

An Analysis of Russian Political Communication after Islamic Awakening; Case Study: Iran and Saudi Arabia

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ABSTRACT

Russia has taken new approaches to this sensitive area since 2011, considering the first whispers of the birth of the new regional order in the Middle East. There are approaches that demonstrate the regaining of Moscow's role in the region. The new Middle East, however, is fundamentally different from the past and has new complexities. The countries of the region today have more independence and interconnectedness of different areas has led to the formation of nesting and complex fronts. Fronts that each require specific patterns of relationships among actors. These complexities have led to the emergence of an empirical balancing practice from Moscow towards the countries of the region. Behavior based on certain approaches based on statements such as direct military intervention, the fight against terrorism, and the formation of anti-Western alliances and the pursuit of international energy strategies. The main components of Russia's equilibrium behavior in the Middle East can be emphasized on functional dimensions, play with all state actors, division of labor without conflict and interaction with non-state actors. This approach to the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia, as two important regional players with interests that are sometimes counter-contradictory, has been applied and has brought good and balanced relations between Moscow and Tehran and Riyadh.

Keywords: Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Middle East, Balanced Behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Access to the southern warm waters in the Gulf and the Sea of Oman from the 17th century has always been one of the goals of Russian foreign policy. During the tsarist empire, the Russians, on the one hand, encountered a great empire, even weakened by Iran during the Qajar period, which, despite all the problems, made it impossible to reach the southern waters in the Russian bullying pillars. On the other side of the (east) region, the powerful presence of the British Empire in India and the engagement of the Russians in the great game made it impossible to easily reach the paths of Afghanistan and Pakistan. On the more frontier borders, the Ottoman Empire, which extended its borders to the north of the Caucasus Mountains, did not let us go to the Russian Empire, weakened by the late nineteenth century. At the same time, the bourgeoisie of the communist ideological system of the Bolsheviks took place in the aftermath of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the wake of the Great

Socialist October Revolution of 1917, which reproduced the power of the traditional Moscow Empire in Eurasia. The end of the Second World War created new opportunities for the Soviet Union as the Pahlavi regime in Iran strengthened the United States and the gradual withdrawal of England from the eastern regions, which promising the formation of the Cold War order in the Middle East. In this period, the Russians achieved their historical aspirations by gaining and strengthening the moons in the Middle east and, on the other hand, the occupation of Afghanistan. However, the gradual weakening of the Soviet system and, eventually, the collapse after the August 1991 revolution, did not allow the Russians to complete this complex puzzle.

A decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the development of the post-Cold War post-war order, work became more difficult for Russia. The modern American order in the Middle East had gained a fairly complete command of geopolitics, energy, and even

relations between regional actors, and the Russians did not see their penetrating path. The start of popular uprisings from North Africa to Southwest Asia, albeit with the loss of the remaining Russian allies, such as Libya and Syria, but the collapse of the post-Constitutional order and the laying of the foundations of the new order gave the Russians the promise of giving the opportunity to a new start Middle East. Moscow has since begun its active career in 2012, taking advantage of all possible means.

But the new Middle East situation and two decades of disturbing Russia were facing new challenges. The multiplicity of actors with varying degrees of power, influence, and influence, along with the cognitive and perceptual weakness of the movement, made the decision-making motives of the new and transformed Middle East harder for Moscow. On the other hand, Russia was in an absolute deadlock that, in keeping with the new conditions of the region and in pursuit of its predetermined goals, could not exclude a part of these actors and co-operate only with a few actors as in the past. In order to play a role in the new order, it should be possible to influence the behavior of all actors in the region through various ways of sharing interests, persuasion, control, containment and other possible means. The alignment of relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia has been the main challenge facing Russia in this framework. This new algebra led to the emergence of a new Russian behavior in the Middle East, which can be called the functional balance. The main purpose of this study is to analyze this behavioral pattern in the Middle East, based on the conceptual model of balance and descriptive-analytical method.

