

## **The Future of the Regional System of the Middle East and the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

This paper seeks to draw scenarios for the future of the Middle East regional system, and considers the actors in the Middle East regional system as: 1. regional powers; 2. failed states in the region; in this paper the three failed states are mentioned: Iraq, Syria and Yemen, 3. active groups inside the failed states, and 4. interventionist powers, such as the United States and Russia, which intervene from an international level in the regional system of the Middle East. In this regard, the constructive variables of the regional system of the Middle East has been studied which include: the problematic, the boundary, the pole, the anarchy, the interaction pattern, the individual and the structure of the international system. The paper argues that every regional system has the problematic and based on the data obtained, the current problematic at the regional level is the existence of the failed states of Yemen, Iraq and Syria. Hence, it is about examining and identifying other variables surrounding the problematic, and ultimately on whether the objectives and actions of the poles of power in the region on the one hand, and the goals and actions of the superpowers on the international level are in line with the resolution of the problematic or conflicting and contradictory to the problematic, provides scenarios for the variables that shape the regional system, and in particular the regional interaction pattern. Based on these scenarios, the future of Iran's foreign policy can be explained.

**Keywords:** Future Studies, Scenario Building, Middle East Regional System, Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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1. This article is the final results of the PhD thesis entitled "The future of the Middle East regional system and foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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## **1.Introduction**

Studies in the Middle East have always been of interest to researchers in various fields of social knowledge and one of the prominent areas of research has been the Middle East regional system. Different variables affect the regional system of the Middle East and build it. These variables are not constant over time s and are subject to various changes. The transformation of these variables causes changes in the regional system of the Middle East. The developments that have taken place in the area in recent years have affected the regional system of the Middle East and its influential factors, and has affected the foreign policy of its members. Although understanding the current developments in the Middle East is important, the perspectives of these developments and the consequences it may have for the member states of the region on the one hand and the overall regional system of the Middle East on the other are also of importance. By conducting futuristic research, one can identify, along with understanding current developments, the possible paths of these developments in the future. This article tries to take a step towards better understanding of the future of the Middle East regional system.

Currently in the Middle East, there is a rivalry between the three poles of power in the region, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey. Although these three countries see each other as rivals, Saudi Arabia views Iran not only as a rival, but also as an enemy. The developments that have taken place in the Middle East since 2003 have led to rivalry between Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, on the one hand, and Saudi Arabia's hostility toward Iran on the other. Following the collapse of the central government of Iraq, in 2003, the country faced not only an internal unrest and instability, but also it turned into an area for rival regional and even transnational actors. "The instability of Iraq has intensified since the withdrawal of American troops from the country" (Cordesman and Khazai,2012). When Iraq emerged from the lack of power resulting from the withdrawal of US forces into a scene for the formation of centrifugal forces, developments in the Arab uprisings took place, which led to the formation of similar crises in Syria and Yemen. Based on this, in the three countries, the confrontation and armed conflict between the central government and the government's opposition began. Meanwhile, major regional and trans-regional actors also moved to support one of the parties to the conflict in the crises of Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

Today, the state of the three mentioned governments is referred to as "failed states" although the degree of failure of the three states mentioned is not the same. The failure of state in these three countries and the existence of intense regional and international competition around them has led the Middle East regional system to be in a special position.

The article argues that the future of the Middle East regional system should be studied in the light of the failure state and regional and trans-regional rivalries in three countries, Iraq, Syria and Yemen. Because these components shape the future of the regional system of the Middle East. In other words, this article seeks to examine the future of the Middle East regional system based on how the changing variables shaping the Middle East regional system are transformed and addresses how these changes influence the future of the regional system of the Middle East in the form of the foreign policy of governments such as Iran. In response to this question, the first step is to examine the variables that shape the future of the Middle East regional system. (The novelty of this article is that the author has added several variables to the variables of the Buzan's Regional Security Complex Theory variables.<sup>1</sup> And between these variables, it has established an organ-like relationship. In this article, the author also tries to apply an innovative conceptual framework for mapping the future scenarios of the Middle East regional system.) In this section, it is argued that among the constructive variables of the future, failed states play a major role. In the second part, based on the study of the variables shaping the future of the Middle East regional system, scenarios for the future of the regional system of the Middle East and its impact on the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is presented. In the final section, Iran's foreign policy towards the presented scenarios will be investigated in details.

## **2. Research Methodology**

The methodology in this article is; Method: Futurology, Technique: Goal Analysis, Trend Analysis, Qualitative Content Analysis and Scenario Writing (Generally mixed method). Also, the analytical approach in this

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1. The theoretical and complete article of this conceptual framework can be read in the article " Critical and Complementary Review of Buzan's Regional Security Complex Theory in The Wake of Middle East Regional system".

dissertation is explanatory-analytical. Also, by visiting libraries and sites, the required data has been collected.

### **3. Research Findings**

The findings of this article are discussed under the following headings;

1. The future constructive variables of the Middle East regional system.
2. Scenarios for the Future of the Middle East Regional System and the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
3. Assessing the possibility or impossibility of scenarios
4. Scenarios a head of the Middle East and the Foreign Policy System of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

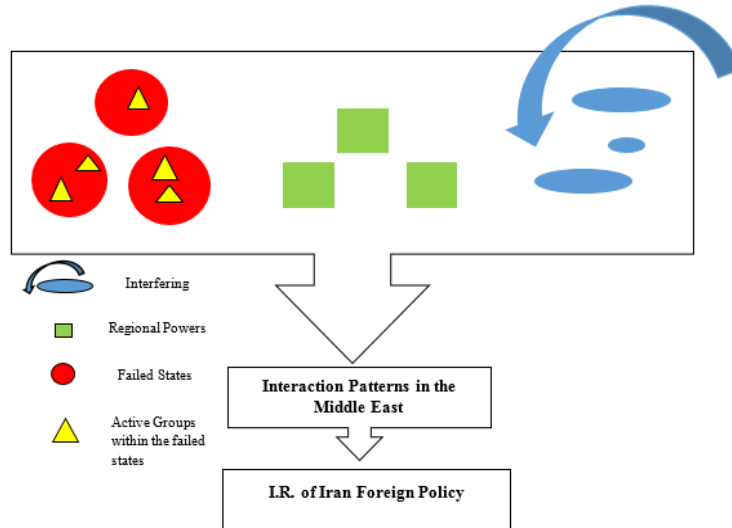
#### **3-1. Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Model; The Future Constructive Variables of the Middle East Regional System**

The future of the regional system of the Middle East is influenced by the activities of these four actors: 1. Trans-regional intergovernmental powers; 2. the main regional powers in the Middle East; 3. failed states in the Middle East regional system; and 4. Active groups within the failed states which are supported by regional or trans-regional powers. On this basis, it can be said that the actors who shape the future of the Middle East regional system include: 1. superpowers such as The US and Russia; 2. Regional poles like Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran; this article includes: Yemen, Iraq and Syria, and four active groups within Yemen, Syria, and Iraq.

Although interfering powers and regional powers differ in terms of power and statehood, but what is in common in them is the "desire to intervene in the situation in the region and, in particular, with the failed states" (Fawcett, 2017), in order to provide their interests and security. Interactions between regional and trans-regional governments and their interaction with the failed states and the active groups within them can be one of the factors that determines the shape and nature of the pattern of interactions governing the regional Middle East system. (Hafeznia and et al,2014)

The interaction pattern can be used to shape the foreign policy of regional system of the Middle East countries. Accordingly, the change in the Middle East regional system, influenced by the change in action and the type of interactions between actors, could change the pattern of interactions in the region and eventually affect the foreign policy of the member states. What has been said so far can be seen in the following figure; (Salimi and et al, 2017; Salimi and et al,2020).

