

Diplomacy and Bureaucracy: Iran and Saudi Arabia in Two Administrations

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Abstract

The Islamic Republic of Iran's Middle East policy and its fundamentals are among the most discussed issues in the Middle East's international politics. The present paper seeks to analyse the structure and formation of Iran's foreign policy interests in the region with a view of bureaucratic diplomacy. Based on Graham Allison's framework of organizational trend and bureaucratic politics, this study assesses two recent Iranian presidents' foreign policy toward Saudi Arabia. Bureaucratic diplomacy of Iran, along with military and security apparatus formulate and implement Iranian foreign policy tactics. Ahmadinejad focused on developing a personal relationship with Saudi leaders, which was not aligned with his bureaucratic diplomacy, though. However, Rouhani embarked on making use of JCPOA as a model to negotiate with Saudi Arabia. The region's constant evolving situation, the hostile approach of Saudi Arabia, and the maximum pressure of the U.S. on Iran prevented Rouhani's

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bureaucratic diplomacy from succeeding.

Keywords: Bureaucratic Politics, Geopolitical Rivalry, Iran, Organizational Trend, Saudi Arabia

Received: 2020-12-19

Review: 2021-01-30

Accepted: 2021-02-06

Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs, Vol. 11, No. 2, Summer- Fall 2020, pp. 359-382

Introduction

Preservation of the state's national interest, alongside each state's armed forces, is one of the main tasks of each country's diplomatic apparatus. Every country has a spectrum of interest groups and various organizations that shape and implement foreign policy. Rosenau considers state decision as the choice selected by the people (Rosenau, 1969: 20). Accordingly, Iran's post-revolution foreign policy made all the state apparatuses dealing with foreign policy formulate and implement republican and Islamic ideals. In this regard, bureaucratic measures have to be taken in the strategic interaction environment. These organizations acted through various channels of competition and compromise. The Allison bureaucratic politics crafts the analytical level to assess such dynamism in which he argues that the external environment's feedback affects politicians to rank decision-makers (Alisson, 1969: 695). Hence, the present paper analyses the bureaucratic diplomacy's action within the two presidential administrations toward Saudi Arabia. Precisely, it asks how bureaucratic diplomacy as an institution shaped the stream of Iran's foreign relations toward Saudi Arabia.

Iran's Middle East policy and foreign relations toward Saudi Arabia is partly influenced by the division of objectives that each institute and interest groups aimed to implement toward foreign policy strategy. This division stems from the definition of the goals. If the country's independence and sovereignty are the primary drivers of foreign policy, reconciliation and de-securitization should be embodied in a way that does not contradict the main objectives (Sajadpour, 2004: 57). The state

apparatus was competing over which purpose should be included in the foreign policy agenda since the early years of the revolution. The extent and access to that objective's information and precision defined each state institute's limit concerning its area of action. This process leads to forming a network and acts toward Saudi Arabia in which bureaucratic diplomacy is part of it. The table below depicts Allison's role models in full or partial access to the information provided to the decision-makers. Each section of this table has a consequence for the decision-maker that enables it to make a decision.

Table 1. Consequences that the Decision Makers Are Facing, Regarding the Degree of Access to Information

Actors Information Access and Detailed Analysis of Outcome		
	Complete Access	Incomplete Access
Logical Actor	Informed	Semi-Informed
Outcome Analysis	A More Detailed Analysis without View of ding Evolutionary Changes of Foreign Policy	No Prospect for Comprehensive Understanding of changes and the Possibility of Decision with Negative Consequences
Organization	Detailed Information and Broader Options for Decision Making	Prudent and Vigilant about Decision Making its Probable Consequents
Process		
Outcome Analysis		
Bureaucratic Politics		

Source: Authors

The current work's hypothesis infers that foreign policymaking is a volatile process of action, and the effectiveness of its tactics depends on how the bureaucracies act within the broader spectrum of organizations and interest groups of foreign policy circles. The Ahmadinejad bureaucratic foreign policy toward Saudi Arabia lacked harmony, while Rouhani's bureaucratic diplomacy has a better arrangement. However, it was negatively affected by the

geopolitical evolution of the region. Bureaucratic diplomacy of Iran's Middle East policy implemented the tactics of Iran's strategic action through the region along with other institutions. The region's hybrid geopolitics necessitated particular action consisting of pragmatism and ideals derived from the Islamic Revolution. Some analysts (Dehghani & Radfar, 2010: 48) have pointed out the importance of ideals in Iran's revolutionary foreign policy.