From Balance of Power to Balancing Behavior

The concept and application of a radical balance in the history of human interactions. However, perhaps it is possible that Hans Morgenthau is one of the first international knowledge theorists who have done special research on this key topic. Morgenthau is of the opinion that in the course of history, five main methods have been developed to maintain international order and peace: the balance of power, international law, international organizations, the rule of law and diplomacy. Among these, he identifies the first and the last as the most efficient instrument (Moshirzadeh, 1394: 103). Morgenthau and other realists,

especially the supporters of structural realism, emphasize the concept of power and the anarchic conception of the world, considering the balancing only as a solution, and paying attention to diplomacy in this regard. In fact, the main conclusion of structural realism is that in a state of anarchy, governments are pushing for more balancing. Realists believe that international actors will seek to strike a balance, both internally, by redistributing resources to both national and foreign security, largely through unification with other states and similar formal and informal arrangements (Brethell and Linklater, 1394-44: 53). However, the end of the Cold War and the emergence of foreign policy studies have posed this challenge with serious challenges. The tensions between structural realism and the study of foreign policy are particularly evident in the context of the literature on the balance of power tradition. The balance of power analysis includes a chaotic tradition that always includes what is now known as "systemic" or "foreign policy" approaches. Although recent work on Waltz's theory has been used to explain the balance-of-laws behavior of governments, however, this research, despite historically finding false results, and the end of the Cold War, have also made them more aware of They were criticized (Martin, 2003: 61).

These challenges have led to new studies on the balance-of-laws behavior of states in the framework of studying foreign policy. Nevertheless, following the realistic view of the inevitability of balancing behavior, the emergence of balance in various frameworks and levels, the fundamental question came of what kind of behavior can be considered as a balancing act by governments? This led to the emergence of new patterns of government behavior in foreign policy, including soft balance, economic balance, or follow-up. However, in the case of Russia (after 2007 and the change in Putin's approach), none of these approaches were responsive to Russia's behavior, and therefore the return to the classical approaches to hard-line balance was taken into account. This means adopting a reactive strategy in response to a hegemony in order to prevent being subjected to domination, aggression, or defeat. This balancing behavior can also be internal or external (Korolev, 2017: 898-899).

However, this behavior is different at the regional level due to the difference in the level

and type of hegemonic interaction and influence. In the Middle East, this approach is presented in a different way. In the region, since the level of threats from the international hegemony is much lower for Russia and is in the category of threats of important, if not vital, interests, the Russians have come up with a smarter, multi-lingual approach. By establishing a circle of their interests in the functional areas of security, they have created a smart division of the region, and in spite of the current volatile atmosphere, they have been able to establish a stable balance in their relations with regional actors, especially the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia. Give up The name of this balancing Russian behavior can be called the "functional balance." Functional equilibrium means the operational definition of the levels of relationships and exchanges in different functional areas for different actors on the basis of important interests so that a minimum level of reciprocal access to the benefits is provided. Thus, the Moscow's equilibrium behavioral pattern is defined by defining its various levels of relations with Tehran and Riyadh in different areas, so that none of them is directly in conflict with one another.

Russia's new Middle East policy after popular uprisings in 2011

Since 2012, and especially after Vladimir Putin's reinstatement, we are witnessing a change in Russia's Middle Eastern politics. Prior to 2012, Russia's policies in this region were sometimes contradictory and opportunistic, but increasing tensions with the West intensified Russian activities in the region. During this period, good relations with some powerful Middle Eastern players allowed Moscow to withdraw from international isolation and partly offset the effects of Western sanctions. Of course, in addition to the factor (west), Putin's close personal relations with the region and his perceptions of the Arab Spring, the promotion of Russian Universalist thinking and the domestic political conditions made Russia change its policies in the Middle East. With the development of these policies, we have seen that, from 2017, economic factors played an important role in the Russian strategy to strengthen its presence in global oil and gas markets (Kozhanov, 2018: 28-29).

As a result, Russia's policies embraced both political and economic components, utilizing all the Middle Eastern players, especially regional

powers. The most important propositions of the Russian in the New Middle East policy can be summarized as follows:

Direct Military Intervention

Russia's direct military intervention in a Middle East security crisis has not been preceded by the post-cold war order of the region. However, since September 2015, Russia's support for the Syrian government has entered a military phase. Several analyzes have been made for this Russian move in Syria, which included the security statement from the ISIS campaign to the fears of the post-Cold War doctrine of the West about the military intervention in undesirable regimes (Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya). From this perspective, the Russian approach is based on this notion of meaning that respect for the principle of state sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs is the guarantor of security. Of course, some analysts have also argued this military intervention to the systemic contradiction between Russia and the United States as a result of the development of the Ukrainian crisis in 2014 (Alsaadi, 2017: 87).

