

Conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran: An Examination of Critical Factors
Inhibiting their Positive Roles in the Middle East

by

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This dissertation was submitted by Ghadah Ghunaim Rashid Alghunaim under the direction of the chair of the dissertation committee listed below. It was submitted to the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences and approved in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University.

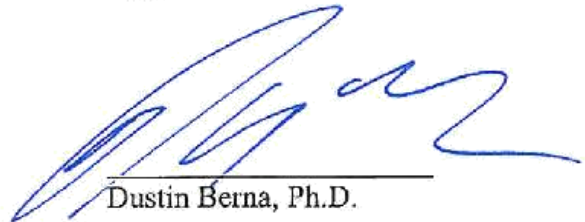
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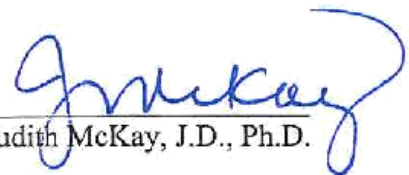
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my grandmothers, who passed away during my educational journey. I never had a chance to say good bye, but I have always kept you in my prayers, and felt the love which has protected me throughout life. I also lovingly dedicate this dissertation to my father and mother, who have been with me in each and every step since 2006 when I arrived in the United States. They helped me to overcome many obstacles, and it was through them that I was able to flourish as a young independent Saudi woman. I promised them that I would always hold my head up high and never let them down, and I hope that they see that I have kept this promise. To my dearest brother Abdulaziz (who has been my secret-keeper and moral supporter, and who asked me daily for updates on my progress and valued my efforts in conducting this research), to my best friend Yosra (who has remained in contact upwards of four times per week and seemed to always forget the time-zone differences we had, and who always introduced me to her new friends as Dr. Ghadah even prior to obtaining my degree), to my aunt Nazeeha, Aunt Salha, and my baby sister Mashaal (who motivated and encouraged me to reach my dreams), to my roommate and precious friend Randa (who seemingly understood me without ever needing to speak a word and who offered advice along the way), to my friend Dr. Ahmed Asfahani (a friend from NSU who is a man beyond inspiration and who acted as my mentor, friend, brother, and my role model), to my other family “Saudis in USA” (an organization that I had the pleasure to co-establish in 2008 to serve all Saudi students to the U.S., and who honored me in 2010 by allowing me to direct the organization and dedicate my time to guide other volunteers in helping the organization flourish, while allowing me to continue my studies simultaneously), this dissertation is dedicated to you all.

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Abstract

Since 1979, Saudi-Iranian relations have been tense due to their position as superior powers in the Middle East. Both countries have different values and perspectives in regards to diplomatic relations with the West. As a consequence of the new developments in Iran's foreign policy and the newfound openness to the West adopted by President Rouhani, the topic has proven to be of research interest. The primary concern of this research was to explore the effect of the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran in the Middle East, and whether or not there is a possibility to overcome this conflict using the new political developments. For this purpose, a content analysis methodology was employed.

Through an analysis of data presented in the literature review, which consisted of scholarly articles, policy briefs, and books, this dissertation examines the complex political relations through which the pattern of the bilateral relations explain the conflicting narratives. This complexity is present in the political actions taken by Iran and Saudi Arabia, as well as the domestic and foreign policies they are embracing. The findings of this study demonstrate the effect of this conflict in the Middle East. The research also proposes a number of possible recommendations on how to resolve this conflict through political openness and reciprocal agreements that target the citizens of Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: conflict, Iran, Saudi, foreign policy, reform, economy, Middle East, security

Chapter 1: Introduction

For this study the researcher will examine both the Iranian and Saudi Arabian options of being a superior power in the Middle East and the conflict this race to the top causes. Superior power—being the political and Islamic leading country in the region—has caused tension to grow between these two countries. The tense relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran increased as a result of Iran's subversion of the Arabian governments, especially Gulf governments that have a great number of Shi'ite minorities in their populations (Abir, 1997). Saudi Arabia plays a major role in the Arab and Islamic world. This important and special position is a result of several factors including its location, its role in promoting inter-Arab relations, its initiative role in establishing the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and finally, its spiritual importance for all Muslims around the world for having the two holy mosques in Saudi (Alnasrawi, 1991).

Both countries value the idea of being the center point of the Islamic world and the Middle East. Iran and Saudi Arabia are not allies. Each country has different values and each of their governments has different values for relationships with the Western world. On the one hand, there is Iran's perspective towards the West which changed with the introduction of a new policy after the Iranian revolution; Ayatollah Khomeini Iran's first Supreme Leader adopted an anti-Western and anti-shah strategy (Tazmini, 2012). Iran's position after the revolution has been described as the government's reaction towards 'West-toxication', because Iran signifies the post-revolution time as the era where religion will demolish the holocaust of West-toxication (Tazmini, 2012, p. 21). In contrast, Saudi Arabia has been a close ally to the United States since 1974. More recently in November 2013, John Kerry, the U.S. Secretary of State, visited Saudi Arabia.

During this visit Saud Alfaisal, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, delivered a speech clarifying and stressing that Saudi-U.S. relations remain strong and stated that true friends base their relationships on openness and transparency. This visit came after some rumors circulated about conflict between these two countries suggesting that the relationship was at a dramatic critical stage. Alfaisal also clarified that Saudi Arabia's decision to decline joining the United Nations Security Council did not mean its withdrawal from the United Nations ("Akkad anna aletizar," 2013).

The Saudi-Iranian relations have always suffered from tension and conflict; religion was the conflict escalator as Wahhabi and Shiite leaders fueled this battle. While Mohammad Bin Badulwahhab views Shiite as the apostate of true Islam, Abdulwahhab was the attack leader on the Alhussain memorial in Iraq which is a very important religious place for the Shiite doctrine. From that time tension never rested, and according to the current circumstances, it will remain in this condition for the time being because the rulers of Saudi Arabia and Iran acted as competitors more than friends. Whereas Iranian leaders after the 1979 revolution have always brutally criticized the Islamic legitimacy of Saudi Arabia, Iran did not rely on verbal criticism on Saudi Arabia alone. It also planned to fly war aircraft over the country during the Iranian Iraqi war, menaced tanker traffic into Saudi Arabia to put pressure on Saudi Arabia for its support to Iraq, and incited violent unrests during the Islamic pilgrimage season in Makkah. For these mentioned facts, Saudi Arabia has always maintained its political and diplomatic relations with Iran; it kept its relation without neglecting the threat from Iran and tried to find ways to reach a settlement with Iran. These efforts started to work after the death of Khomeini; during the Rafsanjani presidency, improvements started to take place. The

Iranian government represented by its Foreign Minister , Ali Akbar Velayati, made speeches about improving relations between the both countries. And Saudi Arabia reacted positively to all speeches (Cordesman, 2003).

Since the establishment of the Saudi government and the Republic of Iran, the Palestinian case has been supported by both states. Furthermore, the Palestinian issue is so sensitive that it has greatly affected U.S.-Saudi relations. The United States' continuous support of Israeli expansions has put Saudi Arabia in a problematic situation in the Arab world. Due to this problematic situation, Saudi Arabia has adopted a foreign policy in the Arabian region based on three elements: 1) oil and political decisions are distinct because oil should never be used as a tool for political burden; 2) the Saudi government has always portrayed their position on the U.S. foreign policy in the Arab region as needing modification; and 3) drawing from Saudi oil revenues, Saudi Arabia has always provided grants to Arab countries in need. These grants are used to guide their political policy in accordance with the Saudi and American foreign policy in the region (Alnasrawi, 1991).

In contrast, Iran provided support to Palestine, and an anti-Israeli policy was executed. During the Khomeini presidency, while the Iraqi-Iranian war was active, the Iranian government did not neglect the Palestinian case and provided limited funding to the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) group, Hamas, as well as to the secular leftist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFL-GC). President Rafsanjani's anti-Israeli policy took on a different character, however, as he made many efforts to communicate with Western governments by showing acceptance of any Palestinian decision even if was the two-state solution, though this position was not

announced publicly (Mattair, 2008). “For Israelis, Iran has become their bogeyman. It is almost universally seen as the country’s greatest enemy and biggest threat” (Waxman, 2012, p. 79).

This study should be of interest to both the Iranian and Saudi governments because it examines one of their most important matters. The problem under investigation has been an issue since the Iranian Revolution in 1979. The Islamic Republic of Iran has always been a threat for Saudi Arabia and vice versa. Moreover, there has been an ongoing silent contest between both countries throughout the past three decades (Sadeghi & Ahmadian, 2011). The conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia has been of interest to politicians on both sides as it has affected local security in Saudi Arabia many times during the season of Hajj (Sadeghi & Ahmadian, 2011).

By the year 2011 Saudi Arabia was an Iranian target as a result of the Kingdom’s support of the government of Bahrain. Saudi Arabia alleged that the unrest in the Eastern province of the Kingdom was assisted by a foreign country. Analysts and news commentators argued that Saudi Arabia was blaming Iran for those attacks (Black, 2011). It is not only an issue of competition between these countries; it also affects the security of both states.

The challenges for Iran and Saudi Arabia have been discussed based on security criteria, but the researcher plans to take it to a step further in order to clarify future options based on a scholarly examination of past facts and current situations in order to reach a peaceful state between Saudi Arabia and Iran. It might help result in a new political era with new cooperations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The goal of this research is to understand possible future options for both countries as they compete

against each other in being a superior power in the Middle East. Further, the research can contribute to the field of conflict analysis and resolution as it seeks a new option for political cooperation for these two powerful countries instead of the continuous conflict.

Statement of Problem

The conflict of hegemony between Iran and Saudi Arabia causes serious security, political, and economic problems. For Saudi Arabia the security threats from Iran are the same as that of all the remaining Gulf countries. Iran is a political and ideological threat for Saudi Arabia because it does support the Saudi Shiite minorities, Iran's military and capabilities growth, and Iran's negative position from the existence of the U.S. forces in the Gulf States (Alam, 2001).

While Iran has other fears concerning security threats, these threats are mainly caused by U.S. interference associated with the growing presence of U.S. forces and military bases in the GCC, and the involvement of extraterritorial forces in the security of the region (Alam, 2001). Since the Iranian Revolution, Iran has been an asymmetric ideological threat to Saudi Arabia, and the conflict between these two nations extends to its foreign policy with neighboring countries including Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Bahrain, Yemen, and, Syria.

Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapon does not create a direct threat to Saudi Arabia, yet it will encourage Iran to act more aggressively in these conflicted countries. In the Gulf region, Saudi Arabia acts as a strategically important member, but if Iran has its own nuclear system, this position will be a threat for Saudi's superiority in the region (Wehery, 2012).

According to Blockmans and Waizer (2013), Iran has been facing economic hardship due to ten years of sanctions, and especially after the latest EU sanctions that were directed at Iranian's oil industry. "Oil revenues make up 50-60% of the government's total revenues. In 2011 oil-related materials constituted 92.4% of the country's total exports to the EU and 80% of its worldwide exports" (Blockmans & Waizer, 2013, p.2). The European embargo aimed to stop financing the government but avoid striking the population of Iran. India, China, Japan, and South Korea continued to import oil from Iran, but these sales still did not make up for the loss of revenues as a result of the EU embargo because of Iran's fleet tank capacity and the small guarantee coverage paid by Indian insurance companies. "Iranian net oil revenues went down by 50%, from \$100 billion in 2011 to approximately \$50 billion in 2012" (Blockmans & Waizer, 2013, p. 4). This decline in Iranian's oil price increasingly affected the unemployment rate, inflation, and prices of goods.