Theoretical Framework

Foreign policy analysis is achieved through a detailed assessment of state institutions' role in the formulation of decision-making processes. Graham Allison altered how a foreign policy analyst views a state's foreign relations. Considering the state as a harmonized player prevents researchers from understanding roles and structures and their influence on the formation of foreign policy decisions. Functions and structures act in interaction with each other, and sometimes one of these elements limits the other, affecting policy formulation and implementation (Carlsnaes, 1992: 250). Revolutionary states are more capable of being exposed to further threats than the steady states in a regional security complex due to the radical changes. Like other revolutionary states, the Islamic Republic of Iran initiated new approaches toward international politics, deriving from further Islamic jurisprudence readings (Fiqh). These strategies elaborated on the political dimension of Islamic government and its idealistic wisdom about the internal as well as world politics (Moslem, 2002: 48-49).

Allison depicted bureaucratic politics in his series of works during four decades. This is a clear indication of the progress of foreign policy research and its depth in this sub-field of international politics. Pursuing national interest necessitates a level of threat de-escalation. Threat de-escalation is a strategic, diplomatic, and historic process typically incorporated by bureaucrats to reduce the level of threat from other states and

actors in their periphery. His foreign policy formulation theory characterizes each country's social and political system's dynamism, which in turn affects its foreign policy decision-making and strategies. For instance, Iran is a scene of modern and traditional forces in political and social spheres, which their interactions have formed a mixed foreign policy before and after the Islamic revolution. The development process as the aftermath consequence of modernism in Iranian society has been uneven. This uneven process has influenced foreign policy by establishing the state apparatus spectrum (Matin, 2013: 131-132).

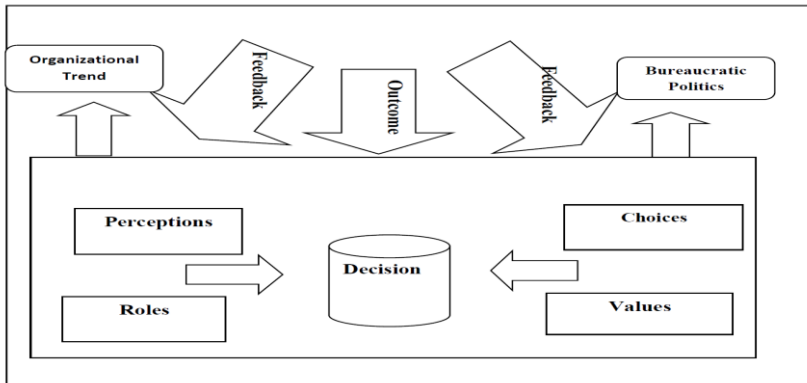
This research incorporates Allison's models for a comprehensive understanding of Iran's strategic approach in the Middle East, focusing on Saudi Arabia under Ahmadinejad and Rouhani administrations. To give an accurate assessment of the importance of both the role and structure, this research analyses each president's interaction with its bureaucratic diplomacy and the role of the presidential administration in the arrangement and formulation of tactics for implementing strategic goals. In addition to the structure, the president's perception of the external environment seems significant.

I- Rational Actor and State System

As mentioned above, this research reviews the importance of bureaucratic politics and organizational process as Allison's analytical concepts to better understand the multidimensional policymaking system of Iran's Middle East policy. The table above clearly indicates how access to the information by each actor model can lead to a distinguished outcome. Understanding of dynamics between the interest groups and state institutions convince the decision-maker to take prudent action and the researcher to dig for a deeper cause and conceptualize the interaction between varied factions. As Allison and Schelling pointed in their respected rational choice and game theories, this policymaking model deals with the state as a rational and harmonized actor in international politics. They pursue a unified

interest that can be achieved through negotiations and an agreed bargaining process (Freyberg-Inan, 2003: 82).

