Iran's Geopolitical Power and the Normalization of Relations Between the UAE and Israel

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the role of Iran's geopolitical power in aligning and normalizing relations between the United Arab Emirates and Israel. The findings show that Iran's growing power and threats in the Middle East geopolitics over the past decade have played an important role in normalizing UAE-Israel relations. Although the convergence and unification of the two countries have been done for the purpose of power balancing, the UAE, due to the lack of serious and immediate security threats, simply out of concern for Iran's hegemony and growing power in the region, aims to establish a policy of closeness with Israel. This is correlated to the fact that the Zionist regime has felt a severe and immediate security threat due to the increase in regional power, as well as Iran's influence near its borders and the rise of the Resistance Front over the past decade, and thus aimed at creating a balance of threat against Iranian threats, therefore striking alliance with the Gulf states, including the UAE, has become a foreign policy priority.

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1. Introduction

The process of normalizing the relations of countries such as the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Oman with the Zionist regime had begun years and decades ago in the form of covert diplomacy. But in recent years, this trend has become less secretive and more overt. Netanyahu's visit to Oman and King Qaboos in October 2018 and the signing of the Zionist regime's peace agreement with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain in Washington under the title "The Abraham Accords" on August 13, 2020, are proof of this claim. In this regard, the UAE is the third Arab country after Egypt and Jordan to normalize diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv. However, the country has already allowed the presence of the Zionist regime in Abu Dhabi in the form of measures such as allowing the establishment of a diplomatic office for the Zionist regime in 2015 (to facilitate its participation in the International Renewable Energy Agency), ending the implementation of secondary sanctions[1] by the Arab League in 1994, and allowing the presence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Zionist regime, Yisrael Katz, in the UN meeting on climate change in Abu Dhabi in June 2019, by taking the first secret steps (Bijan,2020:5).

However, the UAE-Israel move to normalize relations is the result of a combination of domestic, regional, and international causes and factors, such as the role of the two countries' elites, economic-trade priorities, and US supportive policies. Furthermore, there have also been regional issues that have largely led to convergence and unity over the past decade. Meanwhile, Iran's growing power and common regional threats are important drivers of closeness between the two countries; Which, in combination with Trump's anti-Iranian actions and his administration's policy of maximum pressure, gained momentum.

On one hand, Abu Dhabi is looking for an ally who has a common understanding with the UAE on regional and international policies, as well as foreign threats and is not geographically bordered by the country to distance itself from geopolitical threats. On the other hand, the Zionist regime, due to its structural restrictions and presence in a tense region that has imposed inherent threats on it, has tried to strengthen its foreign policy by participating in regional alliances and coalitions. They've done this to

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1.Sanctions on companies that trade with the Zionist regime and companies that trade with those companies.

create security in the current anarchic environment. Using the Doctrine of Periphery Alliance and updating it, Tel Aviv is trying to create a strategic circle around its main enemy, Iran.

Given the above, the research question is based on what effect the increase in Iran's geopolitical power and security threats over the past decade has had on the normalization of relations between the UAE and the Zionist regime, and what are the goals of Abu Dhabi and Tel Aviv, by the policy of normalization of mutual relations, regarding Iran? Therefore, the main purpose of the study is to focus on the Iranian variable and the role of its geopolitical power and influence in the Middle East in reviving Abu Dhabi and Tel Aviv relations, as well as examining the strategic goals of these countries towards Iran. The article hypothesizes that, among various factors, the Iranian factor and the growing geopolitical power of this country have played an important role in the normalization of relations between the United Arab Emirates and the Zionist regime. But given the UAE and the Zionist regime's differing perceptions of power and Iran's threats to its security, Abu Dhabi seeks a balance of power and Tel Aviv seeks a balance of threat from the normalization of mutual relations. A review of the existing literature shows that a comprehensive work has not been written on the subject of this research. Therefore, this article seeks to fill this research gap. In other words, the novelty of the research is that it focuses on the variable of Iran as the main factor in the peace agreement and the normalization of relations between the UAE and the Zionist regime. It seeks to explain the strategic objectives of each of them from the signing of the peace agreement.

2. Research Method

The present study is qualitative research in terms of nature and method. To explain the subject of the research, namely the geopolitical power of Iran and the normalization of relations between the UAE and the Zionist regime, the article has used a descriptive-analytical method. The method of collecting data and information has also been done in the form of a library and using written sources such as books and articles. Internet resources have also been used to supplement data and gather facts.

3.Theoretical Structure: Balancing

Among the theorists in the field of international relations, realists emphasize the need for balance and unity in the security policy of countries; They believe that without a "Balance of Power" or a "Balance of Threat," both of which are a form of balancing, long-term strategic goals will not be achieved. Each country builds power based on its own political and geopolitical requirements. But countries that are close to a threatening neighbor need more balancing. Morgenthau believes that the management of the world system occurs when the use of a regional balance policy leads to the balance and cooperation of actors in a region (Mossalanejad,2011:133-135). The concept of balance of power refers to the fact that a stable balance of power between states is essential to the establishment of peace and order in the international system. If there is a balance, governments will not attack each other and will try to maintain the status quo. The main goal in balancing by governments is not to change others based on their values and norms, but they try to influence the foreign policy behavior of others (Oğuzlu,2020:1). In general, the concept of the theory of balance is based on two basic propositions: 1) the concentration of power by countries will essentially reduce the security of other countries; 2) In an anarchic international system, countries are forced to confront the concentration of power in the international system to survive and increase their security. Whenever a power seeks to dominate the international system, the other powers unite to maintain their existence and independence while confronting the hegemonic tendencies in the system (Lieber,2005:1). Unity is also a tool through which a country tries to balance due to insufficient resources to strike a good balance with the country or group of countries that are trying to establish hegemony (Muller,2002). Balancing is inspired by the fundamental hypothesis of realism that states form the main actors of the international system and rationally seek to increase their power or security given the anarchic establishment. The principle of survival, therefore, obliges states to confront the accumulation and concentration of power.