Fight against Terrorism

Russia has faced many problems in terms of vulnerability to terrorism in the years after the collapse of the Soviet Union during the presidency of Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin's first term of office. So, at the onset of the crisis in Syria and Iraq, Vladimir Putin, at the seventh meeting of the UN General Assembly, said that what worries Russia is the fact that "with the events in some of the Near East and North Africa, a government vacuum Has led to the creation of tense areas that are quickly filled with extremists and terrorists "(Joseph, 1395: 113). Consequently, tackling the root cause of the threat became a principled component of Russian foreign policy.

Formation of anti-Western coalitions

Another new Russian policy statement in the Middle East was the formation of anti-Western alliances utilizing the capacity of regional actors. In this regard, Putin is opposed to the West, hoping to revive the image of Russia as a great power in the framework of the game. In this regard, cooperation with Iran was also underlined by Russia. This was also emphasized in the document on the concept of Russian foreign policy in 2000. A new Russian policy in the Middle East containing anti-American and anti-Western elements, including support for the

Iranian nuclear program, will provide a significant amount of Syria's debt (Borshcevsckaya, 2016: 5). However, it should also be noted that Russia's actions in this regard have been aimed at preventing the formation of a security incident and the rise of tensions with the West. The simultaneous development of relations with western-oriented actors in the region, including Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia, coordination with the West in sensitive military operations and diplomatic partnerships, such as the chemical weapons crisis, including Russia's actions in this regard.

Follow International Energy Strategies

Russia's energy strategy by 2030, which was issued in 2010, will clearly mark the strengthening of the country's foreign economy as one of the priorities of the Russian government. Therefore, the Kremlin has defined one of its goals and priorities in its interaction with energy-affiliated countries. From this perspective, the Middle East's oil and gas producers are becoming more and more important for Russia. Russia and the countries

of the Middle East and North Africa have more than 63 percent of the world's proven oil and gas reserves. On the other hand, the trend towards nuclear energy has faced an increasing trend in the region, which is of great interest to the Russians. Thus, two major approaches to Russian Middle Eastern politics can be considered in the light of its energy strategy. In the first place, increased engagement with oil and gas producing countries to control global energy arteries, especially in the pricing category. And, on the other hand, finding markets for the establishment of peaceful nuclear power plants in the Middle East is in line with Moscow's political and economic goals (Nakhle, 2018: 29). Obviously, Russia's Middle East policy is much more complex and includes more and more components that can be defined below by sub-components. However, the remarkable point here is that all these propositions and policies have been made by looking at the establishment of functional equilibrium by providing a systemic interactive mechanism.

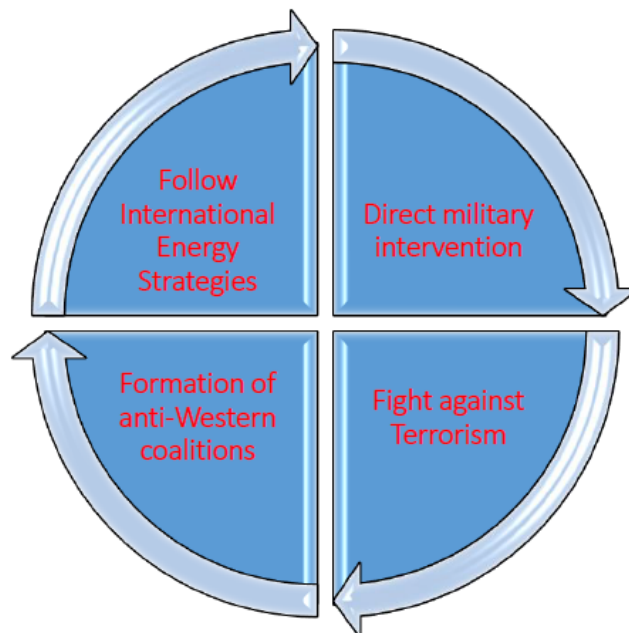


Figure1. *The most important propositions of the Russian in the New Middle East*

The Components of Russia's Balancing Behavior

Earlier, the new Russian Middle East policy propositions were based on four main components and several sub-components. However, the behavior of Russia's foreign policy towards the goals set for the above-mentioned propositions follows a certain pattern. The most important features of this

pattern can be summarized in the following statements:

Emphasizing Functional Dimensions

Putin has always been a pragmatic, realist, and geopolitical acclaimed politician. These characteristics have also been evident in his foreign policy during his second term as president (Roberts, 2017: 6). In the Middle East, this feature has become more qualitative. In this

regard, from Russia, attention has been paid to the effective functions of actors in shaping common quotas in different frameworks. However, this functionalist approach has been sweeping across all areas and not provoking reactive sensitivities.

