Doctoral Dissertation

# Balance of Power and Deterrence between Saudi Arabia and Iran in the Era of Post-Arab Uprisings and Shale Oil Revolution

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# アラブの春及びシェール革命以降の サウジアラビア・イラン間の勢力均衡及び抑止

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Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation

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The political situation in the Middle East is still one of the main concerns for the rest of the world because of the vital interests of the global economy, world energy stability, and the state of international peace. Dramatic, ongoing developments in the past few years—specifically the period that followed the Arab uprisings—have changed the dynamics of politics, alliances, and disputes in the region. Other important factors have contributed to those changes as well, such as US withdrawing from the region as "Gulf Police" to counterbalance Iran's influence due to the revolution of shale oil and gas in the United States, the emergence of the concept of the Asian pivot, and the P5+1–Iran nuclear agreement. These factors combined have reduced the United States' desire to remain responsible for Gulf security. Thus, the shape of policies in the Middle East will be defined mainly by the balance of power and deterrence between Saudi Arabia and Iran, as it has been for decades. I try to analyze the balance of power in the Gulf region in the era of post-Arab uprisings and US withdrawal. In particular, the rapid occurrence of events has increased the demand for research that addresses and understands those alterations. I find that recent developments in the Middle East have forced Saudi Arabia, mainly, and some members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to shift their policy to be more independent and to adopt an assertive neorealist doctrine to keep the status quo in the region. Saudi Arabia has started taking major steps to develop its military capabilities and has also tried to change the map of alliances in the Middle East by forming a pan-Arab force and creating a new Arab coalition, including some of the GCC (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar) plus Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, and Sudan, which played an important role in Operation Decisive Storm in Yemen to confront Iranian expansion in the Arab world. On the other hand, Iran will have a greater budget after removing the UN sanctions related to its nuclear file and unfreezing assets, thus giving Iran the capabilities to finance its proxy wars in the region, which may thus augment the intensity of the dispute between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

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## Introduction

Politics in the Gulf region involve multidimensional perspectives and combined factors.In order to build a comprehensive vision of the subject, we should touch on the historical background and the local and external factors that led to the current policies in the region. This includes the *local factors* of competition between Arabs and Persians, such as the first is *sectarian issues and the Sunni–Shia tension,* the *Second* is the *history of the Arab–Persian dispute*, and the *third* is the *cultural and ethnic competition*. Regarding *external factors,* I will discuss the *fourth factor* which is *the external forces responsible for the security of the region historically*, mainly the Ottoman Empire in the 1500s, the British Empire from the early eighteenth century for 150 years, and then the United States after World War II.

If the researcher wishes to discuss ***the first factor*** which is ***sectarian issues*** and the *Sunni–Shia* relationship, he needs to go back in history more than 1,400 years to an episode that occurred after the death of the Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him, in 632 CE. All Muslims believe Mohammed was the last messenger; he had no male children alive when he died, only daughters. Also, he did not leave a will indicating who would be his successor and the next leader of Muslims.[1] After his death in Medina, there were two types of his companions in the city. *Al Anssar*, which means "the supporters" in Arabic, were the original people of Medina who supported the Prophet when he immigrated to there. Al Anssar are mainly composed of two tribes: the Aws and the Khazraj.[2]The second group of companions was called *Al Muhajirun*, which means "the immigrants" in Arabic. They were not originally from Al Medina but followed the prophet Mohammed or even immigrated from Makkah to

Medina before his immigration. The Prophet immigrated in 622 CE after escaping assassination in his hometown, Makkah, where Muslims were being harassed and tortured at that time.[3] Most of the well-known companions of Al Muhajirun came from the Quraysh of Makkah (the same tribe as Mohammed), who, at the beginning of Islam, were considered the biggest enemy of Muslims.[4]Therefore, Al Medina was like a safe haven for Muslims, especially Muhajirun. After the death of Mohammed, Al Anssar held a meeting to select the new leader of the Muslims in a place called Sagifah (or Sagifah Bani Saidah). They planned to select the head of Khazraj, Saad Ibn Obadah, as the new Muslim leader. The news reached Umar ibn Alkhatab, one of the prominent leaders of the Muslims from Al Muhajirun. He discussed it with Abu Bakr, the closest man to Prophet Mohammed, and decided to go to Sagifah before Al Anssar selected the new leader. Umar wanted to talk, but Abu Bakr stopped him and gave a good speech to Al Anssar in which he praised their effort to support the prophet Mohammed during his life. He explained that the Arabs found it difficult to accept new leaders from outside the tribe of Mohammed because even before Islam the Quraysh were the leaders of the Arabs, and the coming of Islam affirmed this, as the Prophet was also from the Quraysh. Therefore, Abu Bakr asked Al Anssar to support the new caliph (the successor of Mohammed) as they had supported the Prophet.[5]One of the Anssar suggested an alternative of having one leader from the Quraysh and the next one from the Anssar, but the suggestion was dropped by Al Muhajirun. Therefore, Abu Bakr asked the Anssar to select either Umar or Abo Ubiedah, but Umar insisted on selecting Abu Bakr as the new leader of the Muslims. He took a *bay'ah* (oath of allegiance), and the rest of the Muslims in Sagifah followed, selecting Abu Bakr as the first caliph for Muslims after Prophet Mohammed.[6]

The selection of Abu Bakr was not surprising among the Sunni because his name and title, Abu Bakr Alsadeeq, meant "the believer." He was the first man who believed Mohammed's prophecy and was the closest man to the Prophet. In fact, Mohammed was asked in his life who he liked most among his male companions, and he replied that it was Abu Bakr. The Holy Quran also mentioned Abu Bakr as the companion of Prophet Mohammed during their immigration from Makkah to Medina, as well as when the Quraysh followed them to kill the Prophet while he was hiding in a cave.[7] Quran Chapter Al-Tawba Verse No. 40 states:

> (If you help him (Muhammad SAW) not (it does not matter), for Allah did indeed help him when the disbelievers drove him out, the second of two, when they (Muhammad SAW and Abu Bakr) were in the cave, and he (SAW) said to his companion (Abu Bakr): "Be not sad (or afraid), surely Allah is with us." Then Allah sent down His Sakinah (calmness, tranquility, peace, etc.) upon him, and strengthened him with forces (angels) which you saw not, and made the word of those who disbelieved the lowermost, while it was the Word of Allah that became the uppermost, and Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.)[8]

The Prophet mentioned that Abu Bakr was the first person who would enter heaven from the nation of Mohammed.[9]

The events that followed the death of Prophet Mohammed proved that Abu Bakr's plan was to keep the caliphate among the Quraysh; otherwise it would lead to the disintegration of the unity of the Arabs and Muslims because other tribes would not allow

anybody to be a leader unless he was from the tribe of Mohammed.[10] *The Sunni claimed that Ali, the cousin of Mohammed, accepted Abu Bukr as the first caliph, while the Shia said that he had been forced to accept him.* Regardless, both agreed that Ali was not present at the meeting in Sagifah.[11]

It is worth mentioning that there was no use of these terms (Shia or Sunni) after the death of Mohammed directly, but the term *Shia* started to be used frequently around the time of Ali, about 35 years after the death of the Prophet. Therefore, *the dispute between the Sunni and the Shia after Prophet Mohammed's death was retrospective. The Shia believed that the cousin of Prophet Mohammed and the husband of his beloved daughter Fatima, Ali ibn Abi Talib, should have been the first caliph of the Muslims after Mohammed,*[12] *while the Sunni thought the Shoura, or election, should have decided who would be the caliph*. However, during the Sagifa meeting, Ali and his wife, Fatima, were busy preparing for the funeral of Prophet Mohammed, therefore he wasn't a candidate to be the first caliph.[13]

The story of forcing Ali to accept Abu Bakr as caliph seems odd because both Sunnis and Shias know very well that nobody could have forced Ali to do something he didn't want to do. It is well known in Muslim history, and both Sunnis and Shias agree, that Ali was a courageous man and a strong warrior.[14] Shias said the Prophet Mohammed endorsed Ali as the next caliph in his life in the Hadiath of the pond of Khumm when Prophet Mohammed went back to Al Medina from Makkah after he took his last farewell pilgrimage. He made a speech and stated, "Who am I his Maula (master), Ali is his Maula (master)," and this is why Shias celebrate this day.[15] Sunnis, however, think that the event was just a sequence of a long story about when Prophet Mohammed sent Ali to Yemen as the leader of a group of

companions. Ali was decisive with them, and when they returned to the Prophet, some of them complained about his behavior. After the Prophet heard both sides of the story, he found that Ali had made the right decision, and therefore, he gave a speech.[16]

The succession of Mohammed has been in dispute for 1,400 years, and both parties—Sunni and Shia—claim they are right. After Abu Bakr's death, the second caliph was Umar, one of the most important strategic and military leaders in the history of Muslims. The Islamic State expanded greatly, and he defeated the two biggest empires at that time: the Persian Empire and the Roman Empire. The role of Umar and his relationship with Persia have been very controversial issues among Shia and Sunni Muslims.[17]Shias, especially from Iran, blame Umar for not handing over the leadership of Muslims to Ali after the death of Abu Bakr, and they believe Ali was the legitimate leader. Sunnis, on the other hand, argue that the relationship between Ali and Umar was excellent; otherwise, Umar would not have married Ali's daughter, which showed that they were very close. Umar considered Ali a very close adviser and sought his wisdom on important matters. Umar once said that if Ali hadn't existed, Umar would have perished.[18]This well-known statement shows how Umar depended on Ali in handling state affairs. Umar even dictated in his will that there should be an election to choose the caliph after him, and he asked six of the Muslim leaders to select the next caliph (Shura).

Muslims finally elected Uthman Ibn Affan. His nickname, *Thou Alnourain*, means "the man with two lights" in Arabic because he married two of Prophet Mohammed's daughters. Therefore, he was a son-in-law of Prophet Mohammed,[19]like Ali, but Shias refused the election. They believed Ali was the legitimate caliph, more than the three previous

caliphs—Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman—and they thought Uthman's marriage to two of the Prophet Mohammed's daughters was not enough reason, claiming that they had been forced marriages.

Under the leadership of Uthoman, the Islamic state expanded more, but at the end of his reign, *fitna* (troubles and disorder) occurred. Thugs came to Al Medina to complain of corruption among governors in the provinces, and they surrounded Uthman's house for a period before finally killing him. It is worth mentioning that Ali was so concerned about the safety of Uthman that he posted his sons, Al Hassan and Al Hussein, to guard him; thus, the relationship was strong between the two sons-in-law of Prophet Mohammed.[20]

After the assassination of Uthman, Ali became caliph. He tried to change the controversial governors of the provinces, who had many complaints against them. Some people wanted him to take revenge on the people who had killed Uthman. The governor of Laven (most of present-day Syria) in Damascus, Muawiyah Ibn Abi Sufyan, refused the orders of Ali as the new caliph.[21] Thus, Muslims became divided into two groups, some with Muawiyah and the majority with Ali. Finally, they met at the battle of Siffin, which is famous in the history of the Muslims. Ali's army almost defeated Muawiyah, but Muawiyah escaped from the situation by putting the Holy Quran on the tips of his soldiers' spears, which meant they wanted the rule of the Quran. As a result of the arbitration, the battle was stopped and the two armies left, one toward Damascus and the other (Ali's) toward Kufa. This was the beginning of Shiism.

The people who supported Ali called themselves *Shiite Ali*, which means "supporters of Ali." Then Ali was assassinated in 661CE after five years of leadership as caliph, by Kharijite Abdul Rahaman Ibn Muljim. Shias consider Ali is first imam and legitimate caliph,

and he was from Ahl Al-Bayt, which means "the house of Prophet Mohammed." After the death of Imam Ali, his son Al Hassan took over for several months. Eventually, Al Hassan reached an agreement with Mauiyah, abdicating his position to Mauiyah in order to unify the Muslims. However, Al Hassan imposed conditions that Mauiyah didn't follow. For example, after Mauiyah, the Muslim leadership role was not supposed to be hereditary, but Mauiyah sought to make his son Yazied the next caliph. Hussein Ibn Ali, the son of Ali, refused this plan and went to Iraq, looking for support. He did not find actual support from the Iraqis, but the army of Yazied, son of Mauiyah, followed him and fought him. The army killed people around Hussein Ibn Aliin the Karbala battle; then, Hussein Ibn Aliwas killed by Shamar ibn thi Al-Joshan by beheading, which is considered one of the biggest crimes in Muslim history among both Shias and Sunnis. This crime was condemned by both Sunnis and Shias because Yazied's army had killed the beloved grandson of Prophet Mohammed, who was of the most royal blood of Arabs and Muslims. His mother was Fatima, the beloved daughter of Prophet Mohammed, and his father was Ali, the cousin of Prophet Mohammed and fourth caliph.[22]As a result, the rift increased between the Shias and Sunnis.

Surprisingly, there are *many mistakes and misunderstandings in the history of Sunni–Shia tension in foreign sources and books*, mainly regarding the beliefs of Sunnis and Shias such as the beginning of dispute and the divisions of Sunnis[23]; *therefore, I have discuss this topic in detail* and it is good to clarify some points regarding these issues. First, Sunnis believe that Ali was the right fourth caliph of the Muslims and that Mauiyah made a mistake when he fought Ali. By consensus, all Sunnis call the first four caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali) the *Rashidun*, which means "rightly guided caliphs," but they have not given this title to Mauiyah. In addition, all Sunnis agree that Ali was better than

Mauiyah.[24]The second issue is that Sunnis believe that the rightly guided caliphs were on Ali's side during the war between Mauiyah and Ali because the Prophet Mohammed stated clearly that Ammar Ibn Yasser, a companion of Prophet Mohammed and one of the supporters of Ali, would be killed by a transgressing group (Mauyeah's army) during the Battle of Siffin.[25] The third issue is that all Sunnis have high respect for *Al Bayt*, the house of Mohammed, and all Sunnis say "o God, bless Mohammed and Al Bayt" five times in their prayers.

The difference between Sunnis and Shias is that Sunnis have refused to *curse any companion* of Prophet Mohammed because he said not to. Prophet Mohammed knew very well what would happen in the future after his death and gave many prophecies about it, such as predicting Ammar ibn Yasser's death. Yet, he mentioned that the best generation of Muslims was his generation; therefore, it is difficult for Sunnis to damn any companion of Prophet Mohammed,[26]even if the companion did make mistakes. They believe the Lord holds people accountable, while Shias—mostly the Twelvers group—damn a lot of companions of Prophet Mohammed, even the first three caliphs and the wife of Mohammed, Aiysha, whom Sunnis consider the mother of all believers since she was the closest wife to Prophet Mohammed. Furthermore, Sunnis consider any cursing or insults to any companions as an insult to all Muslims, especially since the dispute is 1,400 years old and should already be forgotten. Also, they think the leadership should be determined by Islamic election (Shoura), not hereditary rule, as the Shias believe.

From the historical events—such as the marriage of Umar to the daughter of Ali, despite Shias claims that it was a forced marriage,[27] and the sons of Ali protecting Uthman's

life—we can devise that the relations between Ali and the first three caliphs were very good. The Sunnis want to stop this brutal dispute, and they have asked why the Sunnis should be blamed for Kufa City's mistakes and the betrayal of Al Hussein when the people of Kufa didn't protect him. The Shias, mainly the scholars, remember this story every year as part of their religious rituals and remember the revenge of Al Hussein.[28]

Since then, Muslims have been divided into *two groups*: The majority group is called Sunni and the minority group is called Shia.

Shias are further divided into three types: *Twelvers, Zaidiyya*, and *Ismailis*.

1. Twelver Shias, or *Ithnv'ashariyyah'*, comprise the biggest group of Shias and are located mainly in Iran and Iraq. They are called the Twelvers because they believe that twelve imams were selected by God from the descendants of the first imam, Ali; these twelve are infallible, according to the Twelver Shia beliefs.

2. The Zaidiyya sect is named after Zayd ibn Ali. Followers are also called the Fivers because they follow five imams. The Zaidi believe the imams are fallible and the selection of imams can be nonhereditary and performed by the bay'at. Zaydi is the closest Shia group to the Sunnis, and they don't damn the first three caliphs. The Zaidi are located mainly in Yemen.

3. Ismailis are named after Isma'il ibn Jafar, the older son of Ja'far al-Sadiq. In this way, they differ from the Twelvers, who follow Ja'far's younger son, Musa al-Kadhim. Ismailis believe that Ismail didn't die but rather that his father faked a funeral to protect him. They say he had the right to be the imam after his father. They are called the Seveners because they follow seven imams.[29]

Sunnis compose the majority of Muslims, following all four caliphs after the death of Prophet Mohammed. They have only *one group*, but there is a misunderstanding among Western historians that they are divided into four branches.[30] All Sunnis have the same principles, but they have *four schools* for interpreting the details of the laws of Islam. The four schools are *Hanafi, Shafi'ite, Malikite,* and *Hanbalite*. Sunnis have the choice to select any school they wish at any time, as well as more than one school for any law, whereas Shias can't convert from one branch to another because the main principles are so different.[31]

Despite the disagreements between Sunnis and Shias started after the Prophet Muhammad's death and regarded his legitimate successor. However, the disputes resolved quickly historically, and ordinary Sunnis and Shias have lived peacefully together throughout most of Islamic history. This is because of intermarriage and blood relations between Shias and Sunnis; the wisdom of Al-Bayt imams, such as Jaafar Sadegh; and the huge difference in number between the two groups, with Shias representing a small minority compared to Sunnis.[32]

I have already mentioned the sectarian factor, but the ***second factor*** which is ***historical one*** has also played an important role in the competition. Umar is considered a milestone leader in the history of the competition between Arabs and Persians. He was the strategic leader who collapsed the Persian Empire and made Persians subordinate of Arabs until now. Therefore, even recently some Persian writers have blamed him for collapsing the Persian civilization. Before the Islamic states, a huge number of Arabs were simply followers who showed loyalty and obedience to the Persian Empire; the only exception was the battle of Dhi Qar, when the Arabs united and defeated the Persian Empire for a short time before the

Islamic states.[33]Otherwise, the Persian Empire dominated the Arabs for centuries until Umar came and collapsed the Persian Empire forever. Persia became a state belonging to the Arabs for several centuries. Eventually, Umar was assassinated by a Persian worker in Al Medina while he was praying in the mosque, which was considered by some Persians to be revenge for what he had done to the Persian Empire.

