



**Islamabad Campus**

**Saudi Arabia Power Struggle In The Middle East And Its  
Dependency On United States: Causes And Consequences**

**By**

Akhtar Zaman

Reg. No. 29359

A Thesis Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of  
M. Phil program in International Relations

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
IQRA UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD CAMPUS**

**2021**

## **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

I, **Akhtar Zaman** Son of **Khani Zaman** Roll No.29359, student of M. Phil at Iqra University Islamabad Campus solemnly declare that the thesis entitled “**Saudi Arabia Power Struggle in the Middle East and its Dependency on United States: Causes and Consequences**” submitted by me in partial fulfillment of M. Phil Degree, is my original work and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution. It is also certified that I was not registered for any other academic award or qualification during the period of this study.

Akhtar Zaman (29359)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **THESIS APPROVAL SHEET**

The thesis titled “**Saudi Arabia Power Struggle in the Middle East and its Dependency on United States: Causes and Consequences**” has been submitted by **Akhtar Zaman** Roll No. **29359**, student of M. Phil International Relations at Iqra University Islamabad Campus. We have read the report and it fulfills the partial requirement of M. Phil in International Relations.

**1. SUPERVISOR:**

---

**Dr. Muhammad Sheharyar Khan**  
**Assistant Professor**  
**Department of Social Sciences**  
**Iqra University, Islamabad Campus**

**2. EXTERNAL EXAMINER:**

---

**3. HEAD OF DEPARTMENT:**

---

## **DEDICATION**

Dedicated to my late father (Khani Zaman) who always encouraged me for Higher  
Education-

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The researcher is grateful to the Almighty Allah, Who is the origin of knowledge and without whose graciousness no one can succeed; and to His Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (peace be upon him), whose every saying and action brings knowledge and wisdom.

The author would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Muhammad Sheharyar Khan, who was my supervisor throughout this tedious process. His immense support during my research work made me more energetic to complete this thesis. Without his guidance, constructive criticism, and suggestions, this thesis would not have been possible.

Secondly, I would like to thank my friend Mr. Aziz Ahmad Jadoon (Ph.D. Scholar), who helped me find much-needed sources to support my research and who took the time to help me. I would also like to thank my other colleagues whose names are not mentioned here, but their support and cooperation helped me complete this thesis.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family members who have supported me throughout my studies.

Akhtar Zaman(29359)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**ABSTRACT:**

Saudi Arabia is a Sunni majority country in the Middle East region. Since, revolution of 1979 in Iran, the Kingdom is poised to become a regional power. The Middle East region is instable following internal conflicts colored with religious and ethnic division. Saudi Arabia and Iran are the main players in the region striving for regional supremacy. This study is intended to analyze Saudi Arabia power struggle in the Middle East region following its dependency on the United States. Multiple factors led to Saudi's strive for regional supremacy. Firstly, Iran is a non-Arab state believing on Shia faith of Islam. After revolution, Iran is active to promote and protect Shia faith in the region particularly in Arab populated areas. Saudi Arabia sees the growing influence of Iran in the region as an existential threat.

Secondly, the Kingdom fears that if Iran has not contended timely in Arab States, it will lose its grasp on the Arab world. The Kingdom also fears and alleged Iran to instigate Saudi Shia minority group against the Kingdom. Following the fear of any rebel from Saudi Shias, the Kingdom has strictly depressed minority groups. Thirdly, the rise of non-State actors and their activities in the region have threatened Saudi's internal security. This study is intended to analyze the Saudi power struggle in the Middle East under the umbrella of the United States. The study's central theme is Saudi Arabia's dependency on the United States in perspectives of its weak security position in the Middle East. Moreover, the study has also pointed out the factors that have made Saudi Arabia dependent on the United States instead of the bilateral relationship and mutual peace initiatives in the region.

**Keywords:** Saudi Arabia's struggle of regional power, Saudi-Iran rivalry, US-Saudi relations, Saudi dependency on the US.

## MAP OF SAUDI ARABIA



Source [www.worldatlas.com](http://www.worldatlas.com)

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

AUTHOR’S DECLARATION.....	ii
THESIS APPROVAL SHEET .....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
ABSTRACT:.....	vi
MAP OF SAUDI ARABIA .....	vii
CHAPTER-1 .....	1
INTRODUCTION .....	1
Overview: .....	1
1.1 Background of the Study:.....	1
1.2 Introduction: .....	2
1.3 Statement of Problem:.....	5
1.4 Importance of the Study: .....	6
1.5 Scope of the Study: .....	6
1.6 Objectives of the Study: .....	7
1.7 Research Questions: .....	7
1.8 Hypothesis:.....	7
1.9 Research Methodology and Limitation of the Study: .....	7
1.10 Theoretical Framework of the Study:.....	8
1.11 Organization of the Study: .....	9
CHAPTER-2.....	10
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	10
Overview: .....	10
2.1 Literature Review:.....	10



2.1 Research Gap: .....	18
CHAPTER-3 .....	19
SAUDI'S STRIVE FOR REGIONAL SUPREMACY .....	19
Overview: .....	19
3.1 Saudi-Iran Rivalry: .....	21
3.2 The Rise and Role of Non-State Actors in the Middle East: .....	25
3.3 Saudi Arabia Strive for Power in the Middle East: .....	30
3.4 Saudi's Military Position in the Middle East: .....	32
3.5 Saudi Arabia and Regional Issues/Wars: .....	38
CHAPTER-4 .....	39
SAUDI ARABIA DEPENDENCY ON UNITED STATES .....	39
Overview: .....	39
4.1 US-Saudi Relations: .....	40
4.2 Tensions between Saudi Arabia and the United States: .....	41
4.3 Factors led to U.S. Support of the Saudi Kingdom: .....	43
i. Trusted Friend in the Region: .....	43
ii. U.S. Political and Economic Interests in the Region: .....	44
iii. The U.S. intended to tackle Iran and its allies through Saudi Arabia. ....	45
4.4 Factors led to Saudi Dependency on the United States: .....	45
I. Regional wars in and Political instability in the Middle Eastern Region: .....	48
II. Saudi Political System and Human Rights Challenges: .....	48
III. Lack of an alternate ally: .....	50
IV. Weak Military capability and Technology of the Kingdom: .....	51
CHAPTER-5 .....	55
RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION .....	55

5.1 Research Findings: .....	55
5.2 Conclusion:.....	58
REFERENCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY: .....	60

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1-1 Sunni Muslims Distribution in the Middle East.....	3
Figure 3-1 Balance of Power in the Middle East.....	20
Figure 3-2 Sectarian Balance of Power in the Middle East .....	23
Figure 3-3 Islamic State in the Middle East.....	27
Figure 3-4 Top Military Expenditure States in the World.....	34
Figure 3-5 Saudi-Iran Military Strength .....	37
Figure 4-1 Saudi Arabia Global Arms Trade.....	44
Figure 4-2 Top 20 Arms Importer Countries .....	46
Figure 4-3 Foreign Military presence in the Middle East.....	52

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 3-1 Military expenditure in GDP by country from 2013 to 2018.....	21
Table 3-2 Comparison of Saudi Military with other Regional Powers .....	32
Table 3-3 Comparison of Saudi Military Strength .....	35
Table 4-1 Military Expenditure in Millions of USD .....	40

# CHAPTER-1

## INTRODUCTION

### **Overview:**

The chapter describes a brief Introduction and Statement of Problem, which will help readers to understand the complexity of Middle Eastern politics in the light of the ongoing regional situation and the role of both regional and external players in the entire situation. The study's central theme is to analyze Saudi-Iran rivalry for regional supremacy and Saudi Arabia's dependency on the United States due to its weak security and military position both domestically and in the region as well. The chapter also includes Research Questions and Hypotheses upon which the study has been conducted. The chapter further includes the Significance of Study, Objectives, and Scope of the study, Theoretical Framework, Research Methodology, Research Limitations, and Organization of Thesis.

### **1.1 Background of the Study:**

For many decades, the Middle East region faces socio-political instability due to internal conflicts colored with religious and ethnic ideologies. Saudi Arabia and Iran are playing power politics and striving for regional supremacy in particular since the Iranian Revolution of 1979. In Middle Eastern politics, both religion and nationalism is deeply rooted, which led to sectarian and ethnic division. Saudi-Iran rivalry for regional supremacy is shaped by religious ideology as both have patronized "Wahhabism" and "Shiaism" in the region, respectively.

Although there are also other factors, i.e., natural resources (oil & gas) led to their competition, the sectarian division is the key element of their struggle for regional supremacy, which has impacted Middle Eastern Politics. Further, regional political instability and ongoing security situation has created tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran due to their direct and indirect involvement in regional issues, i.e., Saudi Arabia role

in the Iran-Iraq war and US-Iraq war, their role in the Syrian civil war, and Iran's role Saudi-Yemen war under the umbrella of external powers (USA & Russia).

Middle Eastern internal security situation has also got the attention of these external players influencing by taking sides. Russia has closed strategic, economic, and political interactions with Iran by supporting its influence in the region. In contrast, the United States has backed Saudi Arabia due to its hostile relations with Iran. Due to multiple actors' roles (regional and external), the complexity of regional politics has pushed Saudi Arabia on the periphery of external powers, particularly the United States. Because the regional conditions are not going in Saudi's favor, which not only impacts its role in the region but has also disturbed its domestic stability.

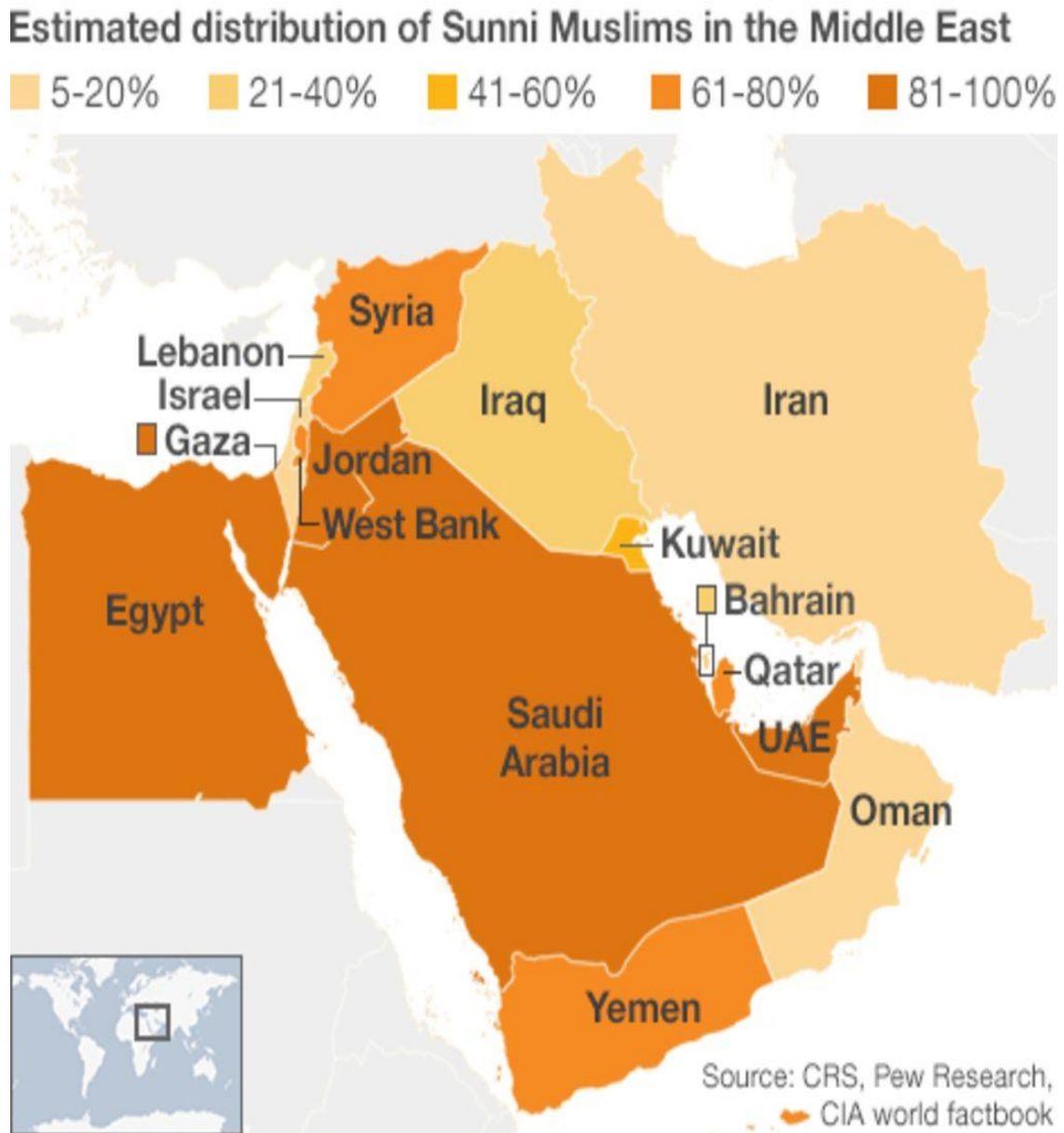
Saudi Arabia is also facing domestic challenges like reforms, diversification of its economy from the oil sector, engaging youth by providing employment, and strengthening its security by adopting modern advanced technology and advanced military equipment with a capable, trained military. These initiatives need the Kingdom's hour, which will enable it to defend and secure itself both domestically and in the region if the current situation went out of control or taken a long time towards stability.

## **1.2 Introduction:**

Saudi Arabia is located in the Middle East, having a total land area of 22, 50,000 square kilometers are occupying approximately 80% of the land of the Arab Peninsula. The Kingdom shares its borders, 814 kilometers with Iraq, 744 kilometers with Jordan, 457 kilometers with UAE (United Arab Emirates), 222 kilometers with Kuwait, 676 kilometers with Oman, 60 kilometers with Qatar, and 1458 kilometers with Yemen. The Kingdom also has approximately 2640 kilometers of coastline in the Gulf Aqaba, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf.

In Saudi Arabia, about 85 % population practice Sunni (Wahhabi) Islam, and the remaining 15% practice the Shia faith of Islam. The Saudi Kingdom enjoys support from Sunni Muslims in the region.

**Figure 1-1 Sunni Muslims Distribution in the Middle East**



**Source: CRS, Pew Research CIA world Fact book**  
<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/maps/>

Figure 1.1 shows the estimated distribution of Sunni Muslims in the Middle East region. Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Yemen, West Bank, and Gaza are the most Sunni populated areas, in Kuwait Sunni Muslims ratio is 40 to 60 %; in Iraq, it is 21 to 40 %, while in Iran and Oman this ratio is 5 to 20 %.

The ruling Al-Saud family and religious clerks "Wahhabis" hold dominant positions in the Kingdom, and the rest of the groups have no prominent role in kingdom affairs. The Saudi economy is mostly based on oil. Saudi Arabia is the second-largest state in the world with substantial oil reservoirs. Further, the heavy dependence of the Kingdom on oil has also created tensions between Saudi Arabia and its neighbor's states, i.e., Qatar, Yemen. Iraq. Saudi Arabia claims supremacy over the Arab states in the region. However, the Kingdom is tackled with internal and external challenges due to regional ethnic and sectarian disputes. Since the Iranian Revolution, the Saudi Kingdom is striving for power to maintain its status quo against Iranian ambitions of extending Shia theocracy in the region.

Saudi Arabia has friendly relations with the United States since 1933. Until now, the Saudi Kingdom is successful in gaining United States support to coup with internal and external challenges. Even in the past, particularly during the US-Iraq war, the United States stationed its forces to defend the Saudi Kingdom from external aggression. Further, Saudi Arabia remained an ally of the United States during the cold war era by countering the Russian communist agenda in the Middle East region and is still an essential ally against the Global War on Terror since 9/11. Moreover, Saudi Arabia's partnership is also crucial for the United States because the Russian backed Iran's growing influence in the region.

Today, both Saudi Arabia and the United States are strategic partners in the Middle East region. Their relationship has more strengthened ever since due to the changing dynamics of both regional and world politics. The United States is the major arms supplier to Saudi Arabia. It has also provided military equipment and trained the Saudi Army to balance its ally against Iran's region. However, Saudi's weak security apparatus and its rivalry with Iran for regional supremacy have pushed Saudi Arabia dependent on the United States.