The internal politics imperative's impact on foreign policy decision making cannot be ignored. For instance, factors including higher authorities' orders and the duties lead to these unpredicted implications: first, it lowers each decision's effectiveness outcome by its later modification resulted from last-minute compromise with interest groups. Second, it prolongs the formulation of strategies and operational tactics. As an example of a state with an evolved foreign policy, Iran reflected how states might change their foreign policy direction over time. This should be considered into account how domestic politics can dramatically change foreign policy (Ehteshami & Hinnebusch, 2002: 283). Decision making in Allison's bureaucratic politics and the organizational process can be imagined within this scheme:



Schema 1. Decision Making Process and Bureaucratic Politics and Organizational Trend

Decision Making in Iran's Middle East Policy: Role of Bureaucratic Apparatus in Formation and Implementation

The Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy evolved from turbulent years of post-revolutionary state to a stable and active participant of regional security dynamism in the Middle East. Bureaucratic diplomacy evolved from a traditional one to a more

goal-oriented asymmetric approach. After the revolution, the first generation of diplomats was not diplomats by profession, but they had a deep impact on forming the country's foreign policy in the following years. The Iraq invasion by the U.S. strengthened these ties, which was laid by this generation in the early 1980s. These officials acted beyond the organizations and had effective relations with the country's key decision-maker in those years. (Veisi, 2020: 2).

Iran started to restructure its foreign policy based on its geopolitical loneliness, and the coalition of Arab countries supported Saddam Hussein of Iraq. Iran saw its help to the world market to prevent the collapse of production in relation to Iran and Iraq. Its acts also financed Saudi Arabia's aid to Saddam's Iraq (Shariati & Ghaffari, 2019: 54).

Some researchers later convinced this perception of the external environment that Iran's foreign relations were formulated in harmony. The state apparatus's role was neglected for a more in-depth analysis. The growing regional part of Iran in the post-U.S. and Iraq invasion brought attention to state institutes dealing with Middle East policy formulation and implementation in the region. Iran's foreign policy toward the Middle East is now based on various coalition and opposition building within active players. It is also formed based on different interests internally and externally. The mass mobilization of Iranians to Islamic ideals turned out to be trans-frontier and proved the importance of domestic factors in reframing alignment. (Courrier International, 2018:16).

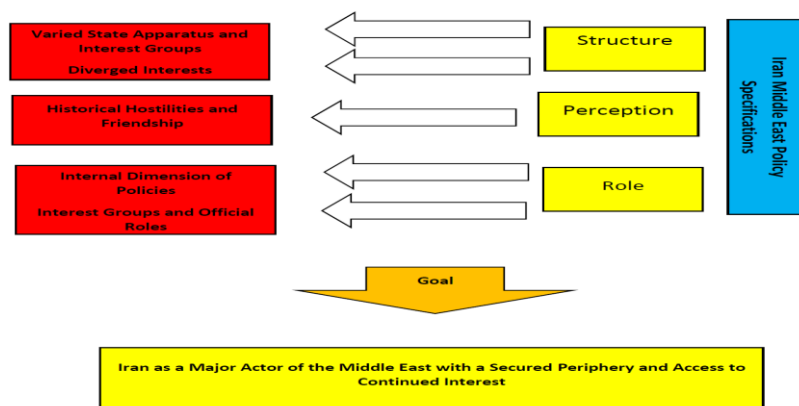
Dehghani focused on the ideological aspect of revolution exclusively. He believes in ideological factors highly influential in Iran's practical shifting of its foreign policy. He analysed Iran's foreign policy during three decades and concluded that discourses exposed Iran to political and historical changes. Iran evolved from an actor with ideological interests to a player with a pragmatic and broader interest in the greater Middle East (Dehghani, 2015: 20).