**Figure (1): Middle East Regional System Actors**



What causes these variables to change is not always a constant factor and can vary in different time and space conditions. This article considers failed states as the most important factor causing the actors to react, and consequently the transformation of the variables shaping the regional system for now and the future. Therefore, in line with the main issue of this paper, which is to understand the future of the regional system of the Middle East and its impact on the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic, the nature of the activists mentioned and the variables shaping the regional system of the Middle East are examined within two scenarios in the next section through examples.

#### 4. Analysis

##### 4-1. Scenarios for the Future of the Middle East Regional System and the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran

Based on the studies carried out in a thesis under the same name, the two scenarios predicted for the future of the Middle East regional system and the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran were as follows:

**4-1-1. The first Scenario:** The first scenario is based on the continuation of the current trend in the Middle East regional system. There are several issues in the current regional system of the Middle East, most notably the fluctuations of the three governments of Iraq, Syria and Yemen, which are incapable of

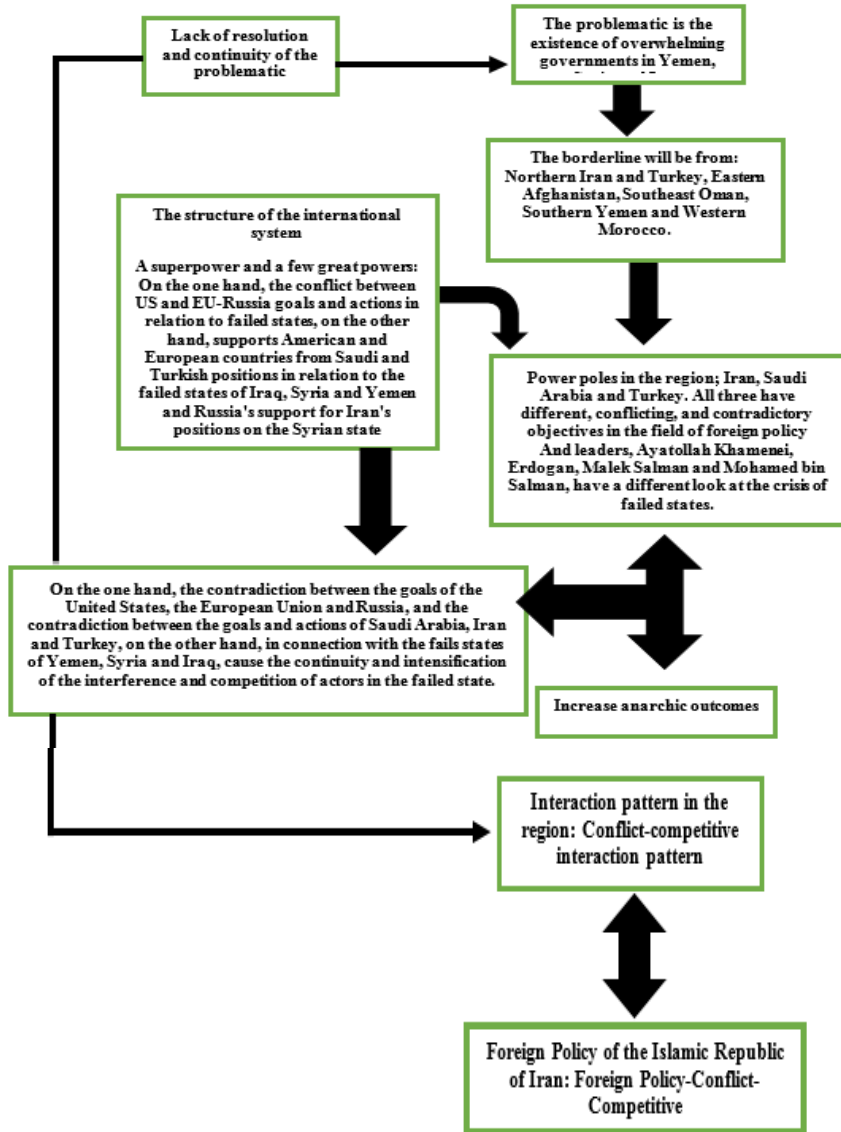
managing their country's affairs. Although the failure of the governments mentioned have different internal, political, economic, and social aspects, one reason for the failure of these states is the interference of foreign countries in their internal affairs. Affected by the failure of these three states, the boundaries in the Middle East regional system, in terms of the type of response of governments and their worrying of the failed states for their survival and security, are: the northern side of Iran and Turkey, eastern Afghanistan, southeastern Oman, southern Yemen and western Morocco. At the frontier in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey, the main power poles in many Middle East issues and problems are particularly involved in the problem of the "failed states" of Iraq, Syria and Yemen, and they compete with each other on the matter.

While Saudi Arabia wants Iran to not interfere in the current Iraqi government and is interested in the establishment of a Sunni state close to Saudi Arabia, "Iran wants the Iraqi Shiites to continue to hold on to the government and keep their proximity to Iran" (Bin Huwaidin,2015). Turkey also calls on the Iraqi government to seek a moderate Sunni government in Iraq that can connect with Turkey. In connection with the Syrian government, Iran wants to continue the administration of Bashar al-Assad and to preserve the Syrian state as an ally for Hezbollah, I line with anti-Israeli goals. But Saudi Arabia wants the regime of Bashar al-Assad to fail and a new government rise with the Sunni majority, which would be close to Saudi Arabia and would stay away from the Islamic Republic of Iran. Turkey also wants the withdrawal of Assad from power and the formation of a government of moderate Sunnis close to Turkey in Syria. In connection with Yemen, while Iran wants Houthis' engagement in power, Saudi Arabia and its allies, as well as Turkey, want to restore Mansour Hadi to Yemen and oppose the Houthis and Iran's involvement in Yemen. The conflicting interests of Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey have led to contradictory actions in relation to the failed state of Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, which not only has stop the problems of failed states form being solve at the regional level, but also led to its continuation. The conflicting goals and actions in the foreign policy of Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, is related to those who are at the head of these countries. In Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei, as a revolutionary leader, pursues the goals of foreign policy, which is based on the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran and calls for changes to be made

in the peripheral regional environment "to meet the goals of the Islamic Revolution of Iran" (Pollack,2015). In Turkey, Erdoğan, and in Saudi Arabia, Malik Salman and especially Mohammed bin Salman, have taken reciprocal and rebellious attitudes towards the Middle East since taking power. The leaders of each of these three countries have a different look at the crisis of failed states. This has led to a continuation of the Iraqi, Syria, and Yemeni governments' failure and, as a result, the anachronism effects on a regional level have increased, the level of cooperation between the power poles have decreased, hence the level of competition and instability in the region has risen. In addition to the contradiction between the goals and actions of the United States and the European Union and Russia, the support of the United States and European countries from the positions of Saudi Arabia and Turkey in relation to the failed states of Iraq, Syria and Yemen, and Russia's support of Iran's positions on Syria, has regional competition.

This has caused the lack of a solution to the problem of failed states and has increases the anarchic outcomes in the region. In such a situation, the dominant interactive pattern in the region is conflict-competitive. Affected by this interactive model, foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran will also be a conflict-competitive one. In a conflict-competitive pattern, the interests of major actors, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey, are opposite each other. For this reason, in this model, the competition between actors over the interests is quite serious. In this situation, the actors are too pessimistic and distrustful of each other, interpreting each other's movements with extreme cynicism. This situation in many cases leads to the formation of a security puzzle. Therefore, the first scenario is the continuation of the current trend. The first scenario can be shown in the following model.

