

## The Regional Dimension in The Administration of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi: Iranian-Saudi Relations (As A Model)

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### Abstract

The historical experience of the course of Iran's foreign policy indicates that it did not follow a pattern that does not change radically when the decision-maker changes. Achieving the Iranian national interest is one of the priorities of this policy, and thus the current president (Ebrahim Raisi) assuming the presidency in Iran was not to depart from These foundations, but he has used tools that may differ from his predecessors, which is clear when he takes a line of rapprochement with the countries of the region within the framework of his intellectual premises that call for regional rapprochement as an entry point for international relations, and moving from the regional to the international to strengthen Iran's negotiating position on international issues And here was the trend to try to resume diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia, after that sharp rupture since 2016, after the execution of the Saudi Shiite preacher (Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr) and the events that followed.

**Keywords:** regional rapprochement, diplomatic relations, national interest, decision-maker.

### Introduction

Specialists point out that foreign policy is: the framework within which states move to confront the circumstances and affairs that occur outside their borders in order to achieve their interests; States in the international community act within the framework of the policies they adopt to ensure that the available resources are used to achieve their national interests in the best possible way. International politics includes all the practices of states outside their borders, and it is natural that important and highly influential states affect international politics and order more than others, while being affected by it.

In this context, the Iranian foreign policy constitutes one of the contents of international policy, and by following the historical course of this policy, we can note that it proceeded on foundations that do not change radically when the decision-maker changes. Achieving the Iranian national interest is one of the priorities of this policy, which sought Iranian presidents over the past decades have achieved it regardless of the tools or mechanisms used, which is no different from the current Iranian president's assumption of the presidency in Iran, but he focused in his speeches on directing the compass of Iranian foreign policy towards the countries of the region and attention to the regional dimension and giving it priority in This foreign policy, was the attempt to open diplomatic channels with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, after they were completely closed following the events that followed the execution of the Saudi Shiite preacher (Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr) one of the outcomes of this interest, and this interest coincided with a return to the issue of the Iranian nuclear agreement In 2015, the United States of America withdrew from it later when former US President (Donald Trump) announced this withdrawal, which gave a justification to the Iranian side. I did not abide by the obligations stipulated in the agreement.

After the current US President (Joe Biden) announced his agreement to return to revive this agreement, the Iranian leadership was skeptical about the seriousness of the American commitment to the terms of this agreement, at a time when the administration of the current Iranian President (Ebrahim Raisi) believes that it is not the most important file and the president despite its importance to the Iranian economy; It focuses on the regional environment in achieving its interests, and then this range will expand to its international environment, after strengthening its negotiating position and increasing its negotiating options on the international scene as a result of winning the regional environment in its favor, at a time when the world is witnessing several crises that affected the course of international politics in general and options Iranian foreign policy in particular. On the other hand, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has realized the current international and regional circumstances and their danger, which made it easier for the Iranian party to resume communication to open channels of cooperation between them, starting with diplomacy, to confront these circumstances and crises, so that both countries achieve their national interests.

### ***Research Importance***

The importance of the study stems from the fact that it sheds light on a distinct and important stage of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia, within the framework of that focus on the regional dimension adopted by the administration of the current Iranian president (Ebrahim Raisi).

### ***Research Problem***

Although the international dimension has taken a significant part in Iranian foreign policy since 1989, in the theses of previous Iranian presidents, because of its importance, especially in the context of the nuclear file, the theses of the current Iranian president have a regional rather than an international dimension, and stem from this research problem. Several questions can be presented, the most important of which are:

- Are there internal and external variables that made the current Iranian administration turn in this regional direction?
- Are there determinants or obstacles to this regional orientation?
- Is there a relationship between returning to the Iranian nuclear agreement and the Iranian-Saudi rapprochement?

### ***Research Methodology***

In order to delve into the field of study in order to reach the results of the study, the descriptive analytical method can be used, which is based on describing the variables and then analyzing them.

### ***Research Plan***

In order to delve into the field of study and reach the results, the study can be divided as follows:

The first topic: the foundations and objectives of Iranian foreign policy and the role of the President of the Republic

- The first requirement: the foundations and objectives of Iranian foreign policy
- The second requirement: the role of the President of the Republic in shaping Iranian foreign policy

The second topic: the course of Iranian-Saudi relations

- The first requirement: The first requirement: a historical overview of Iranian-Saudi relations
- The second requirement: the motives for the Iranian-Saudi rapprochement
- The third requirement: the challenges of Iranian-Saudi rapprochement

Conclusion: It includes the most important results of the study

## The First Topic

### *The foundations and objectives of Iranian foreign policy and the role of the president of the republic*

The Iranian foreign policy is characterized by complexity and intertwining. Those who follow it find that it is a policy in which the religious, national, and revolutionary overlap with pragmatism.