Playing with all the State Actors

Another obvious feature, which in fact may be considered a Russian winner, is to play with all the small and big players in the region. In fact, it can be said that the game has been the heart of Russia's strategy with all the Middle Eastern players. In this regard, Moscow has adopted a multi-faceted approach to addressing regional crises (Therme, 2017: 2). In this framework, the relatively quick rebuilding of Russia's ties with Turkey could well be analyzed in spite of the acute political-security successive crises such as the collapse of the Sukhoi-24 or the assassination of Ankara's ambassador in Ankara. As a result of an acute political crisis, the two countries reached a common queue for solving the problem in Syria. The coincidence with the Zionist regime and the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Syrian crisis has also been the image of the Russian approach.

The Division of Labor without Contradiction

Another significant component of Russia's foreign policy behavior in the Middle East was the division of labor without creating opposition on the various fronts of the Middle East. Russia strives to advance its goals without compromising itself against one another or

making one of the actors in front of another. Of course, this has not always been a great deal, and the Russians have used all of their political, diplomatic and even security tools for this. On the other hand, this division of labor, while not in a stable and stable pattern, may cost a lot to the Russians. However, the hope of achieving a stable behavioral mechanism and the relative advantages of this type of division has led the Russians to take this approach. Perhaps this can be considered the most important feature of the Russian equilibrium behavior in the Middle East. For example, in the Syrian crisis, the Russians worked together with the Islamic Republic of Iran and Israel. On the other hand, Iran has placed Iran on a joint military-security front and has provided Iran with significant weapons, and on the other hand, it has guaranteed to Israel that the weapons are not available to Hezbollah and not used against Israel (Geranmayeh & Liik, 2016: 8).

Interaction with Non-State Actors

Another feature of Russia's balancing act is interaction with non-state actors to regulate the behavior of governments in the region. Russia believes it can enter into dialogue with all parties and non-state actors in the region other than Isis. This allows Russia to use the right balance with relations with a large number of governmental and non-governmental actors, sometimes at odds with other actors (Sladden et al, 2017: 3). The cooperation of Moscow with Lebanese Hezbollah and popular groups in Syria can be well appreciated in this framework.

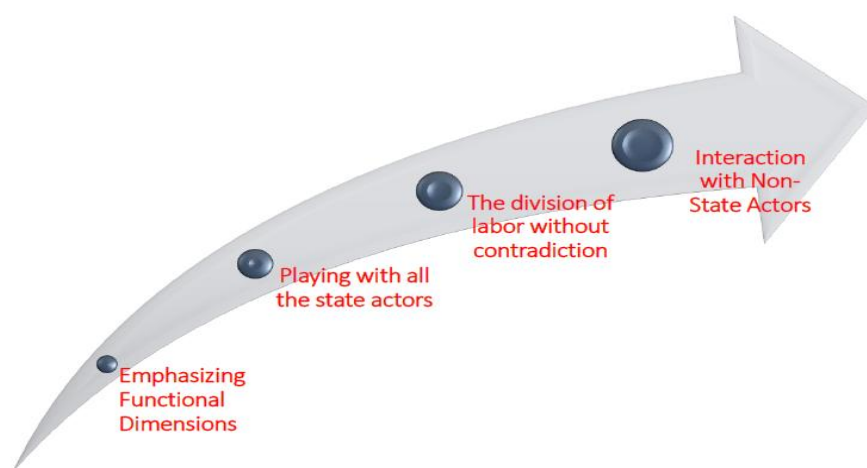


Figure2. *The Components of Russia's Balancing Behavior in the Middle East*

Russia's Equilibrium Behavior towards the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia

The Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia are two of the most important and influential

actors in the South-West Asia region, which are mutually beneficial and sometimes conflicting. However, since 2012, when Russia's participation in the Middle East has developed, we have seen that Moscow has maintained

relatively good relations with both Tehran and Riyadh (Antonyan, 2018: 344). This is while the Middle East region has experienced one of its most difficult times, and is about the rule of a new order rather than the post-cold war order of the United States.

