



ИСТОРИЯ И КУЛЬТУРА В СТРАНАХ ВОСТОКА

HISTORY AND CULTURE

IN THE ORIENTAL COUNTRIES


DOI: 10.22363/2312-8127-2023-15-1-65-80

Research article / Научная статья

Mutual Perception of Arabs and Iranians: History and Present

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Abstract. The relevance of the topic of the study is caused by the traditional perception of animosity between the citizens of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Arab states due to historical and religious factors, as well as the statements of the political elites. The purpose of this study is to reveal the real mutual perception of Iranians and Arabs. In the context of the epidemiological situation in the world and the limitations of field research, the sociological surveys and forums posted on the Internet on this topic are of top interest. The authors rely on a comparative approach in their study. On the basis of this research, aspects of contradictions and solidarity of the parties on a number of issues have been established. In addition, it has been confirmed that there is little or no antipathy towards one another among ordinary citizens of the Arab and Persian worlds, although the Arab side has a slightly more negative attitude.

Keywords: Iran, Saudi Arabia, Arabs, Iranians, Persians, Arab world, Iranian-Arab relations

Article history: Received: 10.11.2022. Accepted: 29.11.2022.

For citation: Lashina AA., Chikrizova OS. Mutual Perception of Arabs and Iranians: History and Present. *RUDN Journal of World History*. 2023;15(1):65–80. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8127-2023-15-1-65-80>

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Взаимное восприятие арабов и иранцев: история и современность

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Аннотация. Актуальность темы исследования обусловлена традиционным представлением о неприязни между гражданами Исламской Республики Иран и арабских государств в силу исторических и религиозных факторов, а также заявлений политических элит. Цель данного исследования — выявить реальные особенности взаимного восприятия иранцев и арабов. Учитывая эпидемиологическую обстановку в мире и ограничения в проведении полевых исследований, интерес представляют размещенные в сети Интернет социологические опросы и форумы по данной тематике. Опираясь на сравнительный метод исследования, авторы выявили особенности взаимного восприятия сторон в таких аспектах, как история, политика, религия и язык. Доказано, что среди простых арабов и иранцев практически отсутствует неприязнь друг к другу, хотя арабская сторона и настроена несколько более негативно по отношению к иранскому государству.

Ключевые слова: Иран, Саудовская Аравия, арабы, иранцы, персы, арабский мир, ирано-арабские отношения

История статьи: Поступила в редакцию: 10.11.2022. Принята к публикации: 29.11.2022.

Для цитирования: Лашина А.А., Чикризова О.С. Взаимное восприятие арабов и иранцев: история и современность // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Всеобщая история. 2023. Т. 15. № 1. С. 65–80. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8127-2023-15-1-65-80>

Introduction

The Saudi-Iranian confrontation for leadership in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and the ‘Islamic world’ as a whole has a long history, dating back to the confrontation between the Arab Caliphate and the Persian Empire. These countries were the implacable rivals and the current rivalry between Riyadh and Tehran for the leading role in the Middle East is largely explained by the historical events in which both sides were involved in the past.

At the present stage, the aspect of confrontation between the parties in the regional arena is a series of political contradictions and the support of different sides in numerous conflicts. Nevertheless, it is impossible to estimate the perception of citizens of the two countries only by the official statements of high-ranking officials and media headlines as in most cases they do not fully reflect the real state of things.

The purpose of this article is to reveal the peculiarities of the mutual perception of Iranians and Arabs via available social forums and opinion polls, and to answer the question of whether the views of ordinary citizens contain the negativity and rivalry claimed by the official sources.

Russian historiography presents a number of works that address the interaction between Iran and the Arab states from historical [1; 2], political [3; 4; 5], or religious [6; 7] perspectives, but there are not enough materials that explore the mutual perceptions of the parties. In particular, the article by V.A. Kuzmin and N.V. Sokolov, dedicated to the analysis of certain aspects of Arab-Iranian relations in the framework of the civilizational approach, stands out [8]. In a sense, this article will serve as a supplement to an earlier study and an update of its data. On the basis of sociological surveys and forums posted on the Internet, the study will analyze and systematize the real perceptions of Arab and Iranian residents about each other.

The article will focus on the historical, confessional, political, and linguistic aspects of mutual perception.