Figure (2): First Scenario



The first scenario cannot be a desirable scenario for the regional Middle East system in general and the Islamic Republic of Iran in particular. Because this scenario, which is the continuation of the current trend,



imposes a lot of costs on the Iranian government and other states in the region, which will be discussed further:

1. This scenario has shaped the state of the "security puzzle" (Bin Huwaidin,2015) throughout the region, which not only "exacerbates rivalries and hostilities but also leads to unwanted wars" (El Berni, 2018), a war that may not necessarily lead to victory. The Islamic Republic is not excluded from this danger either.
2. The first scenario implies the necessity of a continuous war for areas of influence and interests. It is clear that such a sphere of influence or interests, whose preservation is subject to war and constant conflict, gradually overestimates its benefits, and neglects the total costs.
3. The first scenario causes the weakening of the economic power of the countries of the region, especially those involved in the crisis of failed states. Indeed, when security issues are prioritized, issues such as economic development are marginalized or faced with a serious challenge. Weakened economy not only leads to increased internal insecurity but also weakens the country's ability to face foreign threats.
4. The first scenario causes the strategic weakening of the Islamic Republic. This means that Shiite and popular groups such as Hezbollah or al-Hashd ash-Sha'bī, which are part of the strategic capabilities of the Islamic Republic, may be compelled to engage in ongoing wars. Not only do they break through their erosion wars, they may end up in fatigue and even frustration.
5. The first scenario does not allow the Islamic Republic to turn its military achievements in failed states into political and economic achievements, and even with the changing circumstances and the formation of new alliances, those military developments may be subject to challenge and threat.
6. Today, the situation in the Middle East, as described in the first scenario, has become a justification for the United States and European countries that put pressure on the Islamic Republic because of what is called destabilizing policies in the region. This means that the continuation of the first scenario could lead to "sanctions and further pressure on Iran" (Bipartisan Policy Center,2018), and thus the political and economic security of the country would be at risk. Given the experience of

sanctions in the country, any new sanctions imposed on the country will not be beneficial.

7. The continuation of the first scenario creates new alliances against the Islamic Republic. For example, since the beginning of the Islamic Revolution, Iran's policy has been to oppose Israel and support Arabs, but what is happening right now is "the likelihood of a coalition of some Arab states with Israel against Iran" (Rabinovich, 2015). The continuation of the security puzzle of the first scenario can help to bring this coalition into effect.

The critical question is what factors and conditions will bring about this scenario in the future, and what conditions will prevent its realization in the future, and from the perspective of this article, is it more likely for this scenario to occur or not. In the following, these conditions are discussed and in the end a conclusion is presented;

**4-1-1-1. Conditions of Occurrence:** the conditions of occurrence refer to the set of elements that cause the scenario to be realized, which include;

**4-1-1-1-1. The Continuity of the Problem of the Failed States:** This paper considers its starting point in the analysis of regional systems such as the Middle East with the problems in the regional system that brings the governments of the regional system, and in particular the main poles of power in the region to cooperate and engage in overcoming the problem or bring them to competitiveness and hostility. In this article the failed states are introduced as the main problem. The point to be dealt with here is that the troubles of the failed states will continue in the future.

**First; The Continuation of the "Failed State in Iraq"** (Bizhan,2018): Since the fall of the Ba'ath party, the Iraqi government has been involved in a crisis of instability and insecurity, with ISIS's causing insecurity over the three provinces of Anbar, Ninoy, Salahuddin and parts of the province of Diyala, although Iraq has won over ISIS, this has not put an end to the country's problems. Anthony Cordesman, a well-known military and security analyst in an article titled "Post-ISIS: Strategic Stability in Iraq" (Cordesman,2017) considers the Iraqi government a failed state, which makes stability and peace in it much more difficult than fighting ISIS. He believes that victory is not the defeat of ISIS, but victory is when a stable political system and society can be set up without serious controversy in the

country which has not yet been achieved. In addition to this view, there are other reasons that make Iraq after ISIs still continue to be a failed state;

1. ISIS completely destroyed three centuries-old provinces in which the Iraqi government would be unable to rebuild in the short-term and medium-term future. It should be noted that the Sunni provinces were dissatisfied with poverty and deprivation prior to the arrival of ISIS and considered the central government responsible, and in the years after 2011 began civil and armed protest against the government. Now that their provinces have been destroyed, and as a result of their poverty and deprivation, it has become ten times worse, and the Iraqi government is not responsive, the formation of Sunni movements against the Baghdad government is predictable, which could lead to the formation of different groups under different names.
2. One of the most important internal challenges facing Iraq since 2003, before ISIS came, was the Shiite-Sunni dispute in Iraq that the coming of ISIS for some time caused the dispute to be reduced. With the disappearance of ISIS, the Shiite-Sunni conflict is rising again in Iraq.
3. The new Shiite-Sunni Clashes may also turn into armed clashes. ISIS threats cause the creation of "Shiite and Sunni militant groups in Iraq" (Alaaldin,2017), which is not prepared now to disarmament after ISIS.
4. The Arab-Kurd challenge has not only remained alive, but also intensified as a result of the Kurdish referendum and the reactions of the Iraqi government. Even though the Iraqi Kurds always formed the government alongside the Shiites, the Iraqi Kurdish cooperation with the Shiites in the future would be very unlikely. The effects of this lack of cooperation is visible in the Iraqi parliamentary elections of 2018.

The abovementioned factors are merely internal factors that will lead to the continuation of the failed state of Iraq, and the role of regional and trans-regional factors in its intensification in later sections will be examined.

**Second; continuous failed state of Syria:** although ISIs is losing in Syria, there is still a civil war in other parts of the country. In fact, Syria is still engaged in civil war and has a very long way to reach the reconstruction and post-war stage. Therefore, the Syrian government will remain a failed state for the following reasons:

1. The Syria-based government is still outlawed by a large part of the opposition.

2. The Syria-based government not only does not dominate much of its territory, but also has recognizes areas beyond its control, which are at the disposal of the opposition, as "tensioned" areas.
3. Although the government has recognized some of its opponents, the opposition is not willing to accept the government.
4. After the defeat of ISIS and Tahrir al-Sham, the Syrian government faces the issue of what should be done with areas under the control of the opposition that were recognized by the government. It is difficult to fight the Syrian opposition's recognized opposition.
5. The current Syrian government or any possible future government is facing a devastated country that does not have the resources to rebuild. This situation allows the formation of groups similar to radical groups.
6. Six years of civil war in Syria and tribal and tribal bloodshed make the prospect of a transition from war difficult.

At the end of this section, it should be said that just based on the domestic conditions and without reference to regional and trans-regional conditions Syria will still be a failed state, and this country will not only continue to be involved in the civil war, but also is far from entering the post-war stage and the reconstruction phase, which is an even more difficult stage.

**Third; the Continuation of the "Failed State in Yemen"** (Bälz and Mujally, (2018): The Yemeni society is such that it is always prone to civil war or a state war with a part of its society. The talent for war has so far, especially since the 1990s, has shown itself and especially at its peak since the beginning of 2011 onwards which has divided the country in two parts. In addition to the division of Yemen, since the beginning of 2015, the country has already been involved in a conflicted with Saudi-led coalition. The coalition of Saudi Arabia, which sought to end the Yemeni split in the short term, could not achieve its goal, and this country was involved in war for three years. Yemen will continue to be a failed stated for the following reasons:

1. The existence of two states in a single territory, each of which states that its government is the real and legitimate representative of the Yemeni people, claiming that the other is affiliated to a foreign actor.
2. The two governments, on the basis of their capabilities, are fighting each other, which, in the most pessimistic case based on past experiences, may lead to the breakdown of Yemen, as in the Cold War era.

3. Conquering tribal equations on politics in Yemen has transformed the current war in Yemen into a zero-sum war.
4. The civil and foreign war has destroyed all the infrastructure of the poor Yemeni state and the inability to solve this problem intensifies the state's sluggishness.
5. Instability and insecurity in Yemen have contributed to the growth of al-Qaeda in the country, which itself means adding a problem to the deep and fundamental problems of the country.