Despite Morgenthau's efforts, balancing became essentially theoretically acceptable after the reconstruction by Kenneth Waltz. In his theory of structural realism, Waltz emphasizes that the security and survival of states depend on preventing the accumulation and concentration of power. He

believes that the accumulation of power and the "desire for hegemony" logically lead to balance. In Waltz's view, international politics operates in a system whose main characteristic is "anarchy" (lack of central supremacy), in which there is no transnational power, and the acquisition of power is the ultimate goal of the actors. Every country is in the "State of Nature" of Hobbes, which is under tremendous pressure during the race for survival. These pressures lead to the formation of different types of behaviors among actors. On the one hand, it forces the actors of the international system to emulate the behaviors of the most successful actors, which leads to the creation of equal units and coexistence between the actors, and on the other hand, the rapid increase in the power of an actor provokes other actors to increase their power and in case of insufficiency, create an alliance between themselves to prevent the emergence of potential hegemony, and when the balance of power is established, hegemonic ambition disappears (Khandan and et al,2021:69-70). Anarchy, then, is a factor that forces states to act defensively and to maintain the balance of power, not overthrow it. Although balance is considered a constituent factor in the structure of international power distribution, Waltz places very little emphasis on balancing strategies. In contrast, John Mearsheimer focuses on balancing behaviors and strategies, and in explaining the strategic behavior of states, he mentions balancing as a behavioral framework (Little,2007:333) Mearsheimer emphasizes that "regional hegemony acts as a foreign and transnational balancer in strategic regions of the regional and global environment; However, they prefer to be the last balancing force in creating balance. They also avoid direct conflict as much as possible. Rival regional hegemons continue to threaten each other by upsetting the balance of power in the backyard and the region under control" (Mearsheimer,2014:158).

But most neo-realists in recent years have argued that some governments seek to maximize security rather than increase power, and that foreign policy coalitions are based on increasing security (Reiter,2019). In this context, Stephen Walt, as a pioneer of the theory of defensive neorealism, shifts his focus on realism from Kenneth Waltz's concept of "balance of power" to a new concept called the "balance of threat." Contrary to popular belief, Walt believes that nations act not on the principle of balance of power, but on the balance of threat. That is, they balance not with power but with threat; Therefore, the regional balance is created only through the

balance of threats. Accordingly, the threat posed by the centrifugal actor behavior can be considered the main focus of coalition policy and threat balance. In other words, what matters in relations between states is their perception of each other as a threat, not just the amount of power of each. Thus, governments strike a balance with governments that threaten their interests or existence (Moshirzadeh,2015:135). What necessitates balance is the hostile intention and, in a sense, the "attempt to replace the superior power." In other words, the mere increase of challenging power alone does not create balance, but the nature of the rising power of the country requires balance. Therefore, the equation includes the power and intentions of those in power (Adami and Nourani,2020:117). In other words, governments do not seek to balance the power of all actors, but only the threatening governments to create stability and security.

According to Walt, the threat consists of "general power", "geographical proximity", "offensive capabilities" and "offensive intentions". Overall power is the sum of the country's resources; A country with more resources can pose a more serious threat than a country with fewer resources. Geographical proximity is important because these countries are often more threatening than distant ones, other conditions being equal. Aggressive power is the ability of one state to threaten the sovereignty or territorial integrity of another state at an acceptable cost. Finally, countries with a history of aggression are more likely to cause a balance than other governments. Aggressive intentions determine a particular country's desire to force another country to react (Seifi and Pourhassan,2018:44). Thus, the greater the weight of the four variables above, the more governments that find themselves most at risk of early threat move toward balancing the threat and trying to strike a balance with other governments to balance threatening power. Applying his theory of alliances in the Middle East, Stephen Walt concludes that balancing against power is not common. But balancing against threats is more common in this regional subsystem (Paul and et al, 2004:8). Given the above assumptions, balancing against Iran in the anarchic environment of the Middle East seems to be the UAE's main strategy. The Arab and the Zionist regime of Israel are important factors in the normalization of relations and their convergence with each other. While the UAE is using the balance of power strategy to try to enter regional coalitions to create a kind of deterrent against Iran, the Zionist regime is

considering Iran's possible power, military capability, geographical proximity, and offensive intentions in the threat balance structure and tried to form a regional alliance with neighboring countries such as the UAE in the face of Iranian threats in order to balance the threat.