Historical Features of the Arab-Iranian Interaction and the Beginning of the Formation of Mutual Perception

According to the classification of cultures proposed by the Dutch social psychologist H. Hofstede, both Iran and most of the Arab states belong to normative societies [9], which prefer to maintain and respect traditions that have been strengthened for centuries, as well as to refer to the past greatness and to seek in it a basis for pride for their culture and country in the present. In this regard, the historical factor is the most valuable in revealing the peculiarities of the mutual perception of Arabs and Iranians.

The Iranian civilization is one of the oldest in world history, and the empires that existed on the territory of modern Iran were the greatest states of their time. As for the Arabs, in pre-Islamic times they inhabited a large part of the ancient East, which belonged to the possessions of the Persian Empire. For representatives of the Iranian culture, the period of “Jahiliyya” (stands for “ignorance” in Arabic; often referred to the pre-Islamic period of the history of the Arab tribes) is the period of the great empire, while the Arabs were ‘primitive nomadic tribes’ and ‘their territories were under the authority of the Great Persian Empire’ [10].

In its turn, the “arrogance” of the Arab side was shown through rather derogatory naming of outsiders, to be more concrete, all those who did not

speak Arabic (i.e., Persians as well) as *'ajam* (from the Arabic verb *"ajama"*, to speak inaudibly).

With the inception and spread of Islam came a struggle for leadership between the new religion and the long-standing traditions of the Persian empire. The victory of the Arabs in the battle of Qadissiyah in 634 is still one of the most painful topics for the Iranians, and the Arab side often uses this historic battle to hurt the pride of Iran (just remind the exploitation of images of the battle of Qadissiyah by Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein in the Iran-Iraq war of 1980—1988).

According to the representatives of the Arab ethnos, the worldview of Iranians is focused on the great past of the Achaemenid and Sassanid empires, and on the fact that it was the invasion of Iran by the Arabs that caused its decline [11]. As for the exploitation of historical images in politics, we should stress the special role of the “myth of Kerbela” in the Iranian worldview: if during the Iran-Iraq war S. Hussein used the image of the Battle of Kerbela in the Iran-Iraq war, then in the rhetoric of Ayatollah Khomeini the Iraqi leader was represented in the image of caliph Yazid, the Umayyad usurper of power, who sentenced to death of Imam Hussein, the grandson of Prophet Mohammed, in Kerbela in 680 [12. P. 12].

Persian political figures made a significant impact on the government of the Arab Caliphate, especially during the Abbasid era. During the reign of caliph al-Mahdi (775—785), the Persian Shi'ite Barmakid dynasty rose to power, which ruled until caliph Harun al-Rashid came to power. Later the next rising of the Persians in the Abbasid caliphate was due to the favor of caliph al-Ma'mun, son of Harun al-Rashid and his Persian concubine. Then, from about 945—1055, Baghdad was ruled by the Shiite dynasty of the Buids (Buwaihids), who were ethnic Persians.

During Ottoman rule in the Arab lands, the confrontation between the Sunni Ottoman Empire and the Safavid Shi'ite Empire was inevitable and resulted in a series of long and bloody wars in the 16th — 17th centuries, as well as persecution or even removal of unwanted communities from the territories under their control. For example, when Iraq came under Ottoman control, Iranian Shi'ites were deported, while in Safavid Iran there was persecution of Sunnis, which often led to uprisings on the borders of the state and caused the Ottoman invasion of the country [13. P. 73]. The practice of forced resettlement also continued in the 20th century and became standard in a number of Middle Eastern regimes.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the political consciousness of the Arab peoples began to form due to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the

prospect of establishing an independent Arab state. In this regard, Persia also posed a threat to the Arabs' plans [8. P. 118—121], as it regularly confronted the Ottomans for control over such buffer territories as Mesopotamia. Arab nationalism served as an ideological basis for Arab aspirations to acquire their own statehood. In its turn, the renaming of Persia into Iran (“land of the Aryans”) in 1935 can be interpreted as the Iranians' reaction to Arab nationalism and an attempt to counter the emerging pan-Arab ideology by beginning to identify themselves through a break with Semitic culture and the Semitic peoples to which Arabs belong, and a return to their “Aryan” roots.

Arab nationalism generated another disagreement between Arabs and Iranians — the term for the Persian Gulf, which Arabs call “Arab” [14]. The historical facts on this issue speak in favor of the first name, since the designation “Arab Gulf” did not spread until the 1960s, precisely because of the growing popularity and influence of the pan-Arab movement led by Egyptian President Jamal Abdel Nasser. According to pan-Arab rhetoric, Iran was presented as a powerful empire that wants to take control over the Arab states located in the Gulf subregion.