Therefore, it is only on the basis of the internal situation in Yemen that the country in the future will continue to be a failed state. Also, the regional and trans-regional conditions that will influence the Yemeni crisis will be mentioned in the later sections.

**4-1-1-1-2. Opposite Interests of Power Poles in Failed States:** Given Egypt's lack of willingness and ability to enter the crisis of failed states on the one hand, and the inability of Israel to enter these crises on the other, it can be said that the main poles of power in the Middle East are still Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, all three countries have conflicting interests in the failed states. Although conflicting interests in the civil war period are quite apparent in the three failed states, but in the reconstruction and construction phase, this conflict of interest becomes more intense. Later the continuation of the conflict between the serious, fundamental interests of Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the three failed states, both during and after the Civil War are discussed. Finally, the effects of this conflict of interest are considered.

**First; Conflict of Interest in Iraq:** Even if it is assumed that the Iraqi government, by overcoming ISIS has transited from civil war to reconstruction, and that other armed groups and paramilitary forces such as al-Qaeda and ISIS in Iraq will not be formed again, It should be said that the conflict between the interests of Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey in Iraq has just begun. Indeed, even though at the time of writing this article, Iraq has not completely dominated ISIS and ISIS still has parts of its land in the West, regional races have begun and the conflict of interests and rivalries may precipitate another civil war in Iraq.

It is in Saudi Arabia's interest if al-Ḥashd ash-Shaʿbī collapses and not turn into the prevailing power in Iraq after ISIS. Because Saudi Arabia sees the hegemonic influence in Iraq's political scene equal to the full power of Iran

in Iraq. Hence, they explicitly demand for al-Ḥashd ash-Shaʿbī to be removed. Saudi Arabia has not solely relied on this and in recent months has been trying to get closer to those Iraqi Shiite movements which have similar worries about al-Qaeda, such as the Sadr movement. Saudi Arabia's ability and wealth to help rebuild Iraq has also led its central government to extend its engagement with Saudi Arabia. It is clear that Saudi Arabia expects some political benefits in return for the reconstruction of Iraq, which is mainly centered on reducing Iran's influence in Iraq. Hence, Saudi policy is based on expanding engagement with those political movements in Iraq that oppose the presence and influence of Iran in Iraq. On the other hand, the immense poverty of the Iraqi Sunni community due to the devastations has made them more cooperative with Saudi Arabia.

Unlike Saudi Arabia, Iran considers al-Ḥashd ash-Shaʿbī necessary for the preservation of security in the future of Iraq. Indeed, from the perspective of Iran, it is in the light of the existence of al-Ḥashd ash-Shaʿbī that groups such as ISIS will not be able to regroup in Iraq. On the other hand, the Islamic Republic of Iran, in line with ISIS and its supporters being threats to Iran, for the interests of itself, calls for the continuation of the al-Ḥashd ash-Shaʿbi and even their participation in political activities. Therefore, it is in Iran's interest that the Iraqi Shiites who are oriented toward Iran are still in the center of power and Iraqi nationalist movements from the two Shiite and Sunni are not. In the meantime, Iran's inability to directly contribute to Iraq's reconstruction will make Turkey and Saudi Arabia well-positioned to play a greater role in Iraq's rebuilding and thus expand their presence and influence.

As for Turkey, it should also be said that although Turkey and Iran are on the same side about the Kurdish, they disagree over the Baghdad government. Turkey, like Saudi Arabia, wants to strengthen the Sunnis, and will strive to expand its presence and influence through the active role of rebuilding Iraq and thus pursue its political interests.

Finally, it should be said that although Iran was more influential in Iraq during the Iraqi civil war compared to Turkey and Saudi Arabia, while at the rebuilding stage, the role of Turkey and Saudi Arabia would be greater due to having enough wealth. In this situation, Iraq will become the scene of competition for the main three poles of the region. Finding allies in Iraq will be the clearest policy of all three countries, which will result in Iraq dividing

in two and perhaps three fragmentation. This will not only exacerbate the rivalry; it will also keep the Iraqi government out of power.

**Second; The conflict of interest in Syria:** It was noted that Syria is still involved in the civil war and has not entered the post-war phase. Therefore, the conflict of interests of all three poles should be considered in both during the war and after the war.

**The stage of the civil war:** what Iran is calling for during the civil war is that the current Syrian government can once again apply its sovereignty over the whole of Syria. Turkey also wants the Syrian government to rule the Kurdish territories of Syria and has so far requested joint work with Iran, but when the Syrian government wants to regain its control over the province of Idlib, the distance between Jarabulus to Azaz in northern Syria and other areas which is called "Tension reduced," Turkey will seriously oppose. Turkey and Iran had serious differences from the beginning of the Syrian crisis and the liberation of Aleppo in 2015. After the liberation of Aleppo, the focus of Iran and the Syrian government was on the fight against ISIS. Turkey also wanted to curtail the Syrian Kurds. Therefore, the positions of the two sides became close. With the defeat of ISIS by the Syrian government, any attempt by the government to control other parts of its territory will face serious opposition from Turkey, except in the Kurdish areas of Syria, which is very unlikely for the United States to allow this.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia, although it does not care about the occurrences in Syria as much as Turkey does, has the main goal of seeing the government of Bashar al-Assad overthrown. According to news reports, Saudi Arabia and its allies will be responsible for rebuilding areas that are backed by the United States. In this case, Saudi Arabia will rebuild the provinces of Hasakah, Raqqah, and the east of the Euphrates River in the west of Deir ez-Zor, which will turn into a place for the Syrian opposition. Given that the Syrian Kurds are backed by the United States, Turkey will not welcome Saudi's actions. Although Turkey welcomes all oppositions of the Syrian government but Kurds to become stronger.

**The post-war stage:** If we assume that the civil war in Syria will finally come to an end and the sides involved in the war will enter the post-war phase to reconstruct Syria in various dimensions, this will have the support of the regional and trans-regional governments, again the conflict

between the interests of Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia in Syria will not only not be eradicated, but it will just begin.

It is clear that in the post-war stage, the Justice and Development Party of Turkey prefers groups close to the Muslim Brotherhood hold power and, given that Sunni population has the majority in Turkey, it is reasonable to expect this of Turkey. Also, Turkey expects the future Syrian government to be a centralized government with the power to end the Syrian Kurds. Turkey also expects Syria to become the center for its future economic activities and to be a route for the deep entry of Turkey into the Arab world. Saudi Arabia also has a great deal of interest in this matter like Turkey. With the difference that Saudi Arabia does not care about the Syrian Kurds' threats. Also it wants Iran to have no influence in Syria, to cut off Iran's access to Lebanon, thus undermining Iran's influence in Lebanon. Therefore, assuming that Mohammad Bin Salman would become the king of Saudi Arabia, and how he defends moderate Islam, as well as its coordination and alignment with the positions of the United States, makes it more likely for Saudi Arabia to support a secular political system in Syria, which is a serious difference between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is not satisfied with Turkey's position in the Qatari crisis, and it seems to try to put Turkey under pressure in Syria by pursuing interests contrary to Turkey's interests. The other side of the Syrian crisis is the Islamic Republic of Iran. Over the past six years, Iran has paid a lot to maintain what it calls the resistance axis. Hence, with the power it has, it will oppose the approach of any political system that ignores Iran's interests, security and benefits. Therefore, even if there is a possibility of consensus of regional power poles to end the civil war in Syria, there is no consensus on the post-war phase, which is a much more difficult phase. The result will be an escalation of rivalry between power poles in Syria, which will prevent Syria from coming out of failure.