All of the aforementioned factors which fueled the cold war between Saudi Arabia and Iran should be addressed in order to determine whether or not this conflict over hegemony is affecting their roles as powerful nations and positive factors in the Middle East. Researchers have focused their work on this issue, and there is a significant amount of data analyzing the reasons behind the conflict since the Iranian Revolution. However, in this study the researcher will shift the focus to examine the critical factors in this conflict as it might be inhibiting the roles of Saudi Arabia and Iran as positive nations in the Middle East.

Statement of Purpose

This qualitative, content analysis research will examine and analyze the critical factors in Saudi Arabia and Iran which may be inhibiting their positive roles in the Middle East due to their hegemonic conflict. Data sources will include scholarly articles, policy briefs, and books. The first objective is to find whether the conflict of hegemony between Saudi Arabia and Iran is affecting both countries from being positive players in the Middle East region. The second objective is to examine this conflict through the lenses of politics, religion, social factors, economics, and weapons of mass destruction. This research will differ from previous research in the field by analyzing all the mentioned factors in terms of how they inhibit Saudi Arabia and Iran from working together and cooperating in the region as powerful players and peacemakers. The rationale behind this research is to ease the process of peace in the Middle East, because Saudi Arabia and Iran are powerful countries and can shift the roadmap for the region by either working cooperatively or against each other.

The research study will use a content analysis qualitative methodology to gather data and analyze the collected data. The purpose of this research is to explore and understand the factors causing the conflict. For this study the qualitative methodology is the best approach as this research will explore and identify relations while a quantitative research would use numerical data to reach results and get information (Yin, 2009). This research will not compare or measure data to come out with a generalized assumption; the study will analyze a number of elements including religious background, mass destruction weapons, economic history and current status, social life, and the political system in order to grasp a clear picture of the future options for each country's positive

roles in the Middle East. The results of this research will serve as a guide for policymakers and peace builders in order to better understand what these two countries can accomplish based on their current capabilities and past governmental behavior.

Research Question

The primary research question is: Is the conflict of hegemony between Saudi Arabia and Iran diminishing the role of the two nations as positive factors in the Middle East?

Significance of the Topic

The conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran affects the entire region of the Middle East; the effects of destabilization in the region are risky and should be considered. This dissertation aims to cautiously detach facts concerning both Iran and Saudi Arabia from a huge pool of information, as well as their political relations and actions toward other Middle Eastern states. Through the analysis of this data, the research would provide future peaceful political options and tighten their diplomatic relations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Conflict in the Middle East is a repeated topic in the world of international politics. The Palestinian Israeli conflict is the longest the region has witnessed and one of the longest lasting conflicts globally. The Middle East also experienced two wars that had a great number of international participants: the two wars in Iraq both in 1991 and 2003, and the war between Iran and Iraq that lasted for eight years. Furthermore, there are other conflict zones surrounding the area such as Afghanistan, the Caucasus, and the Horn of Africa. Domestic and regional instabilities are caused by the connection between Middle Eastern states and arms-producing governments in creating the Middle East as the most militarized zone globally (Bureau of Verification and Compliance, 2000; Sköns et al., 2002).

The average number of conflicts in the Middle East from 1960 to 2003 is higher than the average in the Americas and Europe, yet lower than the average number of conflicts in Africa and Asia. The frequency of conflict in Asia is the same as in the Middle East; however, the duration of Middle Eastern conflict is longer. Between the years 1960 and 2003 a diverse number of conflicts occurred; some of these conflicts happened between the governments and Islamic militants such as the conflict in Algeria from 1991 to 2003, the Egyptian conflict from 1992 to 1998, and the Saudi Arabian conflict in 1979, while other countries struggled due to military factions such as the conflicts in Iraq in the year 1963, the one in Morocco in 1971, and Syria in 1966. From 1975 to 1989 Morocco fought the secessionists of the previous Spanish Sahara, and the clashes that happened after the unifications of the two Yemens in 1962 to 1970, 1986, and 1996 (Sørli, Gleditsch, & Strand, 2005).

The frequency of conflict in the Middle East has interested the U.S. military presence in the region. It is considered a geostrategic concern for the American government, as the high demand of American military is present. The region's development in the future will have effect on global prosperity and permanence. From 1979 the region of the Middle East witnessed a great number of conflicts, as these conflicts have not been a threat the Middle East alone. The Islamic Revolution and the new Iran faced the U.S with the American diplomats hostage issue, the Lebanese civil war in 1982, the two Gulf wars in 1980 and 1990, the El Dorado Canyon air strikes against Libya in 1986, and the U.S. intervention in Iraq. The interest of American policymakers in the Middle East will continue to 2025 due to a number of factors. For these policymakers the survival of the state of Israel and the peace process of the Middle East is one of the central conflicts that impacts energy security, suppression of the emergence of hegemons and proliferators, avoiding the production and spread of weapons of mass destruction, endorsing regional stability through political and economic reform, and the war against terrorism (Lesser, Nardulli, & Arghavan, 1998).

The key trends of conflict within the Middle East can be categorized by demographic change, economic reform, state control, and Islam and nationalism. In contrast with the world's population growth, the Middle East's population is anticipated to double by the year 2025, while the world's population growth witnessed a reduction in its growth. The Middle East is recording an annual rate of 3% population growth and in the 1990s the Gulf countries and the North Africa countries reported a 40% population growth, whereas the per capita in the region faced a severe drop. By the year 2025 it is anticipated that 30% of the people would be under the age of 15 in the areas with the

highest growth rate. Such demographic change will have many significant destabilizing effects; many will be moving from their local towns and villages to the bigger cities in search of work, education, and health services. The enormous number of people seeking urbanization in the region will overpopulate cities as is the situation in Cairo. Main cities are the heart of economic and political development and will continue to attract the people. The severity of impact in terms of providing social services, housing, public transportation, and health care is much higher than in rural areas in the region. States that are incompetent in meeting the high demands of urbanization create political conflict around the Middle East (Lesser, Nardulli, & Arghavan, 1998).

The economic future of the region is facing instability in a great number of Middle East states. This economic issue puts governments under the stress of high demand on employment, inflation, and external debt. Unemployment rates in some Arab countries, such as Algeria, Iran, Lebanon, and Yemen, are higher than the world's standards of 30%. The gross national product (GNP) during the 1990s has been flat in general, while some countries such as Algeria had a decline in GNP as an effect of political turmoil and a reduction in oil revenues. Oil revenues and oil production are the vital economic keys to many Middle Eastern states as about 40% of oil revenues depend on the exportation of a product, which leads to an economic situation that is vulnerable and dependent as a single commodity (U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 1995). The general insecurity of Middle Eastern countries has greatly raised the levels of security expenses on institutions and military equipment. This tendency has damaging consequences for the Middle East's economic future as described due to its limit to oil and energy investment (Richards & Waterbury, 2013).

Scholars have noted that the measurement of success for a civil society is a measure of political development in the region and vice versa (Norton, 1995). Developed civil societies act as an indicator of democracy and political stability, while the demand for more political transparency acted as a burden on governments across the Middle East (Fuller & Lesser, 1995).

Nationalism and Islam are the two most important factors that will move the political arena in the Middle East up until 2025. Since the Iranian Islamic Revolution, political Islam has not been utilized heavily in the domestic politics in the Islamic world. The progress of strategic countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Turkey, Jordan, and Iran is determined by Islamic politics whether from the government or its opposition. The degree of success of governments in demolishing radical Islamic opposition is high in the short term such as in Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. These oppositions mirror deep-rooted political, economic, and social complications. Suppressed Islamic movements have a tendency to be regarded by the mass Muslim population as the single genuine response to their civilizations' predicaments and to extending an identity crisis (Lesser et al., 1998). The progression of Islamist movements and the likelihood of the establishment of Islamic governments will potentially have significant repercussions for conflict within the social establishment of the Middle East, as this conflict might extend to reach the Islamic world and the West (Huntington, 1993, 1996).

The geostrategic significance of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf and Iran is a major player in the world's economic stability and security, therefore, any conflict in this region can be global threat (Cordesman, 2003). The continuous status of the cold war between the Arabian Gulf states and Iran will only

make the situation worse, and peace an even harder task to be achieved. The location of the Arabian Gulf, also known as the Persian Gulf, is a strategic economic and security location. Yet, the past three decades of instability has affected the region by escalating tension. The usage of the water passage in the region can be historically traced back to the fifteenth century CE; it was used by many world power players. It also featured as the third front during the Second World War (Naaz, 2001).

Regardless of the Saudi's worry over Iranian strategies toward Iranian Shiite interpretation of Islam, Saudi Arabia swings its foreign policy away from any form of direct aggression towards Iran. Saudi Arabia's policy is based on three key elements: religion, oil, and the Arab world. Saudi Arabia views the country as the leading government in all three elements, and Saudi is absolutely firm about maintaining this status. With regard to religion, both countries respect the beliefs of the other regardless of all the past hatred between the different religious sects both Shiites and Sunnis. Saudi Wahhabi clerics view Shiites as inappropriate Muslims, while other Iranian Shiite clerics believe that the Sunni Saudi Royal Family is not the legitimate custodian of the two holy mosques, which represent the two most holy places for Muslims. Concerning the second key factor, as the leading member of OPEC, Saudi would not involve its country in conflict with Iran, as other members of the OPEC cartel have done even during the time of Iranian/Iraqi war, although both oil ministers were obviously aiming at one another's oil policy and institution. The third factor concerns the Arab family's view of Iran as unworthy of trust after the Islamic revolution in 1979. During this time, Iran's only ally was Syria, and this diplomatic relation started in 1982. Iraq, after Saddam Hussain with the majority of Shiites in the Iraqi government, became a new Iranian ally. However, this

relationship only causes more tension and hostility from Arab countries towards Iran (Henderson, 2009).

Iran has been in support of Shiite causes outside the Iran's borders; this support reaches to Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. The Shiites in Saudi began to have a voice and to demand political reform and direct participation. Shiite clergies motivated their followers to stand against their governments, and even went further by requesting a split from Saudi. It is not clear whether Iran is behind these calls; however it is obvious that the Shiite radicals think highly of Iranian religious leaders' guidance (Cordesman, 2009).

The Gulf States and Iran used to resolve their conflicts peacefully without the help of other political powers, as they enjoyed a strong and trustworthy relationship. However, after the Iranian revolution in 1979 the foreign policy of Iran changed drastically. It adopted an anti-West policy, and focused its policy on Third World problems and a populist anti-imperialist policy. Iran's foreign policy after the year of 1979 concentrated on the exportation of the Islamic revolution, the reduction of satanic power, and policy which was against monarchial and secular orientation. In this new formation of its foreign policy Iran aimed towards changing the political map of the region instead of coexisting and cooperating with neighboring countries (Alam, 2001). This new anti-West stance under the guidance of Shi'ite religious figures precipitated a tremendous change to Saudi-Iranian relations in the context of Saudi Arabia's pro-West Sunnite monarchy. This change in the relationship between these two countries created a continuous rivalry (Sadeghi & Ahmadian, 2011).