In its turn, the supporters of the name “Arabian Gulf” state that Persia has never been a maritime power, its territories, even on the eastern coast of the Persian Gulf, were mainly inhabited by the *Huwala* (speaking an Arabic dialect) and *Ahwazi* (speaking an Iraqi dialect) Arabs. Even today there are more ethnic Arabs than Persians living there.

To show their neutrality in this dispute between Arabs and Iranians, many researchers, journalists, and politicians prefer to say simply “the Gulf”, and this approach has become quite widespread in recent years.

Thus, we can state the duality of the influence of the historical factor on the Arab-Iranian relations, which manifested itself, on the one hand, in the mutual influence of the two civilizations, and on the other, created a number of prerequisites for mistrust that exists in relations between these peoples. In this regard, we should agree with the fair assessment of the famous Orientalist Fred Halliday: “History is not univocal: for all the conflicts and conquests, and insults and divergences, there has been at least as much to unite and bring together the Arabs and Iranians as there has to divide them. Language, religion, pilgrimage, migration, trade have tied the regions of both peoples together for all of history. For much of the time they have lived in peace, not war.... The ‘we’ and the ‘they’ are not given by history but are the products of specific, often conscious, political interventions” [11].

The Confessional Aspect

One of the most important factors of disagreement between Arabs and Persians is the confessional aspect, since most Arabs belong to the Sunni branch of Islam, while Shi'ism is the state religion of the Islamic Republic of Iran and about 90% of Iranians confess it. Sunni-Shi'ite antagonism is also considered an aspect of the Saudi-Iranian confrontation, although its impact on bilateral relations is often overestimated.

Sunni Arabs tend to speak quite sharply about Shi'ite followers. In particular, Sunnis call Shi'ites "rafidun" or "rafidites", which is translated from Arabic as "rejectors"; this refers to the Shi'ites' refusal to recognize the legitimacy of the power of the first three "righteous caliphs". In addition, there are widespread accusations among Sunni Arabs that the Islamic Republic of Iran seeks to become "the leader of the Islamic world", thereby overtaking and displacing the Arabs, the people to whom the Islamic religion was sent down.

In their turn, the Shi'ites may call the Sunni Arabs "nawasib" (from Arabic "nasb" — "cheating", "deceit") for their policy of discrediting the image of the fourth "Righteous Caliph" and the first Shi'ite Imam 'Ali [15. P. 9]. Iranian Shi'as accuse Sunnis of numerous discriminations against Shi'ite minorities living in Arab countries, the desire of Arabs to keep Shi'as out of high positions and minimize their participation in political processes. According to Iran, such policies of Arab governments give it the right to act as a protector of Shi'ite Islam and support Shi'as in numerous regional conflicts, particularly in Yemen and Iraq.

Thus, Sunni-Shi'ite contradictions often serve as an argument for a cautious attitude towards Iranians: it is widely believed that Iran still adheres to the ideology of the Islamic Revolution and seeks to "convert the Sunni population of the Arab world to Shi'ite Islam". Political motives are also emphasized because, according to the opinion of many Arabs, Iran uses proxies in the Arab world to increase its influence [16].

It is remarkable that the politicization of the Sunni-Shi'ite controversy has been increasingly pointed out not only by scientists, but also by high-ranking politicians. So at the end of 2015, a member of the Saudi royal family, Prince Turki al-Faisal, gave an interview to the American magazine *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. Speaking about the problems of Saudi-Iranian relations, Turki al-Faisal pointed out the difference between the ruling regimes. As for the Sunni-Shi'ite antagonism, he said it had no religious basis, but was inspired by political ambitions, as governments and individual politicians often exploited the sectarian divide within the 'Islamic world' for their own purposes [16].

The Political Aspect

There is no doubt that most Arab governments are extremely hostile towards Iran as a Shi‘ite country, with unflattering epithets about the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) in the media. The Arab media is full of catchy headlines about Iran’s pervasive interference in the affairs of Middle Eastern states and its support and sponsorship of groups such as the Yemeni Houthis and the Lebanese Hezbollah. Tehran’s support for Bashar al-Assad’s regime in Syria also drew a negative reaction in the Arab world [17. P. 48]. Such statements are practically not found in the media of Arab countries that are allies of Iran (e.g. Lebanon), and this tolerance extends to people as well.