Regional Security Crises

Security crises in different parts of the Middle East can be seen as the focal point of regulating relations between different regional and subregional actors in the new order. The region is currently facing two major security crises in Syria and Yemen. As mentioned earlier, in Syria, Russia has closer views on Iran. The Syrian crisis has become a controversial war. In this nominating war, Iran, Hezbollah and Russia have supported the army of Bashar al-Assad government, and the United States, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar are also in the form of arms, logistics and international platforms and supporters of the opposition army (EKŞİ, 2017: 108). In this regard, we have seen that relations between Iran and Russia have reached its highest level in recent years. In fact, it can be said that the crisis in Syria, Iran and Russia for the first time in a joint operation front. Therefore, the Syrian issue can affect not only the future security of the Middle East and the status of Iran and Russia, but may even play a decisive role in the level of cooperation between Iran and Russia in other areas. Over the past few years, we have witnessed a reciprocal reproduction of this cooperation between Moscow and Tehran in other areas of political and security relations in bilateral relations. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia is a serious opponent of Iran and Russia's position in the Syrian crisis. The opposition groups in Syria have been radicalized radically through the support of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. As a result, relations between Russia and Saudi Arabia have been controversial, controversial roots in the geopolitical interests of both sides (Mikail & AYTEKIN, 2016: 457).

Along with this, another significant issue with regard to Russia is considerable cooperation with Lebanon's Hezbollah as a non-governmental actor. This issue has been strongly criticized by Israel and Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, despite this proxy opposition, we have seen that the Russians have never directly opposed Riyadh and have not abandoned Riyadh within the framework of their Middle Eastern agenda. During this period, even though

we have been observing that Saudi Arabia has not been physically present in Russia's diplomatic paths for peace in Syria, such as the talks on the thresholds or the meetings between Tehran and Istanbul, Moscow has managed to reach through the channels of communication between the two countries and invite the opposition. The Saudis' support will in no way prevent the Riyadh from slashing and even attracting their attention. On the other hand, we witnessed Yemen's crisis in this area. Russia has not played a significant role until the initial stages of the Yemeni crisis, and if not said, passivity, its approaches have shown that Yemen's developments have been a high priority for Moscow. Nevertheless, it seems that since 2017 we have seen changes in Russia's approach to Yemen. In addition, the emphasis of former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh on the readiness of the country to use Yemen's military bases to counter terrorism was also to be considered. In this framework, Russia plays two ways in Yemen. First, the importance of the geopolitics of Yemen and the historical presence of the Russians in this country will make Moscow re-focus its attention on its priorities. Secondly, activating the country's presence in Yemen is a leverage to pressure Saudi Arabia or to regulate relations with the Saudis. In fact, Russia looks at the Yemeni crisis as a long-term and systematic issue, and there are no illusions about the prospect of a real presence for political and economic interests. In addition, Moscow pursues any competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia with good faith, as it is truly afraid of engaging in a Sunni-Shiite conflict.

Sale of Arms and Military-Technical Cooperation

In the field of arms sales, Russia has had a fairly active attitude towards Iran and Saudi Arabia. Since the beginning of the growing military and technical cooperation between Iran and Russia in Syria, we have witnessed the development of military exchanges between the two countries. In this regard, the role of the Comprehensive Action Plan (Action) should not be ignored. Through this nuclear deal between Iran and the 1 + 5, legal bases for obtaining many defensive weapons were provided to Iran. The first major event in Iran-Russia relations in this regard was the delivery of surface-to-air systems at S-300 in 2015 (Wuthnow, 2016: 3). Another issue that came to Iran after the delivery of the S-300 was another great military contract that was

introduced in the news. A Russian TACC news agency reported on Nov. 14, 2016, quoting a top Russian official, of speculation by the two countries for a major \$ 10 billion arms deal. The predictions indicated that the deal included the T-90s T-3s and the 30-year-old SUVs that were announced by Defense Secretary Sardar Dehghan. Of course, it should be recalled that according to resolution 2231, which was ratified by the Security Council after the signing of the agreement, there were restrictions on the sale of arms to Iran by October 2020, requiring the parties to obtain permission from the United Nations. But in the case of Saudi Arabia, this is completely different. Russia views the Gulf region, and especially Saudi Arabia, as an attractive market for arms exports. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia is the only Arab Muslim country that has never approached Moscow to supply weapons. Nevertheless, in July 2008, Moscow and Riyadh signed a cooperation agreement on technical and military matters. Since 2007, there have also been reports of arms talks between the two sides (Nocetti, 2010: 16). Recently, it seems that Russia and Saudi Arabia are expected to deliver S-400 air defense systems, as well as several other weapons orders, such as the Kornet anti-aircraft systems and launcher launchers of dice type, with an estimated value of about 4 billion the dollar has come to an agreement. The Saudi ambassador to Moscow said the deal was in the final stages. From this perspective, the beginning of the sale of advanced weapons to Saudi Arabia by Russia could be considered a milestone in the military-technical relations of the two countries, which was only observed in the equilibrium of the Russian Middle East.