Many have defined hegemony in the field of international relations. It has been described as the power of one state over another; for example, Stiles (2009) defines it as

“the predominance of one state over its peers” (pp. 2-3), while hegemony has also been defined as a hierarchy system of power by Vitalis (2006) who describes it as “the hierarchical order among rival great powers” (p. 26). Further, Keohane relates hegemony to resources in his definition of hegemony as a “preponderance of material resources” (Keohane, 1984, p. 32). The meaning of hegemony is not always connected to relations of different players; the meaning can also relate to an order of a system. This means that hegemony can be defined as the establishment of power in rules; the success of these rules is based on the effectiveness of power adequacy and the readiness to apply it. The power of hegemony can be a ‘powerful enough to maintain the essential rules governing interstate relations, and willing to do so’ (Keohane, 1989, p. 234; O’Brien, 2002, pp. 3-4).

Since the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution, Saudi Arabia and Iran have strongly acted as rivals to gain more impact in the Middle East and more importantly among the among the Gulf States. Saudi Arabia and Iran describe their general policy guideline as Islamic. Though the differences between both foreign policies are great, Saudi is a strong ally with the West in contradiction to Iran’s foreign policy which views the West as the greatest enemy. Saudi Arabia is a regional power, while Iran pursues revolutionary change in the Gulf and the Middle East (Terrill, 2011).

Saudi Arabia gains its powerful status quo from its revenues from oil, stable military alliance with the U.S., and their religious status as the custodians and protectors of the two holy mosques in Makkah and Medina (Hammond, 2010). Saudi Arabia follows a monarch system as their political system. According to fifth article of Saudi Arabia’s Basic Law of Government dated in March 1992:

1) Monarchy is the system of rule in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2) Rulers of the country shall be from amongst the sons of the founder King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al-Faisal Al-Saud, and their descendants, 3) The most upright among them shall receive allegiance according to Almighty God's Book and His Messenger's Sunna Traditions. 4) The Crown Prince shall devote himself exclusively to his duties as Crown Prince and shall perform any other duties delegated to him by the King, 5) Upon the death of the King, the Crown Prince shall assume the Royal powers until a pledge of allegiance (bay'a) is given.

(Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2013, Article 5)

The Saudi Royal Family had always been in control and is hardly challenged; the Royal Family is in control of state institutions. Al Saud princes and the Royal Family's close friends and allies are the ones running the executive office, the cabinet, the provincial institutes, and the security positions such as the Ministry of Interior, the Intelligence Agency, and the armed forces (Hamzawy, 2006). Many believe that the Saudi Royal Family is ruling the country under the supervision of the religious authorities. This belief comes from the strong relationship King Abdulaziz, the founder of the Kingdom, had with senior religious figures. The pressure of religious clergies caused many conflicts with the Saudi government in regards to their domestic and foreign policy (T. C. Jones, 2011). The relationship between political decisions and religious figures in Saudi can be exaggerated; however, this exaggeration is backed up with historical facts that lead to this created image. All Saudi kings respect, consider the religious involvement, and seek the support of *Ulema*—a name that refers to the religious leaders who function as the religious legitimizer for the Saudi political ruling family as the Ulema permit or legalize

debatable decisions (Metz, 1992). The different conditions the rulers of the Kingdom have went through allowed them to adjust their religious appearance and decision depending on the case and conditions surrounding it (Bronson, 2005). In the early 1900s, King Abdulaziz, the founder of the third Saudi state, established a religious army of religious fighters; this army was called Ikhwan. The purpose of this establishment was to calm down the population of the Kingdom and to have a soldier base against any regional expansion. The Ikhwan were a useful tactic used by the founding king to join Makkah and Medina, the two holy cities, to the founding of the country during its formation. Subsequently, by year 1929 King Abdulaziz demolished this organization as it achieved its goal and its existence was no longer a beneficial political tool (Bronson, 2005). King Abdulaziz made this decision because the Ikhwan were causing problems for the development of the country. They did not accept shifts in modern life in the 20th century; they refused all sorts of machines especially those that were used for communication. (Metz, 1992).

Abdulaziz was able to build his modern state and gain recognition from the people by the late 1920s. The King was able to gain such a wide recognition by bearing in mind the various interests of the people of the Kingdom. It was the policy of the country to discuss political and social matters with the Ulema, a practice King Abdulaziz followed (Metz, 1992). The Ulema council is the highest Saudi religious institution directed by the grand mufti who is in charge of maintaining the Saudi system and society in accordance with Islamic law. This position is recognized by the government as a senior religious position (Bronson, 2005). Hence, when the King reaches a disagreement with them, he works towards changing their minds. The Ulema are similar to the Ikhwan when

dealing with new technology and ideas. For example, King Abdulaziz wanted to establish a radio station; this new idea created a conflict between the Ulema and the ruler because they refused the idea of a radio station. Their refusal was based on the fact that the new invention was never used at the time of Prophet Mohammed, and it is a suspicious new invention that does not have any Islamic roots. Abdulaziz was able to change their minds and get their approval for the radio station by acknowledging the Ulema and assuring them that through radio station the Quran will be broadcasted throughout the nation (Metz, 1992).

Saudi Arabia's political system is distinct and cannot be compared to other neighboring countries for three reasons: 1) it is a relatively new state, as it was established in the year 1932; 2) it controls the Wahhabi Islamic ideology as it has been the ideological support for political and military decisions; and 3) its commitment to the Islamic world. The shape of the legal and political systems in Saudi are based on sharia law; this formation comes as a result of the religious and historical background of the nation and its people. According to the Saudi government, sharia law governs the country including the King himself (Dessouki, 1982). Since its establishment of the Kingdom, the Royal Family has been associated by the Wahhabi doctrine. Both Sheikh Mohammed Ibn Abdulwahhad and Mohammed Ibn Saud, the founder of the first Saudi state (historically there has been three Saudi states), created a coalition in ruling the new theocratic state (Dessouki, 1982). Abdulwahhab is an Islamic scholar; his ideas form the foundation the Wahhabi ideology. He studied the Hanbali Islamic law at one of the rigorous Islamic legal schools. His education was received in Medinah, Iraq, and Iran.

The Saudi government refuses to tolerate the exposed practice of other religions as the Saudi clergies and majority of the population do as well. The country is in continuous support of Islamic charity organizations and groups across their borders; some of these groups have been linked to terrorism actions and extremism. However, it is vital to understand that senior Saudi clergies condemn and refuse terrorism and violence (Cordesman, 2009). This appears very clearly after the 9/11 attacks in the U.S.; the government showed its opinion as it was in favor of the war against terrorism in different high profile events. On the Saudi Royal Embassy to the U.S. website, there are 55 statements by Saudi officials and seniors clergies emphasizing the position of the Kingdom against terrorism as an ideology and action (“Public Statements,” 2007). The Saudi government has control over the education system and clergy, because they receive their payments from the government. Through this control, the government is able to place limits on clergies who adopt extremism or make any extreme statement (Cordesman, 2009).

Sheikh Saad bin Nasser Al Shathri is one of the latest examples of the effect of such governmental control. He was fired from his position in the Council of Senior Ulama after he criticized and judged King Abdullah on his decision to build the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, where both men and women researchers and scholars work together. Ordinary Saudi universities are segregated educational environments; the King had a vision of creating a new key element toward a modernized economic Saudi Arabia with the creation of a co-educational university. However, Shathri had a different vision of this new educational foundation; he responded to the new Saudi desegregated community as a great sin from evil. His reason was that mixing

men and women would result in emotional breakdowns and lust for the opposite sex, and this will distract them from their goal of scientific research (Burke, 2011). The membership of this council was always monitored; in the past King Faisal had put tremendous efforts into banning religious figures from gaining recognition by joining elite religious institutions (Bronson, 2005)

The president of Iran is elected for a four year term and given the chance to be re-elected once. The Iranian constitution defines in theory the president as the second official person in power in Iran; the president is in charge of the executive branch and application of the constitution. In practice, the president's power is limited to the power of religion controlled by clerics and the Supreme leader. The Supreme leader is in charge of armed forces, security, defense, and key foreign policy matters. After the president comes to the cabinet, and their members are selected by the president. While the parliament has a say on the selection, each selected member has to get the approval of the parliament.

The Iranian president or the first vice president is in charge of the cabinet. The parliament or the Iranian Majlis contains 290 elected members with four-year terms; the authority of the Majlis includes introducing and passing laws, and indicting the president or any of the Iranian ministers. Yet, laws cannot be passed by the Majlis without the approval of the conservative Guardian Council. The role of the members of the Assembly of Experts is to choose and appoint the Supreme Leader, observe his performance, and eliminate him if the Supreme Leader is found to not meet the requirements of his appointed position; the assembly holds two sessions per year. All members must be clerics, each member is elected for eight years, and the Guardian Council checks and

examines all candidates of the assembly. The Guardian Council is the most powerful group in the Iranian government.

The six theologian members of the council are appointed by the Supreme Leader, while the other six jurists are designated by the judiciary system and permitted by the Majlis. Each member is given six years; however, the cycles are in phases to allow 50% of changes every three years. The council is in charge of the approval of bills that are delivered to the parliament as it has the power to ban any suggested bill if found incompliant with Islamic law. The Guardian Council also has the authority of prohibiting presidential, parliament, and assembly candidates from standing for elections. Iranian reformers tried to control and lessen the authority given to the Guardian Council; nonetheless, all the attempts were not successful. Ayatollah Khomeini philosophies are the foundation of the Supreme Leader constitution; this constitution places the Supreme Leader in the highest political rank with the most influential power in Iran. This position authorizes the leader with the power of appointing the judiciary, six members of the Guardian Council, commanders of affiliates of all military divisions, Friday prayers sermoners, and the directors of radio and TV stations.

The presidential elections are not complete without the approval of the Supreme Leader. The judiciary system in Iran has not once been liberated from political power; at first it was under the control of the clerics, and then it was secularized. Later the Supreme Court revolted and rejected all laws that do not reflect Islamic practices. This introduced the delivery of laws formed from Sharia law and Islamic teachings. The judiciary not only assures the application of Islamic-based law, it is also in charge of nominating six members of the Guardian Council.

The Iranian armed force includes the Revolutionary Guard and the Law Enforcement Forces. All high ranked members of both bodies are appointed by the Supreme Leader, are under his supervision, and only report to him. The Expediency Council works as an advisory board for the Supreme Leader with authority to resolve conflicts between the Majlis and Guardian Council. Members are appointed by the Supreme Leader; all members are religious with a social and political background (“Guide: How Iran is Ruled,” 2009).

The political revolutionary system that was established in Iran mirrors the political characters that took place on taking over the Shah, although the Iranians were motivated and inspired by the Western political system as it appears in their constitution, instead of relying on Islamic Law. This resulted in a complicated political system and positioned it between theocracy and democracy. On the top of this system is the Supreme Leader with absolute and supreme authority, as well as responsibility for elected clerics and non-elected councils in different offices in the system. With a long run of a number of rights to veto one another, this political framework did not result in the successful execution of any type of chief development within the political system.

Khamenei, the first Iranian president after the succession of the Shah, followed a confrontational foreign policy that resulted in detaching Iran from the global community and putting Iran in an eight year war with Iraq. The confrontational policy and war hurt the Iranian economy progressively. This put president Rafsanjani in a position where economic growth is essential, and he was able to advance the Iranian economy by developing international relations. President Rafsanjani was elected twice, however, the

high unemployment rate made Rafsanjani unpopular. There were a high number of young graduates, and the high demands of employment on their side were not fully met.

