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Saudi foreign policy towards Iran in the post-JCPOA period

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Abstract

Foreign policy is the most important aspect of socio-political life of nations and countries, because their survival depends on foreign policy. Therefore, recognizing and studying the foreign policy of countries is very important. One of the most important countries whose foreign policy consideration is important is the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has always sought leadership in the Middle East, relying on its unique characteristics. However, the foreign policy of any country is based on facts and is influenced by factors that affect its efficiency at the regional level and even at the international level. The nuclear deal between Iran and the 5 + 1 (United States, Russia, China, France, the United Kingdom and Germany) under the JCPOA is one of the factors influencing Saudi Arabia's foreign policy. Accordingly, this study addresses the issue of how the post- JCPOA climate has affected Saudi Arabia's foreign policy. In order to answer this question, using the theory of

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neoclassical realism, it is hypothesized that the post-conflict atmosphere has invaded Saudi foreign policy.

Neoclassical realism is a combination of classical realism and structural realism. That is, on the one hand, like structural realists, it pays attention to system-level factors, and on the other hand, it also pays attention to the mental perceptions and internal structure of states, just like classical realists. Neoclassical realists open the black box of government and explain the foreign policy behavior of a particular country by including domestic-level variables in explaining international policies. In fact, neoclassical realism, while believing that the understanding of most current affairs of international relations is the responsibility of foreign policy theory, by simultaneously involving internal variables, especially the role of interest groups and external variables including the country's position in the international system, is a particularly organized view of generalist thinking. In the context of neoclassical realism, internal factors, especially the perceptions and views of Saudi government leaders and elites, have played a key role in shaping the country's foreign policy in the post-conflict period. Internal factors, such as political leaders' perceptions of threats, and material and internal correlations, act as a mediating variable in shaping the country's foreign policy. From the point of view of the Saudi elite, JCPOA has increased its influence and strengthened the position of the regions of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Because the removal of sanctions on Iran provided ample economic opportunities for the Tehran government. In this regard, Saudi Arabia is concerned that financial resources may contribute to Iran's aggressive stance and increase its influence in the region. The risk of increasing Iran's influence in countries such as Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Lebanon naturally raises concerns in Saudi Arabia. Concerns that Iran, as a powerful player, will be present in the security system of the Persian Gulf and that there will be ample opportunities in the region for it. The nuclear deal reached, ending the threat to Iran's nuclear program, will have a positive impact on security in the Middle East, and Iran will no longer be seen as a threat to security in the Middle East. In addition, the removal of economic sanctions against Iran gives the country international legitimacy. With the conclusion of the UN Security Council, Saudi Arabia became increasingly concerned about a shift in the balance of power in favor of Iran. According to Saudi Arabia, billions of dollars will go to Iran once sanctions are removed. The normalization of trade relations between Iran and European countries will also change the situation in the region in Iran's favor. Thus, Saudi foreign policy makers, perceiving the JCPOA as a threat to their interests, have extracted and mobilized their resources and capabilities to counter the perceived threat.

The results of the study show that Saudi officials and decision-makers, for fear of changing the status and regional power in favor of the Islamic Republic of Iran, went to extract their resources (mainly oil) and use these resources to take measures such as increasing arms purchases. Aggressive policies in the region and the diversification of global partners to shift the balance of power have worked in their favor. In a conclusion of the present article, it should be said that in the geographical scope of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf after the Islamic Revolution of Iran, the two countries of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia have always tried to lead the Islamic world according to different readings, based on their identity and geographical nature. They have competed together. Based on this competitive nature in the relations between the two countries, when the nuclear issue of the Islamic Republic of Iran was raised, Saudi Arabia, while trying to use this situation, used the opportunity to sanction and restrict the Islamic Republic of Iran, and in line with this, concluded a comprehensive plan of joint action in The direction of reaching a solution regarding the nuclear crisis of the Islamic Republic of Iran has been defined by the opening of Iran's hand in regional issues. Based on this threat, and in order to deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran, the authorities of Saudi Arabia have formulated various strategies. In line with the implementation of these strategies, by using their resources in the form of oil sales, they have tried to respond to the threat posed by the post-JCPOA environment towards the Islamic Republic of Iran by increasing the purchase of weapons, and to strengthen themselves in the form of purchasing military weapons, and at the same time adopting an aggressive policy in Middle East region to weaken the allies of the Islamic Republic of Iran and strengthen the allies. Also, the authorities of Saudi Arabia have strengthened their extra-regional partners in the post-JCPOA period and have turned to expanding and strengthening relations with China and Russia.

Key words: Saudi Arabia, Islamic Republic of Iran, JCPOA, Realism, Regional Power.