

Political Relations between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain 1981-1990 (Determinants - Procedures)

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Political relations and political stability are the most important considerations in the Gulf-Gulf relations and the most complex in the Gulf regional system. Since Britain announced its withdrawal from the region in the late 1960s, conflicts and crises remain the dominant norm in the Gulf region, and Saudi Arabia finds itself concerned with what is happening in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Bahrain, by virtue of the fact that Bahrain is the closest to the urban density centres in Saudi Arabia and the people of Bahrain are the most geographically and demographically connected with the people in Saudi Arabia. This means that the political impact of the current situation of Saudi Arabia's policy in the Gulf region is based on the need to preserve the stability of the region, especially Bahrain, to address the attempts of Shiite expansion and penetration of Iran and the protection of the Gulf regimes. Also to address the preservation of the ruling regime and prevent the transmission of infection to the eastern region in Saudi Arabia which has taken on political and security dimensions.

Key words: *Political relations, political stability, Gulf-Gulf relations, GCC.*

Introduction

If we follow the Saudi-Bahraini political relations, some facts must be pointed out, including that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was characterised by characteristics that made it an influential position on the Persian Gulf Emirates, especially Bahrain, and these characteristics of the Kingdom's religious status is the starting point of Islam and the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. The second characteristic is because it contains huge oil sources and is considered the first country in the possession of oil reserves in the world, as it occupies the vast area in the Arabian Peninsula, making it adjacent to all the Gulf Arab countries and has a common border with them as well as overlooking the Arabian Gulf. This research is devoted to a study of the political relations between the two countries. The second topic was devoted to the measures

taken by both countries to strengthen political relations between them and was devoted to clarifying the political, security and military cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

A Vision in the Historical Roots of Saudi-Bahraini Relations

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a strong relationship with the State of Bahrain, which is due to several factors, including the Al Khalifa tribal origins, which are due to the Kingdom and also because of economic relations. Saudi support in particular and Gulf support in general have enabled it to have a per capita income in some years more than in Saudi Arabia itself, which has led to the loss of Bahrain (and for the benefit of Saudi Arabia) much of its independent decision-making, especially political, as Bahrain plays a significant role in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It operates a safety valve from social pressures, resulting from the application of the Wahhabi al Qaeda as well as geographical proximity between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, which has increased from the Saudi interest to Bahrain (Ahmed Samir ability, political variables: 86). First of all, it is important to note the history and roots of the Saudi-Bahraini relations, as the relations between the two countries are characterised by historical relations due to the establishment of the first Saudi state (1745- 1818) (Ali Abu Hussein, historical link: 77) Their relations are constantly developing at all levels starting from Imam Jassem Hassan Al-Moussawi, Bahrain-Gulf Relations: 20, and the day after the British withdrawal from the Arabian Gulf in 1971. Bahrain declared its independence on August 14, 1971. An embassy request was made to strengthen their historical relations (Saleh Mohammed Saleh Al Ali, Bahraini Saudi Relations: 58).

Regional Determinants Affecting Political Relations between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain

The Gulf strategic landscape includes the political differences that constitute the regional Gulf system. The political units in the Gulf region are classified into two main categories: the big countries, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq, which control the management of the regional system. The second category is the remaining five countries, namely Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Kuwait. Yemen, because of the weakness of this group, made some resort to the conclusion of bilateral security arrangements with the major powers, which aroused the resentment of major regional countries, especially Iran and less Saudi Arabia, and the differences between these countries, including border disputes, and some strategic dimensions or sectarian reasons (Abdul Khaliq Abdullah, the Gulf regional system: 46).

Border Disputes and Their Impact on Saudi - Bahraini Relations

The process of demarcating the borders between the countries bordering the Arabian Gulf has been linked, inter alia, to the local tribal system inherited, as in tribal groupings on the western side of the Gulf. Its connection is with the tribal elements on the one hand and oil on the other



(Khalidoun Hassan Al-Naqeeb, *Society and State*: 114). The dispute over the Saudi-Bahraini maritime border is the first of its kind in the Arabian Gulf. It is also the first dispute that was settled in a quick and successful way because of the strong relationship between the two countries. The dispute did not take long and did not have a negative impact on the relations between the Kingdom and Bahrain. They are linked only by the waters of the Arabian Gulf (Amin Saati, *the international border of the Kingdom*: 75). For my island for evidence, p was agreed to grant Saudi Arabia the evidence of the big and Bahrain gets the evidence of the small (Mohammed Ghanem Al-Rumaihi, *Bahrain, problems of political change*: 135).