President Khatami's presidential era was full of contradictories. Khatami was a reformist; however, as the Iranian political system is intertwined and complicated, he had to face the common conservatives and their right to veto as members of the clerical councils and the Supreme Leader Khamenei. More press freedom was approved by reformists while the conservative authority would shut down newspapers and arrest political critics. Khatami also started to build good relations with the West; however, the events of 9/11 changed the scale in these new relationships.

In 2003 President Bush called Iran a part of the Axis of Evil. The American presence in countries surrounding Iran escalated the insecurity in Iran. As a result, the next presidential elections were controlled by the Iranian conservatives, and Ahmadinejad was elected president, although these elections were alleged to be fraudulent by many Iranians as a large number of reformer candidates were excluded without providing any reasonable explanations. The Ahmadinejad administration was conscious of the new power and freedom the young generation gained during Khatami's presidency and the need to strengthen its international relations with economically powerful countries in order to support the Iranian economy.

The policy President Bush used against Iran only resulted in harming Iran's economy, causing it to be pushed away and isolated from the international community. The U.S. played the role of the leader for the Western policy with Iran and threatened more economic sanctions, as well as military presence and intervention. This policy which was adopted and led by the U.S. did not help influence Iran towards peaceful talks

with the West in regards to its nuclear program, yet it caused the radicalization of the neo-conservative authority of Iran. The foreign policy of Iran is not only influenced by the Islamic Revolutionary ideology, their actions depend on their strategic interests. To illustrate the statement, the position president Ahmadinejad undertook with Russia contradicts its position with Israel and the United States. The Russian government's abuse against Muslims in Chechnya is not observed by the Iranians as the same as Israeli abuse against Palestinians (Rasmussen, 2009). Iran's urge to own its own nuclear weapons and infrastructure to empower its position in the region as the Iranian authority and elite proves that the country is facing security obstacles and seeks to be in a leading position in the Middle East (Takeyh, 2007).

The position of Saudi Arabia from the time of the Iranian Revolution was based on fear from the new Iran; the Saudi government announced its full support to the Shah regime in a statement made by Crown Prince Fahd. The statement contained three main points. The first point emphasized the Saudi support for the Shah regime as it is a legitimate system as the Saudis described it. The second point accused that the bloodshed in Iran would only cause losses for the Iranians and gains for the communist enemy. The third point reflected the worries of the Saudi government of the future shift in the region if the Shah is removed from power, as Crown Prince Fahd described it as a threat for Middle East stability (Alkawaz, 2007).

The foreign policy of Iran changed drastically after the Iranian Revolution. This change included its diplomatic relations with the GCC states. The cooperative Saudi-Iranian pre-revolution relations faced two key factors that put these two states in a confrontational stage, namely ideology and regional rivals. The competition on regional

power between Saudi Arabia and Iran after 1979 came from five factors: 1) sectarian understanding of Islam, 2) political affiliation with the U.S. and the West, 3) hegemony over the Arabian Gulf, 4) influence growth over the Middle East, and 5) competition in OPEC. Interpretation of Islam and relations with the West were the two most significant factors that played a role in shaping and prioritizing both countries' foreign policies. The first factor was the background to the will of each country to hold the leadership position among the Muslim world, while the second factor relied on the approach of Iran and Saudi Arabia with regard to the West, especially the U.S. Since its formation in 1932 Saudi Arabia adopted a steady pro-West foreign policy; this policy included development in politics, economics, and military dependency with the U.S. In contrast, after the 1979 revolution, Iran was looking for more independence, adherence to an anti-imperialist ideology, and opportunities to create more stable political relations with the Third World.

Theoretical Framework

Neorealism. Neorealism was founded by Kenneth Waltz in 1979; his work was directed to redevelop the theory of realism. Waltz believed that there were flaws in earlier international relation theories such as classical realism. Kenneth was born in 1924 and passed away in 2013; his goal was to explain understandings about international relations by introducing neorealism. Waltz received his bachelor degree in economics after his service in the Second World War. From the University of Columbia he earned his graduate degree in political science; he was teaching at many U.S. universities including Columbia and Berkeley. His career in universities started in 1957 at Columbia University and ended at the same school. He was the president of the American Political Science

Association twice, once in 1987 and again in 1988. Waltz was the recipient of the James Madison Award in 1999 (Martin, 2013).

To understand how states behave, make decisions, and what encourages them to remain in power it is necessary to recognize the role of international key players and community and their effect on states. Neorealism is an international relation theory found by Kenneth Waltz in the year 1997. Neorealism theory is also known as structural realism as Kenneth reasons in his systemic approach (Sagan, 2004). This theory offers an understanding of states' behavior based on the effect of power, and it is the most used approach in modern international relations (Powell, 1994). According to the theory of Waltz, the international construction creates restrictions on how countries behave; this means that states that act within the scope of the probable international array will stay in power. Neorealism theory reintroduces the traditional realism theory, however, in an accurate and intense positivistic social science (Waltz, 1979).

Structural realists believe that human nature has a slight effect on the position of a state to seek power, in contrast to realists. Classical realists believe that human nature is the main reason why states seek power. In neorealism or structural realism theory, the structure of the international system is the motivator of states to seek power. The absence of a higher authoritative power that rules all the other great powers, as well as the absence of security assurance, will result in doubts about whether or not there will be an attack from another state. These reasons are what motivate states to be adequately powerful in order of self-readiness in the case of any future attack. This strive for power among states, while fearing the unknown attack, traps them in a cycle of power competition to guarantee their survival.

Neorealists do not include the different types of regimes nor cultural differences among the aspects of neorealism theory in a state wanting to gain power. This is due to the equal basic incentives the international architectures make for powerful states. The government type of all states does not have an enormous effect on the way it acts toward other states. According to neorealism, all states are equal as they are anticipated to be similar, yet power differentiates between states, since it considers power as the definitive survival. A state's power is measured by its material capabilities and its latent power; the first is considered to military resources while the second power is the wealth of a country and its population. These two types of power a state may possess explains that war is not the only method for a country to gain power; a state's increasing population and share of the world's wealth is a type of power that a country may have (Mearsheimer, 2006). In the case of Saudi Arabia and Iran, both countries are aiming to gain more power in order to protect their states from each other. Iran's possibility of nuclear acquisition puts the state in a more powerful position which worries Saudi Arabia. However, according to neorealism, a state's power is not only measured by its military assets; other factors add to it such as population size and economy.

States compete for power based on five assumptions; none of the following assumptions work alone as a power-seeking motivator for a state. However, all five together are what encourage states in the international structure to want power. The five assumptions are: anarchy, offensive military capabilities, uncertainty of other states intentions, state's survival, and rationality. Anarchy does not mean chaos; it is the reverse meaning of hierarchy. In other words, it is an ordering system that means that power is decentralized as there is not power above states. Offensive military capabilities mean that

all states acquire some sort of power that enables the state to pose as a threat to any of its neighboring states. The power each state has differs from state to state as it also might change from time to time. States will never be sure about the other states' intentions; it might be understood to some degree from the actions of authoritative figures and decision makers; however, it is difficult to be certain whether a state would take an action to change its power balance or if the state is pleased with its status quo. Survival is the foremost objective of all states, as they do seek to obtain other goals such as wealth. However, protecting a state's local political order is a priority to other goals because they rely on the survival of the state first and foremost. Further, rational states are able to manage and create strategies to maintain its survival. Yet, states might mislead themselves from wrongful strategies depending on inaccurate information (Mearsheimer, 2006).

Idealism in international relations. Idealism is the idea of progressing international relations ethically. "An idealist in this sense is one who places before himself in private or public affairs as attainable a goal which other citizens, perhaps equal moral, do not believe to be so attainable" (Smith, 1923, p.2). Idealism is based on the possibility of building a political system on morality. Negative instincts of humans can be ignored and silenced to enable the idea of establishing national and international standards of conduct to reach peace, wealth, collaboration, and justice in the world. According to idealists, war is not considered in the modern world, as humans have evolved from the idea of destructive institution. The cost of having a war is beyond the benefits and gains of it (Brown, 1992).

Wilsonianism or idealism arose as different political policy philosophy by the end of the First World War. The globe was directed to the idea of how to protect states from war and avoid conflict in the international community. Wilson was aimed towards finding local and international democratic institutions that are able to protect democracy and human rights (Russett, 1993). Idealists claimed that reaching world peace can be achieved by having foreign policy makers rely on the nation's opinion for their decision; in other words, having a foreign policy that reflects the democratized public opinion (Long & Wilson, 1995). The optimistic policy of idealism is to override the international anarchy in order to accomplish a more multicultural international structure. Idealists highlight the strength of reasoning to beat prejudice and abolish threatening forces. Through education and democracy and engaging public opinion in foreign policy, the world's public will be empowered. According to idealism, the UN has a vital position in forming the world public opinion. Idealism also recognizes the existence of a shared agreement of interest among people worldwide, regardless of the incompatible interests among their states. Humans do not share the same values and culture; however, they all tend to share the same need of security, prosperity, acknowledgment, and respect (Wilson, 2011). In both Iran and Saudi Arabia, it seems that both counties are somewhat following this theory. As for the Palestinian conflict, the public opinion is recognized and adopted in their foreign policies. Both states foreign policy is influenced by the ethical values of their religious background.

Soft Power. This theory recognizes the power of making others desire to reach the goals that another wants, in other words, getting "others to want the outcomes that you want" (Nye, 2004, p. 5). This achievement can be reached by attracting others to a

goal instead of using coercion. Soft power eliminates conflict during the process of behavioral change, since it does not use force to change but utilizes persuasion and attraction to get the wanted change. Nye also recognizes that soft power does not always have to be the case of positive influence; it can lead to bad changes such as using propaganda as a format of soft power (Nye, 2011). Soft power is the second type of power as it is the opposite of hard power, such as the use of military force. Nye sums up a state's soft power in three elements: 1) the culture of the state such as the place that others value and consider attractive, 2) the state's political standards when practiced both locally and internationally, and 3) the legitimacy and morality of a state's foreign policy (Nye, 2011). The holy places in both Saudi Arabia and Iran are appealing to people on both sides, as well as the foreign policy of each country. The Minority Saudi Shiites admire Iran and its policy as it is a reflection of their religious beliefs.

According to Nye (2004), soft power is considered to be a more challenging tool for states to exercise, because state's resources are not on the scope of state control and soft power does not work directly to create the format of a state's policy. These two reasons would lengthen the process of effective soft power influence that might take several years to achieve. The notion of soft power is descriptive not normative; this leads to the understanding that soft power may be used to conduct evil. For instance, Hitler and Stalin utilized soft power to receive what they wanted from their people, and this does not make the usage of soft power in these cases good even though they were able to reach their intended goals. Nye also believes that soft power is not a type of idealism or liberalism, but it challenges the meaning of realism in international relations. It is only a power method to achieve goals (Nye, 2011).

