



Marriage Without Certificate: On Syria-Iran Quasi-alliance From the Iranian Revolution to the Arab Revolution

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Syria and Iran have formed a special relation in the past four decades. While researchers of international relations have probed deeply into alliance theory in the past half century, current literature in this field can hardly explain the informal mechanism for Syria-Iran security cooperation. To unravel the puzzle, this paper attempts to put forward a new hypothesis: quasi-alliance. Based on an empirical study of Syria-Iran special relations in the past four decades, it reveals that quasi-alliance is a unique model for security cooperation in international arena paralleling with formal alliance, and its security arrangement has a unique logic, dynamics, mode of management and attributes. In the new framework of analysis, this paper touches down upon the origins, channels, features and tests of Syria-Iran quasi-alliance by focusing on the diplomatic history of their bilateral relations from 1979 to 2017. The bilateral quasi-alliance practice has undergone three stages of combating Iraqi aggression in 1980s, curbing Israel-Turkey axis in 1990s and balancing U.S.-Israel-Saudi-Turkey coalition in the 21st century, particularly since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war.

Keywords: Syria-Iran relations, alliance theory, Middle East security, quasi-alliance diplomacy, the Arab Revolution

Introduction

Ever since the outbreak of the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979, Syria and Iran have maintained an all-round cooperation in economy, politics, and security. Particularly in the field of security, the two parties have formed a long-term tacit agreement through several important channels for consultation. The two countries afford each other sympathy and support on key regional security issues, ranging from the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), the Lebanon War (in 1982 and 2006), the Gulf War (1990-1991), the Iraq War (2003), Iranian Nuclear Crisis (2006-2015), the Gaza War (2008), and the Syrian War (Since 2011). On 6 February 2012, Israel's Haaretz newspaper reported that Gen Qassem Suleimani, the commander of Islamic Revolution Guard Corp's elite overseas operations arm, the Quds Force, had gone to Syria and taken up a position in what

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