II- Iran's Middle East Policy Apparatus

Iran's Middle East policy results from interactive communications of the state apparatus with a strategic approach that acts as a system despite differences in tactics. Iran's foreign policy objectives formed to work independently compared to its external actors of the Middle East and their regional allies. Without the existence of any regional security architecture that was tasked for consensus building and mediated among states, this policy increased any collision with the Arab countries and their foreign supporters. These countries also suffer from an internal legitimacy that makes them vulnerable to any popular uprising. The pre-revolution state in Iran exploited the region's potential to influence its western neighbours in the area. Mohammad Reza Shah Iran last monarch addressed its neighbourhood because the instability affected the region and emanated from radical Islamism and nationalism. He exploited the Kurds and Shias' resentments in Iraq against the Baath political system to secure its ambitious neighbour's borders. The state intelligence apparatus (SAVAK) ran activities to gather intelligence and allegiance against Saddam and the Baath party in Iraq (Reisinezhad, 2019: 1).

The bureaucratic structure of Iran's Middle East policy, from the pre-revolutionary years, sought to prevent any insecurity disruption, especially at the time of the Arab nationalism outbreak. After the Islamic Revolution, each president, alongside the military-security apparatus, pursued his policy within the accessible resources and authorities it could perform. The International Institute of Strategic Studies believes that Iran incorporated proxy networks such as interest groups close to the government (Iraq) and influential community groups of Shia (Hezbollah- Lebanon) to form the Middle East's future security architecture. Utilizing the conventional forces might affect the state's ability to counter the opposed countries' conventional forces. State security and stability are the utmost important priority that could not be endangered by symmetrical forces (IISS, 2019:12). The revolutionary institutes played a more significant

role in forming Iran's Middle East policy. The Iraqi invasion of Iran and the participation of Arab countries that provide financial and logistical support to the Iraqi government increased the role of this targeted apparatus. Now, the most determinant factor behind Iran and Saudi Arabia, the regional rivalry of the two states, points their focus attention to Iran's strategic action that is embodied by military and intelligence measures of the IRGC (KFCRIS, 2017: 3). This project depicts the multidimensional nature of Iran's Middle East policy based on a bureaucratic perspective:



Schema2. Iran Middle East Policy Specifications

The early moment of Ahmadinejad's foreign policy approach and his views about global justice shaped his attitude over how Iran's foreign policy should be conducted despite the importance of Iran's Middle East policy and security-military aspect of the country's relations with Neighbours. The Foreign ministry engaged in a day-to-day interaction with other states of the region. Amouzegar notes that Ahmadinejad's foreign ministry approach focused on changing diplomacy and its management. This administration mode ranged from routine activities to the general direction of implementation diplomacy (Amouzegar, 2013: 13).

Liberation movement office in foreign ministry acted as a

liaison office to achieve the ideas of revolution in cooperation with the military apparatus. Its transfer to other entities later in 1984 indicates that the country's bureaucratic foreign policy, especially in the Middle East, restructured to deal with Iraqi aggression at the multilateral level as Iran faced very eminent danger. Iran's Middle East policy changed in the late 1980s to a pragmatic one that had come under pressure several years before the invasion of Iraq and the diplomatic-logistical support of Saudi Arabia. The improvement of Iran-Saudi Arabia relations continued with the Hajj ceremony and the positive personal encounters between Hashemi and Abdullah. This process continued during the presidency of Seyyed Mohammad Khatami and culminated with the participation of the Saudi Crown Prince in the 1997 meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Tehran.

In the post-war years, two Iranian ambassadors to Saudi Arabia during the presidencies of Hashemi and Khatami, Nouri Shahrudi and Sadeghi, were able to establish close ties with the Saudi elite and facilitate the improvement of bilateral relations between the two countries. Due to the two presidents' foreign policy perspectives, the role of diplomacy was increased, and threat de-escalation of Iran's Middle East policy was significant. Sadeghi later on and during Javad Zarif's tenure as the foreign minister was sent to Saudi Arabia until diplomatic relations were suspended. (Alsultanand, 2017: 37).