Research Gap

Throughout the reading of the literature review, the researcher was able to discover the limits of the current studies available on the Iranian-Saudi conflict of hegemony. The previous research focused on the spread of power each country seeks, and the tools used to exercise this need. The researcher was not able to find enough literature that supports the idea of conflict resolution in this case. It is also notable that this is a continuous conflict, and updates will need to be researched. The recent update about the Geneva resolution of the G5+1 agreement with Iran in regards to the nuclear program adds a new layer to the conflict with Saudi Arabia. President Hassan Rouhani, the new president of Iran, is taking a different and unexpected approach within the Iranian foreign policy by accepting to negotiate with the West.

The conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran has been addressed from several angles by researchers from the foreign policy and international relations field. Yet, the topic needs to be analyzed using the skills of conflict analysis and resolution to better understand the continuous situation between both countries. New developments are happening within the region and more dramatic positive changes continue to unfold within the Iranian foreign policy in regards to its relations to the West and in accordance to its nuclear policy.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The goal of this dissertation is to explore the future options of the Iranian-Saudi relations in terms of understanding past patterns of exchange between both countries. The researcher intends to develop timeframes depending on the nature of the political relation in order to determine possible future options to strengthen this tense relation.

“A research design is a plan for collecting and analyzing data in order to answer the investigator’s question” (Holsti, 1996, p. 24). Content analysis can be defined as “any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings” (Patton, 2002, p. 453). Qualitative content analysis methodology is an appropriate method for this dissertation, as it is intended to provide a proper explanation of the Iranian-Saudi relation since the Iranian revolution. Through the analysis the researcher will identify a possible future for this diplomatic relationship.

Qualitative content analysis provides researchers with a better understanding of social reality using a scientific method (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Qualitative content analysis was first used to meet the research needs in the fields of anthropology, qualitative sociology, and psychology to find the meanings of physical communication. It is a deductive tool that helps the testing phase of hypotheses or research questions developed from theories or previous research. The purpose of this type of qualitative research is to ground the investigation of themes and the implications resulted from these themes. Qualitative content analysis offers researchers a tool to develop theory. Sampling requires the search of existing texts selected in a manner that will guide the researcher to find the answers for the research questions. This qualitative approach enables researchers

to reach an explanation for typologies, which results in a clear and cohesive understanding of the research results (Berg, 2001). Qualitative content analysis will provide the researcher with a framework to organize data into categories based on the researcher's interpretation of the data. This step uses the process of inductive reasoning depending on the generated themes from the data (Patton, 2002). The process of content qualitative research of inductive reasoning starts from the bottom building its way to the results through themes (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Rational for Content Analysis

In order to know if content analysis is the best tool to use in investigating the topic of this research, the features of content analysis were studied. Sarantakos (2005) described the features of content analysis as:

- 1) Is a documentary method that includes written material, official documents, speeches, photographs, and so on,
- 2) Is the study of the content of texts, such as words, meanings and pictures,
- 3) Is quantitative, in that it measures objectively specific attributes of text contents,
- 4) Is qualitative, in that it focuses on meanings and interpretations in text,
- 5) Is non-reactive, in that the document was not produced with the knowledge that it would be subjected to this analysis,
- 6) Is transparent, in that its procedure is clear and open and that it can be replicated,
- 7) Is unobtrusive, in that it studies the document without the knowledge of the author,
- 8) Is a diverse and flexible method that can be applied in a variety of contexts and Materials,
- 9) Is longitudinal, in that it can address the same issue over a period of time,
- 10) Is comparative, in that it can produce cross-sectional and cross-cultural data. (p. 299)

Qualitative content analysis is the best tool to use in investigating this topic, as the researcher will be using historical and current data on both Saudi Arabia and Iran. The data the researcher used in the literature review covers the political system, economic background, religious background, and historical exchange between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Through this data, the researcher will be able to grasp the meaning of the text, documents, and speeches that are included in the literature. It will also provide a meaning of the relationship between both countries in different Iranian presidential eras, in order to find the best period these two countries enjoyed in accordance to their diplomatic relation. This understanding will enable the researcher to predict the best practice Saudi Arabia and Iran should use to strengthen their diplomatic relation that has an effect on the Middle East. Krippendorff (1980) describes content analysis as “Potentially,... one of the most important research techniques in the social sciences, it seeks to understand data not as a collection of physical events, but as symbolic phenomena and to approach their analysis unobtrusively” (p. 7). The particular content analysis utilized in this dissertation considers how different periods of the diplomatic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia after the Iranian revolution can contribute to predictions and assumptions for a more productive and engaging relation in the future.

Formulating the Research Questions to be Answered

The formulated research question for this dissertation is: Is the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran diminishing the role of the two nations as positive factors in the Middle East?

Selecting the Sample to be Analyzed

The researcher will use the CIAO database in order to find brief policies and papers related to the topic of Iran and Saudi Arabia. The Praeger Security International database will also be used as it has a great number of books that cover the historical facts of these two countries and their diplomatic relations. Online news websites will also be used to cover events and current developments on the topic.

Applying the Criteria

Saudi Arabia and Iran were typed in the mentioned databases and the research was specified by using terms such as diplomatic relations, Islamic revolution, Arab Spring, oil, sanctions, reform, economic, and political system. The researcher will use content analysis to recognize and illustrate patterns of the different periods of the Iranian-Saudi relations. Data will be categorized chronologically in order to address themes and patterns.

Establish Data Collection Unit and Unit of Analysis

The analysis of this dissertation will focus on political exchange between Iran and Saudi Arabia and frame it into periods; the study will examine texts and actions taken by both political systems since the rise of the Islamic republic of Iran. The unit of analysis will be the systems that Iran and Saudi Arabia have used since 1979 to the date this research is conducted. The system will allow the researcher to understand and define the previous patterns of behavior between both states.

Chapter 4: Case Study and Findings

Saudi Arabia

The economic development Saudi enjoyed in the 1970s from oil revenues prompted the government to release itself from the general dependency on religious scholars. However, this shift in the government's direction away from religious support fired back harshly. In 1979 the danger of religious scholars posed to the stability of the Royal Family appeared clearly as religious rioters gathered in the Holy Mosque in Makkah in a plan to confiscate it (T. C. Jones, 2011).

The Saudi government does not have a formal constitution or political parties since they do not have any elections. Critics outside of Saudi Arabia do not have the full and accurate understanding of the status of the government's popularity within the country. To clarify, the power of the King is restricted and consensual; the limitation on King's power is due to other source of powers inside the Royal Family, such as religious practices, Saudi traditions, key tribes' leaders, business leaders, and the Ulema. Westerners do not recognize the legitimacy of this system as power is not elected, though the Royal Family has always wanted to attain a wide social and political acceptance (Cordesman, 2003).

Sharia serves as the core authoritative political tool in Saudi Arabia. The law of sharia provides the parameters of all political aspects and processes; it also provides flexibility to members of the Royal Family and elites in policies that are not precisely against the law. Previously, Saudi Arabia never had a written constitution or a constitutionally based institution. Saudi Kings believe that the Saudi citizens are protected and receive social justice by sharia law that is rooted in the Quran and Islamic

practices. By the year 1979, after the attacks on the Holy Mosque in Makkah, King Fahad who was Crown prince then declared the basic system of Saudi rule. A committee of eight men was created and led by Prince Naif, the minister of interior. The committee was required to write a constitution consisting of 200 articles, but by year 1981 the system was not yet written (Dessouki, 1982).

Saudi Arabia has a number of factors that allow it to maintain and preserve power. All the country's resources are in the hands of the Royal Family; this is possible due to the absence of a system for accountability. All these resources including the oil are used to develop the Kingdom and to maintain tribal structure and alliance in order to sustain the legitimacy of the Royal Family amid the people of the Kingdom (Hamzawy, 2006).

By the first of March 1992, King Fahad issued a royal decree embodying the Basic Law of Governance. The document contained 82 articles in nine chapters. The chapters include the following: 1) general principles, 2) the law of governance, 3) the values of the Saudi society, 4) economic principles, 5) rights and duties, 6) the authorities of the state, 7) financial affairs, 8) institutions of audits, and 9) general principles. It was applied from the date it was issued. According to the introduction of the royal decree, it was a result of considering the interests of the public, a reflection of the Kingdom's wide development, and the need and aspiration for the country's objectives (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2013).

During the past decade, the government of Saudi Arabia has shown some exceptional political development. Since 2002 the government has accomplished steady yet gradual political reform in several policies. Some of these developments include

establishment of Majlis Alshura or the Shura Council, municipal elections, the legalization of civil society actors, educational reform, and the establishment of the institution of national dialogue conferences (Hamzawy, 2006).

The national dialogue center was established by King Abdullah when he was the Crown Prince in the year 2003. This forum offered Saudi citizens an environment to expose their thoughts about topics which historically have been politically sensitive. These topics varied such as the role and rights of Saudi women (for example, there was a session on the right for women to drive in Saudi). The openness of the dialogue forum was even reflected in the Saudi media, since opinion writers were able to criticize religious thoughts. There are many examples of drastic changes in journalistic freedom of speech to some extent; for example, the work of Ibn Taymiyya, the root of Saudi religious ideology, was questioned several times. Even though this freedom is not explicitly granted, the decision for an article to be published depends on the exact article. One journalist stated of his articles examining Ibn Taymiyya was rejected three times. The growing openness can be characterized by discussions about social grievances and critique and examination of extremist and/or wrongful interpretations of Islam (Bronson, 2005).

Critics must understand that Saudi Arabia cannot simply mimic the Western policy to achieve development; policy development must be reached on Saudi terms. Nonetheless, such allegations neglect the characteristics of the Saudi society, which is basically a combination of religion, culture, tribal practice, and the variety of national character. Imitating a Western political policy of democracy would cause political disruptiveness, factionalism, and the politicization of Islam instead of reaching advanced

social development. The many layers of issues that must be considered in the Saudi context in order to make political and social reform include the country's diversity of Wahhabi Islam, population and economic issues, province divisions, and the centralization the government's mechanism (Cordesman, 2003).

Political reform is not a step taken that has been taken by King Abdullah alone. For instance, King Faisal executed his plan for political reform by using maximized flexibility an Islamic law. His first royal verdict, which included a ten point reform program, was issued after he was announced as King. The following points illustrate the program.

1. While reconfirming the state's adherence to Islamic law, it promised to issue a basic law (a constitution) and set up a consultative council.
2. It pledged enactment of provincial regulations that would establish local governments.
3. It proclaimed independence of the judiciary and promised to establish a supreme judicial council and a ministry of justice.
4. The judicial council was to consist of 20 members chosen from both the lay jurists and the Ulema.
5. It promised to strengthen Islamic propaganda.
6. It proclaimed the reform of the committees of public morality.
7. It proclaimed the government's solicitude for social matters and education and pledged control of retail prices, establishment of scholarships for students, social security regulations, a law protecting laborers from unemployment, and provision of innocent means of recreation for all citizens.

8. It announced the intention to regulate economic and commercial activities through appropriate legislation, which would ensure progress, economic expansion, and encouragement of capital investment.
9. It pledged a sustained endeavor to develop the country's resources and economy, in particular, roads, water resources, heavy and light industry, and self-sufficient agriculture.
10. It abolished slavery in the kingdom" (Dessouki, 1982a, para. 27-26)

The ten-point program relied on Islamic practices and principles, yet it represented a new chapter in the Saudi judicial system. It presented the establishment of the Saudi Ministry of Justice and announced its independency from political power, judges and courts freed from any authority, and rule using Islamic sharia law. King Faisal continued his reform plan to cover financial and economic growth; he constructed many regulations such as the regulations for investing foreign capital, companies, labor law, and civil service (Dessouki, 1982).