#### *The First Requirement: Foundations and Objectives of Iranian Foreign Policy*

The Iranian leaders have been haunted since the outbreak of the revolution in 1979, and until now a desire to export the Iranian revolution to all parts of the world, especially to its vital field in the Arab Gulf region. Articles (152) and (154), which provide for “protecting the weak on earth” and “defending Muslims in all parts of the world.” These constitutional texts are an attempt by the Iranian leadership to legitimize Iranian policies in this field, which were intended to be linked to the identity of the state itself, no matter how inconsistent with the principles of good neighborliness and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, especially the neighbors in the Arabian Gulf. This ambition and desire continue, even if its expression differs, according to the stage and internal and external developments of Iran. Therefore, in order to understand this policy directed towards the realization of the Iranian project, especially in the region, it is necessary to identify those pillars adopted by this Iranian policy, which are:

The first pillar: the ideology, the subjective view of Iran as an empire and the largest country representing the Shiite sect in the world, which can be seen in all Persian writings, including school curricula, and literary writings, all of which focus on two aspects, the first: the arrogant view towards its Arab neighbors, and the second: Consolidating the concept of the Persian nation, which is in the middle of a Sunni environment, even though Iran has dealt with pragmatism in managing its interests, which explains its support for Hamas, as well as its support for Armenia against Azerbaijan.

The second pillar: the geographical factor: as Iran enjoys a position that makes it have a strategic advantage, and this advantage increases when Iran controls waterways important for global trade, especially the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran often uses as a pressure card on Western countries in its negotiations on the program Iranian nuclear.

The third pillar: the apparent imbalance in the strategic balance of power between the two shores of the Gulf: (Iran and the Gulf Cooperation Council), including demographic, geographic, military, and even economic and industrial differences. The Iranian project, by relying on these pillars, aims to achieve its objectives in the region, the most important of which are: to put the Gulf Cooperation Council and its regional neighbors in a state of chronic tension, which makes gathering their forces difficult. Since the revolution in Iran in 1979, successive elites have been able to rule Iran has to combine these three pillars and use them to achieve

several goals, the most important of which are the following:

- Preserving Iran's regional hegemony and expanding towards the Arab region, and this is explained and explained by (Mohammed Javad Larijani), Secretary of the Iranian Human Rights Committee in the Judiciary, by saying: "This strategy makes it imperative for Iran not to limit its geographical borders from its role, as no state with the exception of Iran, it can lead the Muslim world and this is a historic moment to achieve that."
- Preserving the Iranian regime and protecting it from targeting, as happened in Iraq. This regional area constitutes for Iran from a strategic military point of view the strategic depth, which provides it with a front to defend Iranian territory.
- As well as preserving Iran's gains, especially nuclear, and preserving Iran's position in the Islamic world.

Therefore, these goals have become an approach for the Iranian leadership for decades, and they do not change radically with the change of leadership, including the president who represents the other part of the top of the executive authority in Iran, and who plays an important role in shaping Iranian foreign policy, which can be presented in the following demand.

***The Second Requirement: The Role of the President of the Republic of Iran in Drawing Up Foreign Policy***

Specialists point out that the reality of the situation is that the President of the Republic in Iran has an important role in defining the foreign policy agenda and priorities, and despite the superior role that the Supreme Leader assumes in deciding internal and foreign policy, and although the latter is the first leader, the historical experience in keeping pace with previous administrations, did not indicate the state of Absence of an effective role for the President of the Republic in Iran through the possibility of harnessing his views on various issues, which can receive support and support from Iranian parties and institutions participating in decision-making, whether at home or abroad. The Supreme Leader, according to the Iranian constitution, has the authority to formulate the country's supreme policies, but the formulation of those policies passes through state institutions, led by the government and the Supreme Council for National Security, and is influenced by several institutions such as the Expediency Council and Parliament.

It is possible to cite the experience of previous presidents in Iran in order to infer their effectiveness and how to translate their visions into the field of Iranian foreign policy through the following:

***First: The foreign political visions of the presidents of Iran since the death of Imam Ruhollah Khomeini***

It is possible to point out many of the changes that occurred in the foreign policy and relations of Iran, which was under the previous elected presidents. The statement that the Supreme Leader decides only and the elected presidents are implemented is only suspicious; This is confirmed by the Iranian constitution, whether the previous or current amended ones refer to the role of the president in shaping the Iranian state's higher policies, but the parameters of those policies are drawn through the various Iranian institutions.

During the era of the former Iranian President (Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani), who held the position of Presidency of the Republic in Iran for two consecutive terms from 1989 to 1997,

politics in Iran was distinguished (as moderation), and the economic aspect had taken a large space in his policy, and those results that resulted. Because of the Iraqi-Iranian war on the economic situation in Iran, there is a strong motive to make the interest in improving the Iranian economy a high place on its agenda. In addition to those religious dialogues that contributed to setting the features of his policy, and he played an active role in preparing the Iranian internal environment so that it would be ready to receive the revolution throughout the sixties and seventies of the last century.