Iran and Saudi Arabia during the 1980s experienced a tense relationship due to their regional and bilateral position toward each other. Saudi Arabia supported the Baath regime of Iraq financially, which irritated Iran. The consequences of the war in reconciliation were not successful. The confrontational character of bilateral relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia developed during the Islamic revolution and deteriorated along with a geopolitical competition to an uncontrollable pace (Rouhi, 2016: 280).

III- Saudi Arabia and Bureaucratic Foreign Policy

The critical factor shaping Saudi Arabia's foreign policy's foundation is the internal security of the Saudi kingship and royal family's grip on power in the peninsula's political hierarchy. Saudi Arabia, due to the lack of some basic factors such as low population density in its vast territory, lack of water resources for agriculture, shortage of human resources, and the need for indigenous technology, is dependent on other countries protecting its territory and securing the kingdom. The royal family is the embodiment of bureaucracy in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, bureaucrats have family ties with the king. In connection with Iran, King Abdullah's bureaucratic diplomacy differed from King Salman; the latter used full hostile foreign policy toward Iran (Jain, 2015: 283). Saudi Arabia initiated its narrative of national identity after the Mecca incident. It formed a strong government to control its internal dynamics to maintain the growing youth sympathy with Ikhwan in its territory. Cooperation between Saudi rulers and Hanbali leaders shaped a stable statehood in Saudi Arabia later on and anarchical movements at the same time in many Arab states during the 1980s (Kechichian, 1986: 56). Saudi Arabia suffered a tribal narrative of identity that made it vulnerable to the internal and external impact of dramatic change in its regional neighborhood. Orthodox identity narrative of Bin Salman based on the loyalty to the royal family gained momentum during his early year's appointment as the crown prince. The scandal over the killing of a dissident Saudi journalist in Istanbul eroded this new attempt and increased the state-society gap again (Al-Rasheed, 2019: 10).

The bureaucratic foreign policy of Saudi Arabia utilized the mediation policy as its frequent instrument of diplomacy, aiming for eminent reflection of their efforts and formation of events according to their interest. Failure of mediation diplomacy of Saudi Arabia in the Middle East and toward the region's challenging issues is affected by its strategy and interest-based how to deal with other contenders (Kamrava, 2013: 18). Saudi

Arabia shifted the mediation policy to active containment diplomacy that seeks to incorporate any activity to press Iran for a regional system's structural overhaul. The foundation of mediation policy consisting of financial leverage, flexibility, and in-depth knowledge is utilized to implement a stringent policy toward Iran. Iran and Saudi Arabia's cultural differences shifted to geopolitical competition for regional hegemony. Fearing from Iran is based on Saudi Arabia's effort to change the balance of power to its benefit. Every step within this framework should be analyzed according to the concept of balance of power. Saudi Arabia intensified its hostility toward Iran by all means, which "other" as a concept is one of them (Nourmohammadi & Seifi, 2020: 177).

IV- Iran's Middle East Bureaucratic Policy

Iran-Saudi Arabia bilateral relations during the Ahmadinejad presidency formed at geopolitical upheaval. The occupation of Iraq by U.S. forces and the power vacuum of a post-Saddam Iraq intensified regional competition over influence between Iran and Saudi Arabia. President Ahmadinejad initiated a warmer approach toward King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia by visiting Saudi Arabia on working trips. He elaborated on one of the central visions of Iran's foreign policy based on a desire for regional security free from external actors. The idea later faded, and Iran and Saudi Arabia competed for regional supremacy that separated them and led to no security architecture in the Persian Gulf (Mabon, 2013: 2). In his structural theory of decision-making, Rosenau discussed the information provided by structures to decision-makers. During the Ahmadinejad presidency, bureaucratic diplomacy provided details on approaching Saudi Arabia through a briefing of the president who views foreign policy embodied in his global justice doctrine. These briefings are supposed to inform decision-makers over the regional trends which based on that, the decisions are formulated. Ahmadinejad's foreign policy doctrine was not in line with the geopolitical situation and sought contradictory goals that sent mixed messages to other Arab states.