In general, King Faisal was able to create a mediocre standing point between conservatism and modernism. He chose to preserve the Kingdom's religious image and gradually push the country to a more modern stage while still protecting it as much as possible from the negativity of imposing a modern change in the country. King Faisal recognized the unwanted elements of Western modernization; however, he also recognized the need for the Saudi economy and society for modernization so he sought a middle way. His economy, education, social welfare, and Western technology development all benefitted from Saudi oil revenues (Cordesman, 2003). Faisal was also behind the establishment of the Islamic conference; this aided and strengthened the Saudi

influence on the Islamic world. The government also has been known for its financial support to numerous Islamic causes and political needs (Ahrari & Noyes, 1993).

King Khalid followed his brother Faisal in his focus on reform, ruling the country from 1975-1982. The same policy shaped the ultimate and unlimited rule of the King; they also supported the King's role by the bureaucratic style of government. Oil revenues maintained economic, business, health sector, and education progress. Free healthcare and education was provided to all citizens; this was to empower and support the people who were not into business and did not gain any social and economic growth with the change. Although there was a clear introduction to Western influence, the balance was kept. Through the unlimited rule of the King, economic and social development was maintained (accepted by the Wahhabi ethical code) as were strong relations with tribe leaders; this allowed the king to maintain an accepted traditional and cultural life style (Kostiner, 1997).

The rise in oil price in the early 1960s and 1970s reached \$40 per barrel; the vision of King Khalid was to benefit from Saudi oil revenues to fill the state treasury and development initiatives were quickly executed. This economic shift had an impact on social life in Saudi Arabia; the hope was to quickly achieve this plan and take the country to the next level in a short time. The government began to activate the public and private sectors, took steps to reform governmental agencies, and established chamber of commerce branches around the Kingdom (Almuhanna, 1995). King Khalid's era was known as the Saudi golden era and the era of goodness. He pushed the country into the development race along with his brother, Crown Prince Fahd. The execution of the second Saudi five-year development plan was during Khalid's time, and it cost the

country 500 billion Saudi Riyals, a 9% increase in comparison to the cost of the previous plan. The third plan was also during his time and cost 783 billion Saudi Riyals. Development plans included housing by launching the real estate development fund; education that included public and higher education by establishing hundreds of schools for both boys and girls and new universities around the country and sending over 100,000 young Saudis to top universities around the world to get proper education; a healthcare system by establishing 29 new hospitals and 681 clinics furnished with modern equipment and professional staff; transportation; the establishment of the institution of technical training and education; and the Council of Civil Service to take over the planning and organization of Civil Service Affairs in ministries and governmental departments that issued and developed existing labor laws (Alkhareif, 2010).

King Khalid's reign was known to be effective; he completed his brother King Faisal's policy to represent Saudi Arabia in the United Nations. While the U.S.-Saudi relations continued to be pleasant, the Israeli conflict with Palestine was a frustration factor in this relationship. King Khalid expressed to Jimmy Carter during his visit to Riyadh in 1978 that the only resolution for the conflict would be full withdrawal from Israel. However, his leadership skills were unlike Faisal's. He enjoyed openness with the press about the rationale and justification of Saudi foreign policy; he used the same policymaker figures upon whom King Faisal relied, yet he provided them with more authoritative and independent roles. In 1976 Khalid took the step in making visits to Gulf States; these visits strengthened the Saudi-Gulf relations and probably led to the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). After the visits, Iran sent a proposal for a collective security arrangement; the proposal was not immediately rejected

but was taken into consideration due to the suspiciousness of an Iranian hegemony. In 1979 after Egypt and Israel signed the peace treaty, Saudi Arabia's foreign policy with neighboring countries who sought stability changed. King Khalid ended all relations with Egypt and asked Arab countries to adopt economic sanction policies towards Egypt. Although King Khalid made his position clear about Israel, this did not protect him from opposition; he faced two incidents that the Saudi history will always remember.

The first was a strike against the government which took place in the Grand Holy Mosque in Makkah, where Juhaiman and about 500 other men and women seized the mosque. According to the Juhaiman the leader of the strike, the Royal Family lost their validity to rule the country as a result of corruption and close relations with the West. For the government to take military action against Juhaiman and the group, they had to receive a religious opinion from the Ulema, as blood should not be shed at the Grand Mosque. After the government received the approval, it took them two weeks to end the seizure and all men were publicly executed (Metz, 1992).

The Grand Mosque seizure projected a new opposition model into the Saudi government. This group was not only sought a ban on women's social involvement, they also sought bans on television broadcasting and movies, as well as strict obedience to Sharia law. They forced religion into politics by accusing the Royal Family of not being religiously fit to rule the Kingdom. The attackers were member of large tribal groups (the Utayba and Qahtan), workers, members of the Saudi army and National Guard, and students. When King Khalid first heard the news about the seizure, he accused the Shiites supported by outsiders (Dessouki, 1982).

The second incident was in the Eastern Province, Alqatif, two weeks after the attacks in Makkah. Alqatif is the home of the Saudi Shiites, and this was not the first riot for Shiites in the region as it also happened in 1970 and 1978. However, these rioters carried pictures and posters of Khomenini; more than 20,000 National Guard troops were sent to stop the riots. After these two events, the Saudi government decided it was time to form a consultative assembly—*Majlis Alshoura* or *Shoura Council*. The Saudi government and Aramco, the Saudi oil company that resides in the Eastern province, have not discriminated against Shiite employment, a sign of improvement for this minority group. However, living conditions and local services were still the same and lacked proper advancement, which led to a second demonstration in 1980. A plan to develop living conditions was immediately adopted and executed; the plan incorporated home loans, schools, hospitals, street construction and lighting, sewer projects, and an electricity power plant development (Metz, 1992).

The rebellious Saudi Shiites who live in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia where the oil exists account for 10% of the entire Saudi population and 50% of the eastern province population. As this group has rebelled against the government since the era of King Khalid violently demanding equal rights, they continued to do so with their headquarters in the UK and the U.S., communicating via fax. They worked their way through the Western media spreading their anti-Saudi Royal Family publicity.

By the end of 1993, they reached a settlement with King Fahd. As a result of this, arrangement, all anti-regime activity was discontinued by the Saudi Shiites in Saudi Arabia and overseas. From the King's side the government promised and started to ameliorate Shiite treatment, provides funding for development plans and projects to

improve their living conditions, and stopped Wahhabi leaders from agitation against the Shiites. Fahd also went a step further and promised all Shiite political exiles that they would be respected and never harassed upon return to Saudi Arabia (Abir, 1997).

King Fahd rose to throne after the death of his brother Khalid in 1982. His era witnessed two wars: first the Iranian/ Iraqi war, and then the Iraqi invasion in Kuwait. Fahd had to make a critical decision to allow U.S. troops to enter Saudi Arabia; however, the decision did not take time (Yetiv, 1997). The decision was made in a meeting between King Fahd, Prince Abdulla Crown Prince, Prince Sultan Minister of Defense, and Prince Bander (Saudi ambassador to the U.S.) from the Saudi side, and on the American side, Secretary Cheney and General Norman Schwarzkopf. The Americans flew to Saudi Arabia in order to gain Fahd's permission by showing him the danger his country was facing. After a presentation from the American deputation, King Fahd discussed the matter with Prince Abdullah and Prince Sultan and made the decision to grant the U.S. troops permission to enter Saudi Arabia (Yetiv, 1997).

During the 1980s opposition against the Saudi Royal Family recurred. The goals for these groups were due to the government's corruption, its partnership with the West, and calls for modernization. After the Iraqi's invasion of Kuwait in the year 1990 and with King's Fahd request for U.S. military support, the voice of extremism was at its peak. Many clerics, Islamic preachers, and some members of the Ulema criticized and attacked the presence of the infidel on the holy land; they made sure that their speeches were widely spread by recoding them on tapes and spreading them throughout the country. Despite the fact that the King had the support of the Ulema for his decision to allow U.S. military presence in the country with the issuance of a *fatwa*—a religious

announcement justifying and legalizing the King's choice, extremists did not stop attacking and fueling the people against the Royal Family. The opposition not only emanated from the religious groups in the Kingdom, liberal educated intellectuals also began to call for limits on the control of Ulema on the Saudi's daily life. Once these calls were ignored by the government, they and the Saudi middle class population condemned the support of the U.S. to the Saudi government (Abir, 1997).

The intervention of the U.S. government triggered political and social disruption within the Kingdom. Right after the Second Gulf War, Saudi Arabia was threatened and attacked by terror attacks; as an outcome of one these attacks nineteen U.S. soldiers were killed in year 1996. At that time King Fahd was ill and made the decision of turning the power over to the Crown Prince Abdullah (Yetiv, 1997). The existence of American, French, and British forces on Saudi soil after the Gulf War called the legitimacy of the Royal Family into question by both Sunni oppositionists and Iranian Shiite extremists. This rejection of the Western troop's presence resulted in a number of low level violent incidents, as well as two major bombings. The first bombing was in the Saudi National Guard Training Center in Riyadh in 1995, while the second one took place at the U.S. Air Barracks at Al-Khobar in 1996. Terrorist groups such as Al-Qaida also organized attacks against the U.S. government outside Saudi Arabia, such as the bombing of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 (Cordesman, 2003).

After the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989, during the period of Fahd's rule, the relations with Iran started to take a different direction. As mentioned previously, Saudi Arabia never disconnected its diplomatic relations with Iran even under the worst conditions. These Saudi efforts started to pay off, and President Rafsanjani made the first

Iranian attempt to strengthen the relations. The Iranians stopped the support of Saudi Shiite uprisings, as well as the Iranian attacks against the Royal Family, as the Iranian's also stopped supporting rioters during the season of Hajj. Saudi Arabia and Iran collaborated to convince the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to reduce oil production in June 1997. The Iranian airlines started to fly to Saudi Arabia in September 1997. Fahd sent the Saudi Minister of State to Tehran to deliver a message from the King and Prince Abdullah Crown Prince as a positive response to the Iranian invitation to Saudi to attend the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in Tehran in December 1997 (Cordesman, 2003), as well as to establish a high joint annual committee between the two countries to activate trade and economic cooperation. The first meeting was held in December 1998, reaching a volume of trade exchange between Saudi and Iran of more than \$500 million by the year 2000 (Kamil, 2001).

King Fahd's era was known for its regional effect in the Middle East. King Fahd acted as the mediator in Arab conflicts; a great example of his role occurred during the Lebanese conflict in the year 1989. King Fahd made a tremendous step to stop the bloodshed in Lebanon by inviting the entire Lebanese National Assembly—both Christians and Muslim—to resolve their political crisis. The Lebanese were not able to meet at home due to the violence. At the end of the panel the Lebanese were able to vote on a reform plan and elect a new president for their country. This exemplifies the huge influence Saudi Arabia had during Fahd's ruling. He was also able to restore the Saudi-Egyptian relations, and paid a visit to Cairo in 1987. The visit not only affected the relations of both countries, it represented the substantial end to the Egyptian remoteness

from Arab countries. It also emphasized the essential role of Saudi leadership by positioning the Kingdom amongst Arabs (Metz, 1992).