The ongoing Middle Eastern situation led to Saudi dependency on the United States and created tension between both partners. Multiple factors led to this tension. Firstly, the US-Saudi relationship is based on shared interests instead of shared understanding. Both stand with each other to gain their ends. However, the former is an Islamic Absolute

Monarch, and the latter is the Secular Constitutional Republic. Hence, the United States policy of the democratic world is confronted with the Saudi monarchy. Secondly, both states are different from each other in religious, social, and cultural ideology. The majority of both countries' citizens do not know about each other's society and culture, and only a small ratio could understand these aspects. Thirdly, suppose US-Iran re-agreed on the nuclear deal, and both entered the new era of bilateral relations. What will be the future of Saudi Arabia? Would Saudi Arabia utilize alternate options, i.e., China and Russia, or will it withdraw from regional competition with Iran? Fourthly, the murder of Jamal Khashoggi (Journalist) inside the Saudi Embassy in Turkey and the United States Congress's demand to ban Arms sales and punish Saudi leadership has also increased tension between both partners.

Many western states criticize the Saudi invasion of Yemen and the United States' support. In response to the Saudi activities in the region, mainly its role in the regional issues and wars resulted in a western reaction as United Kingdom court has ruled against Arms sale to Saudi Arabia. The Swiss government has also warned Saudi leadership to ban Aircraft manufacturing company in Saudi Arabia. At the same time, France and Germany have also warned to withdraw from the Arms sale agreement with Saudi Arabia.

This study is intended to analyze the Saudi power struggle in the Middle East under the umbrella of the United States. The study's central theme is Saudi Arabia's dependency on the United States in perspectives of its weak security position in the Middle East. Moreover, the study has also pointed out the factors that have made Saudi Arabia dependent on the United States instead of the bilateral relationship and mutual peace initiatives in the region.

### **1.3 Statement of Problem:**

The Middle East is in the grasp of internal conflicts for many decades. Saudi Arabia and Iran are two main rivals confronting each other since the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Russia backs Iran, while the United States backs Saudi Arabia. Saudi-Iran hostility under the umbrella of the United States and Russia has resulted in political instability in the Middle East due to their direct and indirect role in the regional issues. Moreover, Iran has

built its military muscles more robust than its regional rival, Saudi Arabia, even striving to become a nuclear power. Suppose Iran became a nuclear power in the region. In that case, the Saudi Kingdom may not only withdraw from the regional competition, but the latter will also face dire challenges domestically. Hence, Saudi-Iran hostility, insecure regional situation, Saudi weak security position, and its power struggle in the region have pushed the Kingdom dependent on the United States.

#### **1.4 Importance of the Study:**

The study is essential as it attempts to discuss Saudi Arabia's strive for power in the Middle East in light of its dependency on the United States. Saudi Arabia and the United States friendship is long-lasting. Al-Saud regime remained a vital ally of the United States, whether it was the Cold War era or the global war against terrorism. Moreover, the incident of 9/11 attacks on The United States soil and Saudi Arabia support of Al-Qaeda before the 9/11 attacks, Arab uprisings in the Middle East, Iran's nuclear ambitions and its growing influence in the region, particularly in the Arab world, and its hostility with the Saudi Kingdom have tackled Al-Saud regime. Apart from external regional threats, the Kingdom is also facing internal challenges like social-political and economic reforms and its weak military infrastructure. These internal and external challenges are the main barriers in the Saudi regional supremacy, and the Kingdom is heavily dependent on its ally United States to coup with these challenges.

#### **1.5 Scope of the Study:**

The study is primarily focused on Saudi Arabia's power struggle in the Middle East and its dependency on the United States in the perspective of its weak security position. Iran is the primary regional opponent of Saudi Arabia who attempts to contain the Kingdom in regional issues. Moreover, non-state actors, i.e., Al-Qaida, ISIS, and Hezbollah, their activities in the region havenot only threatened regional peace but they have also threatened the Kingdom both domestically and externally in the region. This study analyzes the factors that led to Saudi Arabia's power struggle for regional supremacy in light of internal and external challenges. The study also points out the factors that have pushed the Kingdom heavily dependent on its longstanding ally, i.e., the United States.



## **1.6 Objectives of the Study:**

The study is intended to analyze Saudi Arabia's strive for power in the Middle East region. Saudi Arabia and Iran are the major players in the Middle East region, and both are strongly divided by sectarian-based religious ideology. Both players are backed by major external players, i.e., the USA and Russia, who have their own political and economic interests in the region. The study's central theme is a Saudi Power struggle in the region under the umbrella of the United States. The study will discuss the Saudi power struggle in light of internal and external challenges. It will also highlight the factors that led to its dependency on the United States in the context of its weak military position.

## **1.7 Research Questions:**

1. Why is Saudi Arabia striving for regional supremacy in the Middle East?
2. Why has the United States backed Al-Saud regime in the Middle East?
3. What are the factors that led to Saudi dependency on the United States?

## **1.8 Hypothesis:**

Saudi-Iran rivalry for regional supremacy has pushed Saudi Arabia to become dependent on the United States.

## **1.9 Research Methodology and Limitation of the Study:**

The research is qualitative. The data has been collected from secondary sources, including books, articles, research journals, newspapers, and internet sources. The reason for not taking data from primary sources was due to the shortage of time. Further, it was quite challenging to approach and conduct interviews of Saudi, Iran, and the United States diplomats due to their official task engagement. However, enough literature on the topic is available. Hence the lack of including primary sources will not affect research results as the available literature covers the gap to find out the core issues.

### **1.10 Theoretical Framework of the Study:**

The theory is a tool that enables us to understand the specific phenomenon. According to Kenneth Waltz, "theory is the foundation of science which is rooted in ideas." Similarly, like other disciplines, in International Relations, theories also play a pivotal role in understanding relations among nations because different theorists see the world through a different lens.

States are the unitary actors in the International System, and each state has its ideological foundations with different political systems. Realism, a "family of theories" or "paradigm," is the dominant school of thought in International Relations. Classical Realism, Structural Realism or Neo-Realism, and Neo-Classical Realism are the currents of the Realist paradigm. The Classical Realists depart from human nature. According to them, humans by nature are selfish, power-seekers, and greedy. Structural Realism is the extension of Classical Realism. They compare state with human nature. Whereas, Neoclassical Realism explaining International Politics in the light of International System.

Neoclassical realism belongs to the realist tradition of International Relations theory. The realist tradition had mainly focused on the conflictual relations among states. According to Norrin M. Ripsman, Neoclassical Realism is an approach to foreign policy analysis that seeks to understand international politics by taking into account the nature of the international system - the political environment within which states interact.

Neoclassical Realists argues that in the International System states respond to opportunities and constraints while shaping foreign and security policies. However, these responses are subject to the factors such as culture, leadership perceptions, relations between state and society, and state's domestic political regimes nature. Moreover, neoclassical realists are agreed somewhere with structural realists in the sense that states construct foreign policies keeping in mind opportunities and threats within the International System. Thus, their very existence is at stake if, in an anarchic international environment where the slightest error may lead to defeat in battle, they fail to protect

themselves properly from the outside, the incentives are extremely high for states to concentrate on various events and draft foreign policies to respond appropriately to them.

According to neoclassical realists, states actions can be explained via Balance of Power, intentions or threats, societal actors affecting the power and freedom of action of the foreign policy decision makers. Neoclassical Realism provides ground for Saudi-Iran rivalry for regional supremacy, keeping in mind the ongoing regional situation. R. Hinnebusch argued that the Middle East is the epicenter of world crisis, a war-prone site of the world most protracted conflicts which present a scenario of anarchy and insecurity and where the Realist paradigm holds its relevance to the regional situation (Hinnebusch, 2003). The researcher has described Saudi-Iran rivalry for regional supremacy in the light of the theory of Neoclassical Realism.

### **1.11 Organization of the Study:**

The thesis has been organized into five chapters. Chapter one presents the study's complete structure, i.e., the background of the study, introduction, importance of the study, statement of the problem, the scope of the study, and the objectives in detail. The chapter also discusses research methodology and theoretical framework. Chapter two presents the literature review and the research gap. In Chapter three, Saudi Arabia strives for power in the Middle East in perspectives of its rivalry with Iran, the rise of non-state actors, and their activities in the region has been discussed. In Chapter four, US-Saudi relations have been discussed in detail. The chapter also highlights the factors that led to U.S. support for the Saudi Kingdom in the region. The last section of the chapter describes Saudi dependency on the United States. Chapter five presents the research findings and conclusion of the study.

## **CHAPTER-2**

# **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview:**

The longstanding internal conflicts in the Middle East region have remained the focus of scholars, media, and other experts. Several works already carried out, pointing out many aspects of Saudi Arabia's role in the region in light of the current Middle Eastern situation. They have provided good material on Saudi-Iran rivalry, regional instability and political systems of Middle Eastern states, alliances in particular US-Saudi relations, non-state actors, and the economic portfolio of the region. However, no one has directly addressed why Saudi Arabia and Iran are striving for power in the region? Why and how the Saudi Kingdom is dependent on the United States? Hence, there is a need to look into the factors that led to Saudi-Iran's striving for regional power and point out the factors leading to Saudi Arabia's dependency on the United States. This chapter presents a review of an early literature and research gap.

### **2.1 Literature Review:**

Moutagu (2015), argued that Saudi Arabia is a combination of disparate regions brought together in 1920 by the Nejad region ruler. According to him, some regions accepted him without any struggle, but he used force in other regions. He further argued that many regions of Saudi Arabia have no loyalty to Nejad. Still, nationalism is rooted in them even though there are diverse minorities in the Kingdom, including cultural differences, traditions, and ethnicities.

Al-Atawneh (2009), while discussing Saudi Arabia's political system, has emphasized that the Saudi Monarchy is neither theocratic nor secular in the western sense. Still, it is a genuine monarchy accommodating "Islam." He has further argued that the Saudi monarchy is a compromise between two significant authorities, i.e., the existing religious institutions and the ruling family monarchs.

Lynch (2012), while discussing Islam and Democracy in the Middle East, Muslim religious scholars have fallen into three camps. The first camp rejects both Democracy and Secularism; the second camp claims that Islam's implementation in a real sense will create the best democracy, while the third camp advocates ijthihad.

Ibrahim (2019) stated that the "Islamic Awakening" or "Sahwa" was a period of powerful political and social change in Saudi Arabia between 1960 and 1980. The Sahwa is a religious movement inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood, believing in non-violence and interaction between religion and politics, which has maintained its influence since 1990 despite state repression. The Sahwa figures attempted to increase religious scholars' increasing role in politics and public representation by challenging Al-Saud's hegemony. She further stated that the movement could become more potent if allowed freedom because it addresses issues that impact society.

Kamel Alboaouh & Jon Mahoney(2017) has emphasized that although the Saudi Kingdom was founded under the Wahhabi faith of Islam, now this model has lost its legitimacy, and there is a need to recognize religious pluralism and minority protection. They further stated that the Kingdom has to promote cultural tolerance through political reforms and education. At the same time, issues like corruption and diversification of the economy also demand its attention. They also point out that some political opponents are pushing the Saudis to become a more theocratic state.

Gause III (2013) has emphasized that the global democratic wave has finally arrived in the Arab world. All the monarchs have felt pressure for democratic political reforms, and those who have successfully resisted reform are facing increasingly mobilized populations. He further argued that the democratic participation of Salafis like the Egyptian "Nour party" may inspire Saudi Salafis to agitate for a more active role in governance.

Wald (2018) argued that Muhammad Bin Salman intends to diversify the Saudi economy from its oil dependency. As the Kingdom is facing more than 12 percent unemployment

and decreasing this ratio, Saudi Arabia needs to create 1.2 million jobs by 2022. He further argued that the Kingdom lacked business experience and expertise in other sectors, which would not be possible without foreign and United States participation. The Saudis are pursuing deals for Snap and Amazon as they can offer technical opportunities to the Kingdom. Given Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's (commonly known as MBS), his future rule could be fraught with legitimacy and credibility (Behraves, 2019).

Peek (2016), has observed that Saudi Arabia is facing tension due to the three events, i.e., Russian military operation to protect the Assad regime in Syria without any foreign power check. Saudi Kingdom's rivals are unified across the region. Thirdly, the Kingdom is without a great power protector as the United States tacitly no longer guarantees its security, due to which the Kingdom stands alone. He further argued that Saudi Arabia needs a big crisis, particularly crises with Iran, which enable the Kingdom to get strengthened.

Diansaei(2018), while discussing Saudi-Iran relations and their role in the region, has argued that Saudi-Iran relations have never been at a desirable level. The Iranian revolution of 1979, Saddam Hussain's fall in Iraq, and the Arab Spring has increased disagreement between two regional powers. Both countries claim to have leadership over other Islamic Muslim countries in the Middle East. Iran, as a Shia state and Saudi Arabia as a Sunni-Wahhabi state, has multiple ideological and political conflicts that have drawn opposing interests for each other. He emphasized that Saudi Arabia and Iran are instrumental in expanding their influence in the Middle East as both have ambitions for a larger share in the region. Hope for peace is impossible. He has further argued that both rivals are confronting each other by following the Sunni-Shia coalition's sentimental means in the Middle East.

Terrill (2011) has also observed a similar role of both rivals in the region. According to Terrill, Saudi Arabia and Iran are rivals for influence in the Middle East, especially in the Gulf area, since the Iranian Revolution and Iran-Iraq war. Saudi Arabia is a regional status quo, while Iran seeks revolutionary change in the Middle East region. He further argued that both regional rivals influence the politics of many regional states.

F. Gregory (2014) has observed that in Middle East regional politics, the most common framework is sectarianism and the struggle for power in the region is Sunni vs. Shia contest, which has dominated media and even policy analysis. He further argued that sectarianism is a significant element of domestic conflicts in the region and Yemen and Bahrain. He, while discussing the United States role in the perspective of the current regional scenario, stated that the United States trying to limit Iran's influence in Syria and calls for Asad downfall but avoid the use of force against him, on the other hand, deals with Iran over nuclear weapons issue and backing Iranian led government in Iraq against Sunni Muslims insurgency.

Weddington (2017), observed the impact of Saudi-Iran rivalry on the United States' role in the region. He emphasized that before the Iranian Revolution in 1979, relations between both rivals were based on mutual understanding. Both remained an integral part of United States foreign policy towards the region. The former was able to safeguard Western interest in the Persian Gulf. However, after the Revolution of 1979, their relationship turned hostile. He further emphasized that Iran and Saudi Arabia struggle for ideological, logistical, and territorial influence in the region.

El-Hokayem and Matteo Legrenzi (2006) have observed that formal and informal talks between Arab states and Iran over security and stability in the Persian Gulf are ongoing since 1990. Still, the output is subject to the United States presence and its role in the region. From the Iranian perspective, the latter is the crucial factor of instability in the region. Still, the Arab States see it as an element of their defense in the region. They have further argued that Arab states seek good relations with Iran but at the same time also intend to rely on United States security. In contrast, Iran intends for the United States to withdraw from the region.

Shoaib (2010), while discussing Saudi response to the US-Iran nuclear deal, has stated that due to strained relations with Iran, the Kingdom fears that the nuclear agreement would destabilize the region and consider Iran a threat to the al-Saud regime other GCC states. He further argued that Saudi policies in the region after Iran deal clashes with

United States policies in the region, which is a reaction because, after negotiations with the United States, Iran will interfere in regional affairs.

Khalid (2016), Studying the impact of Arab Spring on Saudi Arabia has been stated that the Saudi Kingdom remained safe from the effects of Arab Spring because the Saudi authorities used two strategies to crush the uprisings, fearing its impact on the Kingdom. Firstly, during Arab Spring, the Kingdom played an influential role in countries like Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, and Bahrain in their favor because the Kingdom was aware that the uprisings would impact Saudi politics and society. Secondly, the Kingdom used religious ideology to tackle its Shia minority who were politically active.

Barany (2013), while discussing Saudi response to the Arab uprisings argued that the Kingdom has promised to spend 37 billion dollars instead of increasing salaries, and construction of low-income housing units. In comparison, the Kingdom also announced 93 billion dollars for social and economic projects, including 60000 new government jobs. He further emphasized that the Kingdom also allowed women to participate in municipal elections and appointments to the Shura Council.

Sean L. Yom and Gause III (2012), while discussing The Arab Spring wave against Arab Monarchs, have observed that Saudi Arabia and Oman faced isolated protests. In Qatar and UAE, there was no dissent. In Jordan and Morocco, the opposition failed to rouse the masses, Kuwait faced long tension between parliamentary factions and the ruling family. Still, there were no new political demands while Bahrain faced massive unrest. Still, the ruling al-Khalifa remained safe through GCC armed intervention. According to them, the Arab kings and princes sitting on their thrones comfortably against the winds of change.

Gaub (2016) has emphasized that historically since WW-II, the Middle East has seen five military alliances, i.e., Arab League's Joint Defense Pact, Middle East Command, Middle East Defense Organization, Baghdad Pact, and the Gulf Cooperation Council but all failed to its security standards due to shifting in regional policy or other issues. He further argued that the Islamic alliance is Saudi Arabia's third attempt to institutionalize military cooperation and coordination since Arab uprisings. Still, despite its efforts, the progress is slow.