4.Findings

4-1. Intensifying the Anarchic Structure of the Middle East and Increasing Iran's Geopolitical Power

The developments of the last decade, known as the "Islamic Awakening" or "Arab Spring", have dramatically changed the geopolitics of the Middle East. The overthrow of the authoritarian Arab regimes in line with the sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf region and the opaque policies of the United States in support of the ruling regimes and preventing their collapse, have intensified the anarchic structure of the region and thus shift the balance of power in Iran's favor, changing the balance of power, which had previously provided the initial bedrock with the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's government in 2003 (Sazmand and Joukar,2020:155). In fact, Iran's influence in the Arab countries of the region, on the one hand, the removal of Hamas from Riyadh and its inclusion in its umbrella, and the support of the Assad government and the Shiites in the Persian Gulf region, on the other hand, which led to a change in the balance of power in the region (Mirrazavi,2013:3-4), caused concern in the Persian Gulf countries and the Zionist regime. In addition, Iran's claim that the Middle East revolutions will be affected by the Iranian revolution raised serious concerns among the Arab governments of the region and the Zionist regime (Ekhtiari Amiri and et al,2020:111). In other words, in the wake of the turmoil caused by the Islamic Awakening, Iran intensified its strategic activities with the aim of becoming the dominant regional power. In this regard, two factors greatly helped the country to exercise direct influence in the Middle East: first, the legitimacy of Iran to sign the UN Security Council in 2015; second, Iran's success in the war against ISIS in Syria and Iraq in 2016 (Herzog,2019:2). In relation to the Iran Nuclear Deal, the Arab countries and the Zionist regime believed that the agreement caused Iran's fear of financial resources to be alleviated and will make it more courageous in pursuing its regional goals and policies, as well as strengthening its military infrastructure (Karami and Mousavi,2019:157); And we must continue to see the potential

threat of an Iran with nuclear power, as well as Iran's support for Islamic groups in the Middle East.

Thus, the nuclear deal not only didn't ease tensions in the Middle East but also widened identity rivalries and power struggles. As stated by the former Zionist ambassador to Egypt, Zivi Mazel, Iran Nuclear Deal led to the "strategic convergence of the interests and not the values" of the Zionist regime and the Arab Gulf states, and brought the Gulf states and the Zionist regime closer to each other on various issues (Ulrichsen,2016:5) and form a secret coalition against possible Iranian hegemony in the region. In fact, it can be said that at the same time as Iran's negotiations with European countries and the United States, the Zionist regime and the sheiks of the Persian Gulf region also made significant progress in the field of diplomacy and the fields of cooperation between the two sides. Iran Nuclear Deal at that time, at the height of the anarchist order in the region, was not the main factor in the convergence of the Zionist regime and the Arabs. But as a catalyst and accelerator, it played a prominent role in collaboration against the Iranian threat.

In general, Iran has increased its regional influence in two direct and indirect ways. In the form of indirect influence, Iran sought to use its allied governments and groups, such as the Syrian government, Hamas, Lebanese Hezbollah, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Iraqi Shiite militias such as Hashad al-Shaabi and the Badr Corps, as well as Yemeni Houthis and al-Shabaab in Syria as proxy groups to further its interests in the region (Smyth and et al,2017). But on the other hand, Iran has sometimes used direct military operations on its western borders (Iraq and Syria) to maintain regional interests and security (Katzman,2019:5-8). Iran's presence and influence in Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon led to the extreme sensitivity of countries in the region, including the Zionist regime. From the perspective of the regime's elites, in the face of the existing threats, Iran is trying to build a strong military front against the Zionist regime in Lebanon and Syria, and a complementary and supportive front in Iraq, somewhere between short- to medium-term (Hamas in Gaza) and long-term strategic threats (an Iran equipped with nuclear weapons). The relative urgency and severity of these threats explain why Iran has become a priority for Israeli politicians in recent years. Also, Iran's efforts to threaten the Zionist regime have led its leaders to seek a military response to these threats, even at the

risk of a major military confrontation (Herzog,2019:1). What has brought the Saudi-led Arabs closer to the Zionist regime is its military and nuclear power, which can protect them from (so-called) Iranian expansionist threats. The Zionist regime also has the opportunity to gain the support of the Arabs instead of facing Iran alone (Rehman,2020:2) and also to gain the necessary legitimacy for its actions against Iran as a regional threat. In addition, recent geopolitical developments in the Middle East have given a new dimension to Iran's policies in support of Islamic and Shiite movements. Previously, Iran's support was limited in two ways. First, these protections mostly included Fatah, Hamas, and to a large extent Hezbollah. Second, the scope of these movements, especially Hezbollah, was limited to Lebanon. But now Iran's support extends from Ansarullah Houthis on the Saudi border to Hezbollah in Lebanon on the borders of the occupied territories. Also, Hezbollah's military role is not limited to Lebanon, and it is currently one of the most powerful non-governmental actors in the Middle East, which is very influential in changing the geopolitical equations of the Middle East (Ekhtiari Amiri and et al,2020:111). In recent years, the geopolitical power of Iran and its regional allies has provoked the reaction of some Arab countries in the Persian Gulf and the Zionist regime, forcing them to adopt coordinated and common policies toward Iran. The exchange of information and military-security cooperation between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates with the Zionist regime in connection with the wars in Yemen, Syria, and Iraq over the past decade shows their seriousness in countering the geopolitical power and threats of Iran and its affiliated groups.

4-2. The UAE's Balance of Power Strategy in the Face of Iran's Growing Power

As the realists point out, the unification of states is done to balance power as the powers of others increase. The balance of power refers to a situation in which no country in the region has a hegemonic and dominant position. Unification is also a way to cover the weakness of internal resources to balance. In other words, countries that do not have the necessary capacities and resources to balance against a hegemonic country seek to eliminate this shortcoming through unification. According to realists, therefore, the survival and security of countries depend on their efforts to prevent the concentration and accumulation of power; And the accumulation of power

and the desire for hegemony essentially leads to balance. In an anarchic system, countries that are unable to eliminate threats by resorting to "self-help" have no choice but to strengthen their military might and form alliances with powerful actors. In other words, when power is unevenly distributed among actors, both sides in an asymmetric relationship may have reason to be wary. The weaker party may be afraid of exploitation or worried about their weak position. Conversely, the stronger side may fear an inevitable shift in the balance of power and face challenges in the long run (Brewer and Brown,2018). Based on this, it can be said that geopolitical weakness along with the increase of Iran's power and strategic influence in the region in recent years has caused the UAE to seek allies in the Middle East geopolitics to balance power.