King Fahd emphasized the establishment of two key points that positively affected the stability of the Kingdom. The first key point was the establishment of the industrial sector, as he planned to create a strong base for the Saudi industrial field by offering the engagement of private investors, and doubled the fund provided to the industrial development fund to allow more factories to be established. The government also was engaged in industry by adopting huge petrochemical projects in Jubail and Yanbu. He also focused on agriculture, which transformed the country from being an oil importer to an exporter. The second key point was strengthening Gulf relations in order to face any threat to the region after the Iraq-Iran war. One of the most distinctive features of the reign of King Fahd was the development of the shareholding companies and the emergence of the Saudi stock market, which included nearly a million percent share in more than seventy shareholding companies, and banks were among those companies that have transformed into shareholding companies trading shares in the Saudi market (Almuhanha, 1995). Unemployment rates among Saudi nationals has reached 12% (Hoetjes, 2013), while government programs that have been designed to provide generous support and social services in Fahd's plan had to be reduced in lieu of the global oil price drop crisis ("Nubtha an hayat almalik," 2005).

When referring to reform in Saudi Arabia, it must be clarified that the Saudi Royal Family had been grouped into two groups. King Abdullah, the current king, leads the moderate group as he appeared to encourage steady and gradual openness and more involvement of citizens in politics limited to the fact that this involvement and freedom

does not interfere with the supremacy and stability of the Royal Family. The moderate group has fervently tried to explain their moderate concept of political reform to Wahhabi religious leaders, and reduce the discrimination among minorities and groups who were in agony on account of Wahhabi practices such as their stance towards women and Saudi Shiites. King Abdullah was in charge of the Kingdom since almost all of the executive authority was conferred on to him after his brother King Fahd became seriously ill. Before his ascendancy to power in 2005, King Abdullah acted positively by promoting the concept of reform that the government commenced in 2002. Prince Saud Alfaisal, the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia for thirty years, is another strong member of the moderate group. Alfaisal publically confronted and challenged the Wahhabi leaders about their position with regard to women's civil rights and political participation. Prince Talal, the half-brother of King Abdullah and characterized for his honesty and being opinionated, urged for the reform of the religious institution, empowering the consultant parliament, the Shoura Council, by enabling them to make decisions instead of the executives and turning it into an elected institution monitored with budgetary supervision (Hamzawy, 2006).

To understand the steps King Abdullah has made to the religious establishment, the relationship between the government and religious leaders according to Saudi Basic law must be clarified. Article 23 states "The State shall protect the Islamic Creed, apply the Sharia, encourage good and discourage evil, and undertake its duty regarding the Propagation of Islam" (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, 2013).

The agreement between the Royal Family and Alsheikh (the founder of the Wahhabi ideology) and his family was described as a bond based on politics and religion.

This relation helped King Abdulaziz, the founder of the Saudi third state, to endorse his position by the use of Islam to influence the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula. Abdulaziz's technique was successful; tribal groups and families yielded to the Wahhabi version of Islam and guaranteed Abdulaziz political loyalty. Both parties supported each other; nevertheless, there is a balance to this relationship. From the very beginning of the third Saudi state after the oil discovery, the Royal Family formed more powerful ties with the community and lessened its reliance on the Ulema. The government's dependence on elements other than the Ulema assisted the country when modern production was proposed. The balance of power is useful as well especially in cases when, for example, uncertain opinions about a topic arise from the society, the government can use the assistance of the Ulema to issue a *fatwa*—a religious judgment to legitimize the resolution (Quilliam & Kamel, 2003).

The year 2002 shows a change in the Saudi religious establishment. The actions of the moderate group of the Royal Family created dissatisfaction within the establishment. Clerics have always voiced their opinion of the risk of political openness. The Ulema enjoyed an escalation in their own power right after the golden liberal Saudi years ended in 1960. After King Abdullah started to gain executive authority in 2002, clerics started to lobby with the conservative group of the Royal Family against religious reform. Many announcements and reports were published by the religious demonizing educational development and advancement in women's civil rights grounded in governmental decisions, as they tried to hinder social and civil reform. Religious reform was not the only change since 2002; the Saudi government does not support the idea of

political parties and monitors all nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), facts which limited the activity of peaceful dissenting groups (Hamzawy, 2006).

However, a group of liberal and politic activists, academic professors, social intellectuals, and writers functioned—utilizing the results of 9/11—to gain wide support and communal encouragement of their demands for development. These groups were also able to reach out to the moderate group of the Royal Family, which resulted in more space and freedom for reformists. Their needs were focused on achieving more political freedom, equal civil rights for both men and women, and equal opportunities for the Saudi Sunni majority and the Saudi Shiite minorities in regards to social, public, and political involvement and participation (Hamzawy, 2006). During this period Saudi Shiites were appointed members of the shoura council, and more recently the first Saudi Shiite minister was appointed (Alhaida, 2014).

With all the progress of the Saudi government led by King Abdullah, the leader of the moderate group, the Saudi government benefits from the balance in power with the Ulema. On March 11, 2011, pro-reform activists called for a day of rage was and asked citizens to demonstrate around the Kingdom. The government was alarmed and ready to react; prior to the demonstrations they responded to the calls for the day of rage and any demonstrations to stop in order to avoid having a situation similar to the Egyptian revolution. Earlier in February during a broadcast about the King's financial aid program, citizens were warned that the government would harshly respond to protestors. These were not the only responsive actions taken by the government to demolish the calls for the day of rage. The Senior Council of Ulema, the highest in ranks of religious authority hierarchy in the Kingdom, declared in his statement that protests against the government

is considered un-Islamic. This action by the government served to renew power between the government and the religious establishment (T. C. Jones, 2011).

After the 2006 approval of limited sanctions on Iran, the U.S. policy increased its pressure against Iran. In January 2007, Ali Larijani, the top nuclear negotiator for Iran, met with King Abdullah. The purpose of the meeting was for Iran to ask Saudi to mediate between Iran and the U.S. The letter was presented on behalf of the government of Iran asking Saudi to communicate with the United States declaring Iran's will to cooperate with the U.S. Then, after a meeting with Condoleezza Rice and the Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs (Prince Saudi Alfaisal), the Saudi King subsequently refused. Alfaisal made the announcement when he spoke with journalists and stated the Saudi Arabia's position refusing to be a mediator between Iran and the U.S. (Khalaji, 2007).

The king's refusal came from his government urging Iran to act with precaution in order to prevent a war in the Arabian Gulf area. These precautions and restraint may have embraced Iran's policy and involvement in Iraq and Saudi Arabia, as Saudi authorities believed that the Iranians were part of the Saudi Shiites' violent attacks in Saudi. Precautions also focused on Iranian military actions as it worried the GCC, Iranian involvement in Lebanon, and the Iranian nuclear programs. The GCC already announced their plans to collaborate in a peaceful nuclear energy program; this announcement was understood by the Iranians as a reaction from the GCC countries to the Iranian's nuclear weapon program if executed. On January 16, 2007, the Foreign Ministers of the GCC, Egypt, Jordan, and the U.S. met and agreed on the full support for the U.S. government's effort to stabilize the Iraqi situation by placating violent actions, endorsing the idea of nationalism, and stopping the involvement of outsiders. The GCC countries did not take

into consideration Saudi's concerns about Iran's involvement in Iraq as Saudi wished, as the Iraqi Shiite were the ones in power, while Sunnis were marginalized minorities. The Saudi government offered to Khalidzad, the Iraqi ambassador to the U.S., the information about Almalki's cooperation with Iran. However, the ambassador claimed that the information provided was false (Mattair, 2008).

In November of the same year, King Abdullah stated to Cheney that Saudi Arabia would continue to support the Iraqi Sunnis if the U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq caused any hostility to the Sunnis. In January the next year King Abdullah asked the GCC countries to financially support the Iraqi Sunnis, Druze, and Christians in Lebanon to resist the Iranians' support of Hezbollah in Lebanon. Saudi Arabia also financially supported Fatah in Palestine to lessen Iran's effect over there. According to U.S. officials, both Iran and Syria provided Hezbollah with long range missiles that could easily strike a raid on Israel. Iran had allegedly warned the GCC countries that any attack on Iranian soil from any of the U.S. military based in the GCC would result in a harsh backfire from Iran against the GCC (Mattair, 2008).

Political, cultural, and religious reform are debatable topics in Saudi Arabia. However, national, economic, and military securities are the elements of concern for long term stability in Saudi Arabia. For this to occur, Saudi Arabia must be able to secure both men and women with jobs and proper education. Over the past fifty years Saudi Arabia's population grew from 3.2 million in 1950 to 28.1 million in 2008. The living conditions of Saudis changed from being a village society to a modern one; the per capita income jumped from quite a few hundreds of dollars to \$19,800 per year in 2007. The young Saudi men and women meet international education standards. Thirty-eight percent of the

population is younger than 14 years old, while about 534,000 Saudis enter the workforce yearly. In order for the Saudi government to support its population by securing jobs and meeting the country's development program, Saudi's economy has to engage encounter the international demand for Saudi petroleum products. The Saudi economy was affected negatively by the drop in the oil price between the late 1990s and the beginning of the new millennium (Cordesman, 2009).

Nevertheless, the Kingdom profited tremendously from the rise in oil product prices between 2006 and 2008. The drop in oil prices in 1997 caused a drop in Saudi export revenues from \$33.38 billion to \$32.66 billion and reached \$44.98 billion in 1999, but revenues started to rise. The year 2000 resulted in a revenue of \$70.84, 2001 in \$59.92 billion, 2002 in \$64 billion, 2003 in \$82.41 billion, 2004 in \$110.85 billion, 2005 in \$161.71 billion, 2006 in \$188.42, and 2007 in \$196.7 billion. However, in the following year in 2008 the revenues increased by 45.1% as it reached \$285.5 billion. Saudi Arabia has to continuously consider the shift and drastic changes that might occur in the price of oil. The increase of oil prices that rose in 2003 was affected by the global economic crisis in 2008; Saudi Arabia risked facing a drop in oil price that could reach 40% in 2009. Saudi Arabia's budget must cope with these changes and consider military and security funds, in addition to being able to generate jobs to support the Kingdom's economic stability. This is a critical issue for Saudi Arabia, as the economic crisis might affect Yemen and Iraq and other poor countries within the region; the risk comes from Iran's reaction and ability to sustain oil export revenues (Cordesman, 2009).

Saudi Arabia is one of the most effective members of the OPEC oil cartel and the world's largest oil exporter. In 2001 the Crown Prince Abdullah, the current King, stated

that oil would never be used as a political asset in the formulation of Saudi Arabia's policies balancing the interests between producers and consumers. Historically, for example back in 1973, the Kingdom used its oil during the Yom Kippur War. Saudi acted as an Arab leader among other Arabian oil producing companies to cut back oil supplies and shipments to the U.S. In 2001, when Crown Prince Abdullah met with President George W. Bush, he stated that if the U.S. did not change its position in support of Israel, Saudi would change its oil policy towards the U.S. (Henderson, 2009). As the largest oil exporter in the world, it takes two tactics to its oil policy. The first one is that the capital Riyadh works on balancing the world's oil market as Riyadh believes it is part of its global responsibility to alter its oil production to meet other's needs, which makes Saudi oil production dependent on international demands. The second tactic is the political advantage Saudi enjoys due its oil production. In other words, because of Saudi Arabia's oil reserves it is considered a U.S. foreign policy partner and is protected by the government of the United States (Morse & Luft, 2003). Saudi Arabia has had two concerns as an OPEC moderate member. It does not want to be considered as one of the radical members as were Gadhafi and Khomeini and use the power of oil production to raise oil prices by reducing production. On the other hand, the Saudi government does not want to face the dilemma of OPEC obtaining the benefit of oil price increase, thus harming the long term concerns of supply excess because the demand of Western countries would decline (Rubin, 2003).