If we discuss the history of the Arabian–Persian wars, we also need to discuss the Muslim conquest of Persia. Umar was the mastermind behind the Arab conquest of Iran, which led to the disappearance of the Sasanian Empire, and the Muslims started their war against the Sasanian Empire with an army led by a well-known general, Khalid ibn Alwaleed. He made some progress in Iraq, but he was shifted to the Syrian front, and the Muslims lost their gains. In 636, Umar sent another famous leader to Persia, Saad ibn Abi Waqqas, and he defeated the Persians at the battle of Qadisiyyah, gaining almost all of the western part of the Sasanian Empire. Arab Muslims continued progressing in Persia, and finally, the Battle of Nihawand was the decisive battle that ended the real power of the Sasanian Empire and caused the last Sassanid emperor, Yazdgerd III, to flee. By 651, the Sasanian Empire was finished forever, and declined of Zoroastrian religious began in Persia.[34]

The *third* competition factor isthe ***cultural and ethnic issues.*** If we review the opinion of Iranian authors—such as Sadeq Chubak, Nader Naderpour, Mehdi Akhavan Sales, and Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh—to examine the cultural dimension of the rivalry, we will see that they consider themselves other-than-Arabs and think they are different from Arabs in all aspects: culture, thoughts, and even religion They stress nationalism and ideological factors that represent a world of difference from the Arabs.[35]

Even in their stories and novels they describe the Arabs in a very bad way. Sadeq Hedayat, for example, describes Arabs as "dark-skinned, dirty, diseased, ugly, stupid, cruel and shameless, bestial and demonic. Moreover, Hedayat portrays present-day Iranian Muslims as corrupt and hypocritical. Only his Sassanid Iranians are attractive, courageous, intelligent, cultured and virtuous."[36] As can be seen, even Iranian authors think the golden age of Iran was before Islam and Islamic invaders (Arabs) destroyed their culture, which is significant if we look at the Iranian state as an Islamic state, as the Iranian regime claim to be. Some Iranians even believe that the Iranian race is superior to the Semitic race (Arabs). In addition, Mehdi Akhavan says "According to 'The Ending of the Shahnameh,' the ending of Zoroastrian Iranian cultures with the defeat of the Sassanid Empire and the coming of Islam has resulted in ruin and despair, which can be resolved only by returning to Iran's pre-Islamic golden age. The Iranian Self was pure, bright and beautiful, but has been corrupted by the Arab Other, false, dark, and evil."[37]Sadeq Chubak describes Arabs as ugly and Iranians as corrupted by Arabs' hypocrisy in reference to Islam, for Chubak believes they founded "the institution of Shi'i Islam in Iran only as a tool for oppression."[38]

On the other hand, there are many authors who have less aggressive views about Arabs or even some positive ideas, but it is worth mentioning that the majority of Iranian authors look at Arabs as having a different culture that has many opposite characteristics to the Iranian culture.

While the ***fourth factor*** is the ***historical external power*** can be divided into three eras, the first real rift between Sunnis and Shias in the region started during the competition between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires. Ismail I initiated a religious policy to recognize Shiism as the official religion of the Safavid Empire. Then, the Safavids declared Shia Islam

to be the state religion and used proselytization to force a lot of Sunni Muslims in Iran to convert to Shiism.[39] The fact that modern Iran remains an officially Shiite state is a direct result of Ismail I's actions, while the Ottoman Empire is Sunni. Shah Ismail I of the Safavid dynasty destroyed the tombs of Abu-Hanifa and the Sufi Abdul Qadir Gilani in 1508. In 1533, the Ottomans fought back and defeated the Safavids in Iraq and rebuilt the Sunni mosque.[40]

After the Ottoman–Safavid dispute, the British Empire came as a protector of the Gulf, as most of Gulf States were called at that time British protectorates. For about one and a half centuries—from the early 1820s until about the 1970s—Great Britain was the dominant power in the Gulf region. The British controlled the major political and economic issues, as they needed to ensure the safety and stability of the trading paths through their colonies in India, the Gulf, and the Middle East.[41]In this way, the East India Company played a leading role in the formation of policies and economics in the region and had a huge influence—to the degree that it made a state within a state (the British Empire).[42]

After the British Navy won battles against the Qawasim, the dominant rulers of the region (now known as Al Sharjah and Ras Al Khaimah), and enforced an antipiracy treaty in 1820, the rest of the rulers in the region followed suit. The British Empire created a political position for the lower Gulf. It was first located on Qashim Island but was then was moved to Bushire; it was united with the political agent there to form a high British official position that was practically like the ruler of the Gulf region. He controlled and coordinated all activities in the region. Most the Gulf Arab states—Al Sharijah, Ras Al Khaimah, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, 'Ajman, Umm al-Qaiwain, Fujairah, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, and Kuwait—were part of Britain's Indian Empire. Great Britain controlled most oil concessions in the region, and no

concession could be issued unless it was approved by British officials. Therefore, the British could grant oil works to British companies. In 1947, the British political resident moved to Bahrain. Great Britain was responsible for the security and stability of the Gulf States, and even after the expansion of oil wealth among the Gulf States, Britain asked the Gulf people to invest their revenues in Britain.[43]

After World War II, the United States became the new patron of the region and took upon itself the duty to protect the Gulf States in return for a smooth oil supply to move the world economy. Thus, the third era is the US presence in the region after World War II. As a result, the United States has had a huge influence on the politics in the region. There have been some changes recently, but because of the importance of the US's role in the region and its continuous effect, this paper will discuss US role in detail when I mention Saudi–Iranian relations in the twentieth century. It is worth mentioning, however, that in modern times the Sunni–Shia competition is defined by the Saudi–Iranian rivalry.

In terms of the balance of power in the Gulf, the researcher will find that most of the available literature discussing the issue has concentrated on the period preceding major recent events in the region, such as the surprising events of the Arab Spring, the changes in US policy in relation to the Middle East, and the shift of the United States toward Asia (the so-called "pivot to Asia"). The emerging warm relationship between Iran and the United States regarding nuclear file negotiation was a dramatic modification to the way that strategic policy in the region has been since World War II. In the short space of time since this development, political authors have not had the chance to analyze the changes in the balance of power. In addition, the modifications in the Middle East are part of an ongoing process that continues to reshape the area, and we can see clearly that some countries' international borders have been dissolved, such as those of Syria and Iraq. Therefore, I tried in this research

to answer the question of how recent events have changed the doctrine of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to keep the status quo and the balance of power in their favor (versus Iran) and to maintain a peaceful state in the region. I have chosen to discuss this subject because it is vital to the rest of the world to be reassured about the global economy and the energy supply in the Gulf area, which contains almost half of the world's oil and gas reserves. The world, especially Asia, depends significantly on the Gulf region for its energy supply and as an important trade route to the rest of the world. Also, the Gulf region plays a significant role in international security, peace, and the war on terror; this is why this updated research has been significantly important for global policy making. The Gulf–Iranian conflict is considered by many authors to be similar to the Saudi–Iranian competition because both countries are responsible for mainly defining the intensity of the struggle. And traditionally, among political authors such as Steven Walt and Paul Aarts, neorealism theory has been used to explain politics in the Middle East, especially the Saudi–Iranian dispute[44]; therefore, from a neorealism prospective, I have tried to understand the effects of new developments, such as the Arab uprisings and US withdrawing from the region, on the balance of power there. I also tried to apply the features of neorealism to the competitors and their behavior in the international political system. I have used combined qualitative and quantitative research methods, including a literature review and interviews with experts in the field. I have also tried to use many scientific methods to measure the power of the two nations to ensure that I reach a high degree of objectivity in my analysis and conclusions. For example, I have utilized well-known equations to measure the power of nations and have used indicators from the international military research institutes, *United Nations* and *World Bank*,to compare several factors of hard and soft power, such as military assets, military spending, the *human development index*, and the *worldwide governance indicators*.

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. I began with this introduction as shown above, which provides a historical sequence of events for the past 1,400 years to show the background and the roots of the dispute. Then, in the first chapter I discuss the history of the Saudi–Iranian relationship from the twentieth century until the present, its stages, and the recent developments in the region. The second chapter contains the importance of the region for the rest of the world, especially as the main energy supplier for global energy demands, as well as the important role of the region in the war on terror. The third chapter discusses theoretical realism and neorealism and their explanations. The fourth chapter contains the application of neorealism to the competitors. The fifth chapter provides a definition of power, as well as equations to measure the power and balance of power among the region's nations; presents calculations; and compares the power of Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the United States, also the economic indicators and military assets of the Saudi Arabia and Iran, and then the sixth chapter discusses in detail the developments in the region, their effects on the external balance of power and the strategies of the Saudi Arabia and Iran in this dispute. Finally, I close with seventh chapter by drawing my conclusion.

# Chapter 1: History of the Region and Modern Events

## 1.1 Pre-Arab Spring History of the Rivalry between the Saudi Arabia and Iran

Throughout the history of the GCC (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, U.A.E., Qatar and Oman)–Iranian relationship, the main parameter has been the Saudi–Iranian relationship.[45] Therefore, the rest of the GCC refers to Saudi Arabia as the "Big or Grand Sister." [46]There are two important stages in the history of the Saudi–Iranian relationship: Stage one, which covered the period from the early twentieth century until the 1979 revolution, is called the pre-1979 revolution stage. The second stage covers the period from the 1979 revolution until the Arab Spring and is called the post-1979 revolution stage.

### 1.1.1 *Pre-1979 Revolution Stage*

Relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran began in 1928, when Habibullah Hoveyda was appointed the first ambassador. During the reign of Shah Reza Pahlavi from 1921 to 1941, Iranian passports bore the phrase "This allows the holder of the passport to visit all the countries except the Hijaz."(Hijaz is west region of Saudi Arabia) In 1929, then a treaty of friendship was established with Iran. In 1930 saw the opening of the Iranian Embassy in Jeddah, which involved only countries with minimal understanding of the issue of nonaggression. A Saudi delegation team was sent to Tehran to negotiate a treaty of friendship and proposed an alliance between the two countries, but the Iranian government rejected this proposal. Saudi King Abdulaziz made an effort to support relations with Iran and, in May

1932, sent his son, Prince Faisal, who was his deputy in the Hijaz, to be head of the official delegation to Tehran.[47]

After the marriage of the Shah Pahlavi of Iran with Princess Fawzia, the sister of King Farouk of Egypt, the Shah started liking the Arabs. That led to an improvement in the Iranian relations with Egypt and Saudi Arabia. In 1957, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi visited Saudi Arabia, including Mecca and Medina, in spite of secularism, which encouraged Mr.Omar Saqqaf (former Saudi minster of foreign affair) to visit Tehran. King Faisal rewarded Iran for its position by visiting Tehran in December 1967. The significance of the visit was that Iran regained its mind in the eyes of the Arabs.[48]The relationship of Saudi Arabia and Iran with great powers, especially the United States at that time, was known as the Twin Pillars Strategy (TPS). The United States had a strategic understanding with Riyadh on the one hand and Tehran on the other.[49] These understandings were to protect US interests and ensure stability in the region. However, the relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia was a bumpy one at times, such as when the shah refused the independence of Bahrain and kept Bahrain's seats in the Iranian parliament empty, which caused a sharp conflict between the two countries in 1968. This continued until Bahrain's independence in 1971.[50]The Saudi–Iranian relationship also experienced some tension in the 1970s because of the 1973 oil embargo by the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC), when Iran continued supplying Israel and South Africa with oil.[51]However, the relationship became smoother in 1975 when Saudi Arabia and Iran supported Pakistan in its war against India over the

Kashmir region. The two countries felt that the Western powers had betrayed Pakistan; therefore, they showed strong support of Pakistan.[52]

### 1.1.2 *Post-Iranian Revolution 1979 Stage*

The Iranian Revolution in 1979 and the fall of the shah, the new regime (Khomeini's regime) launched hostile statements against Saudi Arabia and the GCC, but what made the Gulf officials worried was Iran's intention to export its revolution (*new expansionist doctrine of Iran*) to the other side of the Gulf.[53]

#### 1.1.2.1 *1980–1988 Iran–Iraq War*

Iranians accused the GCC, especially Saudi Arabia, of supporting Iraq during the 1980–1988 Iran–Iraq War, an accusation that Saudi Arabia never publicly denied.[54]

#### 1.1.2.2 *1987 Incidents in Saudi Arabia*

During the Hajj season in 1987, a clash between Saudi security and Iranian pilgrims resulted in the death of 402 pilgrims, the majority of whom were Iranian. Angry protesters in Tehran attacked the Saudi Embassy and the Kuwaiti Embassy. A Saudi diplomat was killed due to severe wounds after he was thrown from an embassy window. As a result, the Saudi king cut diplomatic relations with Iran in 1988. Relations were resumed in 1991.[55]

#### 1.1.2.3 1997 *First Saudi Visit*

King Abdullah (the crown prince at that time) visited Iran for an Islamic summit in December 1997, which was the first time such a high-level Saudi official had visited Iran since the 1979 revolution.[56]Which refers to the relation improvement between Saudi Arabia and Iran

#### 1.1.2.4 *1999 Good Times*

The Saudi–Iranian relationship improved after the election of President Mohammad Khatami in 2001; this was considered by many to be the most stable period of political relations between the two nations to date. Then, the Iranian president visited Saudi Arabia for the first time since the Khomeini regime had taken over in Iran. Saudi Arabia and Iran even signed a security agreement.[57]

Saudi–Iranian rapprochement was significant during the late 1990s and Khatami's period. In 1999, trade exchange reached $150 million, while total investments in many projects reached $280 million. During the collapse in oil prices in the late 1990s, Saudi Arabia and Iran cooperated to stabilize the oil market. An Iranian cultural week was even held at King Fahad Cultural Center in Saudi Arabia.[58]This period can give a good example about the cooperation potential between the two countries if the political leaders agree especially with presence of moderate governments of Khatami who show less interest to do destabilizing actions in the region.

#### 1.1.2.5 *2003 after US invasion of Iraq*

After the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, the US administration brought in Shia groups to take over Iraq ruling. Saudis were upset that most of the new faces in the government were friends and allies of Iran, which increased its influence in Iraq.[59]

In 2006, Saudi Arabia accused Hezbollah, a militia group from Iran, of misadventure after the war with Israel, which caused huge infrastructure damage in Lebanon. Saudis were suspicious that Iran had used proxy war tactics to gain an influence in the region.[60]

One of the main reasons for tension between Saudi Arabia and Iran was the nuclear file. Saudis believed Iranians were expanding their nuclear capabilities because of military proposals to form nuclear weapons, which Iran denied. In 2008, King Abdullah told the United States to "cut off the head of the snake," referring to Iran.[61]

## 1.2 Recent Years: Major Changes in the Middle East

### 1.2.1 *Arab Uprisings*

In a discussion of the Arabian Gulf or the Middle East in general, it is necessary to specify the time period as either before or after the Arab uprisings (which are sometimes referred to as the "Arab Spring") because they were very important historical events that changed the shape of the Middle East. They affected all aspects of life in the region.[62]The Arab uprisings started on December 17, 2010, with the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia in protest of unfair treatment from the authorities. This sparked demonstrations throughout Tunisia.[63]President Bin Ali was forced to flee the country. Then, demonstrations spread throughout almost the entire northern African region to Egypt. Tahrir Square became a

symbol of the Egyptian Revolution, which removed President Hosni Mubarak from the presidency. The revolution then reached Libya and toppled the regime of the Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, who was killed by rebels.[64]It was like a snowball that kept getting bigger and bigger; the demonstrations and uprisings spread through many Arab countries. Unsurprisingly, the major causes of the uprisings were the same in many Arab states, including the economy, failure of the government, corruption, unemployment, and injustice.[65]The uprisings increased in intensity, especially in those countries that were suffering from suppression, severe corruption, and a brutal regime, such as Syria and Yemen. In Yemen, the revolution eliminated President Ali Saleh's regime, which had controlled the country for more than three decades, at least in thought.[66]Syria was the biggest human disaster in the Middle East; the Syrian Revolution opposed a very brutal regime that used the worst methods ever to suppress it. So far, after four years, Assad's regime has killed more than 200,000 people, the majority of whom have been civilians. Chemical weapons have been used frequently against them.[67]

During the Arab uprisings, Saudi Arabia and Iran maintained the same policy to protect their interests and allies, which caused confrontation in many places in the Middle East. Saudis supported the military against the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Egypt, while Iran had a good relationship with the MB.[68]In Syria, Iran helped Assad's regime, while the Saudis and Qatar helped the revolutionaries.[69]Bahrain is another place of confrontation, where the Saudis and some of GCC interfered with the government and Iran supported the Shias, who had a long relationship with Iran.[70]

### 1.2.2 *US Withdrawing from the Region*

Another major event that hit the region in recent years was the United States' withdrawing from the Gulf. For decades following the end of World War II, Gulf oil and a US military presence have coincided because of the huge demand for energy sources to support the worldwide industrial sector, especially for the biggest economy in the world, the United States, which made politicians and Pentagon officials to put the Arabian Gulf region at the top of their priorities to ensure the smooth movement of oil.[71]

This importance was confirmed after the oil shocks in the '70s, when the United States' vital need for oil from the Arabian Gulf became clear.[72] Consequently, the Jimmy Carter Doctrine was a strong commitment to stabilization of the region: "Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."[73]

The history of the US–Gulf oil relationship began when Franklin D. Roosevelt hosted King Abdul-Aziz of Saudi Arabia aboard the USS Quincy on Egypt's Great Bitter Lake in February 1945. The meeting strongly linked Middle Eastern oil with US national security. It also significantly helped form the twentieth century's one of the most important strategic relationship, in which the Saudis would supply cheap oil to global markets in exchange for US protection.[74]

But the situation has changed recently due to many factors, such as the shale oil revolution and the pivot to Asia.