Sunni extremists and Salafists in Arab countries tend to be hostile towards Iran, explaining it with religious reasons, but religious enmity is easily transformed into government propaganda (as in Saudi Arabia, Morocco, UAE, etc.) when the media gets involved.

In spite of the fact that Arab attitudes towards Iran are complex and determined by the depth of the division between Sunnis and Shi‘as, Iranian support for the al-Assad regime in Syria is a much more significant factor in shaping the Arab population’s attitude towards IRI. For example, some people state that Iran has helped the Syrian people to resist the terrorist group DAESH (ISIS, IS, Islamic State, an organization forbidden in the Russian Federation), which in its turn is a humane act that has strengthened the friendship between the two peoples of Iran and Syria. Others claim that B. al-Assad is the embodiment of a “non-Islamist, semi-democratic government” which must be overthrown [18].

Thus, politics and government statements, as well as the media influence the worldview of citizens to a large extent, but we cannot say that they totally control the public opinion. To confirm this, let us turn the attention to analyze the public opinion polls reflecting various aspects of the mutual perception of Arabs and Iranians.

In the 5th wave of surveys conducted by the developers of the Arab Barometer project, respondents from 12 countries (Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, Sudan, Yemen, Iraq, Kuwait, and Jordan) were asked who they thought posed the greater threat — Iran or Israel. Contrary to long-standing propaganda, most respondents named Israel as the main threat to the Middle East (Fig. 1), and a relatively small percentage of Arab citizens believe that the recent rapprochement between some Arab states and Israel is beneficial for the region [19].

According to the diagram, Iran is most feared in Kuwait, Iraq, and Yemen. Sh. Telami, a Palestinian-American professor in the Department of Government

and Politics at the University of Maryland and senior fellow at the Brooklyn Institute’s Center for Middle East Policy, notes that it is Iran’s “projection of power” that drives the fear of Iran among Arabs, especially those living in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. The Arabian monarchies fear Iran’s influence on their Shi‘ite communities. As a result, they also have little interest in reintegrating Iran into the international community, as this would strengthen Tehran’s influence. Therefore, it is in the interests of the Persian Gulf countries to pursue a sustainable policy of containment of the Islamic Republic [20].

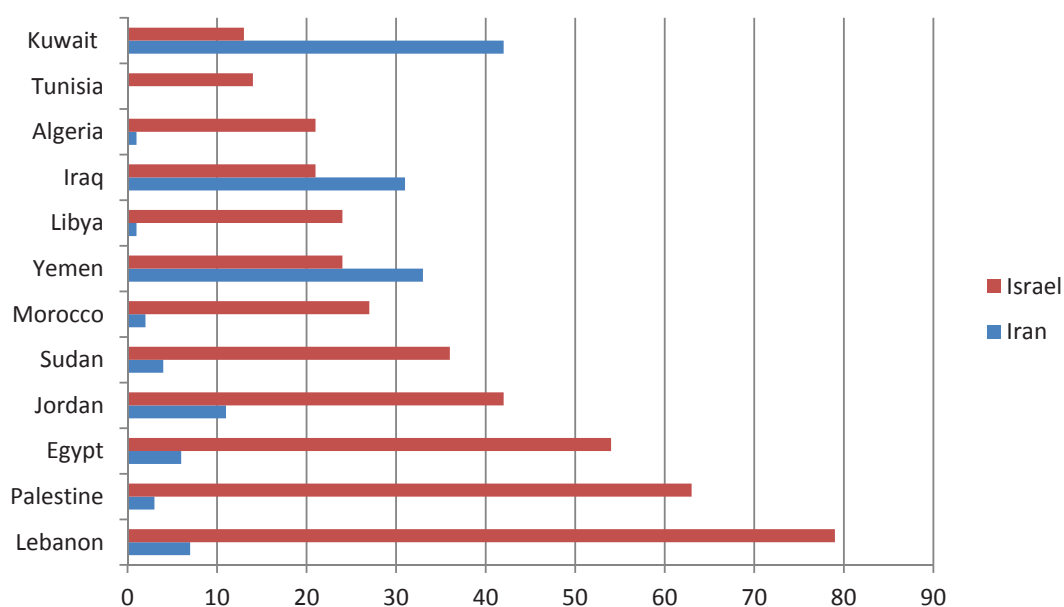


Figure 1. Arab Barometer respondents’ answers to the question “Which country poses the greatest threat to your nation’s stability?”

