

## **Abstract**

This thesis studies the Saudi Iranian rapprochement of 2023 using Type III Neoclassical Realism (NCR) as a theoretical framework. The study is divided in two. First, the Islamic Republic of Iran is assessed. After analyzing the dependent, independent, and intervening variables, it is argued that systemic factors, such as the imminence of further US and Israeli presence in the Gulf and the opportunity that China is offering to Iran in a restrictive environment, are the primary determinants that guided Tehran's foreign policy to approach Saudi Arabia. Conversely, it is discussed that intervening variables cannot be deduced to have exercised a similar influence. Still, Iran's strategic culture is concluded to have further restricted the Islamic Republic's strategic environment, thus suggesting that both systemic and domestic factors can influence the level of clarity and nature of the strategic environment, not contemplated in the literature. As for Saudi Arabia, intervening variables, especially leader images, do constitute a main factor guiding Riyadh's foreign policy decision to reapproach Iran. Mohammed bin Salman's foreign policy has turned out to be characterized by pragmatism and initiatives. However, a study of the structural modifiers presents the kingdom's reliance on the oil and gas markets to sustain its economy, as well as signs of reluctance by the US to keep providing Saudi Arabia's with security. Amid this situation, China appears as the optimal opportunity for Saudi Arabia to diversify its economy and pursue the vision goals delimited by bin Salman.