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| <b>TITLE</b>    | <b>THE MIDDLE EAST SHIITE ARC: A REAL THREAT OR GEOPOLITICAL CHIMERA?</b>  |
| <b>SUMMARY</b>  | <p>The term Shiite Crescent, or Shiite Arc, is becoming increasingly popular in political and academic discourse as well as in the media. It is used to indicate a threat allegedly posed by an alliance of states and forces dependent on Iran. However, there is no consensus on who the exact members of the alliance are. Since the basic criteria of membership in the alliance are the allegiance to Iran and the commitment to Shia Islam it can be expanded to include Iraq, Syria, Lebanese Hezbollah, and sometimes the Shiite forces of Bahrain and even Yemen. The relevance of this agenda peaks with the outbursts of anti-Iranian rhetoric as it was the case in the spring and early summer of 2019. Meanwhile, is the author emphasizes that the concept of the Shiite Arc contains a number of fundamental errors in terms of both methodological premises and the logic of reasoning. Particularly, the author argues that since this concept is based on a dialectic method it cannot be regarded as an appropriate tool for assessing or forecasting the development of the regional processes. On the one hand, the application of this method may entail artificial extrapolation of foreign political culture and assessment criteria in regional realities. For example, the author stresses that Middle Eastern civilizational antinomies can hardly be understood within the framework of the Western political thought as they represent contraries but not contradictions. Ignoring this fact leads to artificial fueling of regional conflicts and controversies. On the other hand, the dialectic method tends to create new, and speculative, fault lines in the region. The author concludes that from the outset the concept of Shiite Arc is founded on an erroneous theoretical ground and therefore is methodologically untenable. Meanwhile, the author stresses that in the current international conditions this concept turned out to be a popular propaganda construct paradoxically suitable to Iran, as well as to its opponents. The concept of the Shiite Arc appears to be an enabling ideology for a new stage of military and political confrontation which may cause more suffering to peoples of the Middle East.</p> |
| <b>KEYWORDS</b> | the Middle East, Shiite Crescent, Shiite Arc, Sunni-Shiite conflict, military regional conflicts, external intervention, propaganda, a dialectical method, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Hezbollah.  |

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