Ahmadinejad's presidency and bureaucratic foreign policy interaction reflect a common problem over how bureaucracy and president perception of the external environment cause competition within state bureaucratic apparatuses. Ahmadinejad consecutively visited Saudi Arabia that was mostly working trips. On his last trip, he invited the Saudi king to participate in the Non-Aligned Movement summit, while the Saudi side sent a deputy foreign minister to the forum. The absence of any coordination between the president and his bureaucratic foreign policy has been seen regarding the approach taken toward Saudi Arabia (DW, 2012:1). President Ahmadinejad's foreign policy doctrine and his policy of restructuring the Middle East's regional security made his approach toward Saudi Arabia not practical. King Abdullah prioritized preserving the status quo, but the fear of a Shiite uprising in the eastern and resource-rich territories of Saudi Arabia convinced the kingdom to take a hostile stance toward Iran. Internal security and destabilizing effect of Arab Spring in Saudi territory accelerated their effort to minimize Iran's influence toward the Shiite population in their region (Philby, 2016: 4).

Saudi Arabia seeks a diminished position of Iran's influence in the broader Middle East, especially in the Persian Gulf. It sees the Houthi government as an Iranian ally in its southern border, which can transform its backyard sphere of influence into an area where Iran can play a more significant role and deprive Saudi Arabia of its historical role. Hossein Sadeghi, the last ambassador of Iran to Riyadh, believes that a re-reading of priorities in foreign policy objectives is needed to reach a shared view with Saudi Arabia while pursuing its national interest. A very detailed, challenging, and lengthy negotiation is required to decrease hostilities and define each country's areas of interest (Masoumi, 2020: 5).

Saudi Arabia shaped its foreign policy based on containment of Iran. Saudi society that demographically comprises tangible Shiite population in the Eastern side of the country necessitated prudent state policy and conservative foreign policy that refuses

any dramatic change of status quo in the Middle East. This perception of eminent threat from domestic and regional political forces was destabilizing due to a negative view of Iran's Islamic revolution. The Saudi state establishment took more offensive steps in foreign policy toward Iran at the end of the Ahmadinejad presidency and did not pursue rapprochement despite a new president to the office.

V- Rouhani's Middle East Policy

Agency role model analysis of Graham Allison shifts attention toward how foreign policy of different states formulated in a distinguished manner and evolved within its system during the time. Rouhani, as the president, introduced a new set of ideas based on moderation and interaction with the world as its norms. Rouhani, as an experienced diplomat, put forward the bold agenda with P5+1 over the nuclear issue. This agenda could be extended to the regional issues, but the Middle East's geopolitical factors have been influential, limiting the scope of Rouhani's foreign policy. This geopolitical factor severed the country's loneliness as many regional and external actors sought to undermine Iran's increasing role in the Middle East's regional dynamics (Juneau, 2014: 104).

Saudi Arabia's diplomatic bureaucracy reconciled with internal instability, reorganized its mediation and diplomacy, and lowered its identity range from leading the Islamic world to leading Sunni Arab states. The Saudi government decided to confront Iran because of Iran's threat of its role in the incident. Saudi Arabia's leadership tried to reconstruct the national identity of its citizens based on a narrow definition of identity constructed on the radical Wahhabi phenomenon (Darwich, 2016: 3). Saudi Arabia's foreign policy toward Iran is structured on the basis of image distortion, secret diplomacy with the opposition, and the distribution of resources among various actors to confront Iran geopolitically and legitimize its regional discourse and diplomacy. Iran's bureaucratic diplomacy was met with extensive Saudi

diplomatic operations: persuading the United States to pull out of the nuclear deal and continuing negotiations in regional and Islamic organizations to form a coalition of forces against Iran.