Sectarian Conflict - A Source of Threat to Security in the Arabian Gulf

The sectarian conflict in the Arabian Gulf, especially in Bahrain, is summarised as the society is divided into two religious communities, namely the Shiite and Sunni communities. This sectarian division was a source of conflict and a threat to security in the region (Emile Nakhla, *Bahrain - Political Development*: 161). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is concerned about the joint relations between Shiites in Bahrain and Shiites in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, especially Shiites in the Eastern Province and Bahraini Shiites belonging to the same ethnic origin, as well as followers of the same Shiite school, the Twelve Ibrahim, and the phenomenon of political violence: 254). This approach emerged strongly in the Arab region after the Iranian revolution of 1979 because it represented a major transformation by presenting a model of governance based on a doctrinal political theory (Shehata Mohammad Nasser, *Politics of the Regimes*: 42). The history of Iranian influence in Bahrain was considered multidirectional. The Islamic Revolution had a responsibility to protect the Shiites in the Gulf and other Arab countries. The impact of this revolution was stronger in the political situation in Bahrain, because of the historical relations between the two countries (Ali al-Din Hilal and others, *Arabs and the world*: 213-214). The most prominent influence of the Iranian revolution in Bahrain, is represented in two aspects: First, the revolution led to deepening the sectarian dimension among the Sunnis. The second aspect is that the Iranian revolution led to the division of the Bahraini Shiite community into two parts, the first is conservative and does not aim at overthrowing the regime. As a result, several Shiite political organisations opposed to the rule emerged in the early 1980s, specifically in 1981, which attempted the so-called Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain (ISLF) to carry out a pro-Iranian coup. The Bahraini government managed to thwart this attempt and the Bahraini government discovered the attempt during the celebrations that it was holding on the occasion of the passage of 200 years since the reign of the Al-Khalifa family (Haider Abdul Wahid Nasser Al-Humaidawi, *Iranian-Bahraini relations*: 373). Some of the saboteurs were trained in Iran in an attempt to overthrow the Bahraini regime (Shehata Muhammad Nasser, *Politics of the Regimes*: 191). The Bahraini Islamic Liberation Movement was established in 1982 and is unlike the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, of which Iranian origin constituted the majority of its affiliates. The Bahraini Islamic Liberation Movement was founded by Shiites of Arab origin and was established in London



secretly so as not to influence it. Noting that the movement did not demand the overthrow of the Al Khalifa rule, but called for some political reforms and has gained considerable credibility among the Shiites inside Bahrain, as it participated in the signing of a number of joint statements with other national opposition factions for reform and established relations with some symbols of the current regime. We note that these organisations, although they differed in the political orientation, demands and method of work, agreed in two things, namely the relationship with Iran and the revolution and the second is the opposition to the regime in Bahrain, which forced Bahrain. Saudi Arabia, in particular, saw the suppression of Shiite opposition in Bahrain as the best option, and the Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz (1975-2011), who condemned the incident, accused Iran of saying: "Iran conspires against Bahrain violated the act A- Islam" (Mohammed Saeed Idris, regional order: 496)

Measures to Strengthen Political Relations between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain 1981-1990

Political Cooperation between the Two Countries

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain belong to a single political system, namely the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC). The relationship between the two countries is special by virtue of several factors. There are also political ties between the two countries.

The GCC Was Established In 1981

Saudi-Bahraini political relations have been strengthened over the 1980s by cooperation with security concerns within the framework of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the official date of the emergence of the first collective security interest in the Gulf region on 26 May 1981, the date of the announcement of the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which was not the result of its moment. Regional and international events and circumstances, exacerbated by the late 1970s, prompted the Gulf governments to take urgent steps to develop a viable collective framework that would protect against common threats. In the final communiqué of the founding summit, the GCC leaders stressed that "the security and stability of the region is the responsibility of their peoples and states and that this council expresses the will of these countries and their right to defend their security and safeguard their independence". (Country: 52). The security dimension was present during the GCC leaders' meetings in the 1980s. The influence of three major regional factors: the Iraq-Iran war, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the prospect of Soviet encroachment on the waters of the Arabian Sea and the Gulf, the Islamic Revolution in Iran, and the fear of Khomeini's threats to export the revolution to the area.

Construction of King Fahad Bridge 1986

The establishment of the King Fahd Causeway came as an attempt to strengthen political relations between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. The idea of establishing the causeway emerged when King Saud bin Abdulaziz (1953-1964) visited Bahrain when he came to power in 1954 and was celebrated by the then ruler of Bahrain, Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa. (1942-1961) However, the official steps to achieve this idea began after the arrival of King Faisal bin Abdulaziz to the Saudi throne on October 29, 1964 and continued attempts during the reign of King Khalid bin Abdul Aziz to sign the agreement to build the bridge in the city of Bahrain on July 8, 1981 and this was ratified in the Arab Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by Royal Decree number (M / 35) on July 15, 1981 and in Bahrain by Law number (21) on November 29, 1981 (Public Institution, King Fahad Bridge). A ceremony attended by King Fahd bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (1982-2005) and Prince Shaikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa (1961- 1999) to be opened on 26 November 1986 in a ceremony attended by the two countries and leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council, during the Gulf Summit in Bahrain. It was widely believed that the purpose of the bridge was to increase economic relations. However, it seems that the real aim of the bridge was a political security objective for the purpose of facilitating Saudi intervention in Bahrain in the event of Al-Khalifa's dangers. The Saudi ambassador to Bahrain, Ghazi Al-Gosaibi, delivered his poems at the opening of the bridge entitled "A path of love, not a path of stone". This showed the depth of the relationship between the two countries (Asharq Al-Awsat Newspaper, 11475).