In fact, the tensions between Iran and the UAE, especially after 2011, the long-standing dispute between the two countries over the three islands, the structural restrictions of the UAE in terms of size and population, as well as the growing military capability of Iran, despite sanctions, has forced the UAE to look for a credible ally that can impose "reciprocal deterrence" in the Persian Gulf region, especially against Iran. As Henry Kissinger points out, the concept of reciprocal deterrence is in some ways the same as the traditional concept of "balance of power" that has taken on a new dimension. Of course, deterrence is better known as a psycho-political concept than a military one (Kissinger,1988:12). Therefore, the deterrent power or the balance of power will be effective only if it is not secret and the enemy is aware of it to a certain extent; An issue that was well illustrated in the public relations between the UAE and the Zionist regime. While the security and economic relationship between Abu Dhabi and Tel Aviv has been going on for years, its publicity has been on the agenda, along with widespread publicity, as a way to benefit from its deterrence against Iran. In fact, the security conundrum in the Persian Gulf region, which arises from a kind of security suspicion towards the actors present in the region, has always plagued the small sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf, and in this regard, entering into alliances with other actors in the region can be a strategy for this security problem for countries like the UAE.

From the UAE's point of view, Iran is an unpredictable power in the field of security and its behavior cannot be trusted, or be built a partnership with. Therefore, from the point of view of the UAE, mechanisms should be

designed to ensure the least damage should be incurred. This mindset becomes much more prominent in the field of national security. This mentality has led the UAE to reassure itself of its national security, given the Middle East instability and the uncertain consequences of Iran's confrontation with the United States and Israel in all parts of the region, which may continue for years. The UAE approached Israel to increase its level of immunity with its mentality of Iranian behavior and at the same time, to influence Iran's calculations towards itself and the Persian Gulf region. From the UAE leaders' point of view, although Saudi Arabia is a strategic partner in the Arab and political spheres, in the field of national security, the political alliance with Riyadh may not be a source of deterrence against potential threats against the UAE. For this reason, they intend to extend their decision-making circle wider to the level of non-Arab regions. By normalizing relations with Israel, the UAE will achieve another goal, given Saudi Arabia's economic, geographical, security, and regional power: to create new spaces for political breathing and more choices in regional conflicts. Like the vague and complex alliances of European powers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that delayed the threat and preoccupied minds, the UAE's turn to Israel, which had been underway for several years has made threatening this country harder, more complicated, and needing more calculations (Sariolghalam,2020:2). Thus, the main root of the UAE's decision-making in normalizing relations with Israel is access to leverage. New approaches to foreign policy and national security are influenced by politicians' perceptions of the mid-term situation in the region, the West, and the United States, the political-economic challenges of the international system, the new definition of national power, and global networking.

The conflicting policies of different US administrations have also played an important role in the normalization of relations between the UAE and Israel. The United States has played the role of Gulf police for three decades with varying degrees of success. Although US power and supremacy continue to grow in the Persian Gulf, and the region is largely dependent on it for security, there is a paradoxical dilemma between Washington and regional actors about the political landscape, the nations, and regional interests. Allegedly, there are differences in the assessment of multifaceted threats and the decline in mutual trust. In this regard, US allies in the region have expressed skepticism in recent years about the "ability" and "willingness" of

the United States to ensure regional order that can maintain its core interests. This distrust stems from US policy in the aftermath of 9/11, when the United States shifted from Middle East management policy through containment, balancing, conflict resolution, and crisis management to regional transformation policy through regime change, confrontation, and democratization. Meanwhile, the occupation of Iraq in 2003 and its aftermath significantly diminished US credibility as a "reliable security guarantor." From the perspective of the Persian Gulf countries, the Iraq war paved the way for Iran to become the most influential regional player. More than the failure of the United States to achieve its goals in Iraq, however, the US "strategic confusion" that has characterized the White House's Middle East policy in recent years has worried Gulf regimes. In this regard, the US caution and contradictory approach to the developments of the Islamic Awakening were strongly criticized by the GCC countries and provided a basis for establishing the idea that the US is leaving its allies alone. These perceptions were clearly shown in rejecting Russia's request for the ouster of Assad by the United States in 2012 (Mossalanejad,2021:316) and its desire for a controlled transfer of power from Hosni Mubarak in early 2011, a longtime ally of Washington and the GCC.

In addition, the Obama administration's reluctance to intervene militarily in the Middle East created a severe security vacuum (Unger,2016:5) as well as potential risks, especially for the Gulf states (Rehman,2020:1). In other words, the Zionist regime and Arab countries such as the UAE concluded that the US absence in the Middle East or its very cautious and selective presence has led Iran to make large investments in Syria and Iraq, as well as the ground for the presence of Russian troops in the Shamat region. The consequence of the Obama administration's lack of attention to the pressures of the Arab countries and the Zionist regime to confront Russia and Iran in the region paved the way for the formation of an unwritten but serious coalition between the Arab countries and the Zionist regime in the Persian Gulf region (Goldberg,2016:69). In fact, they believed that a shift in US foreign policy toward Asia-Pacific[1] and a reduction in its presence in the

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1.Growth of China's economic and military power, ensuring free access to common interests, securing offshore trade lines, countering North Korea's long-range missile development, strengthening US security alliances with neighboring countries, and developing liberalism in the region are among the most important reasons for changing US strategy towards the Asia-Pacific region (Mohamadi and et al,2019: 173).