Rieger (2013) stated that on the one hand, Saudi Arabia is active in protecting the political status quo in the Kingdom and remaining Arab monarchies in the Gulf. On the other hand, the Kingdom supported rebels and NATO intervention in Libya. He further argued that the Kingdom supports Syrian forces against the Asad regime and has sought rapprochement with post-revolutionary leadership in Egypt. Rieger sees this contradictory policy of Saudi Arabia to gain policy interest in the region because the Kingdom intends to roll back Iran's influence in the region.

Peter Henne, Sarabrynn Hudgins & Timothy Samuel Shah (2012), have pointed out that the Saudi role in Al-Qaeda's emergence led to violence in the country, particularly after the United States invasion of Iraq. They argued that Al-Qaeda made violent attacks, including kidnapping and beheading of U.S. citizens. They further argued that Saudi forces disrupted Al-Qaeda in the Kingdom but relocated to Yemen from where they launched attacks against US-bound airliners and have also destabilized Saudi Arabia's southern neighbor.

Whitney (2017) stated that considering the longstanding "special relationship" between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, it is hard to imagine how the two nations could align even more closely in their policies. Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia's multiple foreign entanglements that are intended to extend its influence – along with the U.S.' addiction to Saudi oil – offer Trump the opportunity to prove himself as "a true friend" of the Saudis "who will serve the [Wahhabi] Muslim World in an unimaginable manner."

Cordesman (2016) argued that Saudi Arabia strongly backed the United States against the former Soviet Union. Both states supported each other during their respective confrontations with Nasser, supporting Afghan opposition to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and dealing with crises in Iraq and Yemen. They backed Iraq against Iran when Iran threatened to defeat Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War, and then fought as allies against Saddam Hussein when he invaded Kuwait. He further emphasized that Saudi Arabia and the United States supported each other against USSR, particularly against its invasion of Afghanistan, their confrontation with Nasser, and dealing with Iraq and

Yemen Crises. He further pointed out that both backed Iraq against Iran and fought as allies against Saddam when he invaded Kuwait.

F. Gregory (2014), while discussing US-Saudi relations, has emphasized that the United States must be clear about its priorities if she intends to get anything done with Saudi Arabia. The USA will cooperate on issues like stability in Yemen, containment of Iran as a regional power, and destroy Al-Qaeda and its affiliates where both allies' common interest is matched.

David (2019), while discussing tensions between the United States and Saudi Arabia has stated that United Nations has demanded an investigation into the role of Muhammad Bin Salman in the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, US Senate voting against Arms sales to KSA, and Congress efforts to halt U.S. support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen are the significant rebukes. He further stated that U.S. ties with the house of Saud might now be entering a perfect storm.

Hazbun (2019) argued that the Middle East region is unstable since World War II due to inter-state conflict and rivalry. Local and external actors often tried to balance against threats, limit escalation and restrain actors, including their allies. He further argued that external powers preferred conflict management and geopolitical stability through balancing in the post-cold war era. Still, since 2001, they became agents of instability, engaged in intervention, regime change, and arming of proxies.

Chubin (2012), observed Middle East politics complicated due to cross-cutting alliances, linkages, sectarianism, territorial, and other multiple issues. He further argued that the United States could not influence local forces while unwilling to take sides in the domestic issues and finds itself relegated to the sidelines by circumstances and choices due to regional situation.

Kostiner (2010) has emphasized that the United States' invasion of Iraq in 2003 resulted in new threats and challenges for the Arab States, which includes Sunni-Shia's possibility instigated terrorism and sectarian fighting in GCC states. He further argued that Iran's ambitions for regional hegemony and its nuclear capability would also threaten the Arab

States. GCC states would fail to confront these threats due to their disagreements over appropriate response and immediate interest.

McGinn (2018) has observed that global powers like the United States, Russia, and the European Union are essential players in Saudi-Iran rivalry, supporting either side by responding to developments as they occur. He further argued that Europe had played a secondary role in regional developments; the United States under Trump views all engagements through an anti-Iran lens while Russia has looked at Saudi Arabia more as the United States looks at Iran. Russia sees Saudi Arabia not as a conservative monarchy but as an exporter of terrorism.

Zaccara (2019), emphasized that the United States inability to deal with Iran rationally due to its fitful nuclear proliferation policies pushing the Middle East towards nuclear competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The former seems committed to allowing the transfer of sensitive nuclear technology without any demand under its legal requirement that the Kingdom will not engage in activities that can lead to nuclear proliferation. He further emphasized that the nuclear ambitions of both rivals are not new. There are allegations that both tried to illegally obtain nuclear technology from Pakistan in the past, which Iran admitted in 2007, while Saudi Arabia continually denies the accusation.

Steven A. Cook, Jacob Stokes & Alexander J. Brock (2014), stated that the Turks, Qataris, Iranians, Saudis, and Emiratis have neither resources nor a compelling vision that may help them achieve their goals in the region. However, they have used soft power, financial, diplomatic, and military means to order the region at their ends. They further argued that regional changes and uncertainty do not favor regional power because they are facing structural and political obstacles.

Darwich (2019) argued that the United States has disengaged from direct involvement in the Middle East region and moved toward an indirect role in approaching regional conflicts despite President Trump's withdrawal from Iran's nuclear deal. He further argued that the United States this attitude regarding its role in the region has provided an opportunity for an outside actor, i.e., China and Russia, to increase their presence by positioning themselves as alternate partners.

## **2.1 Research Gap:**

The Middle Eastern region presents a dramatic picture, which is a mixture of longstanding internal conflicts. Middle Eastern conflicts are colored with ethnic and sectarian divisions, but control over natural resources (Oil & Gas) and regional supremacy are crucial elements behind the screen. Besides, external players, i.e., the United States, China, and Russia, are also active in the region directly or indirectly to maintain their grasp through so-called economic, political, and strategic interests.

The longstanding internal conflicts in the region have resulted in political instability and endangered the existence of the Middle Eastern states. Further, the situation also gave birth to non-state actors seeking to impose sharia and immense political freedom. These non-state actors had enjoyed direct or indirect support from regional players and sometimes from external players when they suited their interest and policy goals. However, the changing dynamics in global and regional politics have divided them in one pretext or other and even turned against each other when threatened by any side.

Saudi Arabia is a regional status quo, is also the victim of the current regional situation facing both internal and external challenges. The recent wave of Arab uprisings in the region and limited protests within Saudi Arabia demands social, political, and economic reforms. At the same time, the Kingdom also sees Iran's growing influence in the region as a dire threat to its regional supremacy. To cope with these challenges in the light of its weak security apparatus and strive for regional supremacy, the Kingdom is heavily dependent on the United States.

## **CHAPTER-3**

# **SAUDI'S STRIVE FOR REGIONAL SUPREMACY**

### **Overview:**

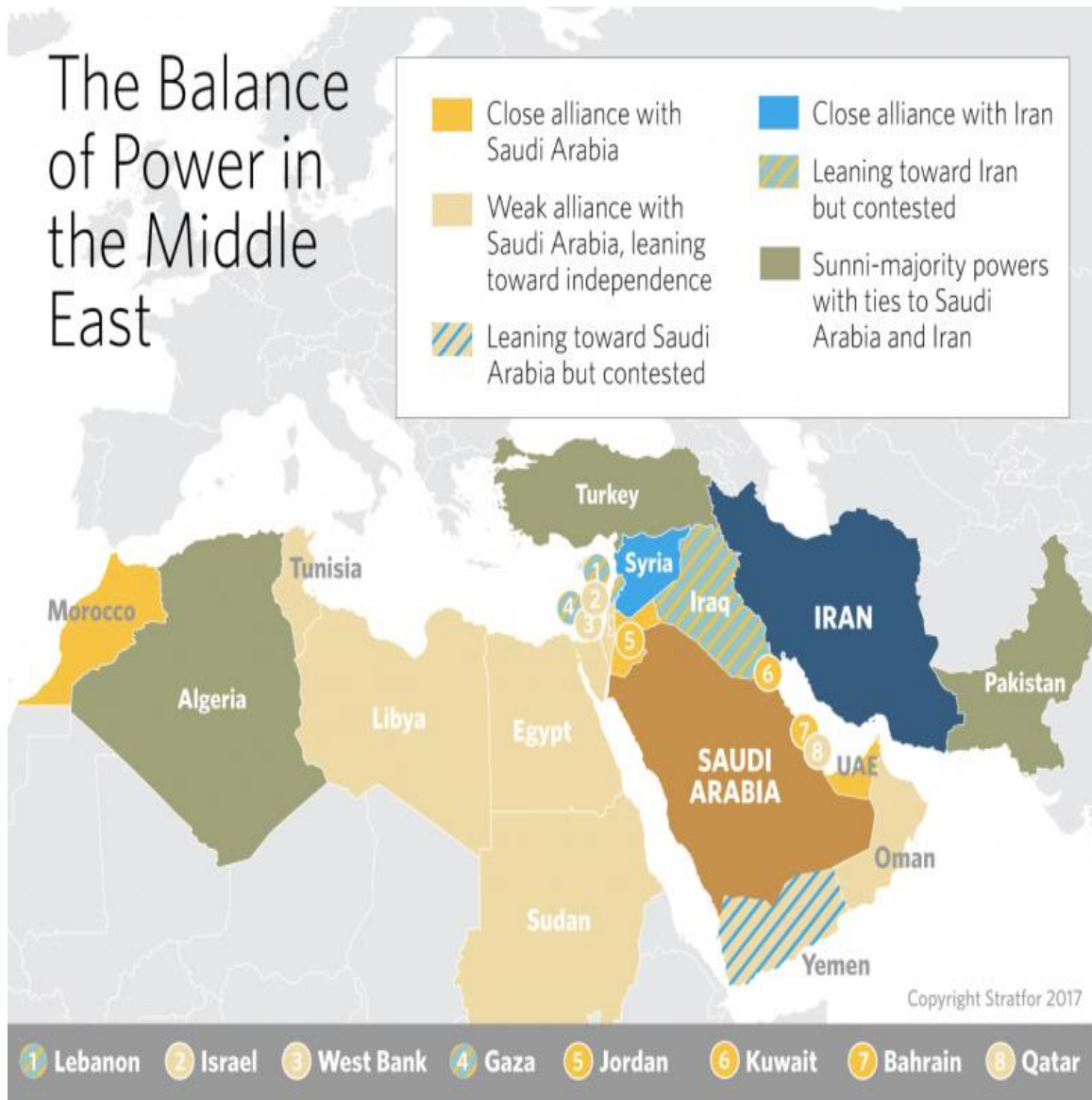
There are four significant powers, i.e., Israel, Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, in the Middle East region. The first three states are non-Arab powers while the latter is an Arab power mostly representing the whole Middle Eastern Arab population and Gulf region in particular. All these regional players are cautious about their role in the region, speculating on regional issues at their lens.

However, Saudi Arabia, the place of birth of Islam and the custodian of two holy places, i.e., Macca and Medina, claims its supremacy over the Muslim world and particularly over the Middle East region. In the larger context, the Kingdom remained successful in grasping its position in the region, especially in the Gulf area and Sunni Muslim population, and faces no disagreement or opposition from regional Arab states soon.

However, Iran is the primary opponent of Saudi Arabia in the region as both rivals are strongly divided by sectarian religious ideology. Saudi-Iran rivalry imprints profound impact on Middle Eastern Politics. Further, regional conflicts among Middle Eastern states over natural resources and striving for regional hegemony led to protracted political instability and security threat to the region, leading to the emergence of non-state actors. Non-state actors like al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, Muslim Brotherhood, and Islamic State strive for regime change, space for political and social rights.

Hence, hostility among regional states and particularly between Saudi Arabia and Iran's repeated calls and struggle for regime change by non-state actors (extremist groups) has much disturbing regional stability. This chapter discusses Saudi Arabia's strive for power in the Middle East region in light of the ongoing Middle Eastern situation.

**Figure 3-01 Balance of Power in the Middle East**



**Source Internet**

<https://worldview.stratfor.com>

Figure 3.1, Shows Middle Eastern states' ties with Saudi Arabia and Iran. Only the Syrian regime but not as a whole is closely tied with Iran, while some of its portions are tied with Saudi Arabia. Iraq, Lebanon, Gaza, and Yemen are the contested areas between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Morocco, Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain, and UAE are closely tied with

Saudi Arabia, while Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Oman, West Bank, Israel, and Qatar are in a weak alliance with the Saudi Kingdom independence.

### **3.1 Saudi-Iran Rivalry:**

The Middle East region is under the influence of two primary opponents, i.e., Saudi Arabia and Iran, for many decades, particularly since the Iranian Revolution of 1979. However, both Saudi Arabia and Iran are Muslim states. Before the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and particularly during 1950-1979, both Saudi Arabia and Iran were allies under the United States' twin pillar diplomacy. Both friends ensured the safe flow of oil to the West from the Middle East region. However, the Iranian Revolution of 1979 caused an ideological division between them. Moghadam sees ideologies and instruments of competition and conflict because they are links between thoughts, beliefs, myths, and action, helping preserve political power(Moghadam, 2018).

**Table 3-1 Military expenditure in GDP by country from 2013 to 2018**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Year-wise Military Expenditure at % GDP</b>					
	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>
Saudi Arabia	25.3%	26.6%	32.7%	25.5%	30.7%	24.6%
Iran	15.6%	14.8%	15.4%	15.2%	16.0%	15.8%
Turkey	5.7%	5.7%	5.5%	5.9%	6.1%	7.1%
Israel	14.7%	15.3%	15.0%	12.2%	11.4%	11.1%

Source SIPRI

<https://www.sipri.org>

Table 3-1 shows the annual military expenditures of Middle Eastern powers of the last six years. The data indicates a slight increase in Saudi Arabia's military Expenditure during the last six years, with an average of 27.56 % of its GDP.

Although Saudi Arabia for a period believed that Iran's new post-Revolutionary political structure may not affect its relationship with Iran because now their ideology is based on Islamic principles which may further strengthen their ties, the situation was different for the former because the founder of the revolution challenged Saudi model of Islamic regime type.

Friends of the past are now enemies, if not enemies but hostile of the present because revolutionary Iran is against the Saudi monarchy regime type and intends to extend the Middle East region's revolution. Following the revolution, Iran has intended for Muslim unity to create other Islamic republics, but it is unable to incite non-Shia Muslims against their governments (Weddington, 2017).

Moreover, after the Iranian Revolution and up till now, religious sectarianism remained the prominent bone of confrontation between both (Saudi Arabia & Iran) as Iran is an Islamist Shia theocracy. At the same time, Saudi Arabia is a Sunni "Wahhabi" fundamentalist state. Their role in the region profoundly portrays sectarianism, whether for a social and political cause or in the economic sector, or regional issues. Religious sectarianism has become a political tool for regional hegemons (Diansaei, 2018).