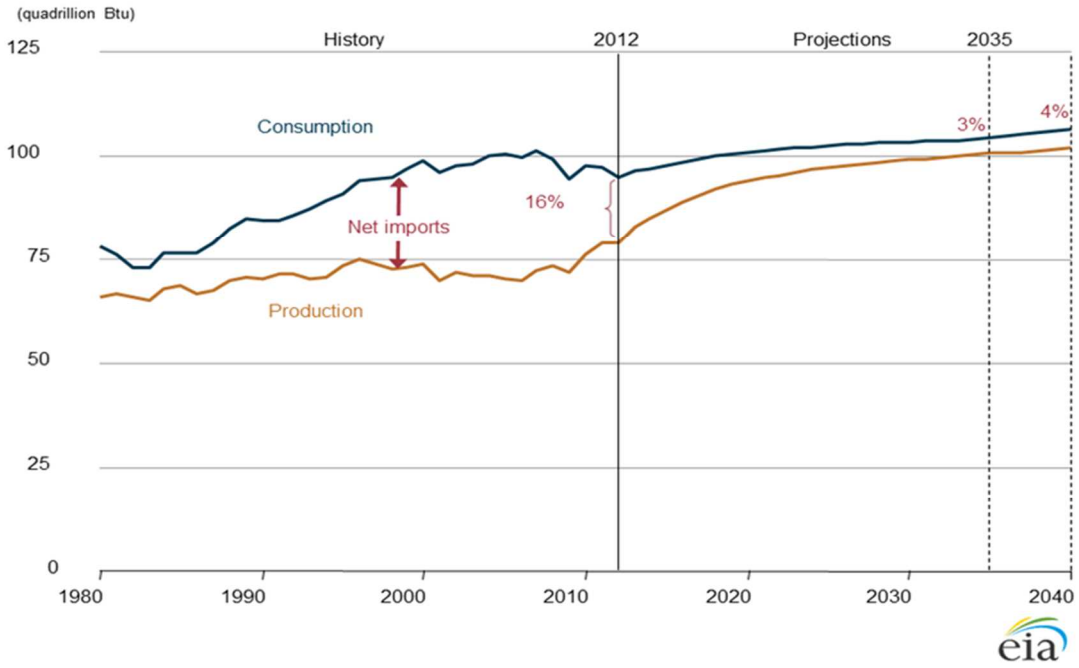
### 1.2.3 *The Shale Oil Revolution*

Despite the fact that the shale oil and gas revolution occurred mainly in the United States, its fallout reflected strongly in the Gulf region, making it a big event in the history of the Gulf as well.

Shale, which is also called kerogen, releases oil-like liquids when it is cracked (fracked) by high temperature, pressure, and chemical agents.[75] The expansion of the development of two techniques, called horizontal drilling and multistage hydraulic fracturing, was revolutionary.[76]

In 2004, shale oil production was insignificant and did not exceed a half-million barrels daily, but it accelerated from 2008 onward to reach about four million barrels per day in 2014–2015.[77]The Energy Information Administration (EIA) expected US production to rise by more than 600,000 barrels this year to reach 9.3 million per day in 2015. By 2016, it is expected to reach 9.5 million barrels daily.[78]US production of oil and associated liquids is expected to rise to 13.1 million barrels per day by 2019. EIA report indicated that the United States' production will plateau thereafter, but it will maintain its first-place rank for almost a decade before it will be lost in about 2030.[79]The EIA forecast showed that US importation will decline from 16% in 2012 to 3% by 2030. This small amount of product can be imported from more nearby resources, so if this forecast comes true, then the importance of the Arabian Gulf will diminish tremendously for the United States.[80]Please see figure 1 from the Energy Information Administration that showed the forecast of EIA of US energy imports in the future.

**Figure 1. EIA's forecast of U.S. energy imports**




Source: Energy Information Administration.[81]

This huge surge in production has renewed the old, sweet dream of politicians and energy decision makers that the United States will be energy independent soon[82] so that it no longer needs to be concerned about its supply of oil from unstable regions like the Middle East.

Tom Donilon, the US national security advisor, said, "the shale gas/tight oil or simply shale revolution has done more than boost economic activity and create jobs at home: it has increased government revenue, improved the country's trade balance, and reduced US

dependence on energy imports from politically unstable regions, thus also widening its room for diplomatic maneuver."[83]

### 1.2.4 *Pivot to Asia*

The Asia-Pacific region is home to 4.3 billion persons, which is about 60% of the human population on Earth. According to the World Bank, in 2013, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, Oceania, and the Pacific Rim produced a total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at purchasing power parity of $38.8 trillion.[84]The developing economies of East Asia saw a growth rate of 6.9% in 2014.[85] Therefore, the area is a large and important market for US interests. For example, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which is a trade agreement between some Asian and Pacific countries and the United States, generated a GDP of $11.9 trillion in 2012 among non-US TPP partners, and these countries have a population of about 478 million, which is larger than the US population.[86]

Since former Secretary of State Ms. Hillary Clinton's famous article "America's Pacific Century" was published in *Foreign Policy*, the concept of a pivot to Asia has become quite common in the discussions of political elites in the United States and the rest of the world.[87] Ms. Clinton stated, "Asia-Pacific has become a key driver of global politics, [and] it boasts almost half of the world's population. It includes many of the key engines of the global economy."[88] A simple definition of the pivot to Asia has been described by M. Schiavenza in *The Atlantic*: "The pivot is meant to be a strategic rebalancing of US interests from Europe and the Middle East toward East Asia."[89] The subhead of the article has a clear message: "The

future of politics will be decided in Asia, not Afghanistan or Iraq, and the United States will be right at the center of the action."[90]

No doubt the pivot to Asia is an important factor that reduces the significance of the Arabian Gulf to the United States, both by itself and as related to the shale revolution, which gives US the chance to look for their interests elsewhere, in this case in East Asia.

## Chapter 2: The Importance of the Region in Security Dimension

### 2.1 Energy Security and International Trading

Three of the world's top ten producers of oil are located on the Arabian Peninsula: Saudi Arabia (ranked first), the United Arab Emirates (UAE; seventh), and Kuwait (ninth). According to reserves data from the US Energy Information Agency (EIA) and country rankings from the Central Intelligence Agency, as of May 2013, Saudi Arabia had the largest proven oil reserves of any country in the world, with 267.91 billion barrels, or 18.17% of the world's total. Kuwait (104 billion barrels) and the UAE (97.8 billion barrels) followed with the sixth- and seventh-largest proven reserves, comprising 7.05% and 6.63% of the world's total, respectively. Iran has 154.58 billion (10.48%), and Iraq has 141.35 billion (9.59%).The region also has key natural gas producers, namely Qatar and Saudi Arabia. The British Petroleum (BP) Statistical Review of Energy for 2012 estimated that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states hold 20.4% of the world's gas reserves, compared with 15.9% for Iran and 1.7% for Iraq. Some estimate that the GCC also has 17% of the world's conventional gas reserves. Qatar and Saudi Arabia have the world's third- and fourth-largest gas reserves, with about 12–13% and 3.94% of the world's total, respectively. Saudi Arabia also has extensive mineral resources.[91]

The Gulf is located in the center of the old world, and it connects the three continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe. Roughly 35% of all oil is transported via ocean, and 20% of all internationally traded oil passes through the Strait of Hormuz, some 17 million barrels daily. According to the EIA, the Strait of Hormuz is by far the world's most important chokepoint

for oil trade.[92]In addition, 3.8 million barrels of oil pass through the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait per day.[93]More than 20,000 ships pass through every year, and just the goods going to and coming from Europe were estimated to be worth $952 billion in 2009.[94]The trade that passes through the Suez Canal represents 11% of global sea trade flow.[95]

## 2.2 The Importance of the Sunni-Shiite Relations and Five Issues of the Rivalry

Islam is the second most common religion in the world, and accounts show that 1.6 billion persons are following its rules; 90% of them are Sunni, and the rest are Shiite.[96]Sunnis and Shias exist in almost all countries in the world, either as citizens or immigrants. Therefore, any rift or rise in tension between Sunnis and Shias will affect global peace and stability.[97] In the modern era, the Sunni–Shia disparity is shaped by the Saudi–Iranian rivalry. As the sovereign power over Mecca and Medina, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia claims special status as a protector of Islam. But Shiite Iran is competing with it for leadership of the Muslim world.

Iranian–Saudi relations involve a mixture of politics and religion, especially following the Iranian/Islamic Revolution with its extreme religious identity (Shia Ithna).[98] There are five major issues or points to consider.The *first* is the point on sectarian religion, and the *second* is

related to competition for leadership in the Muslim world. The *third* issue is the relationship with the West, particularly with the United States, while the *fourth* is the oil within Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), by which I mean the policies on pricing and production quantities.The *fifth* is the Iranian nuclear program. In fact, the last issue is linked to the nature of developments related to the previous three issues, and usually if there is tension between the two countries on any issue, it will quickly cast a shadow on the file of oil and the first point.[99]

### 2.2.1 *Sectarian Religion*

There have been a range of developments, such as war between Iran and Iraq; the situation of Shias in the region, beginning with Lebanon and Iran's support for Hezbollah; the religious and political intervention in Iraq after 2003; and the Iranian role in the development movements in Bahrain and Syria in the context of the Arab Spring. Historically, the sectarian tension has its roots dating back to the criticism exchanged between Shias and the Wahhabi movement, which is not far from the political differences between the two countries in the competition to lead the Muslim world.[100]The leading of Islamic world is important because of its political, economic and influential benefits, the modern tension between Sunnis and Shias is reminiscent of a similar story of the competition between the Safavids and the Ottoman Empire.[101] The Safavids forced the people in Persia to convert to Shiism to ensure their loyalty, and they raised a sectarian dimension against the Ottoman Empire. Iran is doing the same; therefore, we can understand the Sunni–Shia tension as a *political tool* rather than a cause for competition. The evidence is that, throughout most eras of Islam, Shias and Sunnis

have lived together in peace unless politicians have made it otherwise.[102] Even in the same family, there can be both Sunni and Shia brothers. A good example of how Iran cares about political interests more than ideology is the cooperation between Al-Qaeda and Iran against the United States and Saudi Arabia despite their differences in ideology.[103] Sectarian tension also diminished significantly during Khatami's era because politicians willed it so.[104]

### 2.2.2 *Muslim World Leadership*

The second issue of the competition to lead the Islamic world is a contest of almost pure political interest; each party desires to be the leader because it will benefit politically, economically, and culturally. Saudi Arabia has the two most holy mosques; therefore, it is the most religious among the Islamic countries.[105] Although Iran heavily advertises Qom City as a holy city for Shiism,[106] the two most holy Shia sites—Karbala and Najaf—are located in Iraq, not in Iran.[107] This may partially explain the Iranian keenness to intervene in Iraq to gain more influence over the original holy cities for Shias.[108]

### 2.2.3 *Relations with the West*

As previously mentioned, relations with the West are one of the major issues of competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran, as Iran desires to be recognized as a power in the Middle East by the great powers. It lost the position it held during the shah's era after the 1979 Revolution and the unacceptable behavior of the Iranian government, such as the American hostage crisis, Iranian assassination operations in Europe, and attacks of oil tankers

in the Gulf.[109] Iran felt it was obvious that the international community supported the GCC, especially Saudi Arabia, to be the power in the region.

### 2.2.4 *The Competition in OPEC*

The fourth point is OPEC leadership and the policies regarding oil price and quantity. Saudi Arabia is the leader of OPEC, the most influential member, and the biggest producer; therefore, there is another issue of competition in the organization.[110] Saudi Arabia tends to adopt moderate policies that serve oil producers and consumers,[111] whereas Iran has a hawkish view and is looking for high prices because its production is small compared to Saudi Arabia's.[112] Saudi Arabia produces nine to ten million barrels per day, whereas Iran produces about three million;[113] therefore, any drop in prices will affect the Iranian budget, and Iran needs currently to raise prices to about $130 a barrel to balance its budget.[114]

### 2.2.5 *Iran's Nuclear Program*

The fifth issue is the nuclear file, which is very important for all parties in the region and internationally. Saudi Arabia believes that Iran is seeking nuclear weapons with the belief that this approach will provide invulnerability and the privilege of augmenting its leverage in the global political system.[115] In addition, some states, such as Iran, do not have the ability to compete through the conventional power race.

Nuclear deterrence is different from the conventional military race because in the nuclear race the price any country will pay if it tries to attack a competitor that also has

nuclear arms is higher than any state can tolerate; therefore, the balance line is fixed. In a conventional power race, the line is relative and not absolute; it moves according to changes in the power abilities of the states.[116] Hence, even limited nuclear military power would provide a state with deterrence against big nuclear powers and nonnuclear powers.[117] The Gulf States are worried about the possibility that Iran will possess nuclear arms, which will give Iran more influence in the region and decrease the ability of the international powers to contain the Iranian threat to the Saudi Arabia.[118] Therefore, the most important principles for Saudis regarding the P5+1 to meet their expectations and to be satisfactory are that the system of surveillance on the Iranian nuclear program should be very restrictive, without any gap that would give Iran the capability to produce nuclear bombs, and that there should not be concessions at the expense of the interest of the Gulf states.[119] Although the GCC, mainly Saudi Arabia has made it clear that the states of the region have the right to utilize nuclear power but for peaceful purposes only.[120] Finally, the frozen Iranian assets that will be relieved (more than $100 billion) should not be used to destabilize the region.[121]

The Iranian nuclear program as I mentioned is not only regional concern but it is an important international issue, which is why all the world powers (including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China, and Russia) plus Germany are deeply involved in this issue. They made the group called P5+1 to negotiate with Iran to ensure the peaceful purposes of its program and to prevent Iran from getting nuclear weapons.[122]The agreement between the P5+1 and Iran, which was reached after marathon rounds of negotiations, includes many

detailed conditions that restrict Iran from getting nuclear weapons. The summary of the agreements indicates several conditions, including the following:

(a) Iran must reduce its enriched uranium from 10,000 kg to 300 kg, and future Iranian uranium enrichment will be restricted to only 3.67% for fifteen years, which is enough to serve medical and electrical purposes.

(b) More than two-thirds of Iranian centrifuge machines must be stored, and Iran is allowed to use only 5,060 centrifuges out of the 19,000 it has now. In addition, only IR-1 centrifuges can be used and only in one place, the Natanz plant. This condition will continue for ten years.

(c) Iran must modify the Arak heavy water reactor to make it unable to produce platinum, which could be used for nuclear weapons. Also, Iran is prohibited from building any new heavy water plants for fifteen years. It must also implement an additional protocol agreement, which will continue in perpetuity for as long as Iran remains a party to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT).

(d) Iran must sign the additional protocol of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and must stay a member of the NPT.

(e) The IAEA will have comprehensive surveillance of Iranian nuclear facilities and activities.

(f) Iran must stop uranium enrichment in Fordow for fifteen years.