Middle East would increase Iran's role-playing and activism and provide an opportunity for the country to pursue regional goals without serious opposition. Concerns between the Arab sheikhdoms and the Zionist regime increased when the Barack Obama administration showed a strong desire to reach a nuclear agreement and eventually signed it.

In general, the Obama administration's lack of commitment, coupled with the reduction of US security commitments under Trump, in the form of a "responsibility transfer strategy" based on a type of isolationism in the form of the "Patriotism Doctrine" (Davtalab and et al.,2020:15) caused Arab sheikhdoms such as the UAE to seek alternative solutions to regional threats. In fact, the announcement of the US withdrawal policy and the reduction of its presence in the Middle East created a great deal of fear among its regional allies, prompting them to make greater use of their own capabilities and those of their regional friends to provide security. In particular, the Trump administration did not agree to transfer technology and even sell certain military weapons, such as its MQ-Reaper killer drone, to Arab countries. As a result, they began negotiations with China and Russia to purchase equipment and weapons such as drones and S400s. But the limitations of Saudi-UAE cooperation with Russia have become apparent since the "price war"[1] in April 2020, prompting them to look for new allies. In the meantime, the Zionist regime, which was not a party to any of the human rights conventions on arms deals, could have been a viable option. In particular, the Zionist regime was more willing to cooperate with the United Arab Emirates than its Chinese and Russian rivals, which have close relations with Iran.

A study of the relationship between the UAE and the Zionist regime suggests that, unlike the Cold War, small governments may now decide to act on a case-by-case basis out of a wide range of security commitments, given the security needs and issues at stake, and participate in a number of alliances adjacent to their country. "The main actors have clear strategic goals," said Bruce Jones, director of the Brookings Institution's foreign policy program, "The Zionist regime, along with Saudi Arabia and the
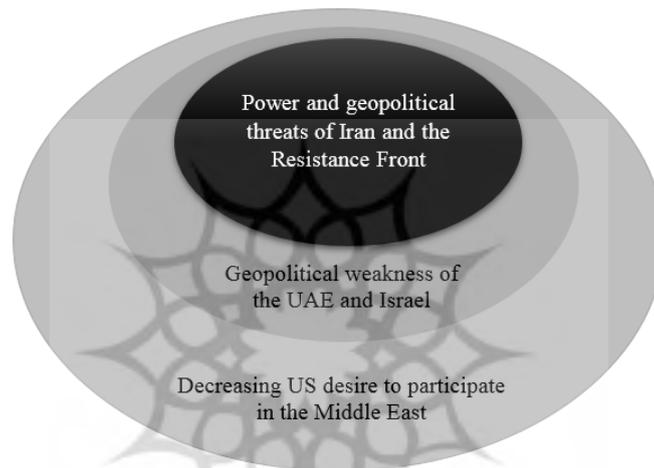

1.Following the defeat of the OPEC Plus meeting, Saudi Arabia and Russia entered into an oil price war, and Saudi Arabia, due to Russia's opposition to reducing oil production, announced that it would increase production from April, and with this decision, oil prices fell sharply and reached about $32 (Smith,2020).

United Arab Emirates, considers their strategic goal to surround Iran"
(Jones,2019:22). In this regard, countries such as the UAE, due to the
feeling of concern and insecurity on the part of the Islamic Republic of Iran,
now use the issue of "Iranophobia" as a propaganda tool to persuade Arab
and Islamic public opinion to establish diplomatic relations with the Zionist
regime. In fact, the actions and movements of Iran in the region, especially
in recent years, which have caused joint insecurity for the Zionist regime
and the Arab countries in the region, have caused the Arab and Zionist
regimes to give way to a kind of strategic alliance against Tehran.
Therefore, raising some issues such as the role of Tehran in some explosions
from the port of Fujairah to the recent explosions in the UAE is to highlight
the project of Iranophobia so that they can define a common enemy called
Iran on the one hand, and create justification for establishing diplomatic
relations between Arab countries and the Zionist regime, on the other hand.
This is to lead the public opinion of the Arab and Islamic world to the point
where Tehran is presented as the common enemy of the Arabs, and the fact
that the Zionist regime has been the main enemy of the Arab world for the
last seventy years is forgotten (Bigdeli,2020:2). In this regard, the drone
attack on the Aramco oil facility, the explosion of the port of Fujairah,
issues related to the Yemeni war, and other similar actions have caused the
Arab countries in the region to feel very serious about Tehran's actions.
Therefore, to address this concern, they have resorted to defining a common
enemy with the Zionist regime called Iran, so that they can stand on a single
front against Tehran. So, it is not just a matter of establishing diplomatic
relations between Abu Dhabi and Tel Aviv. Here is the feeling of concern
and insecurity on both sides about Tehran's actions and movements that
caused these two actors to establish relations with each other; Relations that
will certainly not remain at the political and diplomatic level and will also
lead to security and intelligence cooperation to strike at Iran (Bigdeli,2020:
6). Thus, contrary to the statements of Emirati officials such as UAE
Foreign Minister Anwar Gargash, who stated that Abu Dhabi's agreement
with Tel Aviv does not target Tehran and does not threaten Iran, the Iranian
factor plays an important role in normalizing their relations. In general, it
seems that the paradigm shift in relations between the UAE and the Zionist
regime, which has shifted from tensions, threats, and intimidation to peace
and ultimately political relations, is due to three important factors: first,

Iran's geopolitical power and threats and the Resistance Front; Second, the decline of the US desire for a direct presence in the region; Third, the geopolitical fragility of the Emirate and the Zionist regime; Which is shown in Figure (1).