**Third, conflict of interest in Yemen:** In relation to Yemen, Turkey has positions in harmony with Saudi Arabia maybe with the hope that Saudi Arabia supports the Turkish position in Syria if it supports Saudi positions in Yemen. Therefore, Yemen is the scene of competition and conflict of interest between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Iran and Saudi Arabia now have serious controversies over how to end the war, which is in itself a source of conflict between their interests. Saudi Arabia wants the Houthi Yemen to



surrender unconditionally and limit itself to the province of Sa'dah. While Iran wants their participation in the Yemeni government. The tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia over Yemen has reached its peak now, to the point that when a Yemeni ballistic missile hit Riyadh Airport it was called a call for was form Iran.

Given that Saudi Arabia has a territorial border with Yemen, and the military alliance under its leadership has been recognized by major international powers, the country expects to achieve the expected results and, through a complete victory for Saudi Arabia, end the crisis in Yemen, a goal that has not yet been achieved. Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, uses the Yemeni crisis as a means of exerting pressure on Iran by introducing Iran as the main cause of the continuation of the crisis. Therefore, there is no end to the Yemeni war for the present. In case of an end to the war in Yemen, the conflict between the interests of Saudi Arabia and Iran will continue in the post-war phase which will intensify the competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and as a result there will be a continuation of turmoil in the government in Yemen.

**4-1-1-1-3. Continuity of the influence of the leaders of the poles of power:** In the context of the conceptual framework, it was pointed out that one of the main variables affecting the equations in regional systems, such as the Middle East, is the variable of the individual, or the decision-making leaders of the power poles. These leaders, with their decisions influenced by their beliefs and attitudes toward the outside world, make decisions and define the agenda, the output of which affects the form and nature of the regional system. On this basis, one of the main reasons for realization of the scenario is that the leaders who continue to dominate the current situation in the Middle East, especially in Yemen, Syria and Iraq would do so in the future. In other words, the leaders of Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, which have taken decisions against the three failed states, will continue to follow these decisions in the future to pursue their benefits.

In Turkey, the Justice and Development Party and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, have no legal restrictions on power by 2029. The party appears to be the ruling party in Turkey, due to its successes on the one hand, and the weakness of rival parties on the other. On the other hand, Erdogan could remain the head of state after 2029, if he succeeds in the upcoming elections. This means that Erdogan, while staying in power, is able to pursue

his policies and interests at the regional level, and in particular in the failed states. Even if, for whatever reason, Erdogan stepped out of power in Turkey, he has succeeded to attach the interests and security of Turkey to Iraq and Syria, and so his successor will be forced to engage in domestic issues in Iraq and Syria.

Indeed, Turkey's intervention in Syria has caused the Kurdish issue to take shape in southern Syria, so the next Turkish government cannot be indifferent to the emergence of Syrian Kurdish actors in their neighborhoods. The Turkish government should not only be sensitive to the Kurdish issue of Iraq, but also the country has a lot of economic and political interests in Iraq.

In Saudi Arabia, the transformation shows that the future king of this country is Mohammad Bin Salman, who is now crown prince of his father and king of Saudi Arabia. King Salman, has played a major role in the elaboration, design and implementation of Saudi policies in Iraq, Syria and Yemen over the past two years. Mohammad Bin Salman explicitly considers his attack on Yemen as his own initiative. Given his father's age, he is informally the king of Saudi Arabia now and it is predicted that he will become the king of Saudi Arabia before his father's death.

At the time of writing this article, Mohammad bin Suleiman is removing his domestic opponents to win the kingdom title. Therefore, it seems that there is no serious obstacle to his becoming king. Given the fact that Mohammad Bin Salman is very young and has the status of being king, it can be said that he will continue to pursue Saudi Arabia's current policies in the three failed states until satisfactory results are achieved. Indeed, the persistence of leaders in Saudi Arabia means the continuity of their policies towards the failed states of Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the generation of leaders who believe in the current policies of the country in Iraq, Syria and Yemen has a continuing feature. This means that according to the decisions related to the Middle East, the prerogative of leadership and institutions under their command, such as the Iranian Revolutionary Guards on the one hand and the Iranian government on the other hand, it must be said that the prospects for change in the key areas of decision-making in the Middle East policy of Iran does not exist. This means the continuation of the Islamic Republic's policies will be continuous.

Regarding the continuation of the decision-makers' element in Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, it should be said that the continuation of the conflicting interests of the three countries at the regional level and the continuation of their rivalries is normal. The continuation of this element is one of the reasons why the author believes that this is a possible scenario for the future occurrence of the Middle East regional system.

**4-1-1-4. The Effect of the Variable Structure of the International System:** Although the current international system is, according to theorists, a multi-polar system with a the US as a superpower and a few other great powers, but this does not mean that all major powers are involved in Middle East crises. Indeed, what we see today is merely the engagement of the United States as an international pole in all Middle East crises, including the failed states, as well as Russia's involvement as a major trans-regional power solely in the Syrian crisis.

In fact, from the system of a superpower- great powers, it was only the United States and Russia that directly engulfed the Middle East crisis which this engagement for Russia was merely limited to the Syrian crisis.

If we look at the European Union as a power pole, they play limited roles in pursuit of the United States in the region. On the other hand, there is no perspective that other major trans-regional poles like the Chinese government and Japan want to engage in Middle East issues. This means that when reviewing the impact of the changing structure of the international system we should strictly adhere to the policies of America and Russia, and answer the question that how the policies of these two countries affect the status of failed states. Also how this would help with this Scenario?

The only area in which Russia and the United States are simultaneously involved and competing with each other is Syria. This means that the future developments in Russia and the United States will affect the Syrian crisis. What we are seeing in the current situation is tension in US-Russian relations. The expansion of NATO to the East and the deployment of NATO defense systems in Eastern Europe along with the Ukrainian crisis in 2014 caused tensions in US-Russian relations. Along with these sources of controversy, Russia's entry into the Syrian crisis since October 2015 has caused US dissatisfaction. But what has been the tensest in relations between Russia and the United States is the US plan to accuse Russia of its involvement in the presidential election in November 2016. Russian Foreign

Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Barack Obama had put a time bomb under Russian-American relations that would not allow for any recovery.

It can be said that if the issue of interference in the American elections did not take shape, Trump did not have any obstacles to improve relations with Russia. What makes the Congress extremely sensitive to the issue of inclusion is the perception they have of it. In their opinion, what Russia did was not a form of spying which is a different issue. Russia's action was to gather information from one party and turning that information into an important weapon against the other party, and using that weapon to change the election results. Therefore, they consider Russia to be a serious threat to all democratic systems around the world. For this reason, Mike Muller of the former CIA officials said Russia's action was an "existential threat" to the American lifestyle, which has the political consequence equal to 9/11 attacks.

Continued tensions in Russia-US relations will prevent them from reaching an agreement to resolve the Syrian crisis. Because Russia expects the Syrian crisis to be solved unilaterally alongside crises like Ukraine. While the Trump government is facing serious internal barriers to Russia's relations with Russia, Russia knows well that compromising with the United States in Syria, without solving the Ukrainian crisis and the sanctions imposed on it, will not benefit Russia. This means that the developments in the Russian-American relations are such that they will not allow the two powers to agree on the Syrian crisis. Russia Brining Astana talks against the Vienna talks suggests that Russia has taken a different course to resolve the Syrian crisis, which will not necessarily be agreed upon by the United States. Under these circumstances, not only the United States and Russia cannot help to end the Syrian crisis, but by supporting one of the parties involved in the Syrian crisis, as well as supporting their desirable regional governments in the Middle East, will only exacerbate the tensions and rivalries in Syria, which will lead to the continuing failed state of Syria.

Unlike the Syrian crisis, the only international system in the crisis in Iraq and Yemen is the United States. Not having a rival like Russia makes it possible for the US to play a decisive role in the Iraqi and Yemeni crises, solving the crises by putting pressure on other players on the path to peace. But this is merely one dimension and other dimensions should be considered as well.