In return, Iran will gain the following:

(g) UN and European sanctions related to Iran nuclear activities will be relieved as soon as the IAEA gives the green light for the agreement's implementation. US sanctions related to Iran's nuclear program will also be relieved. It is estimated that more than $100 billion will be made available to Iran from its

frozen assets. Weapons sales sanctions will be relieved after five years, while the missiles sanctions will terminate after eight years.[123]

If we wish to discuss the Iranian nuclear program we should review the history of Iranian program but I wrote the section retrospectively, due to the importance of recent developments of the Iranian nuclear program and the agreement between P5+1 and Iran The Iranian nuclear program began in the 1950s; Iranian nuclear activities started on a small scale until the country received help from the United States, which in 1967 supplied Iran with a small 5MWt research reactor that used highly enriched uranium. The shah of Iran had big ambitions for nuclear power and was planning to have 23 Gigawatt electricity (GWE) by the 2000s; therefore, he formed a new organization to handle Iranian nuclear activities, called the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran. However, the Iranian Revolution, the isolation of Iran from the international community, and the Iraq–Iran War caused the nuclear program to slow down significantly. In the 1990s, the nuclear momentum was again accelerated by the Iranian regime, especially because it had more resources to spend after the end of the Iraq–Iran War. Iran sought help from Pakistan and China, and they signed cooperation agreements in 1987 and 1990, respectively. Russia also entered online and built the Bushire reactor.[124]

International suspicion about the nature of the Iranian nuclear program forced Iran to negotiate with the EU-3 (UK, France, and Germany) before referral to the UN Security Council. Iran agreed in 2003 to cooperate with the IAEA and to sign an additional protocol, but Iran continued to produce and use centrifuges to enrich uranium. Despite the Paris Agreement in 2004 and the promises to temporarily suspend sensitive nuclear activities, Iran continued to stock enriched uranium and centrifuges; therefore, it was placed under many

sanctions for its nuclear activities by the UN, the United States, and the European Union until Iran and the international community reached an agreement in 2015.[125]

### 2.3 The War on Terror and Iran's Relation to Terrorist Organizations

The region contains the bases of many terrorist organizations that are threatening world security and peace, such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula; the Houthis group in Yemen; Daesh in Iraq and Syria; and Hezbollah in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. Therefore, the stability of the region is an important factor in the war on terror.[126]

The relationship between Iran and terrorist organizations has a long, documented history and includes groups such as Hezbollah and Palestinian militant groups. It also includes Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), both of which are proud of their ties to Iran. For instance, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah considers himself a soldier of the Wilayat al Faqih (supreme leader of Iran).[127]

Iran is considered by many high-ranking officials in the US administration to be one of the biggest sponsors of terrorism in the world, mainly against US interests, and the evidence is "overwhelming," as described by Michael McConnell, the director of US national intelligence. Iran has even been labelled as a "central bank" of terrorism because of its activities in Iraq and Afghanistan.[128]

The cooperation between Iran and Al-Qaeda may look odd at first glance because of their different ideologies (extreme Shiism versus extreme Sunnism), but they worked out a way to put their differences aside, at least temporarily, to collaborate against the United

States, using the proverb, “The enemy of my enemy is my friend.” About 20 members of Osama bin Laden’s family lived in Iran, and high-ranking Al-Qaeda members moved freely through Iran with the knowledge of Iran’s authorities after US invasion of Afghanistan.[129]In fact, Al-Qaeda in Iraq after the US’s invasion received huge support from the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) for attacking US and Iraqi targets, according to the US Department of the Treasury.[130]

The report of the US Department of State on terrorism in 2010 mentioned clearly that “Iran remained the most active state sponsor of terrorism. Iran’s financial, material, and logistic support for terrorist and militant groups throughout the Middle East and Central Asia had a direct impact on international efforts to promote peace, threatened economic stability in the Gulf, and undermined the growth and democracy.”[131]

To discuss the long history of the relations between Iranian regime and terrorist activities we should go back to the era of eighties, which is after 1979 revolution, Iran had a prominent role in establishing Hezbollah in the 1980s, and the majority of the organization’s budget and weapons were provided by Iran. In return, Iran was given full control of Hezbollah’s political and military decisions.[132]

Iran has been linked to many terrorist attacks since the 1980s. Famously, a US Marines compound in Lebanon was attacked, which caused the death of 243 US Marines, making it the largest terrorist attack in the history of the United States in the twentieth century. In addition, French facilities in Lebanon were attacked, which resulted in 58 deaths. The United States accused Iran and Hezbollah of these attacks despite the fact that other

terrorist groups claimed responsibility.[133] Still, an Iranian official admitted that Iran helped the terrorist group, and Revolutionary Guard Commander Mohsen Rafiqdoust said, "Of course we helped. We don't know if our equipment was used in this operation. A foreign Army occupied Lebanon. So it was right to hit back with martyrs."[134]

On April 18, 1983, in Lebanon, an attack by a car loaded with explosives in front of the US Embassy in Beirut killed 36 US Embassy employees. On October 23 of the same year, another huge attack on Marine facilities killed 241 and wounded 81.[135] On December 12 of the same year, in Kuwait, al-Dawa Shia terrorists who had connections with Iran initiated a suicidal bombing attack against the United States, the French Embassy, US Raytheon employees, and the international airport; they also tried to assassinate Prince Jaber Al-Sabah (the prince of Kuwait), causing six deaths and wounding 80. The man behind these attacks was Imad Mughniyah, a high-ranking operative in Hezbollah.[136]

Hezbollah has a long history of hijacking airplanes, such as Kuwaiti Airlines Flight 221, onboard which two Americans were killed. Also, Hezbollah hijacked TWA Flight 847 and killed one American onboard. Hezbollah practices all types of terrorist attacks, and it is well known for hostage kidnappings, specifically during the period of the 1980s, when it started kidnapping Westerners, some of whom died under torture.[137]

Not only US and western governments were complaining of Iranian terrorist activities but Saudi Arabia has accused Iran of supporting terrorism in the Middle East, such as the Al-

Khobar Towers bombing, which caused high casualties among Americans in Saudi Arabia.[138] Also, Iran has been accused of creating camps in Lebanese and Iranian lands to train terrorists to wage deadly attacks in Bahrain and the eastern provinces of Saudi Arabia.[139]In addition, there is a public connection between the Iranian regime and the Houthi group in Yemen, which attacked Saudi Arabia's southern border in 2009. Then, in 2015, Houthi toppled the legitimate government and seized power in Yemen, which led to the start of the military operation Decisive Storm, mainly by Saudi Arabia and the UAE, to reinstate the legitimate president and government.[140]Iran has even helped Al-Qaeda members logistically, as Saif al-Adel (a senior Al-Qaeda operative) was working freely from his Iranian base to arrange terrorist attacks on Saudi Arabia in 2003.[141]

# Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

## 3.1 Research Question

Did Arab uprising events and the retreating of the United States from the region (due to shale oil revolution and pivot to Asia) alter the balance of power between the GCC (mainly Saudi Arabia) and Iran, which forced Saudi Arabia to adopt a more assertive neorealist doctrine?

To answer this question, I used combined qualitative and quantitative research methods, including both a literature review and interviews with experts in the field. I assumed that the withdrawal of the United States from the region and the developments of the Arab Spring did affect the balance of power in the Arabian Gulf, which has forced the GCC, especially Saudi Arabia, to shift to a more assertive neorealist doctrine to regain the status quo.

The Gulf states have shown discomfort about US officials' new concerns, which focus on Asian issues, putting the Gulf and Middle Eastern problems in a less important position on their agendas, which in turn gives Iran a wider field for maneuvering to get more influence in the region.[142]Similarly, Gulf elites are now worried about the implications of the rapid, unexpected US withdrawal from Iraq, keeping the place vacant for Iran, and the extensive US desire for rapprochement with Iran regarding Iraq's future and the nuclear file.[143]Furthermore, US rejection of the call to interfere in Syria has made the Gulf worried about the United States' future commitments to the region.[144]What has made the matter worse is the huge difference between most of the GCC and the United States in terms of their position toward

the Muslim Brotherhood (MB).[145]The GCC started doubting US policy in the region, and on several occasions it took the opposite position to US policy, sometimes even trying to undermine it.[146]Despite the rejection of some US officials that the idea is to retreat or withdraw from the Gulf region, the people of the Gulf region consider the nonengagement of the United States in the crises of the region as active withdrawal.

### 3.2 Neorealism Theory

Most well-known scholars in international relations who are interested in Middle Eastern regional politics believe that the region represents a good example of *neorealist theory* and that to understand the situation in the region we should refer to neorealist explanations.[147]Therefore, we should address neorealism, or structural realism, a theory of international relations created by Kenneth Waltz in his 1979 work *Theory of International Politics*.[148] It has become one of most dominant theories in international politics. But first, we should examine the history of realism and neorealism. The modern school of realism in international relations started in the first half of the twentieth century; Hans Morgenthau, who started to put realism in an academic frame, established six principles of *realism*:

1. World politics are defined and organized by laws. These laws are connected to *human nature*, which is the main root of politics and states' behavior. Also these laws can be used to establish a theory that explains state and society policies. Realists like Morgenthau believe that human nature is the cause of all disputes and conflict globally. Human nature can be explained by two elements: *human egoism*, which may

lead to competition for resources to ensure survival, and *human desire for power*, or human beings' wish to be above other people. Human selfishness is one example.

2. In realism, the interest has significance, and the concept of interest is defined in terms of power. Power is the main interest of politics and is infused in rational order; therefore, realism is unemotional and objective.

3. Despite power, the term realism is objective, and it can be generalized, but it is not fixed.

4. Realism is fully aware of the difference between moral values and real politics and the conflict that may occur between them.

5. Realism rejects the concept that moral values are at the core of policy making, and social morals at the interstate level can't be practiced at all times at the international level.

6. There is a huge difference between realism and other political schools regarding many issues, such as thoughts and norms.[149]

Realism underwent a lot of researches and analyses in the international relations field until the late 1970s, when neorealism emerged. Then, Kenneth Waltz introduced neorealism, describing it simply: "Neorealism holds that the nature of the international structure is defined by its ordering principle, anarchy, and by the distribution of capabilities (measured by the number of great powers within the international system)."[150]In this way, Waltz started an innovative revolution in realism. He believed the international system has three tiers: the ordering principle of the structure, the differentiation of actors in the system, and the distribution of capabilities among those actors.[151]

There are many differences between *classical realism* and *neorealism*:

a. The cause of conflict in the world is considered human nature in classical realism but the *anarchic system* in neorealism. Waltz came up with this concept for the structure of the system, which is an important element of his theory that makes it unique from others.

b. As for the causality of international politics and what leads to the outcomes at the international system, realism proposes state interactions, while neorealism identifies two dimensions: the state as actor and the structure of the system.

c. The primary actor, which is the state, is higher than the system in realism, whereas for neorealism it is below the system.

d. Regarding the unit (state), realism believes it responds to the general condition of anarchy according to the characteristics of each state, while neorealism sees anarchy as the structure of the system and believes all units are the same but that their interaction depends on their capabilities.

e. Realism posits that scarce resources lead to a power struggle among competitors, which is linked to human nature; neorealism thinks power is a means, not an end (combined capabilities of the state).

f. Realism distinguishes status quo powers from revisionist powers, whereas neorealism considers states as the acting powers of the system, which are the same except for their capabilities.

g. Neorealism takes a more scientific approach in explaining a state's behavior in the international system.[152]

Kenneth Waltz, as a neorealist, criticized *classical realist theory* on three points. First, realism depends on human nature as the root of politics, which means that it is difficult to test it empirically; therefore, no one can validate the theory. Second, human nature can't explain

variations or contrary statues such as war and peace in the same way, for example. Third, Waltz accused realists of reductionism; they try to explain everything by the sum of the parts, whereas we cannot, how to explain that there can be a trend in international politics while the actors change over time.[153]

What distinguished Waltz's theory from others is the concept of "the anarchic system." The international system is the power that draws the behavior of the states (unit actors), which accordingly affects their reactions to and relations with other states, instead of making the state domestic factors the source of policy making for state behavior in international politics. Although neorealists look to states as the primary actors, they are still under the influence of the international political system; naturally, each state has its own interests, which are sometimes inconsistent with other states, which thus may lead to military conflicts. In this anarchic system there is no higher authority that can rearrange the overlapping interests among the countries or forces of a peace state globally; therefore, each state tries to depend on itself and improve its capabilities to get good results in possible future disputes and to ensure its survival.[154]

## 3.3 Main Features of Neorealism

### 3.3.1 *The System*

The system is the predominant power that forces all actors (states) to respond and form their international behavior based on the system's pressure as it applies to them. Neorealists don't totally deny the effect of domestic factors on the particular foreign policy of a state, but they don't take this into account when explaining international politics; rather, they hold more

general views to explain the international relationships that depend mainly on the international anarchic system, and therefore, domestic factors don't have much influence. Furthermore, Kenneth Waltz adopted a scientific method for the system that could be relatively measured and intentionally ignored immeasurable variations such as state domestic factors. Waltz made it clear that neorealism doesn't predict foreign policy, but it can explain international politics. Even his book's title (*Theory of International Politics*) explains the behavior of the states in the system. In neorealism, there is one independent variable, which is the system and the distribution of power within it to measure the number of polarities (great powers). That may lead to creating a balance of power, with the actors inside the system imitating each other's advantageous methods.[155]

### 3.3.2 *Primary Actors*

The state is a unit actor in the system. The primary goal of a state in neorealism is survival,[156] and states will do all they need to do to reach this goal. Accordingly, they create policies and take actions to reach this objective. There is no trust between states regarding security and power issues; therefore, each state assumes that the surrounding world has unpleasant intentions for either the present or the future[157]

There are many definitions of a state among realists. Morgenthou stated, "A nation pursues foreign policy as a legal organization called a state, whose agents act as representatives of the nation in international affairs. They speak for it, negotiate treaties in its name, define its objectives, choose the means for achieving them, and try to maintain, increase, and demonstrate its power."[158] Stephen Kranser defined it as a "set of roles and

institutions [that] have peculiar drives, compulsions, and aims of their own that are separate and distinct from the interests of any particular societal group. These goals relate to general material objectives or ambitious ideological goals related to beliefs about the ordering of society."[159]

A state should look to adversaries' capabilities because distrust is dominant between states. If a state falls behind in its capabilities, these will cost it greatly, even maybe its existence.

### 3.3.3 *Anarchy*

In the international system there is no higher power that is dominant and legitimate enough to enforce rules among the states, and the internal policy rules and morals within states can't be applied to the global system. Therefore, the meaning of *anarchy* in the international realm is distinguished by the lack of a central authority.[160]Each state believes itself to be the highest authority. Because of a lack of central authority and the weakness and ineffectiveness of international institutes such as the UN, each country has to provide for its own interests and survival. The structure of the international system restricts cooperation between the actors in two ways, as "each of the units spends a portion of its effort, not in forwarding its own good, but in providing the means of protecting itself against others."[161] Not to mention the UN and other international institutes are not having a problem of inefficiency but also do not have enough power or laws to organize the international system.[162]

### 3.3.4 *Self-Help*

There is no world-wide police in the international system; accordingly, each state is responsible for its own safety, integrity, and sovereignty, and its major duty is to use all means to help itself.163 In the international system this means that when one state is exposed to aggression, it should take care of itself, and nobody else should help it. But some realists, such as Glaser, suggest cooperation as a means of self-help, which seems odd to offensive realists, who believe the cooperation is a bad idea.[164]

### 3.3.5 *Security Dilemma*

Neorealists believe the survival of a state is the primary goal, as mentioned before; therefore, states consider it their duty to expand their capabilities and power to counteract other competing powers. On the other hand, rival states will pursue the same behavior by maximizing their capabilities to protect their interests and engage in competition.[165] Distrust is dominant between the states in this anarchic system, which leads to a kind of *security dilemma*. Therefore, it is a continuous process and the duty of states to enhance their survival and augment their security, which will lead to their being more suspicious of other competing states.[166] Therefore "measures that enhance one state's security typically diminish that of others."[167] Thus, neorealists believe that the interaction of a state with other international systems is mainly based on security apprehension.[168]

### 3.3.6 *Polarity of the System*

I previously mentioned the distribution of capabilities and referred to the importance of great powers in the system. This leads us to the polarity of the system, which refers to the number of great powers that dominate it. If there is one great power, it is a unipolar system. If there are two great powers, it is a bipolar system. If there are more than two powers, it is a multipolar system. The most stable system is the bipolar one because it depends on an internal balance only; thus, there is no miscalculation and there is less conflict. On the other hand, a multipolar system can involve external balance and alliances, which make for a less stable system.[169]

## 3.4 Balance of Power

### *3.4.1 The Definition of Balance of Power*

The definition of *balance of power* is very controversial issue, and it has several definitions but it can be defined simply as a state of equilibrium in which no one state or alliance is dominant. There are three types: first, the balance of power as a situation; second, the balance of power as a policy; and third, the balance of power as a system.[170] Balance of power through policy means a state works actively to reach equilibrium. As a situation, it is equilibrium between the actors in the system. As a system, it refers to a particular understanding of the international relations process in the world.[171]

Normally states do not like hegemony; therefore, they try to counteract it, which means they try to prevent an actor or group of actors from concentrating capabilities such as material resources or their use to gain political advantage.[172] The balance of power concept is

popular among politicians as well as many academic scholars. Former US President Richard Nixon stated, “We must remember the only time in the history of the world that we have had any extended periods of peace is when there has been balance of power ... I think it will be a safer world and a better world if we have a strong, healthy United States, Europe, Soviet Union, China, Japan, each balancing the other, not playing one against the other, an even balance.”[173]

### 3.4.2 *The Deterrence*

If we discuss the balance of power we should also discuss *the deterrence* for many reasons, such as the fact that the deterrence goes back to the historical root of realism and neorealism. Additionally, the deterrence, balance of power and neorealism are connected in the thoughts of international relations scholars[174]. Also, in our case in the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the deterrence is a very important concept, as I will discuss later. And to get to know more on subject, I will start with a simple definition of deterrence,which “is the manipulation of an adversary’s estimation of the cost–benefit calculation of taking a given action. By reducing prospective benefits or increasing prospective costs (or both), one can convince the adversary to avoid taking an action. ”[175] The neorealists see the balance of power as the most effective way to keep the order in the international system which is required as long as the power equally distributed among the actor, it will keep peace status, therefore it is the equation of profit, cost and loss which will determine the deterrence. John Mearshmier put it as ``power inequalities invite war by increasing the potential for successful aggression; hence war is minimized when inequalities are least."[176]

There are two types of deterrence, first direct deterrence which is preventing armed attack on the state territory. Second, extended deterrence which prevent armed attack on another state territories. [177]

It is important for discussing the concept of balancer of power to mention the two major elements of the balance of power: internal balance and external balance.