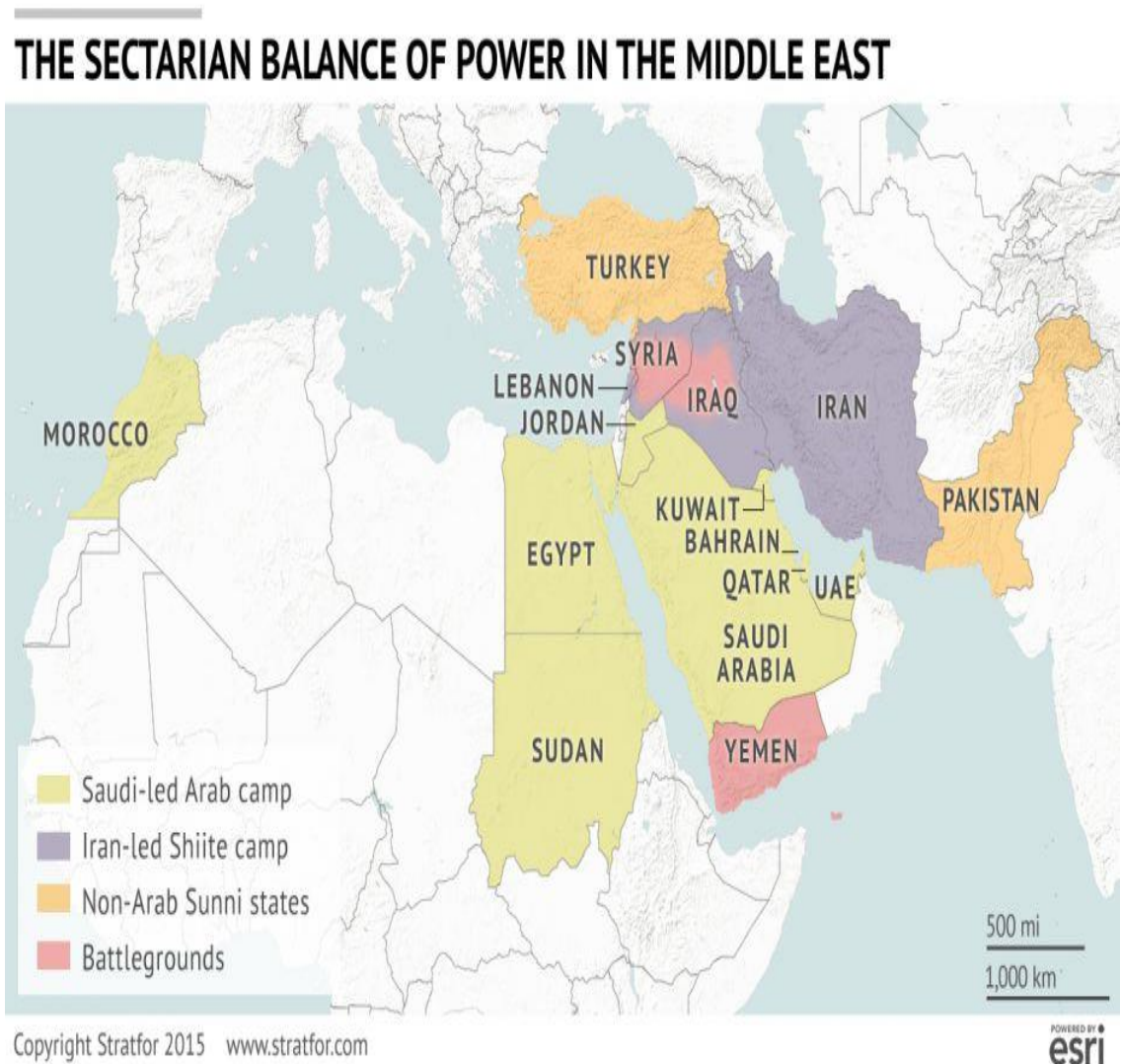
Iran and Saudi Arabia have used different methods in promoting sectarianism in the region. Iran is active in the region by protecting and supporting "Shiaism." At the same time, Saudi Arabia sees its growing influence exploitation of Sunni Muslims majority, thus protecting Sunnis from its influence. Moreover, Iran is also seeking partners struggling to mobilize and protect its Shias minority in the region against the United States-led Israel's and Saudi Arabia's influence in the Middle East.

However, since the United States has imposed sanctions on Iran. Saudi Arabia is succeeding in establishing relations with Arab countries in the region, especially Qatar. Because one of the reasons for the differences between Saudi Arabia and Qatar was Iran.



Unfortunately, both rivals are victims of sectarianism and the whole region is suffering the consequences. Saudi Arabia and Iran - two powerful neighbors - are locked in a fierce struggle for regional dominance. The decades-old feud between them is exacerbated by religious differences. They each follow one of the two main branches of Islam - Iran is largely Shia Muslim, while Saudi Arabia sees itself as the leading Sunni Muslim power.

**Figure 3-2 Sectarian Balance of Power in the Middle East**



Source [www.stratfor.com](http://www.stratfor.com)

Figure (3-2), indicates Sectarian Balance of Power in the Middle East region. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Sudan, Egypt, and Morocco are Saudi led Arab Camp, whereas Iran, Iraq, and Syria are Iran led Shiite camp. Pakistan and Turkey are non-Arab Sunni states standing between Iran and Saudi camps. Besides, Yemen, Iran, Syria are the battleground areas influenced by both camps.

Apart from the role of religion in the region and its impact on Middle Eastern socio-political and economic conditions, the struggle for the region's leader (regional hegemonic power) has also created tensions among leaderships. Once Iraq under Saddam Hussain was also a regional hegemon, fought the war against Iran and invaded Kuwait. However, his power was demolished in 2003 when he turned against the world superpower and threatened its ally, i.e., Saudi Arabia. Before 2003, Iraq was a military threat for the GCC states, particularly Saudi Arabia (Kostiner, 2010).

The Saudi Kingdom remained successful in demolishing Saddam's power in Iraq through the United States. The Saudi Kingdom no longer faces any threat from Iraq but must focus on Iran if it becomes a nuclear power (A.H Cordesman, Nawaf Obaid, 2004). However, the Arab states also see Iran as a beneficiary of Saddam's fall in Iraq (El-Hokayem and Matteo Legrenzi, 2006). Iran's growing influence in the region is a continuous tension for Arab states and particularly for Saudi Arabia. Although both have not fought any direct war yet, the cold war between both opponents is continued. Following regional conspiracy, Iran has established its presence in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and threatened Saudi security by interfering and supporting Yemeni Houthis in particular (Arosoaie, 2015).

The economic conditions of both rivals may deter direct war between both states in the future. However, the former would contain the latter through its continuing influence in the region, particularly in the Arab world, because longstanding regional issues have opened the way for Iran to intervene and influence. In Syria, Bashar-ul-Asad is yet successful in securing his power under Iran and Russia's umbrella despite the Saudi efforts to overthrow his regime.

Saudi Arabia stands with anti-Asad forces and supports the Syrian rebel's cause at every forum. On the other hand, Iran is alleged for supporting Houthi forces in Yemen against Saudi forces and its allies. Diansaei (2018) has observed the Saudi attack over Yemen reaction to Iran's role in the region and its support for the Zaidi Shia minority in Yemen. However, Yemen's prolonged war is an immediate external threat to Saudi Arabia (Yoel Guzansky and Erez Striem, 2015).

Besides, Saudi Arabia sees Iran as a non-Arab state. Its role in the regional player's context is unacceptable for the Arab states, which further led to ethnic division in the region. Ethnic clashes among Middle Eastern masses, particularly the concept of "Arab" and "non-Arab," is another severe hindrance after sectarian division because the Arabs consider themselves superior to non-Arabs. The Arab world concept of nationalism differs from the western concept of nationalism. Saudi Arabia believes in religious nationalism, wherein Both Wahhabi and non-Wahhabi groups within the Saudi Kingdom enjoy different citizenship. Saudi Arabia is carefully watching its non-Wahhabi citizens, including the Shia minority. The non-Wahhabi Saudi nationals are deprived of holding any top position in the Kingdom.

### **3.2 The Rise and Role of Non-State Actors in the Middle East:**

The Middle East's history is full of violent clashes, including inter-state wars, civil wars, insurgencies, revolutions, coups, foreign invasions, and racial and sectarian disputes. Competition for regional hegemony, whether longstanding rivalries such as Iran vs Iraq or more recent rivalries such as Iran vs the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is a fact of life in the international system and is especially evident in this area (Khan, 2011). As part of the hegemonic rivalry, as part of a move to revise or preserve the status quo, states fund militant gangs. Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Libya are failed or collapsing states due to civil wars and the use of armed force by external powers, offering refuge for many of the most extreme and resilient militant non-state actors, along with the vast spectrum of drug groups and war profiteers.

Several states in the region have no control over the use of force within their territories. That means, at least for the time being, that the VNSAs have a crucial and decisive

influence over the direction of political activities in the region. In reality, the current extent and existence of violence in the area seem to weaken the state's control even more. Life in the Middle East seems to be much shorter, even harsher, and seemingly bleaker, to paraphrase Hobbes.

Many groups work in the shadows of the broader Islamic mass movements and represent more established VNSAs such as Hamas or Hezbollah as strategic paramilitary allies. Generally, the essence of their affiliation is purposely concealed to give the political wing of the parent party a degree of political protection.

Due to problems that can be traced back to the colonial period, the Middle East's situation has been incredibly precarious. The interstate and intra-state rivalries that have spun out of balance owing to international interference are accentuated by imprudently defined state boundaries, unsettled tensions like Palestine, and ethno-religious schisms.

After 9/11, which subsequently painted the 2003 Iraq war in theological shades, militant radical Islam gained new dimensions. From Lebanon to Pakistan, a recent wave of radicalization is evident across the country, culminating in non-state actors' rise. Only implementing regional strategies by international actors will pacify the raging conflict in and throughout the Middle East. For the entire region, any more external involvement will have disastrous repercussions.

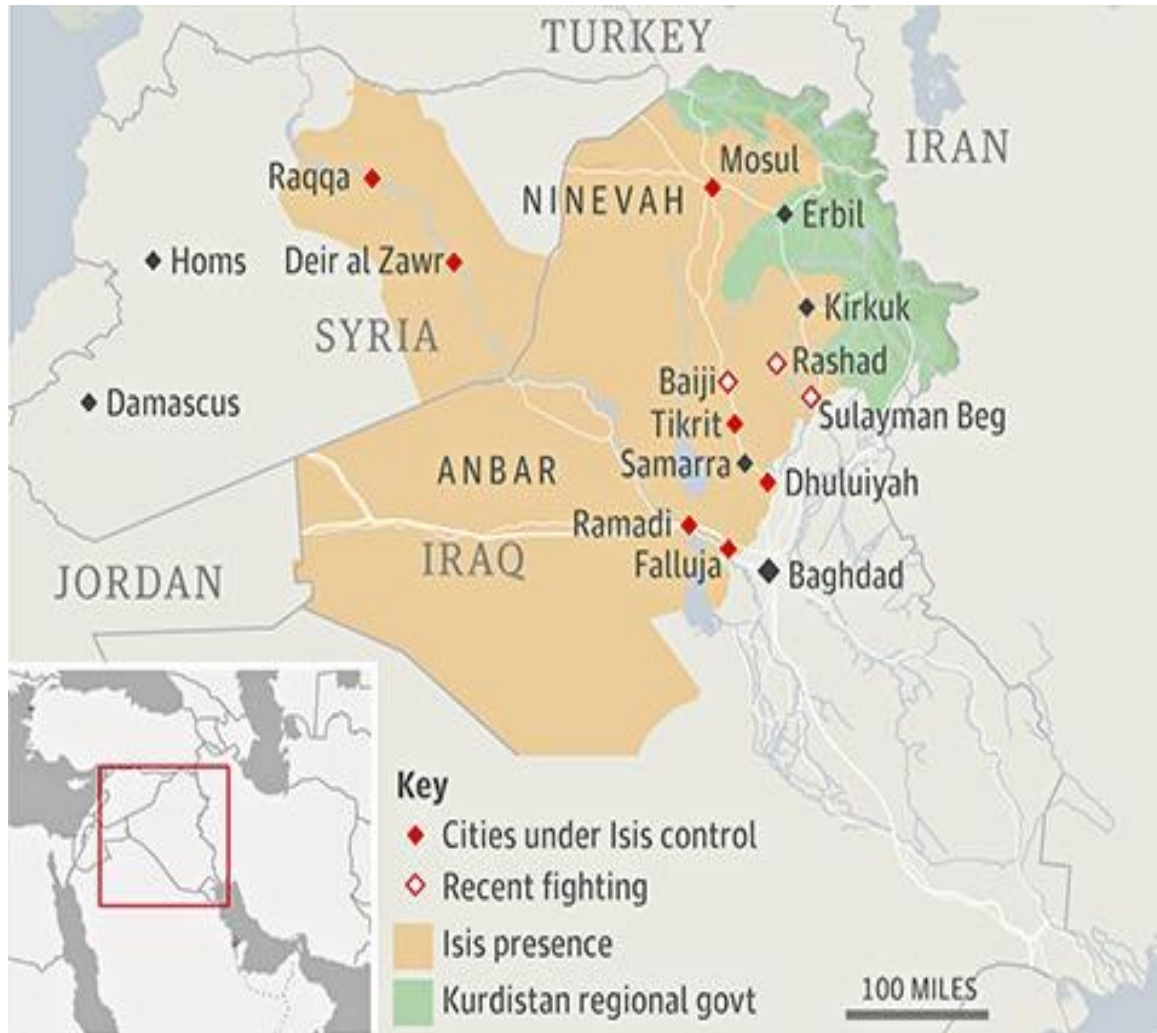
There are a variety of groups that operate in the shadows of the larger Islamic mass movements and serve as strategic paramilitary partners for more established VNSAs such as Hamas or Hezbollah. The nature of their affiliation is generally intentionally obscured to grant some level of political immunity to the political wing of its parent group.

The proliferation of non-state actors securing sovereign powers over chunks of territory that formally belong to states has been a feature of the region for the last two decades, and it deserves attention because it speaks to instances of marginalization that need to be addressed, for example in the case of the Kurds or the Palestinians. The Arab state therefore faces significant challenges that are both structural (challenges that all states face) and contingent (the high levels of conflict in the region since 2003 which have deepened following the 2011 uprisings). Fragmentation, however, is not always linked to

the rise of actors with a transnational and/or sectarian agenda. It is also not limited to ethnic groups traditionally seeking to create their own state – the Kurds, the Saharawis or the Palestinians.

Arab youth seek a new order that will give them more economic-political opportunities (Murphy, 2013). The Middle East region has proved a haven for non-state actors due to the region's longstanding political instability and internal conflicts. The emergence of non-state actors and their active role in the region is the outcome of many factors like the political system of Middle Eastern states, restricted human rights, and the imposition of sharia in a real sense.

### **Figure 03-3Islamic State in the Middle East**



Source Internet

<https://www.maps.com/world/2014/jun/12/iraq-isis-kirkuk-baghdad-kurdish-government>

Figure (3-3) shows overall presence of Islamic State in the Middle East region. Raqqa, Ninevah, Mosul, Tikrit, Dhuluiyah, Ramadi, Falluja, and Deir al Zawr are the cities under ISIS control. Rashad, Sulayman Beg, and Baiji are the cities wherein ISIS is fighting. Iraq and Syria is center of ISIS.

In today's modern world, democracy is the most favorite political system, particularly in the western world. All citizens within the state have the right to select their leadership according to their choice. However, the Middle Eastern political system is mostly shaped by the authoritarian system of monarchy where the ordinary citizen has no right to vote, raise a voice for his/her rights, and comment or participates in any decision-making.

Moreover, the citizens of Middle Eastern states have also limited or restricted human rights compared with other citizens of the countries in the world. They are deprived of rights like political rights, freedom of speech; hold a high position in public institutions, etc. Rising voice for rights or criticisms against the state is strongly discouraged by authoritarian rulers or monarchs in the Middle Eastern states.

N. J. Brown, A. Hamzawy & M. Attaway (2006) have observed the rise of Islamist movements as a matter of great concern for secular Arab's and western governments. These movements are not only political actors but religious organizations as well. Non-state actors like Al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, and the Muslim Brotherhood have played a significant role in regional and world politics during the past, particularly during the Cold War and the USSR-Afghan war. Al-Qaeda remained influential in regional and global issues relevant to religion for a long time due to regional and external powers' support. Once, the Saudi Kingdom remained under criticism and accused of Al-Qaeda funding and support.

After the USSR's withdrawal from Afghanistan, mostly Al-Qaeda Mujahideen shifted to Yemen. Even those Mujahideen who were not accepted by their parent states also settled in Yemen. Further, Al-Qaeda turned against Saudi Arabia when the Kingdom joined the United States alliance against the global War on Terror. L. Plotkin (2018) has observed Saudi Arabia's aggressive policies against terrorist groups as an outcome of Al-Qaeda activities inside the Kingdom because its presence in the region has threatened the Kingdom's security and attacked the Kingdom several times in 2003.

The 9/11 incident and US-Saudi alliance against counter-terrorism resulted in the gap between Al-Qaeda and the Saudi Kingdom, and now it faces dire threats from al-Qaeda internally. The Saudi Kingdom remained under pressure during the wave of Arab uprisings in 2011 in the region. Four factors, i.e., buying loyalty, deployment of loyal and trained forces, mobilization of regime patronage networks, and the divide among reformers, contributed to the Saudi Kingdom's stability in uprisings (F. Gregory, 2011). Although the Al-Saud regime remained safe from the recent wave of Arab Uprisings, the Kingdom still feels its aftershocks. Zaman (2015) argued that the rise of new non-state

actors, including the Islamic State in the region, is a more significant threat than al-Qaeda. Any foreign intervention to suppress these non-state actors will be a big mistake.

Another positive factor that favored the Saudi Kingdom was the nature of protests because the protests inside Saudi Arabia were different from other Middle Eastern and North African states. The protesters in states like Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Yemen demanded regime change, while protestors in Saudi Arabia demanded reforms instead of the King's overthrow (Khalid, 2016).

The Arab uprisings and political instability in the region led to the emergence of the Islamic State. Both Riyadh and Washington have recognized the Islamic State as a severe threat to Middle Eastern security and stability (Nazer, 2014). Saudi Arabia sees Islamic State as an existential threat as it calls for transnational movement despite the fact the Kingdom aligned with Sunni Islamist radical forces in the past (Frideman, 2015). The Islamic State's role in the region is different compared to Al-Qaeda because the latter remained limited to guerrilla warfare and a terrorist organization. In contrast, the former remained successful in maintaining its grasp in Syria and Iraq by occupying land and unifying military (rebellion) force. Saudi Arabia's support for Sunni rebels in Syria is an output of its rivalry with Iran (Arosoaie, 2015).