Cooperation in the Security and Military Fields

There is a close link between the security of the two countries in the Gulf region and the interests and objectives of some regional countries such as Iran, which deepened the security relationship between the two countries, and this became a popular demand before it was official. There should be security cooperation, as the development of political events in the region imposed on them a kind of security coordination under the umbrella of the GCC security agreements.

The Conclusion of the Security Agreement 1981

In order to strengthen political relations between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, the two sides worked to strengthen military and security relations. Within the framework of that policy, Bahrain sought to take some of the steps taken by Saudi Arabia in this area, especially as it preceded the rest of the Arab Gulf specifically in the field of armaments and in an interview. At the time, Sheikh Hamad Issa Al Khalifa (1999-) asserted, "When we started the establishment of the Defense Force, many friends did not hide their doubts about the possibility of it's construction or even it's usefulness. Helping them to prepare the necessary cadres in

their military institutes and facilities, especially Saudi Arabia, we depend on our potential and the potential of our brothers: (91). After the failed coup attempt in Bahrain in 1981, which was promised by the Gulf States that Iran was behind it' under the slogan "exporting the revolution" and that these events could be transferred to other Gulf countries, they tried to counter them by taking precautionary measures and concluding bilateral agreements. The security agreement between the two countries was signed on October 17, 1982 (then joined by the UAE, Qatar and Oman), which stipulated the organisation of the relationship between the two ministries of interior and coordination in matters affecting common security (Ahmad Abdel Kader Mukhlis, GCC: 90).

Establishment of Unified Gulf Forces (Shield of the Island) 1984

The creation of the Shield, as it's associates call it, is considered a means of a contract and an important attempt in Gulf military cooperation. There were attacks against the Gulf States, and the establishment of the forces was not the result of the moment, but a joint exercise between the Saudi and Bahraini forces on 4 July 1975 to achieve cooperation in the field of security and military cooperation to develop a unified system to extend Meynet for military Gulf (Faris Mohammed buildings, the Peninsula Shield: 12). The Kingdom, together with the rest of the Gulf countries, initiated the formation of the Al-Jazeera Shield Force. The Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) decided at it's third session in Manama on November 1982, to recommend the defense ministers to establish a joint defense force called Al-Jazira Shield Forces. North of Saudi Arabia, there were five thousand fighters, most of them Saudis, but the number has increased to reach 41 thousand from all the GCC countries. Since it's establishment, this force has been conducting joint exercises and exercises periodically with the armed forces in each of the GCC countries. The first exercise of this force was held on the UAE soil in 1983, and it was officially announced in 1984 in the presence of the defense ministers of the six member states of the Council. This military force is a joint collective action that consecrates the concept of cooperation, solidarity and a sense of force in front of all dangers. King Khalid Military City is in Hafr Al-Batin, northeastern Saudi Arabia (Dhafer Mohammad Al-Ajmi, Gulf Military Cooperation: 3). In this regard, the Secretary General of the GCC Ambassador Abdullah Bishara said in 1984 that the strength of the "Shield of the island" was formed because of the circumstances of the Iraqi war, and it will end when the circumstances change. However, the changing circumstances have prompted the GCC leaders to pay more attention to them than before. Later, Al-Jazeera Shield forces proved a model for military cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain in the event that Bahrain witnessed later in the research period (Dhafer Mohammed Al-Ajmi, Gulf Military Cooperation: 3).



Conclusion

The relations between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain are historic and based on communication and love between the leaderships and peoples of the two countries, and are witnessing continuous development at all levels starting from the common constants and visions that they have in common with various political and security issues, and common goals as well as their geographical proximity and membership in the Gulf Cooperation Council. Saudi Arabia regards Bahrain as a Saudi affair more than any other Gulf country. Several factors have contributed to the deepening of the political relationship between the two parties, including the emergence of border problems in the region, including the Kingdom's perception of the region's security, as well as the Iranian role, which indirectly contributed to the strengthening of ties between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, especially after the implementation of joint measures. These included the establishment of the King Fahd Causeway and the conclusion of security and military agreements between the two countries.



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