The vision of the former president, who was followed by Muhammad Khatami (1997-2005), came with a speech and a foreign policy calling for the promotion of what he called: (dialogue of civilizations) and seeking to remove the causes of tension in Iranian foreign relations with the countries of the world, which reflected positively on Iran's relations at the level international and regional. Hence, the visions of the former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005-2013) brought foreign political orientations, which took a different course from those taken by his predecessors, Presidents Rafsanjani and Khatami. The internal reasons for power in dealing with Western countries, and his speech had an opposite effect to the government of his predecessor with regard to relations with European countries. As for the government of the former president (Hassan Rouhani), which was born in violation of the policy of his predecessor (Mahmoud Ahmadinejad) and its discourse in opening a new page in Iranian-Western and American relations, and trying to find a way out of that crisis in relations due to the Iranian nuclear file, it established the negotiations that led to the conclusion of the nuclear agreement. 2015; Those visions of the former Iranian president (Hassan Rouhani) are based on the international dimension in finding solutions to outstanding issues, including regional ones, which proceeded within the framework of the Iranian nuclear file, and the discussions that took place with the (5+1) countries before the US withdrawal from the nuclear agreement during the president's era. Former American (Donald Trump); The former Iranian president and his team belonging to the International School of Foreign Policy believe that the level required to address foreign issues is the international level, which is the best in their view, and through it, according to their view, Iran's differences with international powers can be resolved, which in turn will lead to solving regional problems by influencing the regional parties, whether positively or negatively, to break this regional tension, and in order to neutralize the international parties in the negative impact on the situation in the region.

According to this vision, the transition from the international to the regional will undermine the level of strategic independence of the countries of the region, or the countries of the Gulf system; As the push by the major countries of the Gulf regime states is more useful for resolving inter-Arab differences, especially the Gulf Cooperation Council countries with Iran, and these Iranians who belong to the international school of foreign policy focus on the country's economic aspect and solve economic problems at the international level, in other words: These economic problems of Iran can be resolved away from the global value chain, and then intertwined with the global economy, and this was confirmed by the former Iranian President (Hassan Rouhani) by saying: "The solution to economic issues passes through the nuclear negotiating table" (), but it was For the current Iranian president (Ebrahim Raisi), visions may approximate at times and may diverge at other times from his predecessors, but do not deviate from the general principles of Iranian foreign policy, which we will review in the framework of the following requirement.

### ***Second: The foreign policy visions of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi***

The current president (Ebrahim Raisi) belongs to the regional theorists who have their

own view of it, which may not exactly match their previous counterparts; But in general, Iranian politicians and leaders agree on the great importance that this Gulf region poses to Iranian strategic thought. With regard to the subject of the study, these regionalists believe that the regional level constitutes, in their view, a starting point for addressing various issues of foreign policy, at a time when they criticize the Iranian internationalists' focus on The major powers in this aspect, as a weakening of the Iranian position in front of these major countries because of their regional problems, from their point of view, the solution of regional issues with the countries of the regional periphery will have positive returns for dealing with Western countries, and limits the exploitation of these Western countries for the multiple disputes of the regional countries in their favour. and directed against Iran.

On the other hand, they believe that expanding foreign trade with the West will not necessarily enhance Iran's strategic independence. Therefore, from their point of view, the best solution is the regional approach, which is the gateway to addressing foreign differences. This regional orientation does not mean that its owners oppose negotiations at the international level. They support synchronization between the two levels in a balanced way, which is a disciplined balance to expand the room for maneuver in foreign policy, as well as they are motivated to expand the relationship with emerging powers, such as China and Russia, so as to constitute a balancing factor in negotiations with the West.

In this context, the administration of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi pays special attention to its regional surroundings. The observer of this foreign policy notices the duplication of external political behavior represented in supporting allies on the one hand and trying to reach out to its competitors on the other hand, which expresses their translation in one way or another. To achieve their national security, based on their regional point of view, this presidential team believes that deterring Israel and the United States of America does not necessarily target the neighboring countries, the most important of which are Saudi Arabia and the UAE. He sharply criticized the United States, before the United Nations General Assembly, by saying: "Of course, there are two events in history this year, on the sixth of January, when the people stormed the headquarters of the American Congress, and in August, when Afghans fell from the American planes, and from the Capitol to Kabul, a clear message was sent to the world that the American hegemonic regime has no credibility, neither inside nor outside the country." Raisi said: "Not only the hegemony regime, but the project of imposing the entire Western identity has failed miserably." These visions have been applied to Ebrahim Raisi's position on the Iranian nuclear negotiations, which could have an impact on the Iranian-Saudi rapprochement and can be presented in the following.