### **3.3 Saudi Arabia Strive for Power in the Middle East:**

Saudi Arabia is neither fragile nor all-powerful (F. Gregory, 2011). The Kingdom is facing multiple threats at present. These threats are both internal and external. Wechsler has observed three existential threats, i.e., leadership transition, need for revolutionary reforms, and Iran (Wechsler, 2018), while Gregory has identified three issues, i.e., rapid royal succession, fiscal squeeze, and high unemployment of youth that could cause political crises in Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, he also sees these challenges in the long term rather than an immediate threat (F. Gregory, 2011).

Besides internal socio-political and economic challenges, the Kingdom is also tackled regionally due to its hostility with Iran. Other internal pressures the Al-Saud regime is facing are including space for a public voice in decision making, particularly from Saudi



youth, unemployment, minorities particularly Shia minority, domestic extremism within the country, and economic challenges. The Kingdom is in trouble as the economy cannot pace with population growth, rapid deterioration, and rise in regional and sectarian resentments (Doran, 2004).

Keeping in mind any untoward domestic incident or principal dissident, the Saudi Kingdom has kept an eye on its citizens since the 9/11 incident and particularly since Arab uprisings in the region. Peter Henne, Sarabrynn Hudgins & Timothy Samuel Shah (2012) have emphasized that the Saudi monarchy repressed any dissent ruthlessly, whether from Islamists, liberal reformists, or Shia minority. The Kingdom has also restricted religious expression through religious Police on all citizens, which indicates that the Kingdom, throughout its history, has countered voices like freedom for speech and human rights, particularly voices raised from non-Wahhabi groups.

However, such repression policies would not work in the long run, and the Kingdom must opt for alternate as (Wechsler 2018) suggests that demographic realities make reforms and modernization essential for Saudi Arabia because internal insurgency within the Kingdom would call external groups to intervene. Obaid (2014) argued that Saudi Arabia must revisit its national defense and military strategies if the Kingdom intends for the regional Arab leader and be well organized and prepared for the upcoming challenges both internal and external.

Muhammad Bin Salman's vision of 2030, aims to diversify the country's economy and implement significant social and cultural reforms. If his vision is fully implemented, it will lead to a significant transformation in the Kingdom (Habibi). The critical factor behind Muhammad Bin Salman's vision of 2030 was the poor performance of previous governments' development plans. The previous governments failed in stabilizing the country's economy, and they mostly relied on the country's oil resources, and the Kingdom lacks non-oil economic sectors. Even the present Kingdom's non-oil economic sectors are charged from the oil economy.

Muhammad Bin Salman's vision of 2030 includes developing non-oil economic sectors, which may support the country's revenue and reduce its dependency on oil. Besides, a

decrease in oil prices worldwide and a decrease in Saudi oil resources poses dire challenges for the Kingdom in the future, which may profoundly impact the country's economy if no alternate initiatives were taken. However, Muhammad Bin Salman is facing criticism due to his recent initiatives for social reforms and reviewing Saudi nationalism in the light of his vision in 2030.

Following his vision 2030, the crown prince taken tough decisions against opponents, even some opponents were put behind bars, but despite the fact the output of reforms is slow. Moreover, steps like social and political reforms can be seen in the Kingdom's history but never implemented due to disagreement between the ruling family and pressure from religious clerks of the Kingdom.

In addition to internal problems, regional issues and the ongoing unrest are greatly influencing Muhammad bin Salman's vision. The presence of world powers in the region will not allow any country to do as it desire, in these circumstances. In addition, the region's problems are complex, requiring a long time to resolve.

### **3.4 Saudi's Military Position in the Middle East:**

Military power is the core element of state's power. Although state's economy is also important but military strength is the visible factor. Moreover, advanced military capabilities enable the state to implement its agenda the way it desires. The world powerful states have inherited both economic and military power as well. These both factors are interdependent and important to achieve desired policy goals.

For decades, Saudi Arabia has sought to increase its military power. With the increase in military power, Saudi Arabia has also signed agreements with several Western countries to buy modern weapons. The United States tops the list. Although some countries have threatened to cancel the agreement with Saudi Arabia over human rights violations in the Saudi-Yemen war. But not only did the United States continue to support Saudi Arabia in this war, but Saudi Arabia bought a record number of weapons during the Trump administration.

### **Table 3-2 Comparison of Saudi Military with other Regional Powers**

<b>Country Name</b>	<b>Active Military</b>	<b>Reserve Military</b>	<b>Paramilitary</b>
Saudi Arabia	230 000	325 000	24,500
Iran	550 000	350 000	640,000
Turkey	355,200	378,700	156,800
Israel	176,500	465,000	8,000

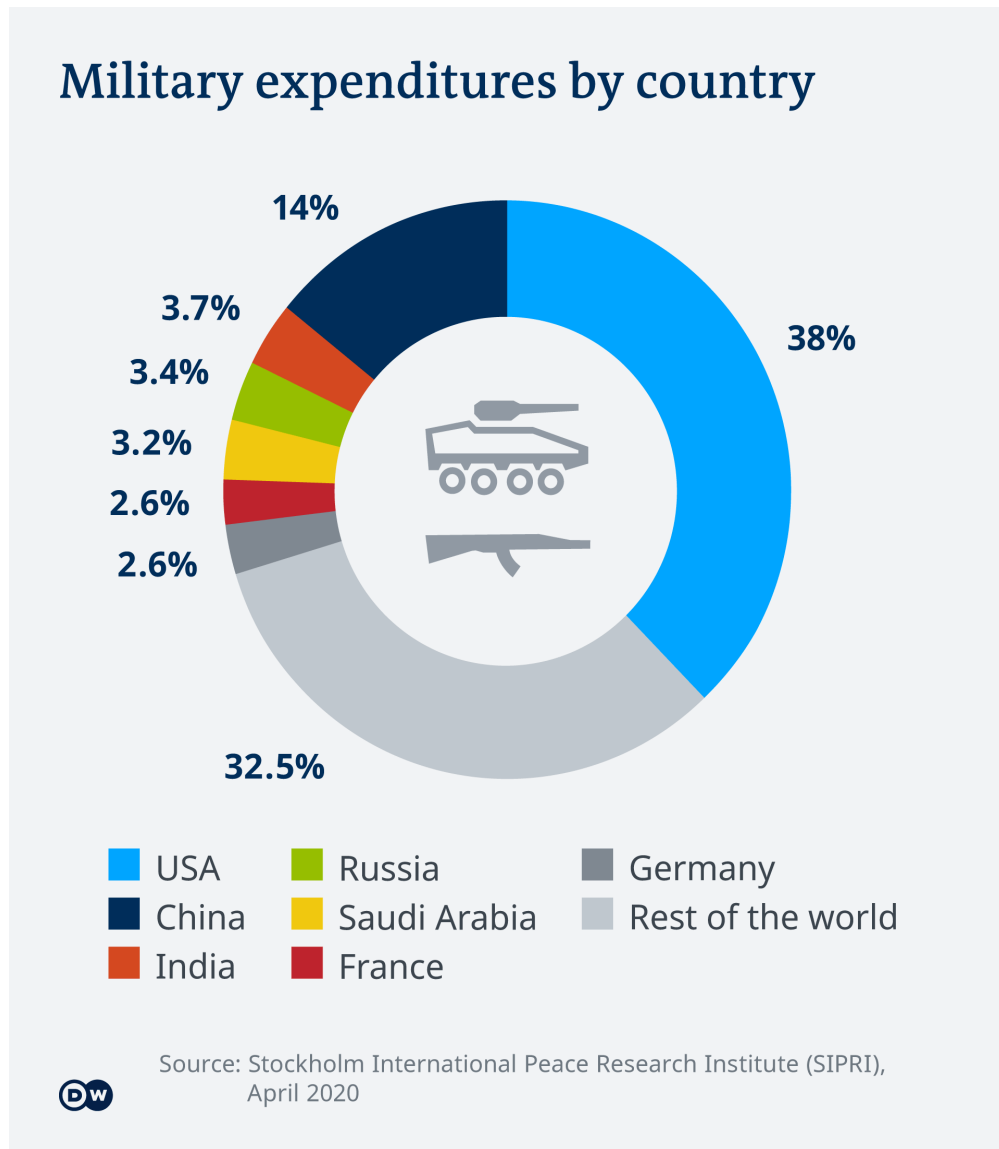
Source SPRI

<https://www.sipri.org>

Saudi Arabia has been the world's second-largest arms importer for the past few years. US-Saudi is historically security partners. The US has provided security assistance to Saudi Arabia in defense, National Guard and Ministry of Interior. The US is also providing assistance to Saudi Arabia in education, trade and economic development. Saudi Arabia is the biggest buyer of U.S weapons (KEITH JOHNSON, 2020).

Although Saudi Arabia is somewhat economically prosperous, it needs to be militarily strong to become a leader in the region. The steps that Saudi Arabia has taken so far to increase its military strength are insufficient for its own internal security. There has been no war between Iran and Saudi Arabia so far, both are just ideological rivals. So far, no country in the region has opposed Saudi Arabia in practice. The way Iran has been opposed for years. If this happens to Saudi Arabia, the Saudis will not be able to defend themselves. On the other hand, the Saudi army is not as fully professional as the armies of other countries, nor has its army fought a war in practice. Except for the Yemen war and that too has become a headache for them.

**Figure 3-04 Top Military Expenditure States in the World**



**Source SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute)**

<https://www.sipri.org>

According to SIPRI data of the year 2020 (shown in figure 3.4), the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia holds the 5<sup>th</sup> position for Military Expenditure in the world.

**a. Saudi’s Military comparison with regional States:**

Since, few years Saudi Arabia is active to increase its military strength. Saudi Arabia has a \$70 billion annual defense budget plus a \$30 billion security-related budget from other

ministries (Carvalho, 2019). Saudi Arabia ranks first in the region and second in the world in military and defense spending. There are many reasons for this. One is the dream of becoming regional power.

The second reason is the bad relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran and their interference in the problems of the region. The third reason is the ongoing war in the region, which has engulfed the entire region. The fourth reason is the emergence of non-state actors in the region whose actions pose internal threats to countries.

**Table 3-3 Comparison of Saudi Military Strength**

<b>Country Name</b>	<b>Active Military</b>	<b>Reserve Military</b>	<b>Paramilitary</b>
Saudi Arabia	230 000	325 000	24,500
Iran	550 000	350 000	640,000
Turkey	355,200	378,700	156,800
Israel	176,500	465,000	8,000

Source SPRI

<https://www.sipri.org>

In addition to military power, Saudi Arabia faces other problems. These include unemployment, human rights organizations, and external forces promoting democracy are also key threats, which have forced countries like Saudi Arabia to make internal and external security more effective to deal with any such threat. In the Middle East, especially in the Arab world, Saudi Arabia faces the same problems. Muhammad bin Salman also needs to pay full attention to these issues.

**b. Saudi-Iran Military Strength:**

The Kingdom has taken many steps to increase its security apparatus. Although the Kingdom is not facing any threat from Iraq after Saddam Hussain's fall, Iran is a greater risk and challenge if it became a nuclear power.

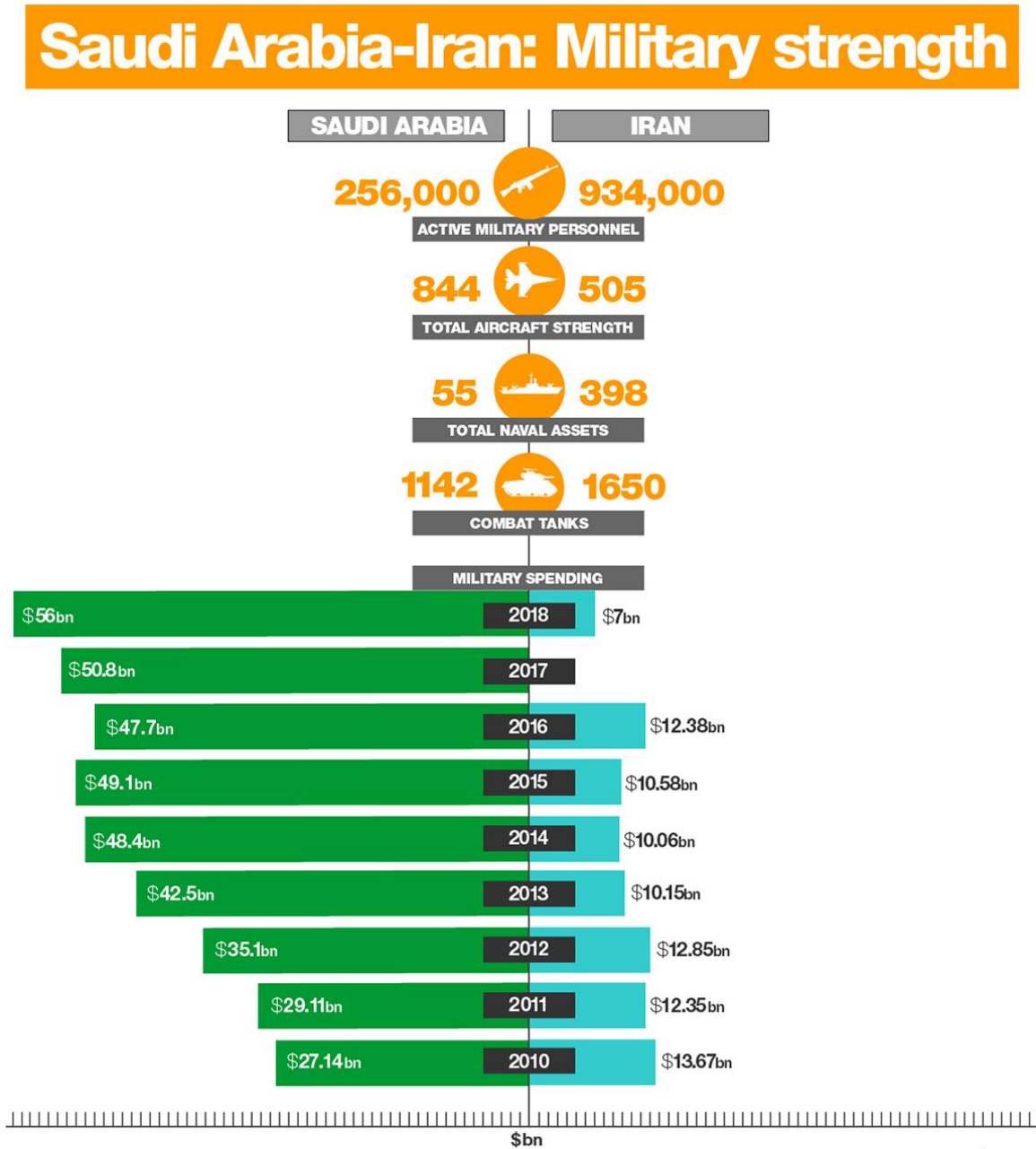
The fight for supremacy in the Middle East between Iran and Saudi Arabia has implied itself into almost every regional problem, splitting foreign alliances and maintaining conflicts throughout the region, raising concerns of a confrontation between the two powers that will include the United States. Since Mohammed bin Salman, the influential son of King Salman known as MBS, was named crown prince in 2017, Saudi Arabia has strengthened its regional adventurism.

Moreover, it has cracked down on its domestic opponents, including the Saudi consulate's vicious assassination in Istanbul of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in October 2018. That had no impact on the strong relations of the crown prince to the Trump administration, however. Washington, eager to overthrow the Iranian government, pulled out of Tehran's nuclear pact and used its economic leverage to suffocate the Iranian economy, taking both countries to the verge of war in January.

The newly elected president, Joe Biden, has vowed to reconcile with Iran diplomatically and support human rights, a core pillar of his foreign policy. The possible consequences are essential for U.S. partners in the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia. Besides, during Trump's era, the kingdom was successful to import Arms from the United States to empower its forces with modern weapons. However, Trump's defeat in the recent elections may have an impact on Saudi Arabia.

Moreover, Trump's defeat in recent elections is also good news for Iran. There is possibility that the newly elected US president may not isolate Iran by removing economic sanctions. If Iran succeeds in establishing relations with the United States, it will be bad news for Saudi Arabia.