Source: Robbins M. Does Iran pose greater threat to the region than Israel? Here is what Arab citizens think // Arab Barometer. January 3, 2020. URL: <https://www.arabbarometer.org/2020/01/israel-or-iran-which-is-the-greater-perceived-threat-copy/> (accessed: 10.11.2022).

It is noteworthy that Iraq and Yemen are commonly included in the so-called “Shi‘ite crescent”, an alliance of states with a Shi‘ite majority or significant minority population that Iran allegedly intends to unite behind it in order to direct this alliance against the Sunni countries for regional leadership. The Arab Barometer data strongly proves that the populations

of these two countries will not support the involvement of their governments in an Iranian-led alliance.

In another poll conducted in 2021 by the *Woodrow Wilson Center* (USA) in six Arab countries (Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, and Lebanon), respondents were asked to identify ‘two states that pose the greatest threat’. Iran received many votes, along with Israel and the United States. However, about two-thirds of the respondents did not oppose Iran’s nuclear program because they do not support the “double standard” policy in the region [20], in which the United States gives Israel the exclusive right to possess nuclear weapons in the Middle East region.

To continue the topic of nuclear weapons, here are the results of an interview with 7,400 respondents from six Arab countries (Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and UAE), as well as Turkey and Iran, conducted in 2015 by J. Zogby, the founder and president of the Arab American Institute (USA). The question concerned support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to resolve the Iranian “nuclear dispute”. According to the results of the survey, most respondents in all countries, except Lebanon and Turkey, did not support the 5+1 group (Russia, US, China, UK, France, and Germany) due to the absence of belief in the possibility of stopping the Iranian nuclear program [21].

Iranians, for their part, expressed contradictory views on the JCPOA. They were mostly positive, but two-thirds of the respondents were annoyed that their country had to restrict its nuclear program. At the same time, a significant part of the population expressed the opinion that their country ‘should have nuclear capabilities as long as other countries had them’ [22].

Thus, people’s opinions regarding the JCPOA are quite contradictory, but do not depend on nationality, since many Arabs see nothing wrong with Iran developing a “peaceful atom”, while Iranians are dissatisfied with the policy pursued against their country and the burden of sanctions that hinder the development of the state.

The Arab Barometer project (Wave 6 — Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Lebanon, and Jordan) also conducted a research project to analyze the opinion of Turkey, Iran, Russia and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in the Arab world. The results are reflected in Fig. 2 [23].

The survey data shows wide support for Turkey’s influence in the Arab world, while Iran is in the last place, i.e. it is a less desired regional leader in the opinion of the respondents. This suggests that anti-Iranian rhetoric in the media influences the Arab population, although not to the same extent as it can be expected based on the regularity some Arab governments initiate anti-Iranian media campaigns.