### ***Ebrahim Raisi's position on the nuclear negotiations and their impact on the Iranian-Saudi rapprochement***

The Iranian nuclear file is one of the most important files for the Iranian leaders, and it shows a lot of extremism, especially after the former Iranian president (Mahmoud Ahmadinejad), who took office in 2005, who announced more extremism in this file and Iran's right to possess this nuclear technology. No other country prevents it from doing so. In contrast to this Iranian militancy, there was great concern about these Iranian nuclear activities, on the part of the United States of America in particular and several European countries, which these countries considered a violation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (N.P. T), which Iran signed in 1968, and the protocol In 2003, and given that Iran could use this technology to develop its military capabilities by possessing nuclear weapons, which would constitute an Iranian military superiority, which in turn would make the balance of

power in the region in favor of Iran, which is not in the interest of the Western powers, and in order that The United States of America was keen to refer this file to the Security Council, which in turn imposed sanctions on the Iranian side, considering it a threat to international peace and security for its failure to stop uranium enrichment in response to Security Council resolutions, in addition to the economic sanctions imposed by the United States of America and European countries outside the scope of the Security Council. And most importantly, the ban on the import of Iranian oil. This Iranian program has become closely monitored by these international parties, as well as by Israel because of the concern and danger it poses to its interests in the Middle East in general and the Arab Gulf region in particular.

With the former Iranian president (Hassan Rouhani) assuming the reins of the Iranian presidency in 2013, there was a decisive starting point in this file. He persuaded the rest of the decision-makers in Iran, especially the Supreme Leader in Iran, Ali Khamenei, to accept negotiations with the 5+1 group. It includes the permanent members of the Security Council + Germany, and the agreement was signed in July of the year 2015, which generally included reducing the level of uranium enrichment and reducing the number of centrifuges, in exchange for lifting international economic sanctions on Iran. This agreement was welcomed by the International, regional and Gulf parties.

But with the former US President (Donald Trump) assuming the presidency in the United States of America, he retreated from continuing with the nuclear agreement, which was the cause of many negative repercussions on Iranian-American relations, and Trump announced his withdrawal from the agreement in May 2018, and he announced Through his televised speech on the US withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran, he said: "Today I announce the withdrawal of the United States from the Iranian nuclear agreement," describing it as "disastrous." Act on US sanctions related to the Iranian regime's nuclear program. We will impose as many economic sanctions as possible." And the US National Security Adviser (John Bolton) later announced: "The reinstatement of US sanctions related to the Iranian nuclear program will apply immediately to the new contracts, explaining that foreign companies have a few months to get out of Iran."

In this regard, former US President (Donald Trump) has repeatedly stated that: "Iran does not live up to the spirit of the nuclear agreement," and he repeated these sayings every time his country imposes sanctions on Tehran. The Trump administration believed that the old nuclear agreement was a failure, because it did not limit Iran's movements and the development of its nuclear program.

Thus, the withdrawal of the United States of America from the agreement renders it null and void, since a large proportion of the sanctions on Iran were imposed by the United States of America, in addition to that, the global financial and economic system contributes to it in high proportions, which is why it can impose sanctions that make All parties not cooperating with it fear its negative repercussions on it, especially the European parties and even Russia and China.

For its part, the GCC countries had a position on the US withdrawal from the nuclear agreement, which was mostly supportive, and this can be inferred from those statements and statements made by the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, such as the statement made by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, saying: "...that Iran had exploited the economic return from lifting sanctions on it to continue its destabilizing activities in the region," and there are

those who have stated that they want to see the region free of weapons of mass destruction.

With the administration of (John Biden) assuming power on January 20, 2021, the US administration continues to pursue its economic, cultural and military interests in the Middle East, and the order of priorities can change with them. The foreign policy for dealing with the Iranian file, also known as the "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action", starting with the return of the Iranian nuclear agreement, to dealing with the regional threats linked to Iran that threaten American interests, and maintaining the security of Israel, a strategic ally in the region.

In this context, Ebrahim Raisi, who is following a line or tactic different from his predecessor, Hassan Rouhani, whose government did not want to escalate with the West over the nuclear file issue; Ebrahim Raisi and his government team see the escalation as a necessity to return to the negotiating table, which may be on Iranian terms, to force the United States of America to review its decision taken by the administration of former US President (Donald Trump), to withdraw from the Iranian nuclear negotiations and review its pressure on Iran.