Figure 03-5 Saudi-Iran Military Strength



@AJLabs



Source: Al Jazeera, Globalfirepower, SIPRI, Trading Economics, Janes  
 Updated: April 25, 2018



Source SIPRI  
<https://www.sipri.org>

### **3.5 Saudi Arabia and Regional Issues/Wars:**

Saudi Arabia is playing a key role in the regional issues. However, this role is based on personal interests rather than peace in the region. The Saudi government is heavily involved in Bahrain's internal affairs, where a minority Sunni group rules a majority Shiite group. Although Iran seeks to overthrow the Bahraini government, it has so far failed in its mission.

Similarly, Syria, in which the civil war has been going on for a decade, in addition to the interference of both the opponents, their external partners are also interfering in Syrian Civil War. Saudi Arabia's ongoing war against Houthi rebels in Yemen awaits a final outcome. The decision to wage a Saudi war against the Houthis did not go well, and despite US support, Saudi Arabia did not win the war and the Houthis are not yet ready to give up. The Yemen conflict is mostly seen as a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran (AlJazeera, 2019).

Saudi-Iran rivalry has also an impact on regional issues. Both have taken sides according to their own national interests. In many areas one is supporting militant groups against government whereas, in some areas is supporting the ruling party against the militant groups. For example, in the Yemen case Iran is supporting Houthis against the government whereas the Saudi Kingdom is supporting Yemeni government. Similarly, in Syria, Iran is supporting Assad's regime and Saudi Arabia is favoring the militant groups against Syrian government. They both have adopted this policy in the case of Iraq and Behrain.

One of the key factors of longstanding regional issues in the Middle East is Saudi-Iran attitude colored with their ethnic and sectarian ideologies. Their colliding policies have pushed the region in unrest and the common person has suffered a lot. Besides, their own national interests, both rivals are also active to protect the interest of their allies i.e. United States, Russia, and China.



## **CHAPTER-4**

# **SAUDI ARABIA DEPENDENCY ON UNITED STATES**

### **Overview:**

In the Middle East region, Saudi Arabia is the prolonged ally of the United States. Their relationship reflects political, economic, and strategic interests in the region. Middle East region is under the influence of power politics for many decades. Both internal and external players are active in the region. States like Saudi Arabia and Iran are striving for regional hegemony under external players' umbrella, i.e., the United States and Russia, respectively.

These external players are involved in regional issues directly or indirectly to grasp their political, economic, and strategic interests. Further, tensions among regional states, particularly Saudi Arabia and Iran, and regional conflicts have created space for these external players to influence regional issues. The US-Saudi partnership remained significant for both allies to secure their policy goals in the region. During the cold war era, both allies push backed communist agenda in the Middle East, and again Saudi Arabia played a crucial role in the global War on Terror.

On the other hand, Iran has well built its military muscles as compared to Saudi Arabia. If war erupted between both revivals, the latter might even hardly defend its Kingdom without external support, particularly from the United States. Hence, internal and external threats from terrorists and religious extremist groups to the Kingdom have pushed the Al-Saud regime dependent on the United States. This chapter discusses Saudi dependency on the United States due to its weak security position in light of the Middle East's current regional politics.

**Table 4-1 Military Expenditure in Millions of USD**

Country	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Iran	11997.2	9901.1	10588.8	12264.0	13931.2	13194.2
Israel	17319.7	18485.8	16969.4	14783.8	15581.6	15946.8
Saudi Arabia	67020.0	80762.4	87185.9	63672.8	70400.0	67554.7
Turkey	18662.6	17772.2	15880.9	17854.0	17824.0	18967.1

Source SIPRI

<https://www.sipri.org>

Table 4.1 shows last five years military expenditures of Iran, Israel, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. There is a huge difference between Saudi's expenditures on military as compared with other regional players.

#### **4.1 US-Saudi Relations:**

The US-Saudi relationship is longstanding in the history of world politics. The founder of the Kingdom Al-Saud was the first who established relations with the United States soon after independence. The relationship was further strengthened during the period by the leadership of both states.

Two factors, i.e., Oil and Security, remained essential elements in the US-Saudi relationship. The United States needs Saudi oil that holds the world's second-largest oil reservoir, and Saudi Arabia needs security to defend the Kingdom both internally and externally. Hence, the United States was the best option for the Al-Saud regime to strengthen ties with the world superpower.

Although events like 9/11, US-Iran nuclear agreement, and the United States silence over Syrian crises were significant shifts both in the world and regional politics but despite the fact the Saudi Kingdom remained in alliance with the United States without seeking for alternate ally whether understanding between the leadership of both states was good or bad.

The reason behind Saudi tendency towards the United States is its support of the Kingdom. Whenever the former felt any internal or external threat, the latter protected its regional ally. Even in the past, United States armed forces were deployed in Saudi Arabia, particularly during the US-Iraq war. Moreover, if the recent hostility between US-Iran increased, the United States will deploy its forces in Saudi Arabia to avoid Iran's untoward adventure in the region. The Saudis see new American President Trump as an opportunity to enhance their relations and refill the gap created during the Obama era after Iran's nuclear deal (Al-Rasheed, 2017).

Relations between Saudi Arabia and the United States have improved under the Trump administration. Washington and Riyadh are entering a new phase of the relationship under the Trump Administration (Weddington, 2017). The main reason is the current tensions between the United States and Iran.

The Saudi government is happy with the US sanctions on Iran. And sanctions on Iran are expected to be lasting for peace in the region. However, Iran and the United States have their own problems. In the past, Obama has also struck a nuclear deal with Iran, which Trump canceled. This proves that the United States builds relations with countries over time to achieve its interests, not peace in the region.

#### **4.2 Tensions between Saudi Arabia and the United States:**

Although the United States and Saudi Arabia are deep strategic partners in the region, there are still tensions between both allies. The involvement of Saudi nationals in the 9/11 attacks, which was the major incident in United States history, imprinted a negative impression on US-Saudi relations.

Saudi Arabia's immediate initiative against Al-Qaeda within the Kingdom and in the region was an effort to refill the gap. However, the 9/11 incident was not the only factor of tension between both allies. Cordesman (2016), while discussing the US-Saudi relationship, has emphasized that United States ties to Israel and Saudi ties to Palestine, the 9/11 attacks and nuclear agreement between the United States and Iran has created tension between Saudi Arabia and the United States. Saudi Arabia was compelled to adopt a strong counter-terrorism stance due to increasing terrorist threats from Syria and Iraq (Arosoaie, 2015).

The longstanding Palestine issue is the major drawback of Saudi Arabia's policies, although the Kingdom has close ties with the United States. Further, the Kingdom has loosed its stance over the Palestine issue due to regional and world political changes. Moreover, the Kingdom remained under pressure during the period, particularly since the Arab Uprisings and US-Iran nuclear deal.

However, the United States President Trump's withdrawal from the nuclear agreement and its hostility with Iran has again provided an opportunity for Muhammad Bin Salman to grasp its ties with the Trump administration. Moreover, the current US-Iran tensions also favored the Al-Saud regime, which may easily convince the United States for Arms provision in the light of the US-Saudi Arms deal. The US-Iran current hostile situation may also curtail pressure on Trump for his Saudi support in the U.S. Senate as he recently faced. Besides, differences in socio-political and religious ideology imprint a negative impact on their relationship.

Trump's defeat in the recent US election is once again not good news for Saudi Arabia. Biden's party has previously criticized Trump's policy on Saudi Arabia due to its adventure in Yemen. Although, the Houthi rebels have repeatedly targeted critical Saudi infrastructure in recent months in cross-border attacks (AlJazeera, 2019), but it is said that Saudi attack on Yemen is the outcome of Trump's ineffective policy towards Middle East.

### **4.3 Factors led to U.S. Support of the Saudi Kingdom:**

Ariane M. Tabatabai and Becca Wasser (2018) have emphasized that US-Saudi relations were founded on two core interests, i.e., security and oil. Saudi Arabia is the second-largest oil reserve in the world. Its oil economy remained important for the United States, the primary oil purchaser of Saudi oil.

However, the United States no more relies on Saudi oil because the former now produces 12 % of world oil from its domestic resources and would become self-sufficient in the oil-based energy sector shortly. In comparison, Saudi Arabia produces about 13 % of world oil. The current situation indicates that oil was necessary for the United States in the past but not in the future. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia still needs the United States to support both internally and externally.

#### **i. Trusted Friend in the Region:**

US-Saudi alliance is a longstanding historical alliance in the world. Saudi Arabia played an important during the cold war era, which supported the United States in tackling the former USSR globally, particularly in the Middle East and even in the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan. The U.S. backed the Kingdom's support of Afghan Mujahideen and promoting the Islamic ideology of Jihad against the USSR in Afghanistan compelled the Russian forces to withdraw from Afghanistan. USSR's failure in Afghanistan and its disintegration left the United States the world superpower and transformed world political structure from bi-polarity into a unipolar world.

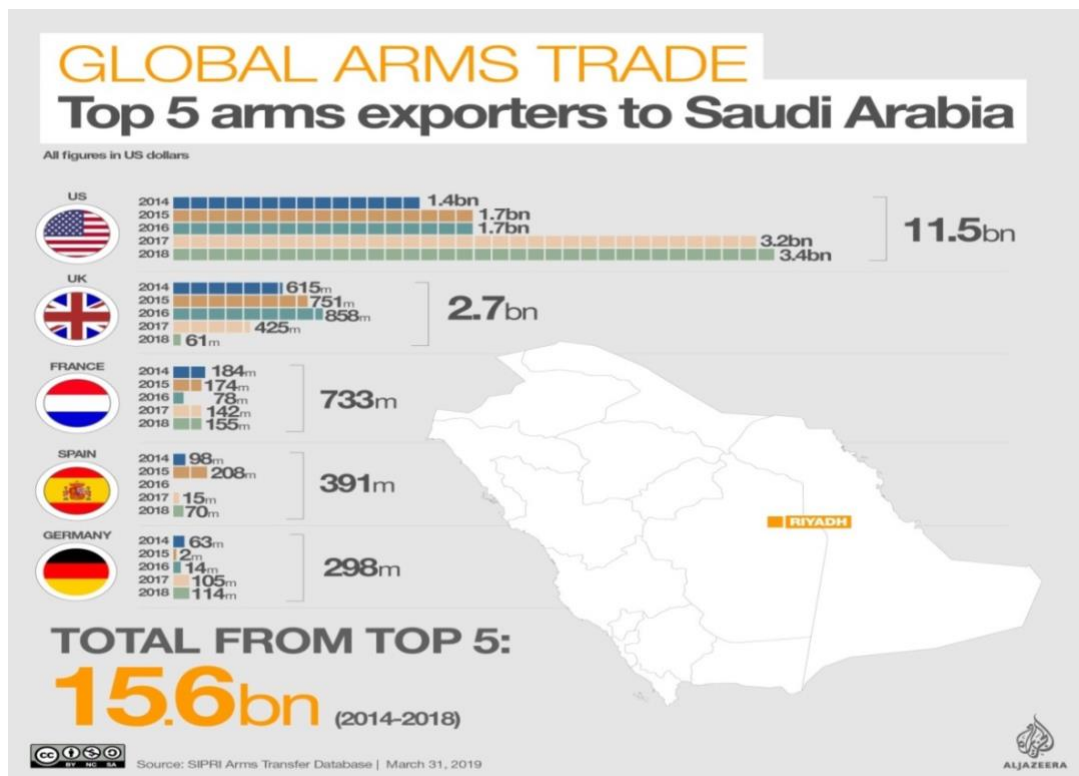
Again the Kingdom remained trustworthy to the United States when Al-Qaeda targeted the United States on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001. The Kingdom joined U.S. led alliance against Al-Qaeda by taking a U-turn, although the Al-Saud regime was the founder of the Al-Qaeda organization. Although the Kingdom is still facing dire threats, both internal and external, from Al-Qaeda due to its ties with the United States but the Kingdom feel secure under the umbrella of the United States. This Saudi loyalty leads to get support from the United States.

After the revolution in Iran, not only did Saudi Arabia openly oppose it, but also US-Iran relations are going in negative direction to a large extent. Saudi-US relations are essential to limiting Iran in the region.

**ii. U.S. Political and Economic Interests in the Region:**

The United States is vigilant about its world supremacy. Fearing the rise of any threat that would challenge its power, the United States is extra vigilant through allies worldwide. Both United States and Saudi Arabia tackled Saddam because they were aware that if they allowed Iraq to seize Kuwait, the region would be at risk, and Iran would conquer the Gulf, the most oil reserve of the world (Baalke, 2014). The Middle East is very important to the world powers. This is not only important in terms of oil but also a huge global market. According to the available data of last five years, Saudi Arabia is the second largest Arms purchaser in the world. Most of the Arms are supplied from the United States. Many times Trump himself has said that Saudi Arabia is important to us because it pays us for weapons.

**Figure 4-1 Saudi Arabia Global Arms Trade**



Source (SIPRI) <https://www.sipri.org>

Figure (4-1) shows top 5 Arms exporters to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. United States holds top position providing Arms to Saudi Arabia.

### **iii. The U.S. intended to tackle Iran and its allies through Saudi Arabia.**

In the Middle East region, Iran is the only remaining but main barrier in the United States to permanently land its forces in oil-rich areas of the region. The Middle East is an area that is mired in its own problems. Although the problems are their own created, it is impossible to solve these problems without a third force. Thus, both are seeking partners throughout the globe suiting their interests.

China is also reaching out in the Middle East. Chinese interest in the region resulted tensions for the United States. Although, Chinese approach is different as compared to United States and Russia but still the USA is threatened. China is interested to pursue economic policies in the region and looking for economic investment in the Middle East. Apparently, China is not taking sides in the regional issues

## **4.4 Factors led to Saudi Dependency on the United States:**

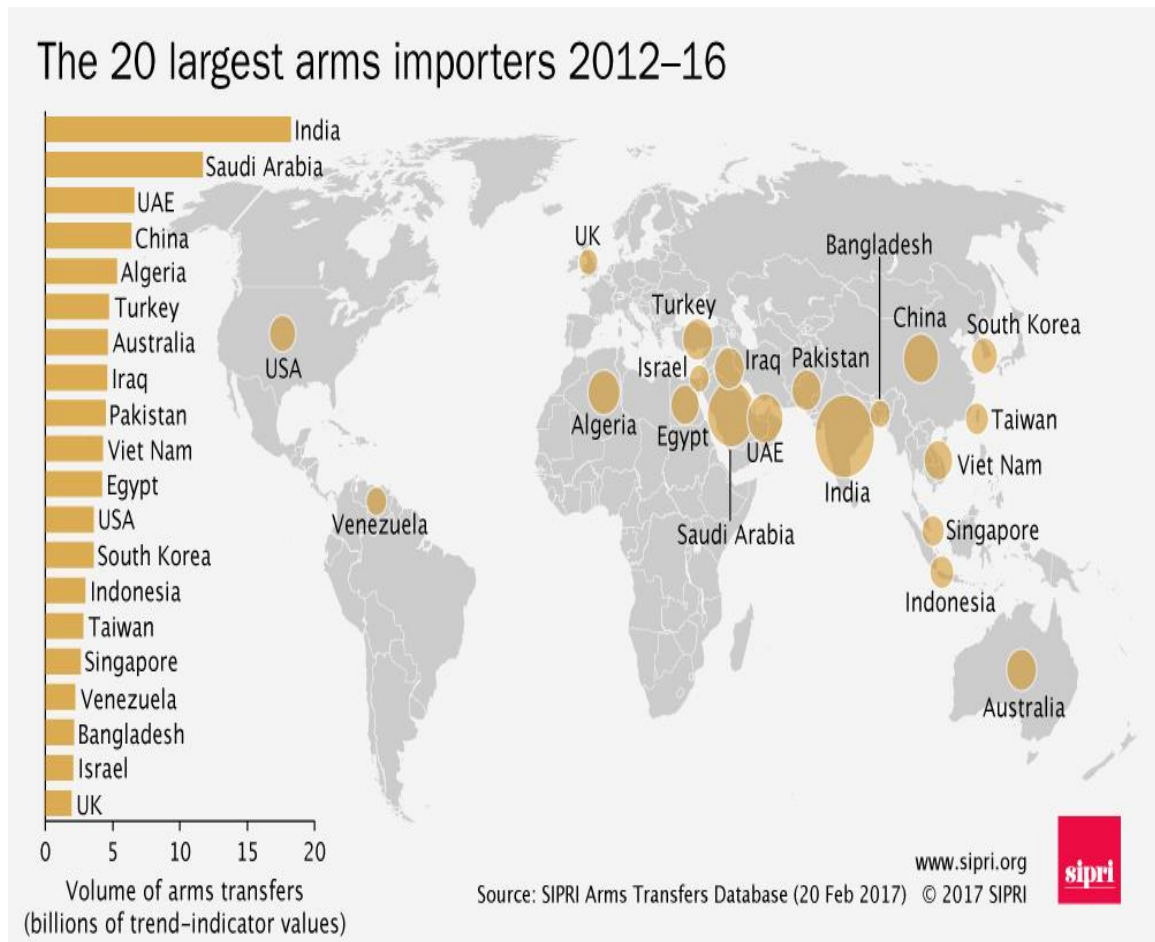
Donald Trump, the former president of the United States, while addressing a campaign rally in Mississippi, stated: "we protect Saudi Arabia." He further stated, "King Salman I love you and we protect you. You might not be there without us and you have to pay for your military".