This means that the United States alone cannot end the crises in Iraq and Yemen, because the country itself only supports one of the internal parties involved in the crisis against the other. At the regional level, the country also supports some of the regional power poles, such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey, against the other pole of power, Iran. This means that US policy is not comprehensive about the crises in Iraq and Yemen and is not able to bring together all parties involved in the crisis and recognize their existence. For example, in the Syrian crisis, the Russian state has such an overview in its policies in the Syrian crisis. In Asana meetings, Russia invites all parties involved in the Syrian crisis, while the United States does not recognize the current Syrian government.

On this basis, in the Yemeni crisis, the United States has handed over everything to Saudi Arabia and has so far refused to intervene directly to resolve the crisis (Sharp, 2018). This means that America either doesn't want to take a role in the crisis in Yemen or is looking to have an impact on the crisis through Saudi Arabia. Unlike the Yemeni crisis, in the Iraq crisis, the United States intervenes directly and seeks to play a role in the absence of powerful trans-regional rivals such as Russia.

With this form of intervention, Americans can resolve the crisis in Iraq, but because America does not cooperate with parts of the Sunnis, because of their association with al-Qaeda or ISIS, and parts of the Shiites in Iraq because of a desire to be in contact with Iran, the main problem is, it does not include all the parties involved in the Iraq crisis.

- In fact, the problem of US policy in Iraq since 2003 is that it has been unable to take a policy that includes all parties involved in Iraq. For this reason, America has not been able to end the instability crisis in Iraq over the past 14 years. The process of structural change helps with the realization of this scenario for the Middle East regional system (Karimi and Gholami, 2017:177; Abdi and Shirzad, 2016:64).

**4-1.1.2. Conditions of Non-Occurrence of the First Scenario:** these conditions refer to a set of occurrences that could prevent the scenario from being realized. If the changes are as follows, the first scenario of this article cannot be realized. These developments include;

1. If an agreement of all parties involved in the crisis in Syria, Iraq and Yemen to end the civil war, to recognize each other, to accept each other's rights, to accept consensus on how the future of governance, to

accept non-compliance and not to receive assistance from supportive governments Foreign and ... is realized.

2. If the power poles of the region abandon their goals, policies and interests in the failed states, and when the first condition is fulfilled, all the affairs and how to resolve the crisis is addressed to the internal parties of the crisis.
3. At the poles of power, a new generation of leaders come to power to abandon the policies of former leaders in failed states and declare at a maximum level that they have no particular interests in the failed states.
4. With the formation of a "multi-great power" system at the international system, the poles of power decide to end the crisis of the three Iraqi, Syria, and Yemeni states, and press the actors who demand continuity of the crisis to their own interests and force them to change their behavior and policies.

Or if the current superpower gets the power to decide on a peaceful or non-peaceful solution to end all conflicts, and that the decision be implemented in the regional arena, and there would be no protest by any internal groups in the failed states or in any regional or international state.

The fact is that the fulfillment of the four conditions that prevent the realization of the first scenario is very difficult and unlikely. Therefore, the author believes that the possibility of this scenario occurring is likely to outweigh the possibility of non-occurrence, and so the regional system of the Middle East in the next ten years will witness a military campaign in which Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia compete in the three failed states of Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

The strength of these competitions is such that it will increase the anarchic outcomes of the region and, as a result of these conditions, the dominant interaction pattern will be a pattern of confrontation and hostility. This pattern of relations will force all member states of the region to enter into hostility and confrontation in their regional foreign policy. In this situation, the regional system of the Middle East suffers from uncertainties, fragility and instability, and moreover, it drives the area into the Hobbesian space.

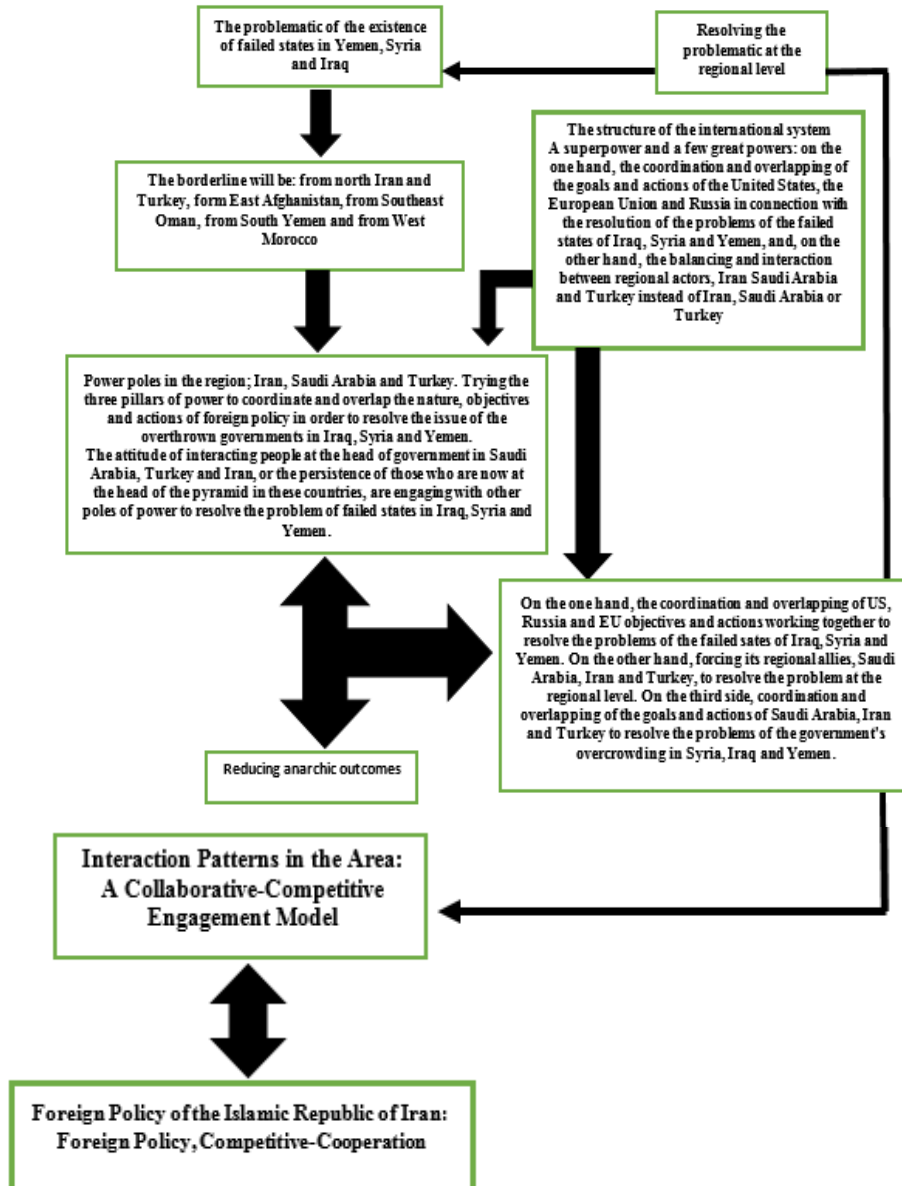
**1.2. The Second scenario:** In the second scenario, the variables of the Middle East regional system are such that the problem of the failed states of the Iraq, Syria, and Yemen has shaped the border in the direction of the north to Iran and Turkey, from east to Afghanistan, from the south east to

Oman, From the south to Yemen and from the west to Morocco. At this boarder, the three governments that have a stronger role and have made other countries to play a long, including Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey. If in Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran, interactive people take responsibility, or that people who are now at the top of power conclude that they can better achieve their goals and interests through interaction, cooperation and coordination with other countries and help resolve the problem of the failed sates and also the one-multipolar structure of the international level (centered on America as the superpower and Russia and the European Union as the great powers) address the problem of the failed states of Iraq, Syria and Yemen, the scenario for the recovery of the regional system will be realized.