### 3.4.3*Internal Balance*

Internal balance depends on self-force factors and internal capabilities, such as gross domestic product (GDP), population, land, natural resources, military power, economic strength, competence, and political stability. The existence of strong internal balance factors such as these enables a state to defend its interest in the anarchic system.[178]

### 3.4.4*External Balance*

External power depends on external alliances. It includes the ability to partner with other states and cooperate with them against common threats.[179] It involves attracting other state actors in the system to form an axis, either by diplomacy or economic interests, to counteract a common danger, which is usually another state or group of states in the system. Credibility and diplomacy are important tools of soft power in external balance, along with how the other actors in the system look at a state. This has a clear effect in the Iranian case, as the United States and Europe view Iran suspiciously because of its behavior and support of terrorism and the instability in the Middle East, which was the second reason they tended to

the GCC,[180] the first being economic interest between the GCC and the international community.

There are many options for balancing power, either by depending on domestic capabilities or facing threats or alliances with external powers. In the balance of power associated with external power, there are four states:

1. There is no need to ally with external powers; therefore, the state depends on its internal balance against other states.
2. Small states come together to balance big states.
3. Big state allies with small state against other big states.
4. A small state jumps on a bandwagon with a bigger state.

States prefer the first option and find the last one the least appealing.[181]

### 3.4.5 *Strategies for Balance of Power*

There are many techniques or strategies to keep the balance in the system, but two relate most to the subject of this study. The first is *passing thebuck*, which is when a state gives the mission of the balance of power and protection of security to other states to avoid the duty of containing a threat.[182] In the present case, the balance of power and status quo are in favor of the GCC because the United States is on its side. It is worth mentioning that the United States has willingly taken on this mission for decades to protect its interests in the region, which are mainly those of the international energy supply.[183]

The second is *chain ganging*, which is when a group of states gathers to form an alliance against a particular threat.[184] This is one of the main policies of the GCC in

confronting Iran; one of the main reasons behind the creation of the GCC was to counter the Iranian menace and its influence on the Gulf States.[185]

The existence of strong internal balance factors, such as military strength and a strong economy, enables states to defend their interests in the anarchic system, but it is important for states to have both the capabilities of power and the strategy for how to use it in a proper way to obtain preferable results.[186]

When facing an external threat, a state has three strategies of internal balance from which to select, according its circumstances: It can continue in the same way, with no change in the elements of internal balance, such as military power, resources, or policies; it can adopt an *innovation*, a "conscious, purposeful effort by one state to offset the perceived relative power advantage of another state by the creation of entirely new institutions, technologies, or governing practices;"[187] or it can emulate the "conscious, purposeful imitation, in full or in part, by one state of any institution, technology, or governing practice of another state."[188]

### 3.4.6*Major Schools of Neorealism*

There are two major scholarly lines in neorealism. The first is *defensive neorealism*, in which a state's goal is to keep its position in the system stable—in a survival position, in other words—and it will not risk more power and hegemony, which could cause a security threat. This is Waltz's school of survival.[189]

The second trend is *offensive realism*, in which a state makes it its goal to increase its influence in the system, even at the expense of other states. Here the state is looking for hegemony on the grounds that the augmentation of power will lead to survival. Therefore,

power is the ultimate end of the people who support this trend, such as Mearsheimer.[190]Therefore, the discussion between neorealists regarding a state's behavior in the system is how to classify the state, as either security oriented or power oriented.[191]

### 3.4.7 *Other Independent Variables for Measuring Power Changes*

We mentioned before in this chapter that neorealism doesn't account the domestic factor variables because it is unmeasurable, and this is one of important principles of the neorealism and as we put neorealism the main core theory in this research therefore we should stick to the rules, by not including unmeasurable domestic variable, that being said, we added two independent variables that are measurable numerically, to see the alteration of power and the effect of major changes in the Middle East such Arab Uprisings and US withdrawal on *internal balance* of Saudi Arabia and Iran as well as these two variables we selected are reflecting many of Kenneth Waltz's elements of power such as economic capabilities and political stability and competence. These independent variables are the Human Development Index (HDI) and Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) and both are well recognized internationally and created by independent institutes, UN and World Bank respectively. The HDI focuses on three basic areas: a *healthy and long life*, such as indicated by life expectancy at birth; the standard of living, such as indicated by *gross national income per capita*; and *knowledge*, such as indicated by mean years of schooling for adults aged 25 years and expected years of schooling for children of school-entering age.[192]While WGI focuses on *political stability and absence of violence/terrorism, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, voice and accountability, rule of law, and control of corruption*.[193]

## Chapter 4: The application of the framework in the region

### 4.1 Neorealism perspective among the Competitors in the Region

According to the neorealist framework in the case of the Saudi Arabia–Iran rivalry, both are *competing to lead the Islamic world* and both have religious influences, so they are trying to augment *their hegemony i*n the region.[194] Historically, Iran and Saudi Arabia have felt *distrust* toward each other. Iran (historically the Safavid Empire) showed hostility toward its Arab neighbors, including Iraq and the GCC.[195] The tension increased following the revolution era when Khomeini demanded that the corrupt governments in the region be toppled, referring to Iraq and the GCC.[196] Furthermore, geographical competition also occurs in the same region, such as is the case with Iran and Saudi Arabia,[197] not to mention that the region has geographical importance for the rest of the world.[198] Both countries have been *affected by global politics* and interact with the *international political system* according to their interests and capabilities, such as in the old case of the Cold War of the United States and the USSR, recently leadership over the oil supply,[199] and policies toward recent events, like the Arab uprisings and the Iranian nuclear file.

The concept of *anarchy in the Iranian mentality* is shown by two major events. The first was the invasion of Iraq by the United States without the UN's permission, which suggested that there was no higher power that could force a superpower like the United States to follow international law.[200] The second event was the international sanctions on the Iranian regime. Despite there being some UN resolutions to legalize those sanctions, Iran says they

are not fair, claiming that the sanctions were applied under the influence of the United States in the Security Council of the United Nations.[201]

Regarding *survival and security*, both countries are looking to bolster their security. Almost always, the main determinants of their foreign policies are security and threats, and their international behavior is in response to a security equation; therefore, survival is the ultimate goal for both.[202] On the issue of *self-help*, Iran has been acting to assert Iranian sovereignty and security against foreign challenges. Iran has been somewhat isolated from the international community because of the aggressive behavior of its regime and its support of terrorism globally.[203] Therefore, Iran feels it has no real superpower alliances in the international community; even though it has good relations with Russia and China, neither would challenge the United States for Iran's sake.[204] As a result, Iranians depend on their internal capabilities and internal balance more than external balance. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia has good international connections and a good reputation, in addition to significant economic weight.[205] Therefore, Saudis depend on both *external and internal balance*, and especially with the presence of the United States in the region, they have tended more toward external balance, at least in the last few decades. Therefore the balance of power for Saudi Arabia and Iran is a policy, both are actively seeking for it (the balance) and trying to shift in their favor.

It is worth mentioning that many scholars have discussed the competition of ideologies (Saudi Sunniism versus Iranian Shiism). Stephen Walt referred to the importance of ideology in the Middle East because it is used as an effective tool in disputation and the

balance of power.[206] But the RAND study suggested that "sectarianism and ideology shape relations, but do not define them."[207]

The apparent difference in the neorealist views of each country is that Saudi Arabia tends to engage in more *defensive neorealism* and is looking to keep the status quo for its advantage, while Iran prefers *offensive neorealism* and hegemony and wishes to change the status quo.[208]

Saudi Arabia has the United States on its side, whereas Iran does not; therefore, Saudi Arabia has both internal and external balance in its favor in conventional power. Iran is trying to use many tools to implement unconventional strategies, including religion (Sunni–Shia tension), as was used before by the Safavids against the Ottoman Empire to keep the region busy with sectarian tension.[209]

It is important to mention that both countries have major differences that are playing an important role in their competition and policies: regime principles. Iran is an *expansionist state*, and this is clear and public; one of the roots of the Iran Revolution was the exportation of revolution to neighbor states. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia has, as one of the principles of royal leadership, *a noninterference policy* in other states. This inconsistency in policies contributes to the confrontation between Saudi Arabia and Iran, as the first wants to keep the status quo while the second wants to change it.

We mentioned before that Iran has used unconventional strategy in their international politics which the sectarian issue, also Iran prefers the unconventional strategy in military policy, one of the main principles of Iranian military and foreign policy doctrine is asymmetric warfare[210] for two important reasons: First, Iran can't compete with the United

States or Saudi Arabia in conventional military power because both of them have more advanced military assets than Iran; second, Iran can't access the international arms market because of sanctions.[211] In addition, asymmetric warfare is cheaper than conventional warfare, which fits Iran's low budget, and it doesn't require high technology.[212]

### 4.2 New Deterrencein the Region

The GCC has used to apply the strategy of *passing the buck* to deal with Iran in last few decades, which gives the mission of Gulf security to US to protect the Gulf States and in same time US interests from the expansionist ambitions of Iran. US has taken this mission seriously and had a constant presence with their forces in the region for decades. US stressed that the protection of energy supply is vital for them and the world economy as we mentioned before. Therefore the *extended deterrence* was the dominant in the region which was provided by US as superpower and huge forces it has,although after the shale oil revolution which accelerated in 2008 and reach high amount of production after, the importance of region has been diminished in the eyes of US officials.

The Gulf States wanted an active US presence in the area, and what the GCC means by this is practical, efficient intervention in the crisis. It is true that the United States has kept some of its forces in the region, but there are some signs of reduction. For example, the Gulf will be left without US aircraft carriers for first time in seven years (usually there have been two air carriers or at least one in the past years to deter Iran).[213] US troops number in the region reduced significantly from its peak 2007 and 2008 which was above one hundred sixty thousands solders to about forty thousand currently although US withdrawal from Iraq

decreased the number but still it is major reduction, and it is seventy five percent less.[214] Even though there are smaller US forces in the region, unless they are effective and are engaging energetically in the region's crises, this is considered by the GCC as US withdrawing. Therefore the Saudis started looking for their own *direct deterrence* (huge surge in military spending), and with the rest of GCC and even adding more Arab states, they are trying to make new *chain ganging* that leads to new form of extended deterrence without US, in an attempt to compensate the US extended deterrence.

### 4.3 The New Saudi Arabian Doctrine

After the retreat of the United States from the region and secretive negotiations between the United States and Iran, Gulf politicians became so upset by US behavior that they publicly criticized the Obama Administration. For example, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, former chief of Saudi intelligence told European diplomats that "the United States had failed to act effectively against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. In addition, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict was growing closer to Tehran, and the US had failed to back Saudi support for Bahrain when it crushed an anti-government revolt in 2011."[215]Also in same context "The shift away from the US is a major one, the source close to Saudi policy said. Saudi doesn't wish to find itself any longer in a situation where it is dependent," Reuters said. With unusually blunt public remarks, Prince Turki al-Faisal called Obama's policies in Syria lamentable and ridiculed a US–Russian deal to eliminate Assad's chemical weapons. He suggested it was a ruse to let Obama avoid military action in Syria.[216] The current charade of international control over Bashar's chemical arsenal would be funny if it were not so blatantly perfidious and designed not only to give Mr. Obama an opportunity to back down (from

military strikes), but also to help Assad to butcher his people, said Prince Turki, a member of the Saudi royal family and former director of Saudi intelligence.[217]

In the last two decades the Iranian nuclear file was one of the main concerns of the GCC, mainly Saudi Arabia, which augmented the tension between the two shores of the Gulf. Saudis think that Iran is aspiring to develop nuclear weapons to increase its influence in the region and to become the superpower of the Middle East. This is why Saudi Arabia considers an Iranian nuclear bomb to be an existential threat.[218]

Saudi Arabia is very upset about Iranian influence in the region and attempts to become the Middle Eastern superpower. Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf bin Abdulaziz, the Saudi ambassador to the United Kingdom, told the *Times of London*, "We are not going to sit idly by and receive a threat there and not think seriously how we can best defend our country and our region."[219] From the speeches of many high-up Saudi officials, we can see that Saudi Arabia is moving toward a more assertive (offensive) neorealist doctrine of increasing security independence from the United States and augmenting self-help to improve its internal balance capabilities and reducing dependence on external balance powers in the Gulf.

## Chapter 5: Analysis of Economic and Military Power of Saudi Arabia and Iran

### 5.1 The Power and the Calculation of Balance of Power

The definition of *power* in international relations is very controversial; it is not surprising, as Hans J. Morgenthau mentioned, that the concept of political power poses one of the most difficult and controversial problems of political science.[220] It can be stated simply that power is the ability to influence or control the behavior of others.[221] Kenneth Waltz briefly defined power in international relations in terms of the distribution of capabilities.[222] Morgenthau, in his effort to search for the most proper concept of national power, said, "Power may comprise anything which establishes and maintains the control of man over man…Thus power covers all social relationships which serve that end, from physical violence to the most subtle psychological ties by which one mind controls another."[223] This is a comprehensive definition that includes more indicators than economy, geography, and military capabilities, as other realist scholars have mentioned.

Regarding type of power from a realist perspective, there are three types. The first is the ability to influence, which means the ability to get others to act in a manner that adds to the interests of the owner of the power. The second is the active participation in important decision making in the community. The third type involves people trying to combine the former two types, which means that the owner of the power directs a particular person or a particular group to raise particular political issues.[224]

After the power has been defined, I should refer to the concept of *balance of power*, is not a rigid process but rather a changing and evolving one. The process involves dynamic

variables of related parties that work mutually to maintain positions and interests that reflect their capacities and capabilities and those of other states.[225] It is also a process in which capacity changes continuously among parties seeking to restore the balance of power, and the concept of the balance of power is multidimensional in terms of capacity beyond the concept of military balance; therefore, the balance of power includes the addition of economic, human, and political dimensions of capacity.[226]

*Measurement of national power* is another controversial issue among political scholars. According to Jeffery Hart, there are three approaches for measuring power in global politics: source control, actor control, and outcome and result control.[227]

Throughout the history of political science, many definitions have been suggested to describe and to measure national power. For example, Karl Deutsch, Norman Alcock, and Alan Newcombe used military spending as a measurement of a state's power, while Klaus Knorr used an economic parameter for power measurement, and still Hitch and McKean used a country's total output.[228] It is interesting to note that these former scholars used a single indicator to measure power, but Clifford German started to use a more comprehensive equation to measure national power, which is known as the *world power index*:

$$G = \text{national power} = N\,(L + P + I + M)$$

Where N is nuclear capability, L is land, P is population, I is the industrial base, and M is military size.[229]

A popular multivariant equation for national power is *Cline's formula*:

$$\text{National power} = (C + E + M)\,(S + W)$$

Where C is critical mass (including population and territory), E is economic capacity, M is military capacity, S is the national strategy coefficient, and W is national will.[230]

Additionally, ***Chin-Lung Chang*** described three models to measure power:

*Model 1*: Power = Nations GNP / World Total x 200

*Model 2*: Power = (Critical Mass+ Economic Strength + Military Strength) / 3

Where Critical Mass = (Is Population / World Total) x 100 + (Is Area / World Total) x 100; Economic Strength = (Is GNP / World Total) x 200; and Military Strength = (Is ME / world total) x 200.

*Model 3*: Power = Model 2 x (IS Energy / World Average)

Where GNP = gross national product, Area = total area, ME = military spending, Energy = energy consumption per capita.[231]

In this study I have used Chang's models to measure the national power of the Saudi Arabia, Iran and US because it is multivariate, comprehensive, numeric and easy to define.

Therefore, *Model 1 for Saudi Power* = 1546 / 75590 x 200 = 4.090.

*Model 1 for Iranian power* = 1209 / 75590 x 200 = 3.198

*Model 2 for Saudi power* = ((30 / 7000) x 100 + (2.149 / 510) x 100 + 4.090 + (80 / 1756) x 200)) / 3 =

= (0.428 + 0.421+ 4.090 + 9.111) /3 = 4.683

*Model 2 for Iranian power* = ((77.45 / 7000) x 100 + (1.648 /510) x 100 + 3.198 + (30 /1756) x 200)) / 3=

(1.106 + 0.323 + 3.198 + 3.416) / 3 = 2.681

*Model 3 for Saudi power* = 4.683 x (681/ 313) = 9.42

While *Model 3 for Iranian power* = 2.681 x (305 / 313) = 2.61.

The gross national income of Saudi Arabia = $1,546 (World Bank 2013); area of Saudi Arabia = 2.149 million square kilometers (the World Fact Book); total area of Earth = 510 km square; Saudi population = 30 million (*Statista* 2014); world population = 7000 million (*United Nations*, World Population October 2011); military spending of Saudi Arabia = $80 billion USD (*"Sipri Military Expenditure Database." Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Sipri). 2015.*), Total Military Spending 2015 Fact Sheet for 2014); world military expenditure = $1,756 billion (*Stockholm International Peace Research Institute* 2012); energy consumption per capita of Saudi Arabia = 681 watts per person (*Central Intelligence Agency* 2012); and energy consumption per capita average = 313 (CIA, US Department of Energy, and other sources 2014).

