian and Caucasus Studies, 28(118), 139-165. Publication year: 2022 http://ca.ipisjournals.ir/article_696953.html?lang=en
6	Territory Development by Saudi Arabia and Its Regional Threats: Focus on the Islamic Republic of Iran	1) Bahador Gholami 2) Ehsan Yari	The scientific journal Security Horizons, Volume 11, Issue 39, January 2019, Pages 165-190. https://ps.iuh.ac.ir/article_204467.html?lang=en
7	Publicizing the relations of the Zionist regime with the Persian Gulf countries and balancing the threat against Iran	Tahir Taheri	Strategic Research Institute of Expediency Council https://csr.ir/fa/news/1317/
8	Drawing scenarios for the opportunities and threats of Arab ethnocentrism in relation to the national security of the Islamic Republic of Iran	1) Hossein Torki 2) Mohammad Ali Khosravi 3) Ali Ghorbanpour	Political Science Quarterly, Issue 53 Vol. 16 Winter 2019, Page: 159 - 183 https://sanad.iau.ir/en/Journal/psq/Article/682080?jid=682080&lang=fa

9	Islamic Republic of Iran's The policy towards the GCC countries	1) Reza Simbar 2) Danial Reaper 3) Sadigheh Azin	Quarterly Journal of Fundamental and Applied Studies of the Islamic World, second year, fourth issue, winter 2019, pp. 50- 73 https://journal.iwfs.com/a rticle_130906.html?lang= en
10	Explanation of The Islamic Republic of Iran's Behaviors in the Persian Gulf Region: Conditional-based Foreign Policy versus Positional- based Geopolitics	1) Abed Golkarami 2) Afshin Mottaghi	Human Geography, Volume 54, Issue 1, January 2022, Pages 95- 114. https://jhgr.ut.ac.ir/article_ 78448.html?lang=en
11	An Explanation of Geopolitical Factors Influencing Iran-Iraq Relations	1) Seyed Mostafa Hashemi 2) Abdoreza Faraji rad 3) Rahim Sarvar	Iranian Research Letter for International Politics, Volume 5, Issue 2 - Serial Number 2, December 2017, Pages 118-143
12	Evaluation and prioritization of geographical factors affecting Iran's defense power	1) Sajad Najafi 2) Afshin Mottaghi	A Research Quarterly in Military Management, Volume 23, Issue 92 - Serial Number 4, March 2024, Pages 121-154 https://jmm.iranjournals.ir/ article_712038.html?lang =en
13	The Islamic Republic of Iran's Foreign Policy towards Iraq from the perspective of Balance of Threat Theory (2003-2018)	1) Ayoub Menati 2) Naser Hdian	Journal of Political Sociology of Islamic World, Volume 7, Issue 15, September 2019, Pages 139-164. https://iws.shahed.ac.ir/art icle_1040.html
14	Saudi Arabia Security Threat Against Islamic republic of Iran	1) Ahmad Doostmoh ammady 2) Mohamm ad Rajabi	Tehran University Policy Quarterly Politics Quarterly, Volume 48, Issue 4, January 2019, Pages 945-960 doi:10.22059/jpq.2018.25 5898.1007246 https://jq.ut.ac.ir/article_ 69741.html?lang=en

• Closure

Analyses indicate that many Iranian studies view Arab countries as a "security threat." To examine this claim, a content analysis was conducted on

50 academic articles published between 2010 and 2024 in the Noormags and Civilica databases. The findings reveal that 70% of these articles address, in some way, security threats posed by Arab countries to Iran, while 30% address potential cooperation. These percentages were derived from the thematic coding of explicit evaluative statements within the sampled texts rather than from author-level classification.

Furthermore, the claim that "most Iranian researchers consider Arab countries as rivals, and even existential enemies, of Iran" requires precise data. A comprehensive review of the academic literature shows that 55% of researchers analyse Iran–Arab relations on the basis of rivalry or threat, whereas 45% also consider the possibility of cooperation and interaction.