However, there is nothing to say that the only priority of Ibrahim Raisi is this file with its importance, and this is what he confirmed in his first press conference after assuming the official position of the presidency, "His foreign policy will not start from the nuclear agreement and will not be determined by it," from which it is understood that this file is within a set of priorities in Ebrahim Raisi's foreign policy. Before taking office in August 2021, current Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi promised not to allow the talks to move forward, and did not agree to return to Vienna until late in the talks, insisting that Iranian negotiators would not back down "in any way." in defense of their country's interests. Iran's foreign ministry said it wanted an "admission of guilt" from the US as well as the immediate lifting of all US sanctions and a "guarantee" that no future US president unilaterally abandons the deal again. Ebrahim Raisi confirmed in another place, "...we do not trust the promises of the US administration," which withdrew from this agreement during the era of Donald Trump and now wants to return to it during the era of Joe Biden.

In this regard, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi announced in a speech to the United Nations General Assembly that he does not oppose the resumption of negotiations to save the agreement on his country's nuclear program, which has been stalled since his election, if "its ultimate goal is to lift all unjust sanctions." Seyyed Hossein Mousavian, who was a member of the Iranian nuclear diplomacy team in negotiations with the European Union in 2015, summarized the thinking of the current Iranian president, saying: "As I understand, a major approach will be the commitment of the 5+1 group and Iran to the JCPOA as well as the JCPOA. That is, full compliance versus full compliance."

Here, the main point of this foreign policy is to limit reliance on these negotiations with Western countries due to their hostility with the reality of Iran's strategic independence, and the need to achieve the international budget by intensifying international diplomacy, under which, according to their view, it is possible to expand the space for maneuvering with the United States. The US, while progressing steps of Iranian rapprochement with Saudi Arabia.

On the other hand, reaching a nuclear agreement could have positive repercussions on Iran in its Gulf regional environment. Jean-Marc Rickley, an analyst at the Geneva Center for Security Policy pointed out this by saying: "The revival of the nuclear agreement and the lifting of US sanctions on Iran would strengthen a key position, alleviate the Iranian economic crisis,



and have an impact on the Gulf talks."

There are those who pointed out that the prospects for improving relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia in particular, may eventually be linked to progress in reviving the Iranian nuclear agreement with major countries.

This is what the specialist in Middle East issues at Tehran University (Hassan Ahmadian) indicated to him in an interview on Al-Mada TV channel, that resolving regional issues in general and the Gulf in particular, and in particular achieving rapprochement with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, could be more effective for Iran before the completion of the nuclear agreement after its completion. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia reconsidered the effects of the nuclear agreement; Her view changed that not concluding this agreement constitutes a danger to her, after her view that the Iranian nuclear agreement constitutes a danger to her, which was referred to by (Hassan Ahmadian).

Here, the current Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's tendency to try to improve relations with neighboring Gulf countries, especially Saudi Arabia, focuses on achieving these visions in Iran's management of its foreign relations in this era, which gives priority to the regional dimension in relations in pursuit of achieving the Iranian national interest in various fields.

Therefore, Ebrahim Raisi was enthusiastic about restoring relations with the great neighbor in the Arabian Gulf, which is Saudi Arabia, and we will address the most important stations in these relations as follows.

## **The second topic**

### ***The course of iranian-saudi relations***

Iran and Saudi Arabia constitute the two largest regional powers after Iraq's exit from the balance equation in the Gulf regional system, which includes each of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries with Iran and Iraq, and this in turn overwhelms a certain character with certain characteristics and at the same time the pivotal effectiveness in this regional system The Gulf region, and this did not come out of nowhere, but rather imposed its political, historical, religious as well as economic weight on them, and this is what could qualify it to play a pivotal role in regional events. This process of relations between the two countries and the motives and challenges of rapprochement can be presented through the following requirements:

### ***The First Requirement: Historical Overview of Iranian-Saudi Relations***

The historical experience of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia indicates that they were not on a single track, as they were composed of conflict and cooperation. Understanding the nature of these relations is linked to the realization of three basic dimensions that govern these relations: the historical dimension, which is represented in those relations with deep historical roots between Persia and the Arabian Peninsula since their establishment until the establishment of political entities until now, and the geographical dimension, which is represented in the region The Arabian (Persian) Gulf, with all those developments and events that this region witnessed, and the shape of the political regimes and the ruling elites that ruled the countries of this region played a role in the nature of the relations between the two countries.

Since the establishment of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, the two countries have formed two opposing poles in the policies (Islamism - republic - revolutionary) versus

(conservative kingdom), each claiming that it represents "Islam" more legitimate representation in the political sphere, and that the sectarian tendency between Sunnis and Shiites, led In addition to that, the geopolitical rivalry between them in the Gulf region and the competition for different interests formed factors that prepare for a bilateral relationship that has not been of the same pace over the years, most of which are tense.