The gross national income of Iran = $1,209 (*World Bank* 2013); area of Iran = 1.648 million km square; population = 77.45 million (*World Bank* 2013); military spending of Iran = $30 billion USD (Obama's interview, *New York Times*, *Politifact*, April 2015); and energy consumption per capita of Iran = 305 watts per person (CIA 2013).

We have to add US measurements because they are the basis of the power in Gulf security and calculations of the balance of power in the region. Thus, for the United States:

*US Model 1* = (16990/75590) x 200 = 44.95

*US Model 2* = ((318.9 / 7000) x 100 + (9.857 / 510) x 100 + 44.95 + 610 /1756)x 200) / 3= (4.55 + 1.93 + 44.95 + 69.47) / 3 = 40.3

*US Model 3* = 40.3 x (1683 / 303) = 223.84

The US gross national income = $16,990 (World Bank 2013); area of the United States = 9.857 million km square; population of the United States = 318.9 million; military spending of the United States = 610 USD (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Total Military Spending 2015 Fact Sheet for 2014); and energy consumption per capita = 1683 watts per person (US Department of Energy 2014).

From the results above, we can see that there is no huge difference between the national powers of Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United States before the Arab uprisings (2010) or after the Arab uprisings (2014), but there is a clear difference after US withdrawal from the region.

**Table 1.1. The powers in the region pre- & post-Arab uprisings in Model 1 & 2**

| Country | Model 1(2010) | Model 1(2014) | Model 2(2010) | Model 2(2014) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Saudi Arabia | 4.01 | 4.09 | 3.57 | 4.68 |
| Iran | 3.21 | 3.19 | 2.72 | 2.68 |
| US | 48.7 | 44.95 | 47.14 | 40.3 |

Source: Alshammary modified, according to Chang's Models, GNI of Iran, IMF (2010); GNI Saudi & U.S., *World Bank* (2010); World Military Spending, *International Peace Research Institute* (*Sipri*) (2010).

**Table 1.2. The balance of the power in the region with and without the US**

| Country | Nation Power Model 1 | Nation Power Model 2 | Nation Power Model 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Saudi Arabia + US | 4.09+44.95=49.04 | 4.68+40.3= 44.98 | 9.42+223.8=233.2 |
| Saudi Arabia after US withdrawal | 4.09 | 4.68 | 9.42 |
| Iran | 3.19 | 2.68 | 2.61 |

Source: Alshammary modified, according to Chang's Models

All three models lead to the same result, which is that Saudi Arabia has more national power than Iran does.

According to Morgenthau, military force is the most important material aspect of nation power, and according to RAND, the most *important parameter for power is military*

*spending*; therefore, we will compare the military spending of the military powers in the region.[232]

**Table 2.[233] Annual military spending between 2006 and 2012 (Saudi Arabia versus Iran)**

| Country/Year | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Saudi Arabia | 45.1 | 48.5 | 52.5 | 63 | 80 |
| Iran | 27.2 | 26.3 | 23.9 | unknown | 30 |

Notice: Numbers are in Billion U.S. dollar.

Source: Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Gulf Military Balance: Vol. 2* (Washington, DC: CSIS, 2013) and ***Sipri*** 2015, and Obama 2015.

### 5.2 Economic and Competence Measures

In his definition of power, Kenneth Waltz mentioned seven elements of power: "size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence."[234] I will try to use objective measurements to represent each element. Therefore, I selected the *Worldwide Governance Indicators* (WGIs) and *Human Development Index* (HDI) because they are objective measurements from independent institutes such as the World Bank and UN respectively. In addition, both (WGIs & the HDI) reflect many elements of Waltz's power elements. Specifically, the HDI reflects economic status and population, while WGIs reflect many economic capabilities, political stability, and competence. Furthermore, I added military forces data and military spending as the best indicators for military capabilities because military power is still the most important element

of a nation's power, according to Rand, though it is worth mentioning that Waltz didn't give specific percentages for each element.

### 5.2.1 *Human Development Index*

The HDI for Saudi Arabia according to HumanDevelopment Report(HDR) 2010 was 0.752 while in HDR 2014 was 0.836 and, it occupied the thirty-fourth position globally(it was fifty-five in HDR 2010) with consideration, that HDR mainly estimates a year before. The HDI for Iran in HDR 2010was 0.702 ( ranking seventy globally)while in HDR 2014 Iran was 0.749, ranking seventy-fifth among 187 countries in HDI classification.[235]

### 5.2.2 *Worldwide Governance Indicators*

The WGIs measure **six dimensions**: *political stability and absence of violence/terrorism, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, voice and accountability, rule of law, and control of corruption*. The indicators take into account several hundred individual underlying variables from a wide range of data sources. They contain the views of a large number of citizens and expert survey respondents worldwide.[236]

From the comparison of worldwide governance indicators we can see that Saudi Arabia in general has better indicator values than Iran for all World Bank indicators. For details of the comparison between Saudi Arabia and Iran regarding WGI, please see figures 3-11.

**Table 3. Comparing K. Waltz's elements of power between Saudi Arabia and Iran between 2010-2014**

| Country | Population | Territory | GDP | GDI (six indicators) | HDI | Military Spending |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Saudi Arabia | Lower | Bigger | Higher | Higher | Higher | Higher |
| Iran | Higher | Smaller | Lower | Lower | Lower | Lower |

Source: Alshammary modified,according to the information of *World Bank*, UN, IMF and "Sipri Military Expenditure Database." *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Sipri)*. 2015.

## 5.3Military Power of Saudi Arabia and Iran

**Table 4.1. Saudi Arabian basic military data**

| | |
|---|---|
| Population | 28.83 million |
| Territory | 2,149,690 km2 |
| Gross Domestic Product (GDP) | 748.4 billion USD |

Source: *World Bank* 2013.

| | |
|---|---|
| Personnel, Army (Regular) | 214500 |
| Number of Brigades | 23 |
| Tanks | 1120 |
| Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs)/ Armored Fighting Vehicles (AFVs) | 4645 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Artillery (Including Multiple Rocket Launchers [MRLs]) | 900 |
| Combat Aircraft | 340 |
| Transport Aircraft | 62 |
| Helicopters | 255 |
| Heavy SAM Batteries | 21 |
| Medium SAM | 21 |
| Navy | & |
| Combat Vessels | 27 |
| Patrol Craft | 68 |

Source: Yiftah Shapir, "Military Balance Files, Saudi Arabia", *The Institute for National Security Studies*, 2014).

**Table 4.2. Iranian basic military data**

| | |
|---|---|
| Population | 77.45 million |
| Territory | 1,648,372 km2 |
| Gross Domestic Product (GDP) | 368.9 billion USD |

Source: *World Bank* 2013.

| | |
|---|---|
| Personnel, Army (Regular) | 520000 |
| Number of Brigades | 87 |
| Tanks | 1620 |
| Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs)/ Armored Fighting Vehicles (AFVs) | 1400 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Artillery (Including Multiple Rocket Launchers [MRLs]) | 3000 |
| Combat Aircraft | 320 |
| Transport Aircraft | 129 |
| Helicopters | 570 |
| Heavy SAM Batteries | 30 |
| Medium SAM | 6 |
| Navy | |
| Combat Vessels | 110 |
| Patrol Craft | 150 |
| Submarines | 18 |

Source: Yiftah Shapir,"Military Balance Files, Iran", *The Institute for National Security Studies*, 2013).

For detailsof the military comparison between Saudi Arabia and Iran, please see ***tables 5.1, 5.2 and figures 3-24***.

**(p.70:deleted due to personal information)**

# Chapter 6: Analysis of External Power

## 6.1 Recent Developments in the Region

Saudi Arabia and Iran entered a new stage following recent events in the Middle East, such as the Arab uprisings and US retreating from the region. The position of the Saudi Arabia and GCC in general on the Arab uprisings were inconsistent; it did not encourage them in Egypt and Tunisia,[237] but it intervened militarily in Libya to topple Gaddafi's regime.[238] In addition, it played an important role in Yemen through what was called the GCC Initiative, which drew the transitional phase in Yemen.[239] Finally, it was active in supporting the Syrian Revolution and the Free Syrian Army.[240] At the same time, Iran reacted to the Arab uprisings according to its interests.

I will start with Egypt is very important player in the region and has a strong army that is considered one of the five most powerful militaries in the Middle East.[241] It was a very close ally to the Gulf States, but after the Egyptian uprisings, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) took over. Historically, the Egyptian MB has had good relations with Iran but not a lot of harmony with the GCC, which has disturbed the external balance of power.[242] This may explain the active role of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in the counterrevolution, which brought Egypt back to military rule,[243] not to mention the mistakes the Muslim Brotherhood made during its rule, which made it unpopular among the Egyptian

population.[244] Hence, the outcome of the two Egyptian uprisings was the restoration of the external balance of power in favor of the GCC.

Another country that was hit by Arab uprisings was Libya. Gaddafi's regime had bad relations with the GCC, especially Saudi Arabia, as it had tried to assassinate the previous King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the collapse of the Gaddafi regime was a positive point for the GCC;[245] two members of the GCC—the UAE and Qatar—played active roles in the military campaigns against Gaddafi's forces.[246]

In Syria, the confrontation between the GCC and Iran is very obvious and public.[247] The Syrian regime is considered one of the most important allies of Iran in the region, and there are military, intelligence, and logistical links between Iran and Hezbollah,[248] a Lebanese organization under the control of the Iranian regime.[249] After the Syrian uprisings, Iran tried extensively to support its ally, Assad's regime, but the revolution was overwhelming. The GCC, especially Saudi Arabia and Qatar, supported the moderate opposition to the Free Syrian Army (FSA) logistically, financially, and in the form of military aid. This became a proxy war between the GCC and Iran in Syria;[250] Turkey also supported some groups of the Syrian opposition. The GCC and Turkey had different purposes for intervening in Syria: The Gulf was looking to counteract the Iranian influence in Syria, while Turkey, a neighbor of Syria, wished to increase its regional leverage in its own backyard.[251] On the other hand, Iran sent troops and even ordered Hezbollah to interfere in the Syrian War. Iran also recruited many Shia organizations and groups from Iraq and Afghanistan to fight with Assad's

regime,[252] inviting extremist groups such as Al-Qaeda to become involved in this conflict by releasing several leaders from Syrian jails. This may have led the extremist groups to weaken the moderate opposition parties.[253] But the outcome so far has been in favor of the opposition; Assad's regime became weak, and Hezbollah suffered a large number of casualties.[254] Furthermore, Assad's regime now controls only about a sixth of Syrian land.[255]

In Iraq, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), or Daesh, controls a large area of the country, as well as more than 30% of Syria.[256] Daesh poses a threat to Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Daesh has weakened the Iraqi government, which was a good ally to Iran. Surprisingly, Daesh has not waged any direct attack on Iran, but it has claimed many attacks on Saudi mosques.[257] Hence, I consider Daesh negative for both the GCC and Iran.

In Yemen, which is considered the backyard of Saudi Arabia, the GCC interfered through its initiative to shape the transitional political process in Yemen to remove ex-President Saleh peacefully from his position and create a newly elected government. The intervention of Iran through the Houthis group with help from Saleh's loyalists led to a military coup and the expulsion of the legitimate government. Then, the GCC interfered militarily (in OperationDecisive Storm), which I will discuss later in this chapter when I address the steps that were taken by the GCC to demonstrate a more assertive neorealist doctrine.[258]

In general, if we calculate the final outcomes of the Arab uprisings in terms of the balance of power in the Gulf region, we find that the uprising in Egypt was positive for the GCC; the uprising in Libya—although it did not affect the balance impressively—was

positive for the GCC; and the uprising in Syria clearly benefitted the GCC by weakening Iran's biggest ally in the region. In Iraq, the GCC has not benefited because Daesh is an enemy to both the Iraqi government and Saudi Arabia. In Yemen, the GCC has not benefited because the country is divided between the Houthis and the government in Aden, which is supported by the GCC. [259]Therefore, the total result of the Arab uprisings is in favor of the GCC. But if we compare the balance of power before and after the Arab uprisings, we will notice that Egypt, for example, was an ally to the GCC, and so the Gulf simply restored its ally. Yemen was also an ally of the GCC, but the old regime and the Houthis became enemies; therefore, we can't jump to the conclusion that the GCC has benefited from the Arab uprisings in terms of the balance of power until we see the final results in Syria, Yemen.

Seeking objectivity to measure the balance of power and the value of each state in the balance of power, I selected military spending as the gauge. The *average military spending* for the sum of five Arab affected by uprisings states *before the Arab Uprisings* is **2126** million $; therefore, the weight of each state is their own military spending on $2,126. While in the era of *post- Arab Uprisings, the average* of yearly military spending increased to **2619** million $ in 2014.

**Table 6.1 External balance and allies of Gulf powers Pre-Arab Uprisings**

| **Country allies** | **Tunisia** | **Egypt** | **Libya** | **Yemen** | **Syria** | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Saudi Arabia | 0.28+ | 2.16+ | 0.62- | 0.81+ | 1.11- | 1.52+ |
| Iran | 0.28- | 2.16- | 0.62+ | 0.81- | 1.11+ | 1.52- |

**Table 6.2 External balance and allies of Gulf powers Post-Arab Uprisings**

| **Country Allies** | **Tunisia** | **Egypt** | **Libya** | **Yemen** | **Syria** | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Saudi Arabia | 0 | 1.89+ | 1.44+ | 0 | 0 | 3+ |
| Iran | 0 | 1.89- | 1.44- | 0 | 0 | 3- |

Notice: (+) means an ally, (-) means non-ally and (0) means indeterminate.

Source: Alshammary, modified from military spending, According to the information of *Sipri*.

Another major development in the Gulf was the US withdrawal from the region. For decades, the United States was a major pillar of security in the Arabian Gulf, but US allies in the Gulf were uncomfortable with the ideas of some US politicians who said that the region did not hold as much importance to the US agenda as it had before. This gave Iran the chance to fill the United States' void in the Middle East. As a result, the GCC tried to take a more active role in its own security efforts.[260] Although some US officials deny military withdrawal from the region, the GCC viewed US disengagement in the region, mainly in the recent military conflicts, as withdrawing. Additionally, the United States has rejected invitations to participate in Syria in order to remove Assad's regime, and in Yemen, the United States only provided minimal logistical support for the Arab coalition.

In recent years, US oil production has increased significantly, which has reduced US dependence on the energy supply from the Middle East. The GCC found itself in a critical situation, as the power (i.e., the United States) that had been maintaining stability in the Gulf region for decades and acting as a counterbalance to Iran left after these changes in US priorities.[261]

Furthermore, the concept of the pivot to Asia became popular among politicians and decision makers in the United States, and they, along with the United States' tight military budget, did not allow the Pentagon to have large forces in both Asia and the

Gulf.[262]Therefore, the Gulf states have to be more self-dependent and more involved in the security process, which has led to the self-help concept of neorealism. Before we consider the concept of anarchy in the eyes of the Gulf and Iran, I want to review two major events mentioned earlier: the invasion of Iraq without UN authorization and the UN sanctions against Iran. As a result of these, the Iranian regime believes there is no higher formal authority that can fairly deal with Iran, while the Gulf States believe that, if the United States has no more interest in the region, nobody will care whether Iran attacks the sovereignty of the GCC. Regarding self-help, both competitors (Saudi Arabia and Iran) have found themselves in the position of needing to be more dependent on self-power and their capabilities to protect their existence. Regarding internal balance, the military and economic capabilities of the GCC are much higher than those of Iran; for example, the UAE's air forces could destroy Iran's old air forces in several hours.[263] Therefore, Iran tries to compensate for its weakness in conventional power through asymmetric warfare, which is considered one of the fundamentals of Iranian military doctrine.[264]

It is important to mention that security is responsible for drawing Iranian behavior toward other states more than ideology or economy; otherwise, there is no good explanation for Iran to cooperate with Al-Qaeda, which has a totally conflicting ideology, or for Iran to occupy UAE islands when Dubai is the most important trade partner in the region.[265]

Gulf rulers in the past used techniques to keep the balance of power or status quo in Iran, including chain ganging, which was the idea behind creating the GCC. They also used passing the buck effectively, either by supporting Saddam during the Iraq–Iran war or by letting the United States take the major role in Gulf security arrangements.[266]

Recently, however, Saudi Arabia techniques to keep the balance of power with Iran have caused it to adopt an assertive (offensive) and a determinedly neorealist doctrine to maintain the status quo in the region.[267] For example, it took steps to develop its military capabilities and hiked its military spending dramatically in recent years[268] (the best single indicator of military power is one's defense budget). It also tried to change the map of alliances in the Middle East by forming a pan-Arab force and creating a new coalition, including the GCC plus Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, and Sudan, which played a role in Operation Decisive Storm in Yemen (*new chain ganging*) in confronting Iranian expansion in the Arab world.[269]

Thus, the GCC, in order to ensure some kind of self-defense ability and independence from the United States, started to spend more on arms deals. For example, Gulf oil producers pumped nearly $130 billion into the military sector in 2012 as they pushed ahead with a drive to bolster their defense, according to Western data.[270]

In addition, the GCC will have a new force of 100,000 members. "There will be a unified command of around 100,000 members, God willing. I hope it will happen soon, and the National Guard is ready for anything that is asked of it," Prince Miteb, the minister of the Saudi National Guard, was quoted as saying by the Saudi Press Agency.[271]

The GCC has also planned to launch a joint military command.[272] In addition, the Gulf is planning to establish an advanced and strong antiballistic missile shield to protect the GCC from Iranian missiles.[273] The Gulf has become more active in security and military issues in the region; a good example was Operation Decisive Storm in Yemen to defuse the threat of

the pro-Iranian group Houthis, as well as its active contribution and discussion in the formation of the new pan-Arab forces.[274]