Figure (1): Three Main Reasons for the Normalization of Relations between the UAE and the Zionist Regime

Power and geopolitical threats of Iran and the Resistance Front

Geopolitical weakness of the UAE and Israel

Decreasing US desire to participate in the Middle East

Despite the symmetry of the influence of various factors on the UAE's foreign policy actions towards the Zionist regime, it seems that the components of the diminishing desire of the US for presence in the region, and the geopolitical fragility of the UAE and Israel, in the absence of threats and geopolitical power of Iran and The Resistance Front could not have been a serious impetus for the normalization of Abu Dhabi's relations with the Zionist regime. In other words, among the above three factors, influencing the Iranian factor and increasing the regional power of this country has played a major role in the policy-making of the leaders of the UAE and the Zionist regime. However, the threats perceived by the UAE do not seem to be existential or focused on the survival of the country. Because Iran and the UAE, despite some tensions, have extensive contact in various fields, Iran does not want to overthrow the governments of the Persian Gulf. Accordingly, it can be argued that the UAE's balancing strategy is more focused on the balance of power in the face of Iran's growing power in the region. While due to the hostility between Iran and the Zionist regime, Iran's

threats against the Zionist regime are more focused on the existence of this regime. For this reason, the leaders of the Zionist regime seek to balance the threat by normalizing relations with the countries bordering the Persian Gulf, including the UAE.

4-3. The Issue of Survival and the Threat Balancing Strategy of the Zionist Regime against Iran

Stephen Walt's threat balance theory emphasizes that countries respond to the threat based on their perception of it and unite against the countries that are the source of the greatest threat. This theory, unlike the balance of power theory, focuses not only on the issue of capabilities in the extent to which one state threatens another, but also on other components such as geographical proximity, offensive capabilities, and aggressive intentions. Under this theory, states that face a common threat or threats unite against it. Based on this, it can be said that Iran, as a common threat, has played an important role in the proximity and convergence of the Zionist regime with the UAE. However, given that the nature of the Iranian threats to the two countries was different from each other, in the sense that the Zionist regime's existential security was endangered, Tel Aviv sought to balance the threat against Iran through an alliance with the countries around the Persian Gulf.

Balancing the threat is an old and long-standing strategy in the national security strategy of the Zionist regime, which has been on the agenda of the government since the existence of this regime. In this regard, the Zionist regime's doctrine of "Peripheral Alliance" is an operational take on the concept of threat balance, which was designed by the Ben-Gurion administration in the 1950s to counter Arab threats. But with the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran and the change in the nature of the new government's relations with the Zionist regime and the non-acceptance of its existence, as well as Iran's support for the Palestinian people and insistence on the need to fight the Zionist regime, which began the Middle East peace process, Iran became the main threat to the national security of the Zionist regime, and thus various strategies were developed to deal with it. Meanwhile, the "New Peripheral Alliance" was one of the most important strategies of the Zionist regime's foreign policy toward Iran. In fact, from the point of view of the leaders of this regime, given the geopolitical transformation of the region and its role in the post-Cold War period, the

peripheral doctrine had to change according to new regional developments (Javdani Moghaddam,2020:204). In this regard, the new peripheral doctrine was defined based on the Zionist regime's enmity with Iran - instead of the Arabs - and the surrounding geographical location in the Zionist regime's national security strategy and foreign policy changed from the Arab states to neighboring Iran. The presence of the Zionist regime in Kurdistan took place after the Second Persian Gulf War, and especially after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's government, as well as the presence of this regime in the Republic of Azerbaijan in this regard. Then, establishing relations with the southern countries of the Persian Gulf, due to its proximity to the sensitive region of the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, became of special importance for Tel Aviv (Shadmani and Yazdani,2018:150).

In this regard, the strategy of covert diplomacy has played an important role in the success of the Zionist regime in the field of foreign policy. In general, the strategy of covert diplomacy from 1948 to the present decade has experienced three different waves in the foreign policy of the Zionist regime: The first wave, mainly among the Arabs of the West Asian region, and in particular Egypt and Jordan. During this period, a conversation took place between Moshe Sharett, the Prime Minister of the Zionist regime, and Jamal Abdel Nasser on the Suez Canal. In the Persian Gulf, in the 1960s, the Zionist regime provided arms to Saudi Arabia to counter pro-Egyptian forces in Yemen. After 1996 and the Oslo Accords, secret diplomatic relations began with Qatar, Oman, Morocco, and Tunisia. The second wave was influenced by Central Asia and the Caucasus. Covert security-arms cooperation with Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and arming the country with surface-to-sea weapons and spy drones happened in the framework of covert diplomacy in the second wave. The third wave of the Zionist regime's covert diplomacy has been operationalized in the Persian Gulf region. The purpose of making this region operational in the third wave of covert diplomacy is its complementary role in linking with the second wave to control the regions of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Countering The Resistance Front using intelligence and political synergy with the Arabs of the Persian Gulf is the main focus of the third wave of covert diplomacy. In 2010, Mossad assassinated the Hamas leader in Dubai, and in 2015 began energy cooperation with the UAE by establishing an energy body in Abu Dhabi. Also, in the form of covert diplomacy, the Zionist regime has been