With the end of the eighties, relations between the two countries witnessed a remarkable shift with the assumption of Iranian leaders with moderate orientations, who sought to find a kind of rapprochement with the countries of the region, the most important of which is the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. With his focus on the revolutionary discourse that was in the eighties, but he did not prevent his successor from moving towards rapprochement in a way that does not contradict the foundations on which Iran's foreign policy is based. The former president (Hassan Rouhani), had represented a return, or at least the possibility of a return, to The line of regional foreign policy adopted by Rafsanjani and Khatami, which put the establishment of normal relations with Riyadh among the Iranian diplomatic priorities. Rouhani described Saudi Arabia as a “friend and brother,” stressing that improving relations with neighboring Gulf states is a top priority of his foreign policy.

For his part, the current Iranian President (Ebrahim Raisi), and since the first day of his assumption of the presidency in Iran, it was clear that focus on the regional orientation in his foreign speech. , has included many messages and clarifications about the foreign policy that he adopts at the regional level, and it was not the first time that Ebrahim Raisi emphasized the importance of establishing relations with neighboring countries, nor was it the first time he emphasized the centrality of regional relations and regional security in his foreign policies.

Although these relations, as indicated in advance, have not, since the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, moved in one pattern along the line, and the last time that diplomatic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia were frozen was against the background of the execution of the Saudi Shiite preacher (Sheikh Nimr). Baqir al-Nimr) and subsequent events in the attack on the Saudi diplomatic mission in Tehran in 2016; The Saudi authorities' execution of Sheikh Nimr sparked an angry reaction in Iran, and the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah (Ali Khamenei) considered that Saudi Arabia would face "divine wrath" for doing so.

For its part, Saudi Arabia announced through its former foreign minister (Adel Al-Ajbeir) in a press conference at the time, that his country announces “cutting its diplomatic relations with Iran and requests the departure of all members of the Iranian diplomatic mission within 48 hours,” and the UAE and Kuwait had reduced their diplomatic representation in Tehran. Following Saudi Arabia’s severing of relations with Iran in January 2016, which were resumed in August 2022. Iran and Saudi Arabia, with Iraqi mediation, conducted five rounds of dialogue in Baghdad, starting in 2021, and the last round was held in April 2022, and was attended by officials in the Secretariat of the Supreme Council Iranian National Security and the Saudi Intelligence Presidency. A number of factors and variables were behind the pursuit of rapprochement, the most important of which can be presented in the following requirement.

### ***The Second Requirement: Motives for the Iranian-Saudi Rapprochement***

A number of variables formed a motive for the Saudi-Iranian rapprochement, after the recent crisis in the diplomatic relations between the two countries, including: what is internal and what is external, whether regional or international.

At the internal level: the desire to achieve this rapprochement among most of the Iranian leaders, and in this regard, the arrival of Ebrahim Raisi to power in Iran and the trends that he has towards his regional surroundings, as one of the most important variables that push towards this rapprochement, in contrast to the presence of Saudi leaders who have realized Those international and regional developments and how to move under them in order to reduce their negative effects on their national interests.” This is what the director of the “Arab Center for Iranian Studies” (Mohammed Salih Sedqian) indicated to him by saying: “The recent regional and international developments have convinced Iran and the Arab countries of the need to put aside differences and adopt a language of understanding and coordination for the benefit of the entire region.”

Likewise, the Iranian government is keen to resume diplomatic relations with the Saudis, which would focus on consolidating its currently contested international legitimacy, and perhaps laying the foundation for greater regional participation: economic and social, which would also strengthen the government locally, at a time when the decision maker wants to Iran is to show its people that Iran is not completely isolated, and that the economic malaise it is experiencing is largely the result of American hostility alone. This is what a spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, Nasser Kanaani, indicated to him, "The improvement of Iranian relations with neighboring countries is evidence of the success of the Iranian government's diplomacy," and stressed that cooperation between Tehran and Riyadh "is in the interest of stabilizing the Middle East."

In the same context, the Gulf Cooperation Council countries in general and Saudi Arabia in particular have realized the importance of calming tensions in the region to achieve the interests of the countries concerned, taking advantage of the bad conditions the world is witnessing, including the Ukrainian war, Chinese-American tension, and Chinese-Taiwanese tension, as well as the danger of International terrorism and the negative results due to the Corona pandemic and others, and it showed a desire to strengthen economic relations with Iran, and in one of the meetings, the Gulf Cooperation Council countries announced that “strengthening regional dialogue and returning to the agreement would allow more regional partnerships and economic exchange.”

Likewise, the new Saudi position on the Yemeni file (the war on the Houthis), and Saudi Arabia’s desire to end the six-year war in Yemen, which has become a source of threat to the security of the Kingdom and the sources of its oil wealth, which have become targets for Houthi missiles and drones, in addition to that, the Saudi military campaign against the Houthi group is no longer Al-Houthi, allied with Iran, enjoys the support of the United States. All of this has pushed towards rapprochement and reducing the difference of views on regional issues with Iran. Observers in Iran classify the (Yemeni file) as the main factor behind extending the security negotiations between Iran and Saudi Arabia for more than (16) months, during which the two sides managed to overcome many files and raging disputes. The firing between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis contributed greatly to overcoming obstacles and resolving the thorny issues between Iran and Saudi Arabia, expecting the success of the upcoming rounds of Saudi-Iranian negotiations in ending media attacks and reopening embassies, in preparation for constructive cooperation to resolve regional crises.