### 6.2 Operation Decisive Storm

Yemen is one of the poorest Arab countries; is closest to the richest countries in the region, including the GCC; and shares a long border with Saudi Arabia and Oman.[275] This is why the GCC interfered in the crisis and created what is called the Gulf Initiative to solve the Yemen crisis, especially to protect its borders. There are also active branches of Al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula, so the stability of Yemen is an important factor in the war on terror. In addition, Yemen has a strategic location known as Bab-el-Mandeb, which is a strait located between Yemen and Djibouti and one of the most important routes for international trade.[276]

After ex-President Saleh of Yemen was toppled and his regime collapsed in the Yemen uprisings, the transitional period passed to his vice president, Mansur Hadi. A presidential election was conducted, and Hadi became the president of Yemen. But Saleh was not happy about losing power after more than three decades of rule, so he made an alliance with the Houthi group, the ex-enemy of the Saleh regime, to destroy the democratic process in Yemen. At the same time, the Houthi group, which was backed by Iran, received encouragement from Iran to take over Yemen. The influence of Saleh on the Yemen Army and the Republican Guard was so strong that the Houthi group was able to take Yemeni cities one by one through military force, finally taking Sana'a. The Yemen Army didn't fight back after the intervention of the Saleh group.[277]

The Houthi group put legitimate President Hadi and his prime minister under house arrest. It infiltrated the governmental organizations and ministries and started to move south to occupy the rest of Yemen. President Hadi escaped from Sana'a, moved to Aden, and made it temporarily to the capital, but the Houthi and Saleh groups followed him and started to attack Aden, therefore Saudi Arabia and the GCC (except for Oman), as well as some other Arab countries, such as Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Sudan, created a coalition (*new chain ganging*) that started a military airstrike called Operation Decisive Storm on the night of March 25, 2015, to protect legitimacy in Yemen and to bring different Yemeni parties back to the political process.[278]

Hundreds of air fighters of new Arab coalition started the campaign to strike Houthis and ex-president Saleh's loyalists. It is worth mentioning that Sudan had previously had a good relationship with Iran, and its joining the new alliance was considered a strong blow to Iranian policy in the region.[279] It was the first time in decades that Sunni Arab states took the initiative to strike and counteract the influence of Iran in the Arab world.[280]

**Table 7. Military spending in 2014 for the countries are participating in Decisive Storm of the two coalitions.**

| Arab coalition | Military spending |
|---|---|
| Saudi Arabia | 80 billon $ |
| U.A.E. | 22755 million $ |
| Bahrian | 1433 million $ |
| Qatar | 1913 millions |
| Kuwait | 5666 million $ |
| Egypt | 4961 million $ |
| Jordan | 1268 million $ |
| Morocco | 4055 million $ |
| Sudan | 2377 million $ |
| Total | 124428 million $ |
| **Iranian coalition** | |
| Iran | 30 billion $ |
| Houthi+ ex- president | 1715 million $ |
| Total | 31715 million $ |

Source: "Sipri Military Expenditure Database." *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Sipri)*. 2015.

### 6.3 The Pan-Arab Force

The Arab League agreed to create a joint military force to counter extremism and political instability across the Middle East at a meeting in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, on March 29, 2015.[281]

The joint force is scheduled to include more than 40,000 troops beyond the size of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)'s rapid reaction forces.[282] It is likely to consist of 500 to 1,000 soldiers from the air forces of the participating countries, 3,000 to 5,000 navy personnel, and about 35,000 ground forces.[283] The ground troops of the joint force, which will

be under the leadership of the commander from Saudi Arabia, will be divided into three sections: special operations forces, rapid intervention forces, and rescue operations forces.[284]

Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Morocco, Jordan, and Sudan have confirmed their contributions. These countries have become convinced that Iran is seeking further expansion in the region after its success in reaching a tentative agreement with Western nations over its nuclear program. Matthew Hedges (an expert in the region) said, "The birth of the joint Arab force came as a result of the lack of confidence of the Arab countries in their traditional allies."[285]It is a chain-ganging strategy to counteract external threats.

### 6.4 Strategies of the Competitor for Balance of Power and Deterrence

When I applied the three models (multivariants) to measure the nation power of Saudi Arabia and Iran, I looked for objective methods to compare the power of each party. As we can see from the results (Model 1: Saudi Arabia = 4.09, Iran = 3.198; Model 2: Saudi Arabia = 4.683, Iran = 2,681; Model 3: Saudi Arabia = 9.42, Iran = 2.61), all of the models confirmed that the national power of Saudi Arabia is larger than that of Iran. Therefore, Iran is trying to compete in two ways: First, it is pursuing asymmetric warfare because conventional national power is not in its favor; yet, asymmetric warfare is cheaper and does not follow the rules of conventional conflicts that depend on national power. Second, it is trying to reduce the effect of the United States on the balance of power in the Gulf via the negotiations over its nuclear program and influence in the Middle East. I mentioned previously when I explained balance of power that it is divided into internal and external types; the external type depends on alliances, and it is known that the United States is the biggest ally of the GCC. Thus, Iran is trying to remove the United States from the equation for the balance of power.[286]

Regarding the first Iranian strategy, there are many examples of asymmetric warfare involving Iran, but the most important is its support of violent, nonstate actors, such as Hezbollah and Houthi, to attack the interests of the GCC inside and outside the region. It also trained extremist Shia groups in the Gulf, such as in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia.[287] Another strategy for Iran to compensate for its weakness in conventional military technology is the development of the Iranian ballistic missile program. Iran has tried for years to expand its ballistic missile arsenal, copying and developing techniques from North Korean missiles.[288] It has problems with the accuracy and the guidance of missiles, however, which makes them strategically useless.[289] Therefore, Iran depends on quantity over quality, attacking with a high number of missiles (saturation attacks) to overwhelm the GCC air defense systems.[290]

The same strategy is used by Iran in a different field as well: its navy. Iran depends on swarm attack boats, which are fast, small, low-tech boats that can accumulate in large groups to attack one big naval vessel.[291] It also has a large number of small, midget submarines.[292] Iran hopes that these strategies will give it some kind of self-help advantage to survive and maximize its power in the international system.

Regarding the second Iranian strategy, which is the reduction of US effect on the region, in the multivariant equations shown above, Saudi Arabia has more national power than Iran, which raises the following question: *Why does the GCC need the United States in the region?* The explanation is twofold. The first *deterrence*, the presence of US power plus Saudi power in the region, is equal to more than ten times the Iranian power, as calculated before, which gives *extended deterrence*. The second point is that Iran can wage attacks on

the Gulf even if it knows it is weaker in conventional power because Iranians believe they have the ability to tolerate higher causalities and economic losses than the Gulf States.[293]Michael Eisenstadt described it as Iranian Iran high threshold of pain or insensitive to lost[294], Iran believes that it has higher threshold of pain as country than Saudis Therefore, even if the Gulf States win, they cannot tolerate smaller causalities like Iran can. This behavior was clear in the Iran–Iraq War, when Iran used the technique of human waves, despite its very high human cost.[295] Iran lost one million people, while Iraq only lost about a quarter to a third of this number.[296] However, there is no land connection between Iran and the Gulf; therefore, there is no application for human waves in a potential dispute, and this may explain why Iran has concentrated on the southern part of Iraq and has increased its influence: It will give Iran a land connection to the Gulf.[297] But if we add the national power of the Gulf States, mainly Saudi Arabia, and the US power together, they would cause huge and rapid destruction and very high causalities for Iran that even its high capacity for causalities could not tolerate. Thus, the presence of the United States in the region is considered a huge deterrence to any uncalculated venture of Iran toward the Gulf.

To counteract the Iranian plan, the GCC moved in two ways, first by increasing military expenditures and expanding military capabilities, and second by reshaping the map of alliances in the Middle East. A good example was the creation of new pan-Arab forces and taking the lead, as was seen in Operation Decisive Storm. It is important to note that the Saudi Arabia is taking initiative to protect its interests (offensive doctrine) is a significant development which refers to the change in the attitude. Part of Cline's formula to measure

national power is national will (W), and the Saudi Arabia's will was shown clearly in Operation Decisive Storm and the pan-Arab forces.

Another important step showing the new assertiveness of Gulf policy is the oil-price war; the GCC plans to keep America dependent on Middle Eastern oil, which, accordingly, will maintain protection for the region.[298] The Gulf has counteracted shale oil producers by reducing the price of oil to such a degree that many shale oil companies cannot afford to extract it.[299] As is known to oil experts, shale oil is expensive to produce compared to oil in the Gulf region.[300] Therefore, OPEC, which is controlled by Saudi Arabia, refused to decrease its production to defend the price.[301] Saudi Arabia has changed its policy dramatically from defending the price to defending the market share, which means the biggest loser of the price war is shale oil. Only the most efficient producers can survive. As a result, oil prices plummeted by more than 50% over a few months,[302] making it difficult for US shale oil companies to compete. Furthermore, it is difficult for banks to give loans for further drilling, and it is just a matter of time before many shale oil companies leave the market, which will give the GCC back the leading role in oil policy.[303]It is obvious that the drop in the oil price will affect the GCC because they depend mainly on oil their governmental budgets but they have huge foreign reserves that were accumulated during past period of high oil price which gives GCC the flexibility to survive in low petroleum price for a while until the shale oil companies collapse. This will keep the United States dependent on Gulf oil, which will lead in turn to keeping the United States in the region to defend its interests. Gulf States is requesting effective US role in the region, and the GCC want to see US is involving in Middle East affairs and problems and seeking actively the solutions.Even if US keeps some forces in the

region, it is not assuring unless they are engaging in the region's crises, otherwise it is US withdrawing in the eyes of Gulf officials.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

I conclude that the answer to my research question is yes**,** developments in the Middle East, such as the *Arab uprisings and US withdrawing from the Gulf region* due to shale oil revolution and pivot to Asia(reduction of extended deterrence of US), have forced Saudi Arabia, to adopt *new*, more *assertive (offensive)* neorealist policies and more self-dependent political actions to counteract Iran. After the recent major developments and its sequences,(indirect effects of Arab Uprisings and shale revolution) GCC (mainly Saudi Arabia) has taken several steps to enforce its military forces, which have been shown by the huge surge in military spending and massive arms deals (*internal balance*) that the GCC signed to upgrade its military capabilities as well as the establishment of an integrated ballistic missiles shield to protect the Gulf from Iranian missiles.

On the other side, Iran has tried to reduce the US effects in the region by signing the nuclear agreement*(external balance* ), which will open a channel between the United States and Iran to discuss the political issues of the Middle East and will unfreeze tremendous amounts of Iranian money that will enrich the its economy (*internal balance* ). As a result, Iran will be able to use some of this money to augment its own military spending to support its asymmetric warfare, mainly through proxy wars in the Middle East, and in later stages, Iran will be able to access the international weapons market after the sanctions are lifted. Despite the United States' rejection of claims that it is withdrawing from the region because of the rebalance of a pivot to Asia and the shale oil revolution, it is obvious that the United States has not interfered in the major current crises to hit the area, such as the Syrian War, or has only minimally interfered, such as in the war in Yemen. Alternatively, in recent years, Saudi Arabia has taken the lead in many crises in the region without dependence on US forces (e.g., the Pan-Arab forces and Operation Decisive Storm (*new chain ganging*), which

included many Arab states and was a significant development in the Arab world (*external balance*)). Furthermore, Arabs, mainly in Gulf States, are, for the first time in decades, taking responsibility for regional security without US help. These developments have clearly shown the new changes in the Gulf's political behavior and attitude in attempts to regain the balance of power in the region and keep the status quo. The confrontation between the Saudi Arabia and Iran has become semidirect and hostile in many places, such as Syria and Yemen in an unprecedented way. And not to mention international circumstances and new players in the international stage due to the weakness of the United States globally, which will lead to the emergence of *Russia and China*, which, in turn, will lead to a *multipolar system*. As mentioned before, a multipolar system is the least stable system in international politics; therefore, the levels and the nature of the conflicts in the region are expected to become more aggressive and more complicated.

To discuss the present nature of the dispute, we need to review the past. As I discussed in the beginning of this research, the roots of the dispute are very old and constitute part of the culture and civilization of both parties. If we add the sectarian factor, we should not expect any kind of truce or reconciliation soon. The Gulf region has throughout history been afflicted with conflict over power, resources, and ideologies, and this stage in history is not exceptional,[304] especially with the new Saudi Arabian assertive doctrine (offensive) to keep the status quo in its favor, and the existence of Iran as a theocratic regime with a desire for expansion. Khomeini's revolution made it clear that the expansionist desire is one of the regime's main principles, and it is difficult for whoever is leading Iran to change Khomeini commandments. Furthermore, Iran has recently made Saudi Arabia its number one enemy—instead of the United States and/or Israel—especially since the beginning of warmer relations

with the United States following the nuclear agreement.[305] It is worth mentioning that the Iranian regime depends on hardliners and conservatives for its survival because they make up the majority of its supporters, and this type of supporter needs potential enemies with a different ideology to that of Iran and its revolutionary beliefs. In this case, the enemy is Saudi Arabia. The confrontation between the expansionist and status quo states is a classical dispute from a realist prospective and will continue unless major changes occur in either of the competitors or if they modify their behavior. The balance of power in the Gulf region has traditionally been managed through a conventional balance of power policy, but the retreating of the United States from the region has changed the variables of the policy, which has changed the *struggle from one of expansionist behavior versus the status quo to offensive behavior versus offensive behavior.* It is true that the current administration in the White House considers the nuclear agreement with Iran an achievement, but at the same time, it has increased the intensity of the dispute between Saudi Arabia and Iran. US administration knows that most of the work will be on the shoulders of the next American administration, since Obama's administration is in its final stretch; therefore, any Iranian breach of the agreement will be left to the next US government to deal with, which is not convenient assurance for the Gulf States. As a result, Saudi Arabia has tried to make a new sort of deterrence, as we know one of the main element of Balance of power is deterrence.[306]And Saudis believe it will ensure the safety of Saudis and GCC and will protect their interests, As Paul Huth mentioned in his definition of deterrence, is a type of threat to convince other not do or initiation some kind of action,[307] and in our case in this paper means the provocative Iranian action from toward Saudis, taking in consideration principle of Iran revolution is the expansion (export of revolution) to other country and on the other hand Saudis look for keep

sovereignty and integration of GCC. Therefore Saudi Arabia is attempting actively to shape this deterrence. To form the reliable deterrence, state should have two important factors, first, the capabilities such as military or political power and second, the ability to use this capabilities such as the will for implementation of threat.[308] Saudis work hard recently on the capabilities as this research showed for the cause of huge rising in military spending last several years, and they showed the will during last year by interfering in Yemen war to actively to protect their interest. Furthermore deterrence it can be further divided into three categories, type one which direct attack deterrence ,type two which prevent the opponent from starting very provocative act and type three deterrence, 'tit-for-tat deterrence' makes the opponent is afraid of getting no profit due to the reaction of the deterrent such responding by limited military action.[309] In Saudi-Iranian case, the deterrence that Saudis are looking for includes mainly type two and type three deterrence and for sure type one is must although it is uncommon to occur. Beside this to explore more in details of deterrence form that Saudi is seeking for, this will lead us to other classification of deterrence that was put by Nigel Morgan, the general deterrence and immediate deterrence. While General deterrence describe the relation between the adversaries in usual competing circumstances that keep status of no conflict (no-action) between the parties while the immediate deterrence is describing the situation when there is high likely attempt of attack from the opponent while other party launching threat to prevent it.[310]For Saudis they want to keep general deterrence as the norm in their relation with current Iranian leaders while the latter deterrence is the exception but is needed in case of rapid deterioration of the relation or in case of crisis. Saudi Arabia is attempting by creating the Arab coalition will pose some kind of deterrence, Saudis showed great enthusiasm to invite the GCC and other Arab states to create pan-Arab forces and to

engage in Operation Decisive Storm. Though this does not compare to the extended deterrence of the United States, at least the sum of military spending for GCC and other Arab states will be huge. Also, it fills the gap in one of Waltz's elements of power, which is population. As we know, Iran has a larger population than Saudi Arabia, but the sum of the Arab states population is participating in Decisive Storm is higher than Iran. Therefore, I can see from the events that there are obvious changes in the *power*and the *attitude* of Saudi Arabia. There has been a change of power in terms of military capabilities, internal and external, and a change of attitude in terms of offensive doctrine. However, in the Iranian case, it is expected that the Iranian regime will improve its capabilities after accessing money from previously frozen assets and will continue to compete with Saudi Arabia. It is worth mentioning that despite the newly assertive Saudi Arabian doctrine, the GCC is not one unified body in its policy in terms of how to deal with Iran; Oman is often an exception, and the Yemen War is a good example, as Omanis have refused to join the rest of the GCC in Decisive Storm. It is important to consider that the end results of the Syrian and Yemeni wars will be vital for both parties (external balance) and will reform the balance of power in the Gulf region in favor of either the GCC or Iran. However, the competition, according to current indicators, seems heated. Although the traditional policy of the balance of power is expected to continue, the main equation of politics in the region will remain as it has been in the past.[311]