Economics and Energy

Relations between the economy and the energy sector are one of the other attractive areas for Russia in Saudi Arabia. In this regard, Russia has opened a special account on the Saudi market. Especially after the economic problems caused by the fall in oil prices and Western sanctions since 2014, Moscow needs a special need for new markets to breathe new breaths into its economy. This is particularly evident in the field of attracting foreign investment, one of Saudi political leverage in recent years. During the trip of Malek Salman to Moscow, Saudi Arabia was committed to investing \$ 10 billion in Russia over the next five years, the first foreign investment in Russia. But the other area

is the cooperation between Russia and Saudi Arabia on the issue of oil and gas. In this regard, Saudi Arabia and Russia see each other as potential partners to form a powerful oil alliance to stabilize the world energy market. Despite the fact that the energy crisis encourages oil countries to compete, Saudi Arabia and Russia still maintain their position in consultation and cooperation on hydrocarbon markets. Currently, Russia's Lukoil and gas stroke companies are active in the Arabian oil and gas market (Kosach, 2016: 5). The main concern of the two countries is to form a coalition for controlling the world's energy arteries. Recently, after threats by United States President Donald Trump, the United States has begun talks to rebuild unilateral sanctions against our country, Russia and Saudi Arabia to offset the potential deficit of Iran's sanctions on the energy market. In this context, a tripartite meeting of energy ministers from Russia, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (as the head of the OPEC) took place in Moscow.

CONCLUSION

The developments brought about by the popular uprisings in the Middle East since 2011, which have led to the collapse of the post-Cold War post-war order and the formation of a new regional Middle East order, has forced Russia to re-engage in its transformation in the region. Moscow views itself in the new Middle East that distinguishes itself from the status of the Cold War, so that countries enjoy a higher degree of independence (compared to the 1970s-1990s) and regional actors play a significant role in the new regional order. This has complicated the role played by the Russians as a powerful new metropolitan actor. However, over the years, we have seen that Russia, in the framework of its new Middle East policy, has been able to make some progress in regional development. The direct military intervention, the fight against terrorism, the formation of anti-Western alliances and the pursuit of international energy strategies constitute the main propositions of the new Russian Middle East policy. But the Middle East is a multifaceted struggle in various areas that complicates the achievement of these propositions for the Russians. This made it possible for the Russians to achieve a balanced approach with an emphasis on functional dimensions. An approach that was realistic, non-ideological, modern, and fully pragmatic. In this

regard, Russia's equilibrium behavior can be subdivided into four key statements focusing on functional dimensions (paying attention to the effective functions of actors in shaping common queues in different frameworks), playing with all actors (relying on multi-faceted approaches and playing with all actors in the region without abandoning No effective actors), the division of the work without creating opposition (without having to confront oneself or causing one to act against another actor), engaging with non-state actors (interaction with actors Non-governmental organization to set up Of governments in the region), analyzed and evaluated. In this framework, Russia's attitude toward the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia is being analyzed. Russia has been in the Syrian pro-Nazi battles, though it has been with Iran and Saudi Arabia, but has never entered a direct rivalry. On the other hand, while the Russians, although in the Yemeni crisis, had a more positive attitude toward the government of Ali Abdullah Saleh and looked at the pessimistic view of Ansar al-Wahla, while in Syria, despite the pressure from Israel and Saudi Arabia, they have been cooperating with Hezbollah in Lebanon for their own purposes. . In the military and arms dimension, we witnessed a dramatic increase in cooperation between Iran and Russia. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia, which has so far no experience with Russian weapons, has begun talks on the acquisition of modern Russian weapons, such as the S-400. A case that can be considered a turning point in relations between the two countries. In the field of economics and especially energy, Moscow stands beside Riyadh. Russia and Saudi Arabia have negotiated a lot to secure Iran's oil production deficit after Donald Trump's sanctions, and they seem to have agreed to achieve a decisive stream in the energy market. This is not a pleasant Iran. All of these positions have been taken within the framework of Russia's equilibrium approach and have led the Russians to achieve a relatively stable mechanism in their engagement with Tehran and Riyadh.

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