While this article has primarily focused on perspectives that view Arab countries as a threat to Iran, some experts find it necessary to examine alternative viewpoints as well. For example, studies such as *Iran and the Arab World: Opportunities for Cooperation* (published in the *Quarterly of International Relations* in 2022) demonstrate that some researchers emphasize the possibility of interaction and convergence. Additionally, studies such as *Iran's Regional Diplomacy Strategies* (published by the Centre for Strategic Research in 2021) suggest that Iran and Arab countries can cooperate in the economic, energy, and regional security sectors.

In conclusion, this research has attempted to analyse Iranian studies on Arab countries by utilizing an integrated framework, operationalized through the discourse coding of Middle Eastern studies and drawing upon intersubjective perception and critical sociology. By examining the nature of the activities, objectives, and perspectives of Iranian educational and research centres, their focus on Arab countries in the Middle East, and the content produced in these centres and specialized journals, it is possible to identify the fundamental assumptions underlying this body of research.

By concentrating on the primary approaches adopted in these studies and by examining more than 500 articles, books, and academic notes—most of which were authored by recognized and prominent professors and researchers in the fields of Middle Eastern and Arab studies [1]—the core assumption underlying many of the Iranian studies reviewed can be summarized as follows:

According to several of the analysed texts, the academic environment in the Islamic Republic of Iran has been influenced by the ideology of exporting the revolution, hostility toward the United States, the eight-year Iran–Iraq War, Iran's support for anti-occupation resistance groups, its policy toward Israel, regional rivalry with Saudi Arabia, the formation of a Shia-led government in Iraq following the fall of Saddam Hussein, and successive regional developments, all of which are perceived by many Iranians as sources of threat. Consequently, a unique intellectual environment has emerged in which a substantial proportion of Iranian scholars view Arab countries as security and, in some cases, existential threats to Iran.

This perspective has been influenced by the policies adopted by the Islamic Republic of Iran over the past four decades, and it has also had a significant impact on institutionalizing this way of thinking among Iranian policymakers. In this regard, numerous articles have been written in Iran whose authors argue that Arab countries are continuously seeking to weaken Iran's regional position. The following themes emerged repeatedly in the analysed literature as explanatory narratives rather than as empirically verified causes.

The hostilities and rivalry between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia's influence among Arab countries has intensified the level of threat perceived by many Iranian scholars (Doostmohammady & Rajabi, 2019). For example, Ali Jannati, the former Iranian ambassador to Kuwait, wrote in a note for Iranian Diplomacy: "After the collapse of the Shah's regime in Iran and the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia became deeply concerned about the influence of revolutionary ideas within the country, especially among Saudi Shias. In an effort to prevent the spread of the revolution's powerful influence, Saudi Arabia sought cooperation with other Arab countries in the region. With the outbreak of the Iran–Iraq War, despite its ideological and political differences with Saddam Hussein's regime, Saudi Arabia sided with Iraq. In 1981, at the suggestion of the Kuwaiti government, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was established. This council was likely formed to ensure the security of the regional countries and to prevent the spread of revolutionary ideas from across the Persian Gulf. Gradually, the GCC expanded its financial and political support for Saddam Hussein's regime, to the extent that, by the final years of the war, fear of an Iranian victory led the Arab Gulf countries to devote substantial financial, oil, political, and propaganda resources to Iraq".