Likewise, its inability to influence the course of the war in Syria, and the refusal of former US President Donald Trump to help it against Iran after attacking its oil facilities, made the Saudi decision-maker see that a dialogue with Iran is more useful, in order to ensure that

Saudi Arabia does not turn into a permanent war field. It could damage his plans to develop the Saudi economy, which Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman aspires to.

At the international level, there are international visions in general and US in particular to ease tensions and conflicts in the Arab Gulf region due to their link to global interests, including: ensuring the security of global trade and oil exports from countries bordering the Gulf, and in a statement presented by the current US President (Joe Biden), published in an article in the "Washington Post" newspaper, he considered that "cooperation through diplomacy is better for the region than disintegration through conflict," and noted the benefits of "a safer and more integrated Middle East," and said that "waterways are a necessity for global trade and supply chains, and energy resources are vital." to mitigate the impact of the Ukraine war on global supplies. The Director of the Arab Center for Iranian Studies indicated that the Saudi-Iranian rapprochement would be welcomed by the US and Russia at the same time, and in this regard, Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper referred to what a number of experts said, "If the United States is pushing Saudi Arabia, indirectly. To normalize with Iran, Russia is pushing Tehran to rapprochement with Riyadh, and it is also seeking to persuade the Gulf states to solve their problems directly with Iran. Therefore, the international factor cannot be overlooked in determining this rapprochement between the two largest parties in the Gulf system. But this convergence cannot be in isolation from the environment, whether it is internal or external. A number of variables can be recorded that pose challenges to this convergence, which can be presented as follows.

### ***The Third Requirement: Challenges of Iranian-Saudi Rapprochement***

News, reports, and statements by Iranian and Saudi officials tend to confirm the two parties' desire to end the quarrel and conflict between them, build bridges of cooperation and diplomatic exchange, and sit at the negotiating table. However, there are a set of factors and variables that may enter as challenges to this rapprochement, the most important of which can be limping, as follows.

#### ***Interior Environment***

Specialists form the interrelationship between the internal and external environment of the foreign policy of any country; In this context, the issue of rapprochement between the Iranian and Saudi parties is governed by several internal variables for both countries.

The desire of the two parties to restore diplomatic relations between them was not based only on a purely political will. Rather, there may be factors and institutions that have formed another content for this desire outside the corridors of politics, so rapprochement cannot be real without the desire for that in light of the sectarian "sectarian" difference, and religious institutions in both countries. The Iranian political system, which is based on the theory of Wilayat al-Faqih, and which contradicts the Salafi religious institution in Saudi Arabia and its role in Saudi foreign policy trends, constitutes two opposing poles in the Islamist policies in the region; Each of them presents itself as representing Islam and Muslims with greater legitimacy in the political sphere. On the other hand, adherence to the principle of exporting the revolution in Iran and Iranian interference in the affairs of the Arab Gulf states constitutes an obsession of concern among the Saudis, and to some extent constitutes a challenge to this Iranian tendency towards rapprochement with its Gulf neighbor.

#### ***External Environment***

The regional files in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen constitute challenging points in

the path towards rapprochement between the two countries. The weakness or collapse of the state's authority in these Arab countries calls, in reality, to a political vacuum and, consequently, to the expansion of the area of regional intervention in these countries.

In this context, the occupation of Iraq had caused an imbalance in the regional balance of power in favor of Iran after it left this regional power balance equation after the American occupation of it, which made Iran extend its arms to most of the Arab countries in general and the Gulf in particular. In the Gulf issues in particular, Iran has increased Iran's ability to influence the course of events in this important region of the world, which was evident in the events in Bahrain, Syria and Yemen since the beginning of 2011, within the framework of the so-called "Arab Spring".

In this context, the military advisor to the Supreme Leader (Yahya Rahim Safavi), and the former commander of the Revolutionary Guards, stated: "Our western borders do not stop from Shalamchah on the Iraqi border west of Ahvas, but rather reach southern Lebanon, and this is the third time that our influence has reached shores of the Mediterranean.

For his part, the new Iranian president, Ebrahim Raisi, pledged to follow the path of the revolution, considering that his victory in the elections is a popular "message" of the need to protect the "values of the revolution," stressing that the regional issues that his country adopts are "non-negotiable" and that the elections are "a continuation of the revolution." Ruhollah Khomeini's approach, and following the path of Qassem Soleimani," and this can be understood as the continuation of Iran's policy of intervention in the countries of the region; Iran imposes itself as a strategic alternative to foreign forces in the Arab Gulf region, and rejects any security agreements or arrangements concluded with any party outside the countries of the region, and this was confirmed by Raisi in his speech at the United Nations General Assembly at the (77th) session, on: 21 9/2022, by saying: "Regional security must stem from the inside and not be imposed from the outside." This is one of the principles that Iran has adopted for decades, especially after the second Gulf War.