Rouhani's policy toward Saudi Arabia was not on the agenda for negotiations with Saudi Arabia, in part because of the geopolitical confrontation between the two countries, which was reluctant to resolve regional issues. In the absence of any pragmatic agenda for negotiations, the two states exchanged friendly and hostile messages over foreign media. Javad Zarif, the foreign minister, applied some soft approach toward Saudi Arabia through public diplomacy and tried to explain a new area of Iran's foreign policy, especially its post JCPOA approach toward its neighbors. For example, Al-Alam TV, which supports Iran's national priorities, projected that Iran is not a threatening country, avoiding any controversies that were likely to create tension in the negotiations (Baghernia & Mahmoudinejad, 2018: 390). Iranian bureaucratic diplomacy actively participated in the Yemeni talks with other parties and arranged for the Houthi delegation to meet with the ambassadors of Britain, France and Germany. The missing part of this puzzle is that Saudi Arabia was not interested in Iran's initiative. Rouhani's bureaucratic diplomacy order to continue Yemeni crisis without accompanying Saudi Arabia did not reduce tensions with Saudi Arabia. . A broader mandate with a detailed agenda and reconciliation is needed to reduce the tensions. Esfandiary and Tabatabai (2016) assert that the Yemen crisis can trigger this process. Zarif wrote on his Twitter in Arabic declaring that "Iran sees no benefit in continued war and its siege in Yemen, but it welcomes peaceful solutions." He added that "Iran welcomes all initiatives which invite to talks and persuades everyone to use peaceful solutions" (Dehshiri & Shahmoradi, 2020: 210).

Zarif's diplomatic approach to Saudi Arabia was mixed with social and warning signals, and each part of his message was activated based on Saudi time and policy toward Iran. Ongoing hostility of Saudi Arabia toward Iran shifted Zarif's approach

toward Saudi Arabia by taking an informative and warning style at the media level (Zarif, 2016: 11). Iran-Saudi tensions stem from the search for security rooted in regional security architecture and its implications. On the contrary, in Yemen, for example, the Saudi's seeks to secure its periphery and diminish any Iranian influence that might change the balance of power to benefit Iran. The lack of diplomatic relations allowed Saudi Arabia to pursue its policy without being limited to the line of communication. In the absence of this line, Saudi Arabia can use its leverage to observe the results of wait and see policy.

In Syria, Saudi Arabia has developed a containment policy toward Iran in line with US and Israeli strategies. Rouhani pursued a multi-level strategy embodied in the Astana talks, in which Saudi Arabia had no role. The two countries developed a program that was not interconnected at any level. Rouhani's diplomatic bureaucracy did not prioritize discussing Syria with Saudi Arabia as the Syrian government concurred with its major cities. In turn, Saudi Arabia relied on the asymmetric approach and negotiated a concerted Arab and American approach (Al-Rasheed & AbdolMohammadi, 2018: 6-7). The lack of Saudi incentives to deal with Iran was reinforced by Trump's election as president. . Saudi Arabia may have considered the unpredictable nature of Trump's foreign policy, and instead of forming a coalition of Sunni Arab countries against the United States, it first turned to the Trump administration. Also, against the initial critics of Saudi Arabia, Trump coordinated with them to pursue his foreign policy in the region with the support of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia also translated oil for a security policy to gain Trump's support toward Iran (Mossalanejad, 2017: 39;47). In the Biden administration, however, some analysts see the opportunity for a new beginning between Saudi Arabia and Iran (Wintour, 2021). Additionally, Saudi leaders have said that they should be included in any potential negotiations between the Biden administration and Iran on a new nuclear deal, to ensure it addresses Iran's missile capabilities and its "malign activity"

(Reuters, 2021).

Saudi Arabia pursued its traditional policy of mediation and coalition building, such as the liberation of Kuwait. It participated in an anti-ISIS alliance involving air raids. Saudi concerns of Iran formed a foreign policy approach of containment in Bahrain and Yemen. Saudi Arabia motivated those governments' hostile position toward any measure that Iran put forward to decrease hostility within those countries. Iran's consequent successes to uproot these terrorist cells from Iraq and Syria changed the regional balance in favor of Iran (Saikal, 2016: 172-173).