## Notes

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## Tables

**Table 5.1. Saudi land forces equipment.**

| | Military Products in Service | Quantity |
|---|---|---|
| | 155 GCT (Self-propelled howitzer) | 50 |
| | Al Fahd AF-40-8 (Wheeled armored personnel carrier) | 100 |
| | AML (Reconnaissance Vehicle) | 235 |
| | AMX-10P (Infantry fighting vehicle) | 570 |
| | AMX-30 (Armored vehicle-launched bridge) | 12 |
| | AMX-30 CET (Main battle tank) | 51 |
| | AMX-30 S (Main battle tank) | 572 |
| | AMX-30D (Repair and recovery vehicle) | 57 |
| | ARAVIS (Tactical vehicle) | 73 |
| | Astros-2 (Multiple rocket launcher) | 60 |
| | BMP-3 (Infantry fighting vehicle) | 238 |
| | BMR (Wheeled armored personnel carrier) | 140 |
| | BMR-2 / BMR-600 (Wheeled armored personnel carrier) | 140 |
| | Bradley M2/M3 (Infantry fighting vehicle) | 400 |
| | CAESAR (Self-propelled gun) | 132 |
| | COBRA (Wheeled armored personnel carrier) | 98 |
| | Dragon (Anti-tank guided missile launcher) | 100 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | EE-11 URUTU (Wheeled armored personnel carrier) | 20 |
| | FGM-148 Javelin (Anti-tank guided missile launcher) | 100 |
| | FH70 (Towed howitzer) | 72 |
| | HOT (Anti-tank guided missile launcher) | 50 |
| | LAV III Kodiak (Wheeled armored personnel carrier) | 1130 |
| | LAV-150 (Modernization of the vehicle) | 1100 |
| | LAV-150 Commando (Reconnaissance Vehicle) | 1100 |
| | LAV-25 Coyote (Reconnaissance Vehicle) | 352 |
| | M-114 (Towed howitzer) | 50 |
| | M101 (Howitzer) | 100 |
| | M102 (Towed howitzer) | 48 |
| | M109A1 (Self-propelled howitzer) | 280 |
| | M113A3 (Tracked armored personnel carrier) | 1700 |
| | M198 (Howitzer) | 90 |
| | M1A2 Abrams (Main battle tank) | 400 |
| | M3 (Wheeled armored personnel carrier) | 150 |
| | M60A3 (Modernization of the vehicle) | 460 |
| | M901 (Self-propelled guided missile system) | 335 |
| | Piranha 8x8 (Wheeled armored personnel carrier) | 160 |
| | Piranha ACV (Reconnaissance Vehicle) | 140 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | PLZ-45 (Self-propelled howitzer) | 54 |
| | Tactica (Wheeled armored personnel carrier) | 261 |
| | TOW BGM-71 (Anti-tank guided missile launcher) | 200 |
| | TPK 420 VBL (Wheeled armored personnel carrier) | 10 |
| | TR (Towed gun) | 28 |
| | UR-416 M (Wheeled armored personnel carrier) | 100 |
| | VCC-1 (Infantry fighting vehicle) | 200 |

Source: "Country Information, Saudi Arabia," *Army-Guide*, 2015, http://www.army-guide.com/eng/countrys.php?countryID=67.

**Table 5.2. Iranian land forces equipment.**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | 9K331 Tor-M1 (Anti-aircraft system) | 29 |
| | 9M133 Konkurs/Spandrel (Anti-tank guided missile launcher) | 130 |
| | BM-21 9K51 GRAD (Multiple rocket launcher) | 64 |
| | BMP-1 (Infantry fighting vehicle) | 300 |
| | BMP-2 (Infantry fighting vehicle) | 200 |
| | Boraq / Boragh (Tracked armored personnel carrier) | 180 |
| | BTR-152 (Wheeled armored personnel carrier) | 320 |
| | BTR-60 (Wheeled armored personnel carrier) | 300 |
| | BTR-60 (Modernization of the vehicle) | 30 |
| | Chieftain Mk5 (Main battle tank) | 200 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Chieftain (Main battle tank) | 100 |
| | D-20 KHITIN (Towed howitzer) | 30 |
| | EE-9 CASCAVEL (Reconnaissance Vehicle) | 40 |
| | Fadjr-5 (Multiple rocket launcher) | 5 |
| | Ferret Mk 1/1 (Reconnaissance Vehicle) | 20 |
| | Fox (Reconnaissance Vehicle) | 20 |
| | FV101 Scorpion CVR(T) (Reconnaissance Vehicle) | 80 |
| | FV101 Scorpion CVR(T) (Reconnaissance Vehicle) | 50 |
| | G5 (Gun-howitzer) | 100 |
| | GH N-45 (Gun-howitzer) | 120 |
| | M101 (Howitzer) | 700 |
| | M107 (Self-propelled howitzer) | 200 |
| | M113A3 (Tracked armored personnel carrier) | 300 |
| | M48 (Main battle tank) | 80 |
| | M60A1 (Modernization of the vehicle) | 50 |
| | T-55 (Main battle tank) | 110 |
| | T-62 (Main battle tank) | 200 |
| | T-72 (Main battle tank) | 250 |
| | Tupe 59 (Towed howitzer) | 1100 |
| | Type 54-1 (Towed howitzer) | 100 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Type 59 (Main battle tank) | 220 |
| | Type 69 (Main battle tank) | 200 |
| | Type WA 021 / WAC 21 (Towed howitzer) | 15 |
| | ZSU-23-4 Shilka-M (Anti-aircraft system) | 30 |
| | Zulfiqar (Main battle tank) | 4 |

Source: "Country Information, Iran," *Army-Guide*, 2015, http://www.army-guide.com/eng/countrys.php?countryID=59.

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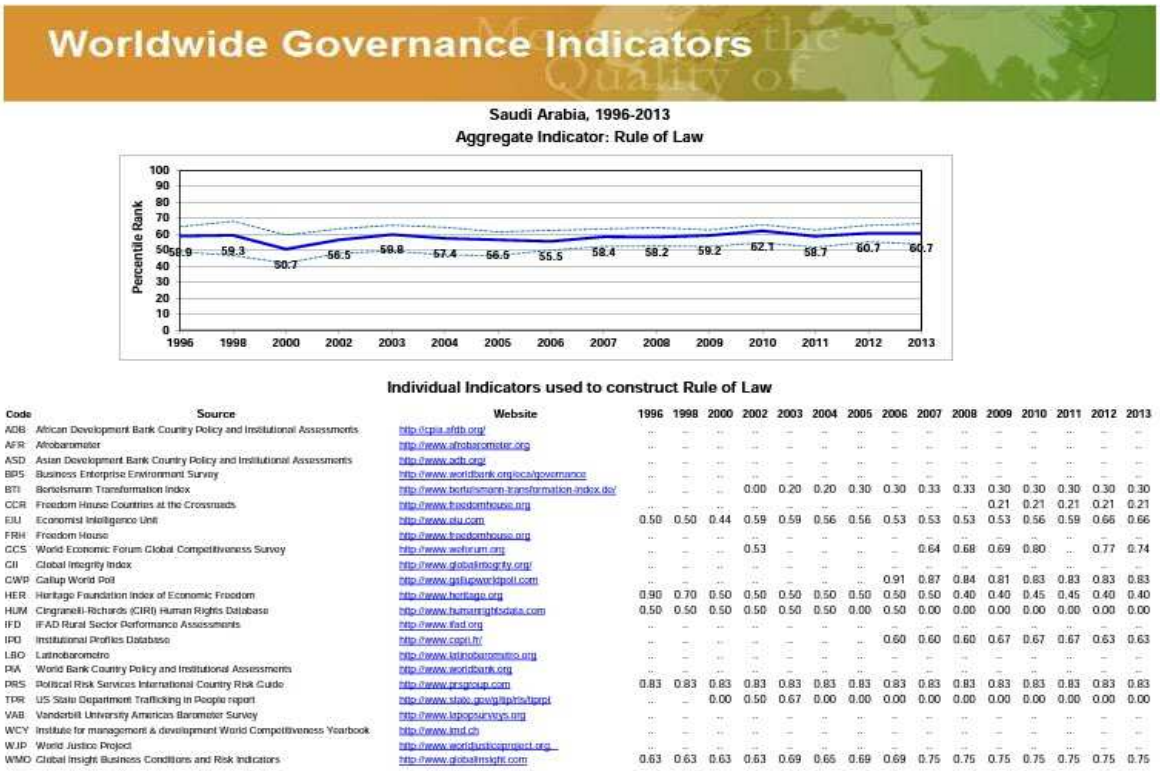
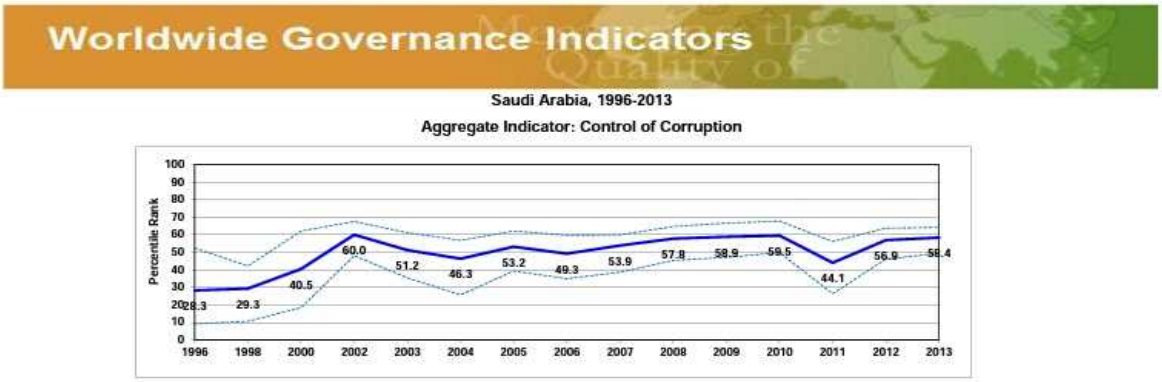
Figure 3. Role of law and the control of corruption in Saudi Arabia.




**Individual Indicators used to construct Rule of Law**

| Code | Source | Website | 1996 | 1998 | 2000 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ADB | African Development Bank Country Policy and Institutional Assessments | http://cpia.afdb.org/ | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| AFR | Afrobarometer | http://www.afrobarometer.org | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| ASD | Asian Development Bank Country Policy and Institutional Assessments | http://www.adb.org/ | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| BPS | Business Enterprise Environment Survey | http://www.worldbank.org/eca/governance | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| BTI | Bertelsmann Transformation Index | http://www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de/ | .. | .. | .. | 0.00 | 0.20 | 0.20 | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.30 |
| CCR | Freedom House Countries at the Crossroads | http://www.freedomhouse.org | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 0.21 | 0.21 | 0.21 | 0.21 | 0.21 |
| EIU | Economist Intelligence Unit | http://www.eiu.com | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.44 | 0.59 | 0.59 | 0.56 | 0.56 | 0.53 | 0.53 | 0.53 | 0.53 | 0.56 | 0.59 | 0.66 | 0.66 |
| FRH | Freedom House | http://www.freedomhouse.org | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| GCS | World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Survey | http://www.weforum.org | .. | .. | .. | 0.53 | .. | .. | .. | .. | 0.64 | 0.68 | 0.69 | 0.80 | .. | 0.77 | 0.74 |
| GII | Global Integrity Index | http://www.globalintegrity.org/ | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| GWP | Gallup World Poll | http://www.gallupworldpoll.com | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 0.91 | 0.87 | 0.84 | 0.81 | 0.83 | 0.83 | 0.83 | 0.83 |
| HER | Heritage Foundation Index of Economic Freedom | http://www.heritage.org | 0.90 | 0.70 | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.40 | 0.40 | 0.45 | 0.45 | 0.40 | 0.40 |
| HUM | Cingranelli-Richards (CIRI) Human Rights Database | http://www.humanrightsdata.com | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.50 | 0.00 | 0.50 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| IFD | IFAD Rural Sector Performance Assessments | http://www.ifad.org | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| IPD | Institutional Profiles Database | http://www.cepii.fr/ | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 0.60 | 0.60 | 0.60 | 0.67 | 0.67 | 0.67 | 0.63 | 0.63 |
| LBO | Latinobarometro | http://www.latinobarometro.org | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| PIA | World Bank Country Policy and Institutional Assessments | http://www.worldbank.org | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| PRS | Political Risk Services International Country Risk Guide | http://www.prsgroup.com | 0.83 | 0.83 | 0.83 | 0.83 | 0.83 | 0.83 | 0.83 | 0.83 | 0.83 | 0.83 | 0.83 | 0.83 | 0.83 | 0.83 | 0.83 |
| TDR | US State Department Trafficking in People report | http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt | .. | .. | 0.00 | 0.50 | 0.67 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| VAB | Vanderbilt University Americas Barometer Survey | http://www.lapopsurveys.org | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| WCY | Institute for management & development World Competitiveness Yearbook | http://www.imd.ch | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| WJP | World Justice Project | http://www.worldjusticeproject.org | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| WMO | Global Insight Business Conditions and Risk Indicators | http://www.globalinsight.com | 0.63 | 0.63 | 0.63 | 0.63 | 0.69 | 0.65 | 0.69 | 0.69 | 0.75 | 0.75 | 0.75 | 0.75 | 0.75 | 0.75 | 0.75 |




**Individual Indicators used to construct Control of Corruption**

| Code | Source | Website | 1996 | 1998 | 2000 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ADB | African Development Bank Country Policy and Institutional Assessments | http://cpia.afdb.org/ | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| AFR | Afrobarometer | http://www.afrobarometer.org | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| ASD | Asian Development Bank Country Policy and Institutional Assessments | http://www.adb.org/ | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| BPS | Business Enterprise Environment Survey | http://www.worldbank.org/eca/governance | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| BTI | Bertelsmann Transformation Index | http://www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de/ | .. | .. | .. | .. | 0.30 | 0.30 | 0.35 | 0.35 | 0.35 | 0.35 | 0.40 | 0.40 | 0.40 | 0.50 | 0.50 |
| CCR | Freedom House Countries at the Crossroads | http://www.freedomhouse.org | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 0.19 | 0.21 | 0.21 | 0.21 | 0.21 |
| EIU | Economist Intelligence Unit | http://www.eiu.com | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.25 | 0.25 | 0.25 | 0.25 | 0.25 | 0.25 | 0.25 | 0.25 | 0.25 | 0.25 | 0.25 | 0.25 |
| FRH | Freedom House | http://www.freedomhouse.org | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| GCB | Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer Survey | http://www.transparency.org | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| GCS | World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Survey | http://www.weforum.org | .. | .. | .. | 0.58 | .. | .. | .. | .. | 0.53 | 0.66 | 0.68 | 0.80 | .. | 0.72 | 0.76 |
| GII | Global Integrity Index | http://www.globalintegrity.org/ | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| GWP | Gallup World Poll | http://www.gallupworldpoll.com | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 0.58 | 0.68 | 0.68 | 0.68 | 0.68 | 0.68 |
| IFD | IFAD Rural Sector Performance Assessments | http://www.ifad.org | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| IPD | Institutional Profiles Database | http://www.cepii.fr/ | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.25 | 0.25 |
| LBO | Latinobarometro | http://www.latinobarometro.org | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| PIA | World Bank Country Policy and Institutional Assessments | http://www.worldbank.org | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| PRC | Political Economic Risk Consultancy Corruption in Asia | http://www.asiarisk.com/ | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| PRS | Political Risk Services International Country Risk Guide | http://www.prsgroup.com | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.42 | 0.42 | 0.42 | 0.42 |
| VAB | Vanderbilt University Americas Barometer Survey | http://www.lapopsurveys.org | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| WCY | Institute for management & development World Competitiveness Yearbook | http://www.imd.ch | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| WJP | World Justice Project | http://www.worldjusticeproject.org | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |

Source: "The Worldwide Governance Indicators, Saudi Arabia," *World Bank,* 2014.

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**(pp.162: deleted due to personal information)**

**Interviews**

**(pp.163: deleted due to personal information)**

**Some of the Interviewees**

A-Mr. Salman Al–Dosaary (editor in chief of *Alsharq Al-Awsat* [a pan-Arab newspaper]), in discussions with the author, December 17, 2013, Riyadh.

B- Dr. Abdullah Al-shammari (former diplomat, lecturer, and political analyst in politics of the region), in discussion with the author, December 21, 2013, Riyadh.

C- Mr. Yoseef Alkowaileet (deputy editor in chief of *AlriyadhNewspaper*), in discussion with the author, December, 23, 2013, Riyadh.

**Notice:**

Some military spending numbers and the values of other variables are secretive or unavailable, therefore it is difficult to obtain, I have tried in this research to look for more than one reliable resource but if it was not available, then I couldn't but to select last available figures.

**Calculations:**

**Military spending in million USD, according to *Sipri.***

| **period** | **Tunisia** | **Egypt** | **Libya** | **Yemen** | **Syria** | **The average** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pre-Uprisings** | **602** | **4596** | **1338** | **1731** | **2366** | **2126** |
| **post-Uprisings** | **929** | **4961** | **2997** | **1715** | **2495** | **2619** |

**Source:**"Sipri Military Expenditure Database." *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Sipri)*. 2015.

The weight of country= military spending ÷the average

Example; Tunisia's weight Pre- Uprising = 602 ÷2126 = 0.28

Tunisia's weight Post- Uprising = 928 ÷2619 = 0.35

**Special Thanks**

**To: Allah, the most gracious and the most merciful.**

Mr. Mr. Yoseef Alkowaileet for their help during this research.

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