This intersects with the visions and behavior of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which also wants to be influential in the region, especially in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. A qualitative leap when resolved in the process of this rapprochement, and there has been a struggle between them for influence in Iraq since 2003, in general, and after the US military withdrawal from Iraq in particular, as it is one of the interests of the two countries.

Likewise, Israel cannot be excluded from the equation of the future strategic balance, as it is working to enter the region in one way or another to achieve its interests, which has been achieved for years, the most recent of which was the signing of agreements between it and the UAE and Bahrain that were called "normalization agreements" in 2020, and a maker may see The Israeli decision is that any rapprochement between the Gulf states and Iran will not be in the interest of Israel's goals, and weaken the Israeli role in the region. This was indicated by the National Security Research Center at Tel Aviv University, which confirmed that "a real Iranian-Saudi rapprochement would constitute an important breach in the anti-Iran front that Israel sought to present, and most importantly, it would remove a central factor from the opposition front to the American return to the nuclear agreement." He also indicated that this rapprochement is considered as a contribution to reducing the effects of normalization between the UAE and Bahrain with Israel, in order to reduce the atmosphere of confrontation in the Gulf and improve its regional standing, which contradicts the Israeli regional

orientations.

In the international context, the United States of America, since the intensification of its presence in the Arab Gulf region, especially the end of the seventies and the emergence of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, has presented Iran as the greatest danger to the Arab Gulf states, in order to justify achieving its interests in this presence and in persuading these oil countries to buy those armaments arsenals from them worth billions of dollars, which is a great loss for the United States of America in the event of not continuing this policy, and this could intersect with the possibility of achieving real rapprochement between the countries of the Arab Gulf region, especially between the two largest neighbors in this Gulf regime, which is described as He was not closed to himself and was not independent of himself.

Thus, these factors and variables could pose challenges or obstacles towards this Iranian regional orientation to complete the circle of Iranian-Saudi rapprochement, which could, in its entirety, be reflected on the security and stability of the Arab Gulf region and its regional system, and thus make it more penetrating than external parties.

## **Conclusion**

A careful reading and analysis of the personality of the current Iranian president, Ebrahim Raisi, his absolutes and his political ideas indicate that: He does not establish an intellectual or political approach that is far from what is familiar in Iran and in light of the existing conservative and reformist currents. It adopts the approach of moderation in all its internal and external policies, with the relative presence of this distinguishing feature from its predecessors, but it does not depart from the revolutionary and radical framework or content that has proven its worth in protecting the Islamic Revolution and its state since 1979 until now, which constitutes one of the pillars of foreign policy. The arrival of Ebrahim Raisi to power in Iran is a new indication of the possibility of changing the parameters and trajectories of Iranian foreign policies within the framework of these pillars.

Based on the theoretical literature of international relations, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi can be considered a “pragmatic” approach and visions; He sees the force in its various dimensions as an axis of external relations. It focuses on building self-capacity as a top priority; As subjective capabilities are central to Raisi’s vision of the world, and accordingly, Raisi is pursuing a pragmatic regional policy and contributing to creating a less tense and more stable regional environment, in an effort to strengthen its regional position and influence in the region and break the stalemate that characterized its policy, which can It should be noted through the special flexibility he gave in the file of Iranian-Saudi relations, in order to be able to give impetus to move these relations from the stage of peaceful coexistence to the stage of mutual dependence, which is in the interest of the two countries.

This approach facilitated the change in the perceptions of the Saudi side towards the importance of achieving this rapprochement, in light of the changes that the world in general and the Gulf region in particular is witnessing, which pose a threat to the interests of the two countries.

At the same time, Raisi does not abandon the international level in his foreign policy, as it is the broader environment in which it operates. He cannot be considered as opposed to the negotiation approach pursued by the government of his predecessor (Hassan Rouhani).

What has received Saudi support after the latter reconsidered its position on this agreement in an attempt to win the Iranian party after the area of the American protection umbrella had weakened in providing assistance to it in several situations through which it could respond to those threats and attacks against Saudi interests, especially the oil facility from Before the groups backed by Iran.

The process of evaluating the Iranian-Saudi rapprochement remains not easy, in light of these various variables, but this rapprochement, whatever the environment surrounding it, is contingent and linked to the movements of the two parties, as they are the largest parties in the Gulf system, and the most understanding of the importance of this rapprochement, and therefore the future of this rapprochement can be It bears several scenarios between progress, regression, or remaining in a state of fluctuation at the same level that the relations between the two countries have known for several decades.

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