United States President's statement indicates Al-Saud family dependency as the Kingdom did not officially respond to the statement. The United States is reportedly removing Patriot antimissile systems and other military assets from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as it winds down a military build-up that began when tensions with Iran flared up last year (Al-Jazeera, 2020).

Although Russian president Mr. Putin said, "We are ready to help Saudi Arabia and protect their people." "They need to make clever decisions, as Iran did by buying our

S300, as Mr. Erdogan did by deciding to buy the most advanced S400 air defense systems" (Karkpatrick, 2019). However, Muhammad Bin Salman may not turn towards Russia due to improvement in the US-Saudi relations during Trump's era. Even the Trump will not give this opportunity to Russia.

**Figure 04-2 Top 20 Arms Importer Countries**



Source SIPRI

<https://www.sipri.org>

Figure 4.2 indicates that Saudi Arabia remained at 2<sup>nd</sup> position among the 20 largest Arms importers between 2012 and 2016. UAE (Saudi ally) holds 3<sup>rd</sup> position; Turkey is at 6<sup>th</sup> while Israel holds the 19<sup>th</sup> position.



Throughout Saudi history, the United States has protected the Al-Saud regime as (Jenkins 2016) has pointed out that the United States defended the Kingdom whenever it was threatened. Although, Saudi-US alliance suits the United States' interest in the region but at the movement, the former influence over the latter due to its weak position. While discussing the US-Saudi relationship, M. Tabatabai and B. Wasser argued that the Al-Saud regime needs the United States more than the United States needs Saudi Arabia. The United States has an opportunity to shape Saudi Arabia's behavior (Ariane M. Tabatabai, Becca Wasser, 2018). The following factors mainly led to Saudi dependency on the United States.

American firms like McKinsey, Boston Consulting Group, and Oliver Wyman have worked on hundreds of projects for the Kingdom. In contrast, the Saudi government bureaucrats worked together with these consultants to implement government programs (Wald, 2018). The Iranian hostility towards the Kingdom is the critical factor of its dependency on the United States.

Although US-Iran relations are not going in a positive direction since the Iranian revolution, the former U.S. President Obama's nuclear deal with Iran depicts that the United States did not want direct war with Iran. The United States intends to contain Iran through regional opponents and diplomacy. Besides, US-Iran history indicates that both enjoyed friendly relations till the fall of Shah. Both Saudi Arabia and Iran are Muslim states and can play a crucial role in resolving ongoing regional issues, i.e., Palestine issue, Syrian issue, Yemen, and Iraq issue.

The only sectarian division is the bone of confrontation between both regional players. Both sects' religious clerks (Sunni & Shia) can bring both powers close to each other through their sincere efforts. Moreover, regional peace in the Middle East is subject to Saudi-Iran close ties rather than external powers' intervention. This initiative will also decrease external pressure from both rivals. (Cordesman, 2016), argued, Saudi Arabia depends on the United States for Arms, training, and support.

## **I. Regional wars in and Political instability in the Middle Eastern Region:**

The Middle East has witnessed internal instability for many decades due to sectarian and ethnic division. This rivalry also violated the regional inhabitants' human rights, and the region has suffered both economic and human loss due to the disagreement between regional states. Their incapability and incompetency to settle down these internal issues have pushed them on the periphery of external powers. The ongoing conflicts in the region have also threatened leading players' internal security, and Saudi Arabia is one of those players. At present, Saudi Arabia spent its massive budget on defense, although the Kingdom is only fighting a direct war in Yemen. There is less chance for Saudi success in the instant war if the United States withdraws its support to the Kingdom.

Besides, Saudi Arabia is facing the failure of its policies in the Syrian issue. The Kingdom has failed to overthrow Asad in Syria up till now since Arab Uprisings in the region. The Syrian crises also indicate a misunderstanding of the policy gap between Saudi Arabia and the United States. The latter has influenced the crises but indirectly through the Kingdom instead of direct involvement as the United States did in the Libyan case against Ghaddafi.

This situation also indicates that the United States did not allow the Kingdom to play openly in the region. It indicates that the United States supported the Kingdom where its policy interest is matched in the region. According to the Defense Department, Pentagon would deploy additional antimissile batteries and deploy additional warplanes to Saudi Arabia (Helene Cooper & Michael Crowley, 2019).

## **II. Saudi Political System and Human Rights Challenges:**

United States liberal world order is advocating and promoting democracy. Saudi Monarchy is confronting its policy of the democratic world. Another policy goal of the United States is universal human rights as described in the U.N. charter. These two main elements of United States policy lack suitable space in the Saudi political system.

The Saudi kingdom foundation was laid down by Muhammad Ibn Saud and Muhammad Abdul Wahab. The former was the local ruler, and the latter was a religious leader of the Wahhabi sect. Since independence, these two tribes hold a dominant position in the Saudi Monarchy. Other tribes, particularly non-Wahhabis, have no any important or critical role in the kingdom affairs. In other words, the remaining groups or tribes except for the Al-Saud family and Abdul Wahab family are deprived of essential national affairs.

Moreover, the Saudi Kingdom strictly banned public voice, particularly against the Kingdom. Even those who raised their voices for human rights or demanded space for political choice faced strong suppression from the Kingdom. So Saudi nationals lack rights like freedom of speech and political choice compared with other nations of the world, especially states where democracy is followed as the country's political system.

Following the wave of Arab Spring and fearing its aftershocks within the Kingdom, Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman, to decrease the tension, has announced social reforms at the domestic level in the regime. The Kingdom has removed the ban on Saudi women, and now the women can drive the vehicle within the Kingdom. This initiative of the Crown Prince has been welcomed by Saudi females. Recently the Kingdom has also removed the ban on women's travel, and now the Saudi women can travel abroad without seeking prior permission from their guardians.

Restrictions within the Kingdom were against fundamental human rights as the woman at any corner of the world has not suffered yet. The removal of these restrictions by the Kingdom is a positive step toward social change. The Kingdom needs to take more steps limited to female free movement within and outside the country and create an atmosphere for public voice, political and administrative reforms wherein all sections of the society could participate without any discrimination. (Hitman, 2018), has observed kingdom discrimination against non-Wahhabi groups in public space, security affairs, religious affairs, education systems, and political participation.

### **III. Lack of an alternate ally:**

After independence in 1932, the Kingdom's founder (Al-Saud) established relations with the United States. No doubt there are ups and downs due to the changing dynamics both politically and economically at the world level. Even though tensions have strengthened both allies' relationship even today ever since, this longstanding friendship can be seen through different aspects. In one aspect, Saudi Arabia has relied on its ally during the period without any choice or searched any other ally like Russia or China and remained in the Western bloc all weatherly whether it suited Kingdom's interest or not.

Even the Kingdom has an opportunity to opt for an alternate ally as (Hannah 2019), argued China like Moscow, is ready to sell its advanced capabilities to the Saudi Kingdom without any conditions like its human rights record, Jamal Khashoggi issue, or any threat for withdrawal of support due to Saudi-Yemen war. This aspect imprints the right attitude of the Kingdom in the eyes of the west, i.e., United States towards the west. It depicts that the west, particularly the United States, sees the Kingdom as a trusted ally in the region. That is why the Kingdom remained safe from the United States' anger and its initiatives against terrorists since 9/11. All terrorists were Saudi nationals who were involved in the 9/11 attacks. On the other hand, the Kingdom lacks the alternate option of ally due to its active role in the Afghanistan war against the former USSR. The Kingdom not only funded Mujahedeen but also Saudi Mujahedeen fought against USSR in Afghanistan. The Kingdom also countered the Russian communist agenda in the Middle East region during the cold war. Henceforth, keeping in mind its previous role in the cold war era, the Kingdom may not take this risk to opt for Russia as an alternate of the United States.

Another example for the Kingdom is Ghaddafi in Libya. Libya under Ghaddafi had good friendly relations with Russia, and the former was its all-weather ally in the North African region. However, during the civil war in Libya in late 2011 against Gaddafi, Russia did not protect its ally from the civil war. The role Russia played in Syria, if played in Libya, Ghaddafi would be successful in his safe escape from Libyan uprisings. Moreover, the Kingdom could not avail of this option until it claimed Iran's role in the

region because both Iran and Russia are historic allies. Even Asad's survival in the Syrian crisis is due to the Iran-Russia close ties.

Thirdly, Saudi Arabia can improve ties with China as the region is important both economically and geo-strategically for the latter. However, it will avoid taking sides in regional conflicts and controversies (A. Scobell & A. Nader, 2014). Hence, the Saudi-China alliance may not suit Saudi Arabia's policy interest, although China can boost the Kingdom's economy; provide advanced technology and Arms for the Kingdom's protection. The last and fourth option for alternate choice is the Muslim world, particularly Pakistan, in the larger context. Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman has taken the initiative for the Muslim world military alliance. The alliance is an alliance of the "Sunni-Muslim world" and does not represent the whole Muslim world, particularly Iran and pro-Iran states (means Shia-Muslims).

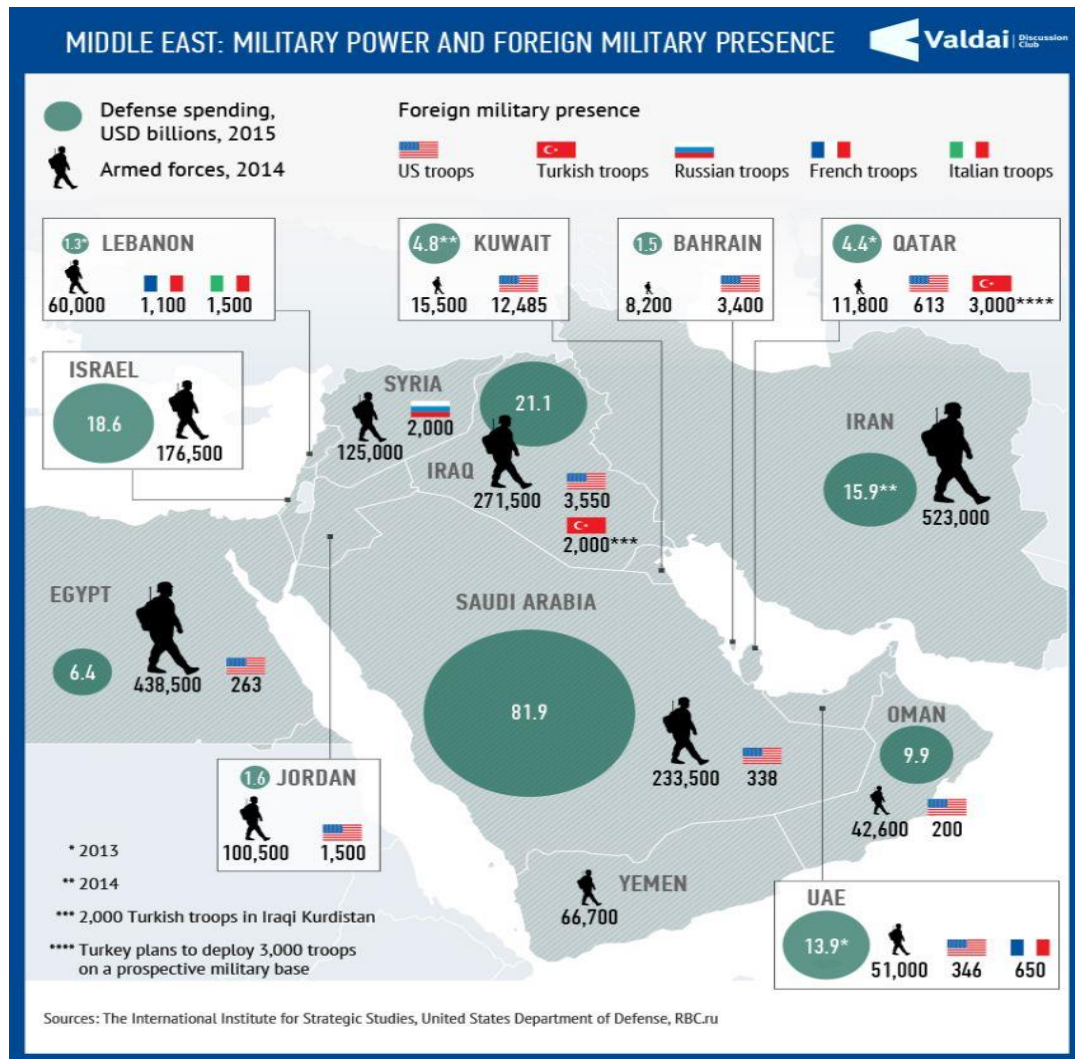
In a broader sense, the Kingdom is trying to utilize this option. The ground has been prepared in theory but not tested practically yet. However, the alliance is complicated, and member states may disagree upon an agenda that might affect Iran or if the Kingdom intends any step against Iran or other pro-Iran states in the region or worldwide. In the larger context, this alliance may remain ineffective because it will not suit Saudi interests. The best example of the alliance's ineffectiveness is the recent Pak-India clashes over the Kashmir issue as the founders of the alliance remained silent over the issue.

#### **IV. Weak Military capability and Technology of the Kingdom:**

The Kingdom lacks advanced military capabilities and advanced technology in order to cope with the current scenario in the region. The right move for the Kingdom to strengthen its defense design as the Kingdom is facing a complex, uncertain, and ever-changing regional landscape (Obaid, 2014). Although the Saudi leadership has made agreements with western states France, Germany, United Kingdom, and the United States to provide advanced military equipment, the Kingdom has faced intense criticism due to its direct and indirect role in regional issues, mainly the Saudi war in Yemen. Moreover, governments of France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States have also been criticized domestically by its citizens and civil society organizations worldwide.

Eventually, France, Germany has banned further Arms supply to the Kingdom and further warned not to extend the agreements in the future. The Swiss government has also warned the Kingdom that it will ban its aircraft manufacturing company based in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates if the Kingdom continued human rights violations. Another drawback for the Kingdom was the United Kingdom's decision as the local court declared U.K.'s Arms sale to Saudi Arabia unlawful and ordered to stop the future sale. Similarly, the Trump administration itself has faced strong opposition in the U.S. Senate for US-Saudi Arms agreements. These recent developments in western politics did not go in Saudi favor. GCC countries are still dependent on the U.S. security relationship, but they are also considering other security options (Chubin, 2012).

#### **Figure 4-03 Foreign Military presence in the Middle East**



Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, U.S. Department of Defense

<https://www.iiss.org>

Figure (4-3) shows deployment and presence of foreign forces in the Middle East region. U.S has deployed its forces in Saudi Arabia, UAE, OMAN, JORDAN, EGYPT, KUWAIT, BAHRAIN, and QATAR.

Saudi Arabia is currently lagging behind Iran in acquiring advanced technology and far behind from Turkey and Israel. A breakdown in Saudi-Western relations is not good for Saudi Arabia. Because no foreign power other than the West will make Saudi Arabia's dreams come true. Therefore, Saudi Arabia must fulfill the aspirations of the West. It is important to maintain the trust of the United States and its supported groups. Although

Russia and China also want to establish better relations with Saudi Arabia, these relations are economic in which Saudi Arabia is not guaranteed from external and internal threats. At the moment, Saudi Arabia has only one option to maintain good relations with the West in order to strengthen its grip on the region.



## **CHAPTER-5**

# **RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Research Findings:**

Middle East region, which contains vast reservoirs of natural resources (oil & gas), has experienced longstanding instability and is still under fire in many of its parts compared to other regions of the world. The absence of regional peace and stability is the output of multiple internal and external factors. Internally the region is facing strongly divided religious ideology; ethnic clashes among masses, lack of democratic values, restricted human rights, discrimination between genders, deprivation of minorities, strife over resources among states, and struggle for regional hegemony.

If we look at Saudi-US relations, there are historical ties between the two countries. Although, there are ups and downs between the two during this period, but still both are close friends due to their some common interests in the region. Besides, Saudi Arabia is seemed failed in achieving its desired goals in the larger sense. The Kingdom has relied on United States all time, but the latter did not support until its own national interest suits.

Besides, Saudi Arabia and Iran are confronting each other in the Middle East region despite the fact that both rivals were friends in the past. Nevertheless, the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and Iran's initiatives to extend its revolution in the region resulted in tensions between both regional players. Sectarianism and nationalism are two colliding factors having a profound impact on the regional states.