able to use the economic and intelligence capabilities of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to weaken the government of Bashar al-Assad in the form of civil war and to spy and obtain information on the borders of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The purpose of covert diplomacy was to establish secret political and military-intelligence relations with Arab and non-Arab countries in the West Asian region to contain the Islamic Republic of Iran and The Resistance Front (Khoshka,2020:2). The Zionist Regime has changed its peripheral strategy, with insistence on Iran's threat to them and the United States, in such a way that its scope of implementation has been transferred to countries and systems neighboring Iran. In other words, the Zionist regime, based on the threat balance theory, according to which governments unite against the countries that are the source of the greatest threat, within the framework of the new US containment strategy, which seeks siege and action from all sides to put pressure on Iran. In the "new containment strategy", which 9/11 paved the way for it, the United States focused on neighboring regional systems to contain Iran. In this policy, the Zionist regime has an important place, and as a regional hegemonic power, compatible with the international hegemony, seeks to neutralize the Iranian threats as an anti-hegemonic power. In the same context, the document of the national security doctrine of the Zionist regime states that the policy of this regime at the regional level is guided in three main areas: 1) partners in peace; 2) mediating countries, and 3) rebellious countries and organizations (Borhani and Hosseini,2021:50).

1. The Zionist regime must seriously adopt a policy to maintain and develop its peaceful relations with Egypt and Jordan. The Zionist regime must involve them in advancing positive trends in the region and advancing joint efforts to fight terrorism. At the same time, the Zionist regime must maintain its qualitative superiority over its allies. In addition, the Zionist regime must work to expand its relations with moderate actors in the region.

2. In the case of relatively moderate and moderate countries, especially Saudi Arabia and Iraq, the Zionist regime is interested in preventing them from becoming rebellious countries and should improve relations with them to the level of peaceful relations. The Zionist regime is also interested in encouraging the international community to neutralize the potential threat posed by these countries.

3. The Zionist regime must confront the rebellious countries and organizations - especially Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, Hamas, and extremist Islamic organizations whose assassination and unconventional weapons are a challenge – and must take serious steps in developing international and regional cooperation and strengthening its accountability to weaken their legitimacy (Meridor and Eldadi,2019).

Therefore, first of all, the Zionist regime's interests in the surrounding environment are trying to create a wide belt of partners to prevent the stabilization of the Shiite-Iranian axis. This axis correctly identifies the weaknesses of the Zionist regime, which include: high sensitivity to casualties, the geopolitical problem of the Zionist regime facing long and extensive war, restrictions on participation in ground operations, as well as the psychological tactic of victory without defeat (Borhani and Hosseini, 2021:50).

In this regard, recent developments in the Middle East, which were followed by Iran's presence in the Syrian war and Tehran's influence beyond the border walls of the occupied territories, caused the security balance in the Middle East to shift in favor of The Resistance Front centered in the Islamic Republic. The Zionist regime, which initially chose the policy of non-interference in the Syrian civil war made it possible for Iran to move into Syria with a multidimensional plan. When the Zionist regime realized the consequences of non-intervention, it tried to delay and disrupt the process of consolidating Iran's influence and power in Syria and prevent the establishment of military infrastructure in Syria. The Zionist regime's efforts are now focused on three areas:

1. Attacking Iran's military fortifications and intercepting the transfer of weapons, especially advanced weapons, to Hezbollah.
2. Pressure on Russia to contain Iran and limit its influence in Syria and the withdrawal of Iranian forces under Russian control from the border of the Zionist regime, especially in the Quneitra region and the Golan Heights.
3. pressure on the United States to delay the full withdrawal of its forces from eastern Syria and the Al-Tanf region, to sever Iran's military ties between Iraq and Syria and prevent Iranian domination of this strategic region (Dekel,2020).

Given the current situation and Iran's multiple threats against the existence and survival of the Zionist regime, the regime has tried to limit the influence of the Shiite axis led by Iran and create reciprocal threats. Increasing cooperation with pragmatic Sunni countries and the normalization of relations with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain can be explained in this context. In fact, instead of relying solely on military and intelligence power, the Zionist regime seeks to achieve political gains by expanding the process of normalization of relations, and ultimately balancing the threat against Iran. The logic of the security dilemma, especially in the case of a government with geopolitical weakness, strategic depth, and, until recently, a tangible regional alliance, dictates that establishing diplomatic relations with Iran's potential enemies and create a severe security crisis for it. This sense of threat from Iran, especially in relation to the possible presence of the Zionist regime in the Persian Gulf, has led the Iranian authorities to give serious warnings to the Emirati leaders and inform them of the negative consequences of the Zionist regime's presence in the region. However, it seems that the strategic vision of the United States and the Zionist regime with the entering of Tel Aviv in the region is beyond what can be controlled by the management of Emirati officials and leaders. Because the Emiratis have practically taken a step in a way that they will not be able to determine its dimensions and limits.

Figure (2): Analytical Model for the Project
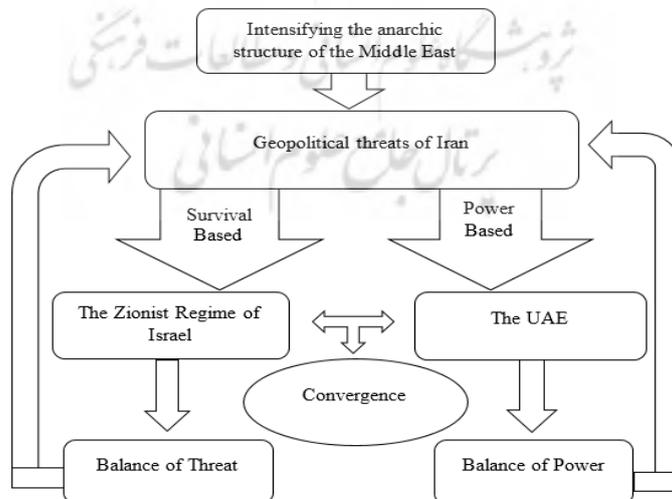
5. Analysis and Conclusions