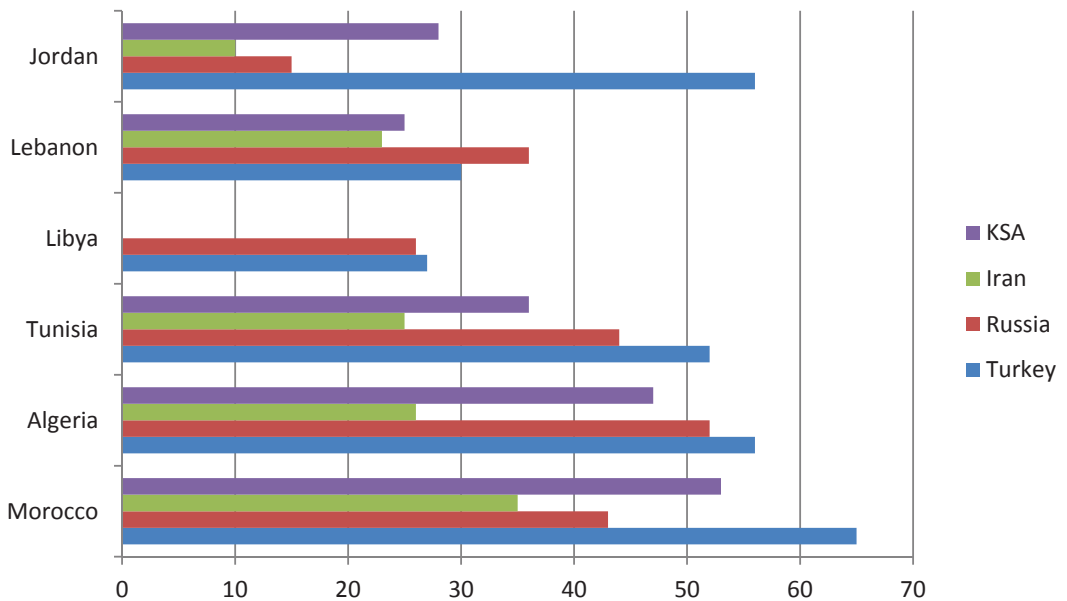


Figure 2. Residents of Arab countries' support for the influence of Turkey, Iran, Russia, and the KSA (2021)

Source: Robbins M. Heavy hands and heavy hearts: the perils of military intervention in MENA // Arab Barometer. February 24, 2021. URL: <https://www.arabbarometer.org/2021/02/heavy-hands-and-heavy-hearts-the-perils-of-military-intervention-in-the-mena/> (accessed: 10.11.2022).

Nevertheless, it should be noted that most Arabs, whether they are hostile to Iran or not, admire the Iranians and their achievements throughout history, including the independence of Iran's foreign policy and its non-obedience to Western countries, in particular the United States [24]. Moreover, Iran is respected by many Arabs for its opposition to Israel and support for the resistance carried out by Hamas and Hezbollah. In this regard, it is quite logical that, according to a survey of Palestinians, who were asked to name a state that they particularly sympathize with, between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran the majority favored Iran, which is certainly related to the policy pursued by Tehran in the Middle East settlement [25].

In contrast to numerous projects reflecting Arab attitudes toward Iranians, very few sources are able to draw conclusions about Arab perceptions of Iranians. Among the few opinion polls there is one that was conducted in Tehran in late December 2020 [26]. The answers of the respondents showed that Iranians have a very positive attitude toward Arab states, moreover, they have close friends there. When asked which of the countries of the Arab world they would like to visit, the respondents first mentioned Egypt, because Iranians are attracted by the history and architecture of the homeland of the pyramids. In addition,

the Iranians have strong associations with the popular Iranian TV series on the religious theme “Prophet Yusuf” [27].

Palestine is on the second place by the number of references. The reason for this choice is Tehran’s policy of active defending the pro-Palestinian position in the Middle Eastern conflict, which greatly influences public opinion and compassion for the tragedy of the Palestinian people.

The country that Iranians are less eager to visit is the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Even though Saudi Arabia is home to the main holy places of Islam — the cities of Mecca and Medina, complicated and unpredictable Iranian-Saudi relations stop Iranian representatives from visiting the Arabian monarchy [28].

Thus, the main reason for the lack of harmony between the Arab peoples and Iran is the political ambitions of political actors, as well as the foreign interference of extra-regional actors, primarily the US and the EU, into the Middle Eastern politics. This position is clearly stated by one participant in a social survey in Tehran: “Saudi Arabia has crossed the line, while others, such as Qatar, maintain an optimal level of engagement with Iran. We are friendly and can quickly become friends again. Obviously, each country bases its relationship on the benefits and advantages it receives, but it is doubtful that hostility will lead to anything good for any country. With all the sanctions imposed by the Western countries, some people may think that it’s our own fault that we have such problems, but let me take off the mask and say this: the Iranians have no problems with anyone” [26].

The reality is that Iran itself is not looking for conflict. Moreover, considering that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a U.S. satellite, many of the tensions between Riyadh and Tehran can be viewed through the prism of Iran’s conflict with the United States. Arabs are constantly presented with a lot of misleading information about how badly Iran treats the Sunni Arab populations living in Iran, Iraq, and Syria. School textbooks in Iran in their turn are filled with false and biased descriptions of Arabs as cruel and primitive invaders who once invaded Persia [29]. Hostility and superiority have been fostered and instilled in younger generations for decades, both in Arab countries and in Iran. The fact that they speak different languages contributed greatly to this.

The Language Aspect

The language factor is also one of the controversial aspects of relations between Arabs and Iranians.

The Arabs believe that they are the representatives of the true religion, who imparted to the Persians the desire for knowledge that is inherent in Islam.