Apart from the sectarian division, the concept of nationalism dramatically divides the Middle East region. For Saudis, Arabs and non-Arabs are two major nations in the region, and the Arabs are superior to non-Arabs. From the Iranian perspective, the Persian civilization is a part of history, and Iran is capable of leading the Muslim world.

However, if the Saudi concept of nationalism is applied in the real sense, then the Kingdom itself violates its concept of nationalism because, within Saudi Arabia, the Arab Shia minority and non-Wahhabi groups or tribes are deprived of their national rights. Even Arab Shia (Saudi Shia minority group) and non-Wahhabi Arabs could not hold any official Saudi monarchy position. They are considered inferior compared to Wahhabi Arabs.

Although the young Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman, in his vision-2030, intends to put forth collective nationalism in the Kingdom rather than Wahhabi nationalism upon which the present Saudi nationalism is based, no positive change is seen up till now. Moreover, Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman, like late king Abdullah would face strong criticism from the Wahhabi lobby if he has taken any step or shown any sincerity with non-Wahhabi Arabs within the Kingdom.

Following the sectarian and ethnic division, both rivals have continuously influenced over regional issues. Saudi Arabia once supported Saddam against Iran in the Iraq-Iran war in 1980 and then fought against Saddam when he invaded Kuwait in 1991 and again fought against Iraq as an ally of the United States US-Iraq war in 2003.

Although apparently, the Saudi Kingdom joined the United States against Iraq due to the pressure from the Bush (former U.S. president) administration, the Saudi leadership was happy for Saddam's downfall because Iraq under Saddam had challenged Saudi Arabia in the region. However, the fall of Saddam Hussain also opened ground for Iran to influence and secure its interest. The fall of Saddam, the Arab Spring of 2011, the Syrian crisis, and the Yemen war have allowed Iran to intervene directly and indirectly in these issues.

Presently, Iraq has divided both religiously (sectarian division) and ethnically. Syria is in the grasp of civil war. The Asad regime in Syria is supported by Iran and its ally Russia while Saudi Arabia and the United States back rebel forces. In the Syrian crisis, the former is directly involved while the latter is playing its role indirectly. However, in the Syrian crisis, Russia is more directly involved rather than Iran. Similarly, in Yemen, the United States supports war Saudis through direct intervention. At the same time, Houthis rebel forces are backed by Iran indirectly.

Moreover, external powers, i.e., the United States and Russia, have their own political and economic interests in the region and intend to contain each other through two regional opponents (Saudi Arabia and Iran). During the cold war era, the U.S. partnership with Saudi Arabia supported its policy goals in the region, which kept away USSR to hold and grasp its roots in the region. Saudi Arabia is tackled both domestically and externally in the region.

The external powers, and in particular the United States, has a great desire to ensure its strategic interest in the region in the long run by taking sides to tackle or keep away other forces and by, in large, those who are opposing the American liberal world order. Thus, the Middle East region presents a complex nature colored with mixed intentions.

The current Middle Eastern situation calls for all regional and world powers' attention for an immediate and timely solution by playing their neutral role. United States' reversal from the nuclear deal has distrusted Iran (Mousavian, 2019). Apart from regional and external powers, there is a third force, "non-state actors" calling for regime change. Although they contain many ideas, their ultimate aim is to change the political structure and keep away external players to intervene in regional matters.

The ruling family of Saudi Arabia fears domestic changes i.e. freedom of speech, right to vote and to accommodate the youth. However, all these changes are need of hour due global change in political structure. Thus by ignoring global changes and relying on any external force may be a big mistake. Moreover, if the Kingdom faced any larger domestic issue, the ruling family must pay the price. It is the time for Muhammad Bin Salman to review its domestic as well as foreign policy and bring effective reforms. These reforms may not only ensure internal peace within the Kingdom but in the region as well. Muhammad Bin Salman may also carefully point out the factors that pushed the Kingdom heavily dependent on United States. He may also look for alternate options that can endeavor peace in the region.

According to the former United States President Kennedy, "every nation determines its policies in terms of its own interests." If this is true, then why some states did not achieve their desired goals despite their policies are shaped keeping in view their national

interests, and why some are successful in their policies as they gain more beyond their desired national goals. The variance in achieving one's interests indicates that not only national policies lead to success, but other factors like the country's geostrategic location, socio-political system, its economy, military power, and its capability in technological advancement also matters in the effectiveness of national policies. In the words of Waltz, a state has to rely on its resources and relative efficiency, which must be its constant concern.

A country's national capacity is its real wealth and power because alliances are effective until the particular issue or conflict also serves or suits allies' interests. Otherwise, the state itself would pay the cost for that issue or conflict. If a state intends to lead, it must build its muscles to ensure its hegemony, whether it is regional politics or world politics. Being claiming regional supremacy, Saudi Arabia has relied on United States support in the past and even at present both domestically and at the regional level.

## **5.2 Conclusion:**

The ongoing situation in the Middle East region has been the focus of scholars. The region is under fire due to internal conflicts among regional states. Both regional and external players are either directly or indirectly involved in regional conflicts by taking sides. These regional issues are colored with religious sectarian and ethnic division. However, Saudi Arabia and Iran are the main opponents confronting each other in the Middle East region. Sectarian division and ethnicity (Arab & non-Arab) are the main factors led to their confrontation. Saudi Arabia fears Iran's growing influence in the region particularly in the Arab world which has threatened Saudi's status quo in the region. However, Saudi Arabia should not only see Iran as an adversary, but Turkey could also create problems for Saudi Arabia in the future. Although Saudi Arabia claims to be a leader in the Muslim world, the Turkish president is truly representing Muslims in the world and his policies and role are being welcomed in the Muslim world.

Apart from external threats, the Kingdom is internally facing pressure for social, political, and economic reforms, while domestic terrorist activities have also disturbed the regime's internal security. The emergence of the Islamic State and its call for regime change and

Iran's growing influence in the region also poses dire threats to the Kingdom's survival and maintaining its regional status quo. Moreover, Yemen's ongoing war is also not more than a headache for Saudi Arabia due to its miscalculated cost-benefit analysis. Saudi weak security apparatus and military equipment are not enough for its defense in the larger context. The United States President Trump's words, "you may not be there without us," clearly depict Saudi's story. The Saudi Kingdom must focus on its current position if it intends for becoming a regional power. The Crown Prince would take tough decisions like to rebuild its economy, particularly alternate economic sectors of its oil economy, military equipment, social and political reforms within the Kingdom.

No doubt, the Trump administration was very good for Muhammad bin Salman. The field was empty for Salman due to differences between the United States and Iran. To some extent, Saudi Arabia also took advantage following US-Iran tensions. Trump's anti-Iran policies allow Saudi Arabia to pursue its own interests, but Saudi Arabia has not been able to achieve what it set out to do. Proof of this is Saudi Arabia's ongoing war in Yemen. Following Trump's defeat in the recent election, political turmoil is possible in the Middle East once again. Will the New Government Continue Trump's Policies or Restore Obama's Agreements with Iran? If the new government ignores Iran again, the field will be empty again for the Saudi government. And it is possible that Muhammad bin Salman could make his dreams come true. But this is not an easy task. Saudi Arabia will have to rethink its approach to the new US administration. If the Saudi government failed to attract Biden, Saudi Arabia's dream will be shattered. And again, instead of playing a role in the region for a while, the Kingdom will be backed in a defensive position. To fulfill its desire to become a regional power, Saudi Arabia must reconsider its policies. The role of Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Israel is very important. All of them must be on the same page for peace in the region. Peace in the region is essential for Saudi Arabia to become a regional power. If unrest continues in the region, Saudi Arabia will not be able to become a regional power and will remain dependent on the US to protect from existential internal and external threats.

## REFERENCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- A.H Cordesman, Nawaf Obaid. (, 2004). *Saudi Internal Security: A Risk Assessment (Terrorism and the Security Services- Challenges and Developments*. Retrieved 10 12, 2019, from Center for Strategic and International Studies: <https://www.csis.org.com>
- Al-Atawneh, M. (2009). Is Saudi Arabia a Theocracy? Religion and Governance in Contemporary Saudi Arabia. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 45(5), 727-737.
- AlJazeera. (2019, September 21). *Hemen's Houthis will stop all attacks on Saudi Arabia*. Retrieved 12 30, 2019, from Al-Jazeera: <https://www.aljazeera.com>
- Al-Jazeera. (2020, 05 08). *Al-Jazeera News*. Retrieved 05 09, 2020, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/05/remove-patriots-military-assets-saudi-arabia-200507183258484.html>
- Ariane M. Tabatabai, Becca Wasser. (2018, 11 15). *Rand News*. Retrieved 11 20, 2019, from [www.rand.org/news](http://www.rand.org/news): <https://www.rand.org/news/press/2018/11/15.html>
- Baalke, C. (2014). A Political and Historical Analysis of the Relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia; how the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia has influenced U.S Foreign Policy in the Middle East. *Digital Commons @ SPU Seattle Pacific University*.
- Barany, Z. (2013). After the Arab Spring; Revolt and Resilience in the Arab Kingdoms. *Parameters*, 90-101.
- Cordesman, A. H. (2016). *Saudi Arabia and the United States: Common Interests and Continuing Sources of tension*. Center for Strategic and International Studies.
- David, W. (2019, June 27). *The New York Times; Saudi Arabia is Running Out of Friends*. Retrieved October 10, 2019, from [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com): <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/27/opinion/saudi-arms-sales-britain.html>
- Diansaei, B. (2018). IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA IN THE MIDDLE EAST: LEADERSHIP AND SECTARIANISM (2011—2017). *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations*, 18(1), 124-134.
- F. Gregory, G. I. (2014, July). Beyond Sectarianism: The New Middle East Cold War. *BROOKINGS DOHA CENTER ANALYSIS PAPER*, 5.

- Frideman, G. (2015, 6 9). *A Net Assessment of the Middle East*. Retrieved 12 14, 2019, from Geopolitical Weekly.
- Gaub, F. (2016). Saudi Arabia and the Islamic alliance. *European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS)*, 1-4.
- Habibi, N. (n.d.). *Implementing Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030: An Interim Balance Sheet*. Retrieved from Middle East Brief, Crown Center for Middle East Brandeis University: [www.brandeis.edu/crown](http://www.brandeis.edu/crown).
- Hannah, J. (2019, March 27). *Trump Should Salvage U.S-Saudi Relations*. Retrieved 03 27, 2019, from foreign policy.com: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/03/27/trump-should-salvage-u-s-saudi-relations/>
- Helene Cooper & Michael Crowley. (2019, September 20). *Trump Focuses on Defending Saudis, Not Striking Iran, for Now*. Retrieved 12 30, 2019, from The New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/20/world/middleeast/trump-iran-saudi-arabia.html>
- Hinnebusch, R. (2003). *The International Politics of the Middle East*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9NR, UK.
- Hitman, G. (2018). *Saudi Arabia's Wahhabism and Nationalism: The Evolution of Wataniyya and Qawwiyya*. Ariel University Israel: Digest of Middle East Studies (DOMES).
- Ibrahim, A. (2019, June 05). *What is Sahwa, the Awakening movement under pressure in Saudi?* Retrieved 12 31, 2019, from Al-Jazeera: <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/sahwa-awakening-movement-pressure-saudi-190603100555782.html>
- Kamel Alboaouh & Jon Mahoney. (, 2017). Religious and Political Authority in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Challenges and Prospects. *MANAS Journal of Social Studies*, 6(2), 241-256.
- Karkpatrick, D. D. (2019, September 17). *Putin Says Saudis Should Buy Russian Missiles, to Laughter from Iran*. Retrieved 12 30, 2019, from The New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/17/world/middleeast/putin-saudi-iran.html>
- Khalid, S. (2016, August). Saudi Monarchy and the Arab Spring: A Way Forward to the Question of Stability. *International Research Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(8), 47-50.

- Khan, M. A., & Rasheed, M. R. (2020). *Electronic Media and Interpersonal Discourse: Mediation in Crises*. *Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 28(1)
- Kostiner, J. (2010, September). *The GCC states and the Security Challenges of the Twenty-First Century*. Retrieved 11 23, 2019, from The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies: <http://www.besadcenter.org>
- Lori Plotkin, B. (2018). *Is Saudi Arabia's Counterterrorism Approach Shifting?* The Washington Institute for Near East Policy.
- Maciej Herbut and Renata Kunert-Milcarz. (, 2017). The Explanatory Power of Structural Realism in the 21st Century: the Eastern Partnership, Russian Expansionism and the War in Ukraine. *Polish Political Science Yearbook*.
- McGinn, J. (2018). *Saudi Arabia and Iran: Beyond Conflict and Coexistence*. London: Middle East Centre, London School of Economics.
- Moutagu, C. (2015). *Civil Society in Saudi Arabia: The Power and Challenges of Association*. *The Middle East & North Africa Programme, Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs*.
- Murphy, C. (2013). *A Kingdom's Future: Saudi Arabia Through the Eyes of its Twentysomethings*. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.
- Nathan J. Brown, Amr Hamzawy & Marina Attaway. (, 2006). *Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World; Exploring the Gray Zones*. Retrieved 12 14, 2019, from CarnegieEndowment: [www.carnegieEndowment.org/pubs](http://www.carnegieEndowment.org/pubs)
- Nuruzzaman, M. (2018, July 10). *Saudi Arabia's 'Vision 2030': Will It Save Or Sink the Middle East?* Retrieved 12 20, 2019, from ResearchGate: [HTTPS://WWW.E-IR.INFO/2018/07/10/SAUDI-ARABIAS-VISION-2030-WILL-IT-SAVE-OR-SINK-THE-MIDDLE-EAST/](https://www.e-ir.info/2018/07/10/saudi-arabias-vision-2030-will-it-save-or-sink-the-middle-east/)
- Obaid, N. (2014). *A Saudi Arabian Defense Doctrine: Mapping the expanded force structure the Kingdom needs to Lead the Arab World, stabilize the region, and meet its global responsibilities*. Retrieved 12 20, 2019, from Defense and Intelligence Projects: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs Harvard University: <http://belfercenter.org>



- Peter Henne, Sarabrynn Hudgins & Timothy Samuel Shah. (, 2012). *Religious Freedom and Violent Religious Extremism: A Sourcebook of Modern Cases and Analysis*. Georgetown University: Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs.
- Powell, R. (1994). Anarchy in International Relations: the neorealist-neoliberal debate. *Just*, 48(2), 314-344.
- Shah, S. A. A. (2018). *Pakistan's Relations with the United States and China in the Post-9/11 Era*. *Journal of Politics and International Studies*, 4(2).
- Sean L. Yom and F. Gregory Gause III. (2012, October). Resilient Royals: How Arab Monarchies Hang on. *Journal of Democracy*, 23(4), 74-88.
- Shoaib, M. (n.d.). Evolving Saudi Foreign Policy post-Arab Spring. *Journal of Strategic Affairs*.
- Talcott Parsons, Edward Albert Shils, and Neil J. Smelser. (, 1965). *Toward a General Theory of Action: Theoretical Foundations for the Social Sciences*. Transaction Publishers.
- Terrill, W. A. (2011). *The Saudi-Iranian Rivalry and the Future of Middle East Security*. Retrieved 10 11, 2019, from Strategic Studies Institute: <http://www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil/>
- Wald, E. R. (2018, 10, 18). *Saudi Arabia Has No Leverage; Ignore the bluster from Riyadh. The Saudi economy is dependent on the U.S., which has plenty of power to force concessions*. Retrieved 12 11, 2019, from New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/18/opinion/saudi-arabia-economy-united-states.html>
- Waltz, K. N. (1959). *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Wechsler, W. (2018, 10, 25). *The National Interest*. Retrieved 12 13, 2019, from The National Interest: <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/saudi-arabia-its-own-worst-enemy-34282>
- Whitney, W. (2017, March 27). *Trump Is Taking The US-Saudi Relationship To The Next Level*. Retrieved from the Internet.
- Yoel Guzansky and Erez Striem. (, 2015). *Saudi Arabia: A Buildup of Internal and External Challenges*. The Institute for National Security Studies (INSS).

Zaccara, L. (2019, August 15). *Trump is laying the Ground for a Nuclear Arms Race in the Gulf*. Retrieved 12 30, 2019, from Al-Jazeera: <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/trump-laying-ground-nuclear-arms-race-gulf-190801130430388.html>

Zaman, S. u. (2015). Rise of Non-State Actors in the Middle East; Regional Dimension. *IPRI*, 51-65.

Khan, M. S. (2011b). The Post-Cold War Security Dilemma and the Muslim World. In

*Rozpad ZSRR i jego konsekwencje dla Europy i świata. Część 3. Kontekst*

*międzynarodowy* (pp. 433–442). Księgarnia Akademicka,

<https://www.ceneo.pl/50668249>.