The geopolitics of the Middle East has undergone a major transformation over the past decade, which has resulted in an intensification of anarchic order and changes in the security equation in the regional structure. The overthrow of some Arab states, as well as internal conflicts in some countries, such as Syria, Yemen, and Iraq, further strengthened Iran's spheres of influence and geopolitical power, and ultimately shifted the regional balance in favor of the country; However, Iranian activism has incurred great costs. What is certain is that Iran's acting and role-playing in various geopolitical areas of the Middle East have caused the sensitivity of some rival actors such as the United Arab Emirates, and also doubled the sense of threat of actors such as the Zionist regime; Which has a long-standing enmity with Iran. Therefore, among the influential components in the normalization of relations between the UAE and Israel, the role of Iran's growing power and geopolitical threats seems to be very important. The Iranian factor has caused rival powers (such as the UAE) and adversaries (such as Israel) to adopt a policy of convergence based on the common threat of Iran and to prioritize the balancing strategy in their foreign policy. Although Abu Dhabi and Tel Aviv have adopted a balancing strategy towards Tehran, due to the difference in the nature and urgency of Iran's security threats against each of them, the UAE and the Zionist regime have different approaches to balancing strategies. In other words, the UAE is more in search of a regional balance of power. While Israel has put the strategy of balance of threat on its agenda. The UAE has always sought a powerful regional ally to counter the power and influence of the Islamic Republic of Iran and The Resistance Front. Therefore, after unsuccessful cooperation with the Saudi axis, especially in Syria and Yemen, as well as after creating tensions in relations with Ankara and Doha and the reluctance of the United States to be active in the region, Emirati officials seek to ally with the Zionist Regime. For the United Arab Emirates, which is facing structural and geopolitical weaknesses, the development of relations with the Zionist regime and the alliance with this country can be a good tool for balancing power with the regional power of Iran. The UAE, despite its extensive trade relations with Iran, has always considered the country a threat to itself and over the years has sought to use various mechanisms such as the purchase of advanced military weapons, and military intervention in

Middle East geopolitics such as Yemen and creating coalitions and unions with countries such as Saudi Arabia, to try to maintain a balance of power in the face of Iran's growing geopolitical power as much as possible. But on the other side, given Iran's power, offensive capability, geographical proximity, and aggressive intentions against the Zionist regime, Tel Aviv officials have sought to balance the threat to counter the Iranian threat to the regime's survival. In fact, given that Israel's view of the Middle East environment is through the lens of security, the Tel Aviv leaders have always tried to control the rioters' entrances to their security system outside the borders and prevent them from entering. In this regard, Israel has tried to create new alliances around its main enemy, Iran, by re-reading and understanding the doctrine of the Peripheral Alliance of Ben-Gurion. Establishing relations with the countries on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf is part of the new doctrine. According to Tel Aviv, the UAE, meanwhile, has a strategic position to put pressure on Iran. For this reason, this regime has shown great interest in establishing relations with the United Arab Emirates at the highest levels.

Now, the United States, Israel and the Arab countries of the region, in parallel with pursuing the policy of maximum pressure, seek to render the influence of Tehran's regions ineffective, and to achieve this, establishing diplomatic relations between the UAE and Israel is one of the most important steps. Restricting Iran in this region, especially in the waters of the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Sea of Oman, and tightening the security and intelligence siege to reduce Iran's maneuvering power can make Iran's operating conditions difficult; This will complicate the security puzzle in the region. It seems that with the presence of Israel in the Persian Gulf system, the developments in the region will enter a new phase, and also determining the level and limits of the Zionist regime's movements in the region will not be under the control of Emirati officials and other Arab countries. In particular, the security relations between Abu Dhabi and Tel Aviv have the full support of the United States and are part of its overall strategy for the region. It seems that with the presence of Israel in the countries of the Persian Gulf, their security will be practically linked; because the security of Israel is the priority of the United States of America. Therefore, the security, intelligence, and military equations of the Persian Gulf region will change and Iran's maneuver of power in the Persian Gulf

will be overshadowed. Considering the acceptance of the Zionist regime as a fact and the possibility of expanding the relations of other sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf with Tel Aviv, it is suggested that by using bilateral and multilateral diplomacy and changing foreign policy approaches, Iran make closeness with countries of the Persian Gulf region a serious policy priority. In other words, to prevent the formation of a strategic alliance against Iran and the possible tightening of the siege in the future, with the presence of the Zionist regime in the region, Tehran should seek to improve its relations with the Arab countries in the Persian Gulf, so that these countries don't have any fear or concern about the actions of Iran. Building trust is a crucial element in improving relations with Iran's southern neighbors. Negotiation and cooperation on issues such as the issue of the three islands, the war in Yemen and Syria, and the crisis in Iraq can provide a platform for convergence and alignment between the two sides and build trust between the two sides. Through active diplomacy, Iran must address the security concerns of the Persian Gulf countries, such as the United Arab Emirates, and provide the context for political, economic, and even military-security interactions. The development of comprehensive and constructive cooperation will lead to mutual security interdependence and ultimately reduce security threats against Iran. At the same time, strengthening relations between Tehran and the Arab states in the Persian Gulf region will make the current alliance of these states with the Zionist regime fragile, or at least not pose a serious threat to Iran. Convergence and cooperation also require achieving common and intersubjective senses and perceptions among the region's political elites.

6.Acknowledgment

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