The historical roots of conflict between Iran and the Arab world. With the advent of Islam and during the period of the Rashidun Caliphs (632–660 CE), particularly under the second caliph, Muslim Arab armies conquered Iran. They defeated the Sassanian forces at the Battle of al-Qadisiyyah, leading to the collapse of the Sassanian Empire and the expansion of Muslim rule into Central Asia. Some narratives within Iranian academic and public discourse refer to these events as a symbolic origin of subsequent identity tensions. Some scholars argue that this historical experience gave rise to a deep-seated hostility toward the Arab world that continues to influence contemporary perceptions. Others, however, reject this interpretation, arguing that it has been politically instrumentalized. One Iranian scholar contends that some groups, particularly among the urban middle class, portray an ancient and continuous hostility between Iranians and Arabs while simultaneously opposing the Islamic Republic and criticizing Islam as an Arab religion. According to this view, some political leaders have also selectively invoked this narrative to advance contemporary political objectives. Consequently, the notion of an enduring historical hostility

between Iranians and Arabs is regarded as a modern political construction rather than a historical reality (Manafzadeh, 2016).

The geopolitical position of Iran and the Middle East. The strategic location of Iran within the Middle East has generated enduring competition and tension throughout the region, contributing to mutual perceptions of threat between Iran and several Arab states. As one Iranian analyst argues, the intervention of major powers in West Asia has intensified regional instability. Following the end of the Cold War, new geopolitical dynamics accelerated military competition and regional arms races. According to this perspective, external powers sought to prevent regional convergence and promoted divisions among influential regional actors. Consequently, policies such as Iranophobia have been employed to portray Iran as a threat to its neighbours and to prevent the emergence of a regional hegemon. Within this framework, Iran's regional engagement in countries such as Lebanon, Iraq, and Afghanistan is presented as a strategy for maintaining national security, strengthening regional deterrence, and preserving the regional balance of power (jamejamdaily.ir).

The discourse of Iranophobia in the Arab world. An expert from the Institute for Political and International Studies of Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs argues that Iranophobia is a multidimensional phenomenon rooted not only in political and security concerns but also in historical, cultural, and international factors. According to this interpretation, the Iranophobic discourse observed in many Arab countries cannot be understood solely through contemporary security dynamics but must also be situated within broader historical and ideological contexts (Mehdizadeh & Mirhosseini, 2019).

Conclusion

The study of the Middle East and Arab countries within the discipline of regional studies in Iran has evolved into a robust academic field over the past four decades. Initially catalyzed by the geopolitical aftershocks of the Iran–Iraq War and the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, this discourse has gained significant momentum in the post-Arab Spring era. Today, Iranian research on the Arab world is driven by a complex interplay of factors, including the Tehran–Riyadh rivalry, Iran's strategic presence in Syria and Iraq, fluctuations in the energy market, and the persistent tensions involving the Axis of Resistance and the United States.

The empirical findings of this study underscore a significant divergence within Iranian academia. Content analysis reveals that 70% of the surveyed literature prioritizes security threats, while 55% of researchers adopt a confrontational lens, viewing Arab countries as existential rivals. These findings reflect more than a mere statistical trend; they signify the dominance of a Hobbesian strategic culture within the Iranian academic sphere—a mindset that often dismisses regional convergence as a

"temporary tactic" rather than as a strategic shift. While certain nuances exist—such as the perception of Oman as a facilitator versus Saudi Arabia as a maximum-security challenge—the overarching intersubjective space remains clouded by mutual distrust and historical grievances, ranging from the legacy of the Iran–Iraq War to contemporary maritime and sectarian disputes.

To overcome this epistemological impasse, it is crucial to dismantle the "othering" of Arabs that has been entrenched by nineteenth-century nationalism and exacerbated by modern geopolitical tensions. By transitioning from an "absolute security-oriented" paradigm to one rooted in the integration of political economy and a shared regional identity, Iranian scholarship can reduce the cognitive costs of foreign policy and open new avenues for cooperation in the fields of energy and regional security.

In conclusion, the politicization of knowledge within research centres has often prevented a realistic appraisal of the rapid transformations occurring in the Arab world. To move beyond a "threat-oriented" mentality, this study suggests the institutionalization of joint scientific diplomacy between Iranian universities and Gulf research institutes. Such intellectual engagement is essential for replacing a legacy of fear with an intersubjective framework built upon sustainable development and collective security.

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