If the above conditions are met, the level of regional anarchism will be reduced to provide more cooperation and less competition between Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran, and more stability will be created in the region. In this case, the pattern of interaction among the major countries in the Middle East region will be in a cooperative-competitive manner, and consequently, the foreign policy of Iran will be cooperative-competitive as well. Competitive cooperation model means that although there is rivalry among actors in some areas, there are different forms of collaboration in other areas.

The competition is mainly in the political and security fields, which means less pessimism by actors and cooperation is in non-political and non-military areas that can help to mitigate and reduce competition. The second scenario can be shown in the following model.

**Figure (3): The second scenario**





The realization of the second scenario could be a desirable scenario for the Islamic Republic of Iran because the costs of the first scenario would turn into benefits for the country. If the second scenario is realized, then the following benefits can be conceivable:

1. The Middle East regional system moving far from the security puzzle and preventing future contests and wars.
2. The elimination of need to use hard options to defend interests and areas of influence through the negotiation and recognition of the interests of others.
3. Prioritizing economic development in the region and increasing domestic capabilities through wealth generation, thereby securing domestic and foreign security.
4. Avoidance of Iranian-supported groups from erosion and costly wars and the possibility of their role playing in political and even economic field.
5. The possibility of converting military achievements into regional political capabilities to defend the interests of the country in the Middle East.
6. The disappearance of the justification of the United States and its allies to exert pressure on regional Iranian policies and even to recognize the interests of Iran at the regional level by some trans-regional governments.
7. Preventing the unification of Israel and some Arab countries and reiterating the issue of Palestine, which has been completely marginalized in recent years.

In order for this scenario to be realized, conditions should be formed that should be in contradiction to the conditions that led to the realization of the first scenario; in other words, the conditions that led to the first scenario, the same conditions hinder the realization of the second scenario. Hence, in the following, only those areas that, if occurring, can be used to realize the second scenario will be discussed. These are:

**1. Cooperation Rather than to Competing by Regional Poles:** Since the main variable in determining what the fate of regional systems is and what direction it will take, is the kind of polarization of the power of the regional system is, it must be said that one of the conditions for the realization of the second scenario is that power poles change their attitude to the problem of failed states. This means that the three poles of power simultaneously create this change in their policies and attitudes and they should work with each

other instead of competing. Many factors can make the three poles of power change their look, preferring cooperation to competing which include;

- 1.1 The cost of competition is much higher than the cost of co-operation. That is, continuity of competition in the three failed states would increase the costs of all three poles in a coordinated manner, which would conclude that they would abandon their conflicting interests in the three failed states and instead cooperate with each other.
- 1.2 Conquering the rival in the failed states will push the three poles into direct competition. This means that, instead of the three poles of power competing in another country, such as the failed states, their competition is directed toward each other. For example, in the current circumstances, Iran and Saudi Arabia are moving in the same direction as two other countries, not through proxies, but directly in competition. If the continuity of these competitions threatens to directly compromise power poles, they may decide to settle their tension, rivalry and conflict in the failed state through cooperation. Indeed, power poles are naturally aware that the cost of their direct opposition to each other is far more expensive than supporting one of the parties involved in the failed states.
- 1.3 A new generation of leaders from the three power poles will come to power that basically do not have the belief in the necessity of hostility and competition with other poles in the failed states and would not define their own interests there. For example, the secular flow in Turkey has westernized tendencies, and when it was at the top of Turkey's power, it did not enter the Middle East issues at all, and did not imagine any interest for Turkey in the Middle East.
- 1.4 Poles of power under the domestic pressure because of the failed states, set aside their domestic pressures and international pressures on the failed states. This means that on the one hand, those groups inside the failed states that receive the help of the regional power poles declare that they are no longer willing to pursue policies of the poles of power and seek to make independent decisions. On the other hand, domestic pressures on regional power poles will increase, and public opinion of these countries will push them to change policies about failed states. Thirdly, international pressure pushes both three poles of power simultaneously and at the same time to push for a different path in the failed states.

The occurrence of each of the aforementioned fields, either alone or collectively, can lead the three poles of power to the direction of working together to resolve the crisis of failed states. In this case, they will be able to prevent the intensification of the failed states in Syria, Iraq and Yemen by helping a series of parties involved in the failed states, and even helping to resolve their crisis. This change of policy has to be based on the fact that the poles of power in other failed states would not consider themselves to be of vital interest to themselves.

**2. Formation of the structural requirement of the international system to end the crisis of failed states:** Given the fact that today the crisis of the three failed states of Syria, Iraq and Yemen has been internationalized, the kind of look at the structure of the international system also affects the failed states. The structure of the international system of the future either remaining mono-multipolar future, or a multi-polar military, it is only able to end the conflict in the failed states and replace the path of cooperation with the paths of competition and hostility if the following occurrences happen which are;

2.1 The structural requirements of the international system being able to overcome the structural requirements of the regional system of the Middle East, or be willing to overcome it. The author is well aware of the structural requirements in Waltz's theory of neo-realism which indicates that the requirements of the Macroeconomic structure shape in the behavior of actors in the sub-system level. But in the Middle East, the allies of the United States, such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia, have shown that they are not fully in line with the requirements of the unipolar structure. The structural requirements of the international system, whether mono-multipolar or multipolar, is only capable of changing the behavior of regional power poles if they are willing to change their behavior.

2.2 The structure of the international system, whether in the form of a multipolar system, or in the form of a multipolar system, should be in such a way that all parties involved in the crisis of failed states, whether at the national level or at the regional level, are equally subjected to pressure and behavior change. As long as the structural requirement of the international system is that it merely gives the right to one of the parties in the crisis and protects only one of the parties involved in the crisis and does not recognize the existence of the other side, the requirement for

the macro system of the international system is not able to solve the crisis. Indeed, what has led the United States, as the great power of the international system, to fail to meet its structural requirements for resolving the Middle East crisis and problems, is that it has been pushing for a one-sided crisis against the other.

2.3 Both the superpower of the international system and its many great powers pay the expense of the continuation of the crisis of the failed states, and the cost will increase so much that the continuation of the crisis would not be in their interest. For example, Russia will no longer be able to pay for interventions in the Syrian crisis. Also, in another example, the United States thinks that the costs of entering the crisis of the failed states is rising like the Vietnam War and should come to an end. In another example of September 11<sup>th</sup>, the government convinced George W. Bush that unilateral support from Israel in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict cost the country, and for that reason, for the first time, they supported the two government plans and even pushed Israel to leave Gaza in 2005.

In the end, it should be said that if the regional power poles affected by these factors, on the one hand, and the international poles of power decide, on the other hand, that the crisis of the failed states of Syrian, Iraqi and Yemeni governments should be resolved through cooperation. , we can say that the second scenario of this article will be realized. Because regional and international structural requirements together are able to put pressure on domestic parties involved in the crisis of failed states, to end the one sided support of the crisis, would put an end to the failed states in these countries. If such a situation is realized, it can be said that the consequences of anarchy in the region will be greatly reduced, which will further form the basis for cooperation between power poles. In this case, power poles like the Islamic Republic of Iran will devise a different foreign policy in the Middle East regional system, aimed at cooperating with competing poles like Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

## **5. Conclusion**

### **Scenarios a head of the Middle East and the Foreign Policy System of the Islamic Republic of Iran**

In the first scenario, the pattern of interaction in the Middle East regional system in the future will be based on hostility and opposition. It means that

trying to pursue antagonistic interests by the poles of power will put them in front of each other and will lead to hostility and confrontation. In this situation, foreign policy agendas will inevitably be designed and developed in a way that will intensify and continue the hostility. The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is no exception to this situation. Here are a few points to consider:

**First**, the Islamic Republic is unable to retreat from the policies and interests it has defined for itself in the Middle East or to abandon the Middle East. The Islamic Republic has linked its security and survival to the conditions of the Middle East, as the high ranking officials have repeatedly pointed out that the main objective of the Syrian crisis by rivals and enemies of Iran is to hit the Islamic Republic. From this perspective, the removal of the Syrian political system, the weakening of Hezbollah and the destabilization of Iraq are taking a course towards the ultimate goal of the Islamic Republic. This means that the possibility of retreat from Syria, Iraq, and even Yemen to the Islamic Republic is not only possible, but also a retreat to the detriment of national security.