However, there is no point in denying the fact that the flourishing of Arab-Muslim culture to a large extent was possible due to a wide range of Persian scholars, thinkers and writers, who contributed greatly to the formation of Arab-Muslim civilization [30], as well as by the Persian language.

According to the Arabs, ‘the Arabic language is immortal because the Holy Qur’an was sent down in it [31], it is the language of Islam, and so everyone who considers himself a Muslim must know Arabic.

However, it is important to note that after the Arab-Muslim conquest of Iran it was Persian not Arabic that became the language of the “new Muslim culture” [32. P. 12], linking together a vast space from the Arabian Peninsula to Mawarannahr.

As for Iranians, Arabic is the only thing that unites the Arabs into a single whole because they fail to create a joint nation or a common state [9]. In addition, Iranians honor the Arabic language as the language of the Holy Book of Islam.

It is important to emphasize that during the period of co-history, Iranians being representatives of other ethnic and religious minorities living in the Arab Caliphate (Greeks, Jews, Assyrians, etc.), have made invaluable contributions to the translation movement as well as the development of science in the Arab-Muslim world. Translation as a cultural phenomenon goes back deep in the history of pre-Islamic Iran, particularly in the Achaemenid era. In the period following the Arab conquests, the legacy of Persian civilization contributed to the development of the first phase of the translation movement in the Middle East. In this phase, works on mathematics, astronomy, medicine and biology were translated. It should also be noted that the Persian poetic tradition had a tremendous influence on Arabic-language poetry, for which the Persian ghazals served as the standard for several centuries.

Thus, in the Arab Caliphate the peculiar division of the spheres of usage between Arabic and Persian took shape, “flowing from different tasks”: Arabic was the language of Islam, while Persian acted as a language of communication in the eastern provinces of the Caliphate and a literary language, in which numerous lyric works, historical and epic works were written [32. P. 12—16].

Modern Persian retains a great many Arabic borrowings which have penetrated it since the period of the spread of Islam in Persian-speaking areas. This was partly connected with political pressure and attempts to ban Persian; however, it was also practical. Arabic was and is the language of the Islamic world. Like English today, Arabic was the language of science, mathematics, and subjects that required international discourse.

At the present stage, some Iranians aim to demonstrate their academic level by filling their speech with borrowings from the Arabic language. After the Islamic Revolution in Iran (1978—1979) there was a marked increase in the use of the Arabic language, which was mainly due to the proliferation of theological works and the new constitution, as well as the fact that the majority of the new regime consisted of Muslim legal scholars with a brilliant command of the Arabic language.

As time passes, the idea to free the Persian language from Arabic borrowings has spread among Iranians. The first attempt was made as far back as the time of the poet Firdausi (about 1000 A.D.). Although there were regular debates about the percentage of Arabisms in the Persian language and the extent of their influence, the overall percentage of Arabic words used in everyday speech probably did not change significantly over the centuries. As to the rate at which Arabic is used in written Persian for academic or bureaucratic purposes, the situation varies considerably according to the sphere of usage.

In modern Iran, there are also initiatives to reduce the influence of the Arabic language. For example, there is a Persian Academy aimed at replacing some foreign words with Persian equivalents. Iranians are sincerely proud of their language stating that Arabs are not able to “arabize” their country completely even if they wanted to: the Persians preserved their heritage and language for more than 1,400 years after the appearance of Islam in Iran, and they are able to do it further.

Conclusion

Thus, despite the political contradictions between Iran and the Arab states, in particular Saudi Arabia, people on both sides are quite positive towards the opponent and are ready for cooperation but meddling by the Western countries and misinformation from the media complicate the process of normalizing relations. The state of things is that governments’ actions are often at variance with public opinion, i.e., governments do not seek the support of their people in making decisions. In other words, they are not the governments that are led by public opinion, but the public opinion is “adjusted” by the media, at the instigation of the governments, to suit the course pursued towards their opponents.

The study has also once again demonstrated that the Arab countries are not united in their views on relations with Iran. It is demonstrated both by the

results of sociological surveys and the concrete steps taken by individual Arab governments in regional politics. At the same time, people do not want to be influenced by aggressive rhetoric and try to disprove the widely believed facts of mutual Arab-Iranian enmity. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the Iranians are more loyal to the Arabs at the present stage, which is also reflected in Tehran's desire to establish cooperation with the Gulf monarchies.

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