Bureaucratic politics can show how the eternal environment has affected the perception of statesmen. The Iraq invasion of Iran in the early years of the 1980s exacerbated the pessimism about any regional cooperation between Iran and Persian Gulf countries over security issues. Soltaninejad, based on his principles of approximation to the world, intended Rouhani's diplomacy to do so. However, the history of mistrust and the conduct of Saudis against the Islamic Republic of Iran by supporting its arch enemy, Saddam Hussein, led to any dramatic change in general terms of Iran's Middle East Policy for any compromise or concession toward Saudi Arabia (Soltaninejad, 2018: 727-728).

Rouhani's Middle East policy is facing a type of Saudi foreign policy that is eager to spend as much power and energy as to stop Iran from advancing its interest in the region. Saudi Arabia views the U.S. withdrawal from JCPOA as a key milestone in its success. They understood the lack of time to implement this strategy and quickly achieved it with the Trump administration's support. Iran was empowered with JCPOA and gained its strategic confidence, making Saudi Arabia vulnerable to regional security and domestic politics. Javad Zarif's initiative to reach out to the public is an eminent indicative of bureaucratic diplomacy involved in supporting the country's Middle East policy. To achieve this, bureaucratic diplomacy facilitated the Islamic Republic's position on Saudi Arabia's aggressive policy. In addition, Iran's diplomacy expresses readiness for a broad-based

negotiation with the Saudi government and the definition of regional security arrangement. The foreign minister reached out to some Persian Gulf countries that already had a moderate approach toward Iran. However, bureaucratic diplomacy faced geopolitical fluctuations, which limited its scope of action. Saudi Arabia leads its foreign policy with a small group of the royal family and their inner circle. At the same time, Iran implements its foreign policy with various organizations and interest groups with a different view of foreign relations toward the Saudis. Rouhani's foreign policy required rigorous negotiations to reach a genuine security agreement with Saudi Arabia. Concessions may accompany this decision.

Conclusion

Iran's state key decision-makers view Saudi Arabia's intention and its approach toward Iran pessimistically. In addition to Saudi hostility, the region's geopolitical dynamics deteriorated the situation and decreased the chance of any diplomatic breakthrough between the two countries. The diplomatic bureaucracy of Rouhani's foreign policy proposed the Hurmuz Initiative with the participation of regional players and significant powers. The Saudi perception of a constant need to gain U.S. support in dealing with Iran is the primary bureaucratic politics trend and fundamental obstacle, which Iran failed to address.

On the other hand, Saudi Arabia's foreign policy reduced the role of the foreign minister in fulfilling the demands of the king and his crown prince, who had set strategies and minimized any action independent of the United States as a provider of security. . Saudi Arabia expressed a set of clear goals toward Iran and the area of its interest. The precise definition of goals made that country eager to pursue its clear mandate. In fact, unlike Iran, Saudi Arabia limited its plans to contain Iran at any price. Contrary to Saudi Arabia, Iran set different goals, such as keeping the resistance axis operational aligned with the procurement of the country's urgent needs at the time of massive pressure due to the

U.S. unilateral sanctions. Saudi Arabia gained confidence since the U.S. withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal. Its reliance on Trump's pressure on Iran prior to its departure from JCPOA and convincing the Americans to act within a reciprocal base, and benefiting them from massive military purchases; made them feel that they are on the right path.

Ahmadinejad had the opportunity to establish consensus within a broad range of organizations involved in forming and implementing Iran's Middle East policy. However, the president's inner circle could not conceive of a wider range of foreign policy stakeholders, which could bring Iran and Saudi Arabia to the negotiating table. Instead, Ahmadinejad took a dual approach based on the cultivation of personal relations with leaders of Arab countries and to address Arab nations in which these elements naturally contradicted each other. Rouhani's presidency is a scene of evolving Middle East policy of Iran exposed to a hostile environment. To expand the positive result of JCPOA to the region, foreign minister Zarif embarked upon a regional tour to improve relations with countries of the southern shore of the Persian Gulf.

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