Therefore, in general, to provide national security a balanced interference in the Middle East is needed and to defend interests and areas of influence, and therefore the leaving the Middle East is not fundamentally possible. On this basis, in the next decade, the Middle East and its issues will be the main focus of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic.

**Second**, the enemies and rivals of the Islamic Republic believe that it is necessary to confront the Islamic Republic against its regional policies. A relatively strong consensus among Iran's rivals and regional enemies, on the one hand, and their international supporters on the other hand, is in the process of being formed, which must be confronted with the regional policies of Iran and, in their words, force Iran to retreat from the Middle East. This situation has castigated and increased the ability of regional rivals to deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Through their increased power, they will also design and formulate a Middle East foreign policy agenda for the future that will confront what is called the regional influence of Iran. Therefore, if the Islamic Republic of Iran is required to define and formulate its foreign policy agenda to provide an active role in Middle East affairs in the interests of its security, Iranian rivals and enemies of the region are also faced with the same requirement in their foreign policy agenda in the

Middle East, aimed at pushing the Islamic Republic of Iran away from the Middle East. The result of these two similar obligations, but for different reasons, is that the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran will turn into a reciprocal conflict between their enemies and their regional rivals in order to secure their security in the Middle East.

**Third**, in the situation described, the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the coming years in the Middle East region will be a high-cost policy. Because in the face of other governments' reliance on the security concerns of the Islamic Republic, and the basis for dealing with it, the Islamic Republic will be forced to pay a lot more for its Middle Eastern policy. Basically, the cost of regional policies of Iran can be one of the goals of its rivals and its regional and trans-regional enemies. Expanding costs include a range of material and human costs, which is a basic necessity in terms of expanding the scope of the Middle East issues, and in particular the failed states. It should be noted that imposing a costly foreign policy on the Islamic Republic of Iran could lead to Iran's erosion in the Middle East and ultimately lead to the drain of strategic power in the country. On the other hand, rising costs can push the Iranian economy and create public discontent inside the country.

**Fourthly**, with the rise of hostilities and contradictions, and with the nature of Middle East conflict in the future, it may be possible for Iran's Middle East policy to shift from a policy within the framework of foreign policy to a policy within the framework of a military strategy. This means that because of the conflict and military action, the role of the military in the Middle East becomes more pronounced. In fact, in the current situation, foreign media and their officials, on the one hand, and some internal insights, follow the path that defines Iran's policy in the Middle East not as a diplomatic, but as military. To name Major General Qassem Soleimani as Iran's foreign minister in the Middle East is an attempt to highlight the military dimension in Iran's Middle East policy, which can be fully realized in the future. Such a process may also occur in other countries.

**Fifthly**, as a result of the above circumstances, Iran's foreign policy and its rivals such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia may lead to a move toward hostility and direct opposition, instead of hostility and confrontation with each other in the failed states. In other words, the current indirect hostility in the overthrown governments has given way to Iran's direct hostility to its rivals

and its regional enemies. This situation, which is most probable in relation to Iran and Saudi Arabia, means that another contradiction will be added to the agenda of Iran's foreign policy in the region, which will have different costs and consequences. It is clear that the cost of hostility and direct opposition between Iran and Saudi Arabia or Turkey is very different from the costs of hostility and rivalry in failed states, and therefore requires a different foreign policy.

At the end of this section, it should be said that, given the first scenario, the escape of the above conditions is not conceivable and the Islamic Republic is forced to pursue a policy that may be contrary to its will, unless: first, unpredictable circumstances occur that the nature of the interactions in the regional system of the Middle East is completely transformed, and second, if the Islamic Republic and other governments pursue the desired scenario, which is the second scenario, which will be dealt with further.

Regarding the second scenario and the foreign policy of Iran, governments are not always giving in to current conditions and realities, and in many cases they try to build a reality that is desirable by pursuing different policies and actions. In fact, whenever governments recognize that their political environment is undesirable, they do not hesitate if they are capable of moving from that unfavorable situation. This is because governments are able to create new optimal environments. On the other hand, many of the government's actions are aimed at achieving the desires that they have drawn for themselves. For example, a government's attempt to become a superior power for that state is a desirable goal. However, it may later come to the conclusion that it is not a desirable goal.

On this basis, the three main governments of Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia are seeking a desirable situation for themselves in the Middle East. For example, after the rise of the Arab world, each of the three governments moved in to achieve the desires they had drawn for themselves. In fact, the current situation in the Middle East is to a large extent the product of their efforts to achieve their desired goals. If they realize that they are in a desirable situation, they should try to keep the current situation going. But this also has another dimension, which is that if the three governments of Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia come to the conclusion that the definition of what they intended to be desirable was wrong and that the current situation

in the Middle East is not what they expected, they may change the current situation and move on to another stage.

If such a decision is made, then the point is that how each of the three governments defines the favorable situation. If their definitions are different and contradictory to the future situation, it is clear that a radical change in the current situation in the Middle East will not be achieved. But if their definitions of a good future are similar or shared, then the desired situation that the author poses in the form of a favorable scenario will be realized. Therefore, if the Islamic Republic of Iran determines and defines its foreign policy agenda to achieve the second scenario or the desired scenario, then some basic steps should be taken in the following order:

**First** of all, the Islamic Republic of Iran itself accepts that what has been described in the first scenario is an unfavorable condition for the interests and security of the country. In fact, the view is that the current situation is not a situation in which the Islamic Republic of Iran expects to be happening in the region and that its continuation will increase costs and threats against the country. Along with the element of acceptance, the element of will and determination is also very important for the transition.

**Second**, the two major regional rivals of Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, have the same understanding that the situation described in the first scenario is not desirable, and is totally contrary to their expectations as well as their interests and national security. It is important for the two countries to accept the fact that the Islamic Republic alone cannot change the situation and that the two countries have also been effective in shaping the situation in the Middle East. The continuation of the second step for Iran's foreign policy is to examine whether the governments of Saudi Arabia and Turkey have concluded that the first scenario in the region is undesirable for them and that they are capable of and willing to prepare for better conditions .

**Third**, the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in step three seeks to understand how the governments of Saudi Arabia and Turkey define the desirable situation. What other factors do they suggest to the desirable future of the Middle East, and how similar they are to the definition of the desirable situation with the views of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Indeed, after three governments accepted the unfavorable situation described in the first scenario and decided to move on to another stage, the main task of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is to focus on its own interests



and with a consideration for Turkey and Saudi Arabia and try to get all three countries' perspective on what is desirable close to each other. The more Iran is able to create a similar definition of the desired scenario between the three countries, the more Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia will be able to achieve the desired scenario. In fact, at this stage, the foreign policy of the country should be based on cooperation and coordination with Turkey and Saudi Arabia in order to achieve the desired scenario. It was noted that Turkey and Saudi Arabia would have to understand and do the same. For example, Iran and Turkey have started some joint engagements to resolve the Syrian crisis, which could, if continued, include Saudi Arabia. It is clear that in order to achieve a common understanding of what is called desirable status, it is necessary to make some modifications to the policies and positions which Iran and Turkey have done to some extent, although its continuity is unclear.

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