The importance of Saudi Arabia's oil stems from the fact that it is one of the world's largest oil reserves, with the highest oil production, exports, and refining capacity. Saudi Arabia owns 19% of the world's oil reserves, 12% of the global oil

production, more than 20% of the sales of oil in the global market, and a refining capacity of up to more than three million barrels per day. The estimate of petroleum reserves in the Kingdom is 264.6 billion barrels, to exemplify how large the Kingdom reserves are by calculating its production rate in the next 80 years. Saudi Arabia is able to continue production at a rate of 9.5 million barrels per day. In addition if Saudi takes its potential and possible reserves into account it could continue production for more than 100 years, not to mention that undiscovered resources might add several more years to the production estimation. Saudi Arabia completed its increase in production plan to reach a capacity of 12.5 million barrels per day.

The decision to invest more in the oil production came from the Kingdom's prediction of the future high demands on Saudi oil, and to express the Saudi desire to maintain a reasonable spare capacity not less than 1.5 million barrels per day. The Saudi's past oil surplus production helped to continue the stability of the oil global market, since Saudi cooperated by pumping more oil in cases of global oil shortages or an unexpected rise in demand. The Saudi Arabia's oil policy stems from its moderate, consistent, and balanced approach, as it takes into account all international parties, and the balance between current and future production. This approach focuses on international cooperation, peace, economic development, and prosperity for the whole world. The Saudi petroleum policy seeks to stabilize oil markets based on supply and demand utilizing their enormous oil reserves. This enables Saudi to meet different petroleum global demands in different seasons.

The kingdom seeks cooperation with other producing countries from within OPEC and outside of it to ensure the sufficient availability of crude oil in the

international market, while avoiding an excess supply that can lead to the collapse of oil prices. The policy also seeks to maintain reasonable levels of petroleum product prices that meet the interests of both producing and consuming countries (Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, 2012).

The Saudi oil industry is confronted with domestic and international challenges; these challenges have an effect on the position Saudi maintains and holds as a market leader in the oil industry. The first challenge facing the country is the shift in demand from America and Europe to East Asia. Secondly, the Kingdom's leading oil supply position globally can be changed by three factors: 1) new oil reserves in North America, 2) the threat from uncontrolled domestic usage of oil, and 3) Iraqi oil production increase and huge spare capacity.

For Saudi Arabia to overcome these challenges it has begun to prioritize energy efficiency as the main domestic source, while renewable energy will work in support of current sources. Khalid Alfalih, head of Saudi Aramco the Saudi oil company, estimated the increase in national energy from 8.3 million barrels per day (mb/d) in 2028 which is an increase of approximately 250%. However, this increase can be reduced by 50% if the energy efficiency plans change and fuel subsidies end.

Saudi Arabia has been warned by Citigroup that within twenty years it may face the possibility of transforming from an oil exporter to an oil importer because 25% of fuel production is used nationally. This huge percentage is higher than the per capita in industrial countries. According to the International Energy Agency IEA, the estimated cost of energy subsidies including oil, gas, and electricity rates stood between \$40 and \$45 billion in 2011.

Currently there are significant domestic demands and rising calls to use clean energy technologies that will help lessen the Kingdom's energy dependency on oil, and Saudi Arabia must move quickly towards this area. The second solution the Kingdom is considering in order to overcome these issues is idea of using gas in order to lessen the demand on oil domestically. Alfalih stated that in the next 20 years Aramco is going to increase its gas supply by 250%. The country is also planning to embrace a solar project investing \$109 billion in the next two decades; solar systems will be more cost effective, safer, and useful due to Saudi Arabia's great solar source. The third option Saudi is considering as an alternative for oil is the use of nuclear and renewable energy as a domestic energy supply.

However, according to Citigroup, this is a risk for Saudi Arabia as a result of shortage in expertise and high costs, and it has not been reported to be successfully implemented in a desert environment. These three reasons resulted in postponing the date Saudi chose to launch its nuclear project in 2019. The third solution is geared towards Saudi sustaining its political and economic power of influence, and this is connected to the spare oil production capacity. In comments about the Saudi spare oil capacity, Ali Alnaimi, Saudi Petroleum Minister, stated that it "has been tapped to compensate for production disruptions and declining supply from other major suppliers, and is a cornerstone of the kingdom's energy policy" (Al-Tamimi, 2012, para. 7).

In 2012 prices of Brent oil increased from \$94 per barrel at the end of June to \$109 per barrel by mid- November. The sanctions on Iran resulted in demand shortage; more than one million barrels per day of Iranian oil were off the global market. However, the increase in price was not recovered by adding more Saudi and Iraqi oil into the

market. In October of the same year, Saudi Arabia increased its oil production to produce 400,000 barrel per day (b/d) more than October in the previous year. OPEC's productivity in 2012 was higher by 1.2 b/d as it was able to produce a total of 31.2 million b/d in October 2012 while the total was 30 million b/d in October 2011. The loss of Iranian oil from the market did not affect to output of OPEC in 2012.

The Iranian threat to Saudi Arabia after the Iranian revolution is based an ideological and asymmetric conflict. Iran has used the Palestinian case and anti-Western policy as a means to praise or criticize other Arab countries. Saudi Arabia is a close ally to the U.S., and it depends on the U.S. for its security. Meanwhile, Saudi has struggled with Iran to gain more influence and authority in numerous regional cases such as in Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Bahrain, Yemen, and now Syria.

The Saudi fear from Iran having a nuclear weapon is not because of the direct threat of the weapon; it is from the empowerment to Iran's ferociousness in these conflicted states. In the Gulf region, where Saudi Arabia is considered the largest state and claims supremacy as it is considered a strategic region for Saudi, Iran will be able to gain a more significant position with more authority and influence on smaller Gulf States. Saudi Arabia's position in the Middle East would put even more stress on the Royal Family if Iran owns a nuclear weapon; a response from Saudi will be expected. There is an additional fear factor to the aforementioned: Saudi is anxious about a U.S.-Iranian deal that might conclude in a grand bargain. Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states are anxious about Iran's acquisition of a bomb, and equally fear a diplomatic agreement that both Iran and the U.S. might reach.

Saudi Arabia has publicly stated that it will call for a weapons of mass destruction (WMD)-free zone in the Middle East. The Saudis believe that negotiations are not the best practice to resolve this conflict and will only aid Iran with more time. According to the WikiLeaks cables, King Abdullah requested that the U.S. “cut off the head of the snake.” Saudi Arabia is uncertain about its preference in a military attack against Iran nuclear facilities; it has stated once that Iran might react aggressively on the GCC states and would only assure Iran to quicken the process of acquiring nuclear weapons (Wehrey, 2012).

According to McInnis (2005), Saudi Arabia is overloaded with many responsibilities, and a nuclear weapon is not one of them as it has a high risk of damaging Saudi-U.S. relations. Though this statement is accurate with regard to the past particularly prior to the end of Iraq’s Saddam Hussain where it was a Sunni dominated state. And with regard to shifts of power where Iraqi Shiites are in power with a greater chance for Iranian influence (Bokhari, Fidler, & Khalaf, 2004). However, this might not be the current reflection of the Saudi desire. Mr. Chas Freeman, a former U.S. ambassador to Saudi stated “Senior Saudi officials have said privately that, if and when Iran acknowledges having, or is discovered to have, actual nuclear warheads, Saudi Arabia would feel compelled to acquire a deterrent stockpile” (Campbell, Einhorn, & Reiss, 2004, p. 129).

The Kingdom’s military capabilities are poor; this comes from incorrect choices of weapons and arms, and poor strategic military planning regardless of all the tremendous spending on defense during the invasion of Kuwait in the 1990s (Cordesman, 2004). An Iranian bomb would unbalance the security situation in Saudi Arabia; the poor

circumstances of the military preparations as well as the large size of Saudi and its small population makes it even more difficult to protect the Saudi territory (McInnis, 2005).

Rumors were spread from the early 1990s of Saudi Arabia's efforts in acquiring a nuclear weapon as a reaction to Iran's (Amlin, 2008). However, the country does not have any domestic resources to encounter a nuclear weapon; it needs technology advancement in the field and expertise to enable the development of a plant (Lippman, 2011). Saudi Arabia has never functioned in a nuclear facility; Saudi experts and scientists have no firsthand experience in enriching uranium for reactor fuel, in nuclear fuel transformation, or in dealing with nuclear machinery. As the kingdom does not have the human capacities to develop its own weapons, there are some international concerns of Saudi purchasing it from another country. Pakistan is the most probable country Saudi would seek out for a weapon, as it has the option to obtain fissile materials and receive training from Pakistani nuclear experts (Almin, 2008).

Saudi Arabia has shown desire to engage in a peaceful nuclear energy project; in fact, the GCC initiated the development of a peaceful nuclear energy program. In May 2008 Saudi Arabia signed a memorandum with the U.S. for nuclear energy cooperation (Almin, 2008), as it also discussed a civil nuclear French collaboration (Pirrot, 2008).

With Iran's new president Hassan Rouhani, the Geneva talks that were held at the end of November 2013 ended by an agreement. The negotiations continued for days between Iran and the P5+1 group of world powers, including the U.S., UK, Russia, France, China, and Germany, who joined in diplomatic efforts to peacefully resolve the Iranian nuclear issue. According to the White House, the agreement stated that:

- Iran should not enrich more than 5% uranium
- Iran should allow more access to inspectors including daily visits to Natanz and Fordo nuclear plants
- Arak plant should stop its development as it is believed it produces plutonium
- Sanctions on Iran will stop for six months,
- Iran will receive sanctions relief up to \$ 7 billion (“Iran Agrees to Curb,” 2013, para. 13-17)

This agreement will have an effect on the global oil market; Iran has the world’s fourth largest oil reserves and second largest natural gas reserves. This deal concerns Saudi Arabia, as U.S. companies will be interested in doing business with the Iranians. The estimations of the added value Iran oil will contribute to the international market is about 800,000 oil barrels per day. Iranians are expected to offer cut rate prices to attract more international investors, since the Iranians were banned from the market for years due to the sanctions on Iran. European investors are also interested in getting involved with Iranian oil (Salhani, 2013).

In 2011 Saudi Arabia increased its spending to \$130 billion in a prevention strategy aimed at stopping a social upheaval, while the break-even cost went up \$98 billion. Saudi did not use its \$700 billion of foreign reserves as its left for extreme situations/cases. Chris Skrebowski, editor of Petroleum Review, stated that Saudi Arabia might warn the U.S. by saturating the oil market with the needed amount of barrels, in order to affect the U.S. shale oil revolution as the cost of production at U.S. shale is about \$80 billion. It is uncertain if the Kingdom has enough spare oil to do so, or if Saudi will cooperate with any of the OPEC GCC members as other Arabs joined Saudi in the Arab

oil embargo back in 1973. It is notable, however, that during the last decade Saudi Arabia has been a responsible global member in the oil market and helped to maintain the price of oil to guarantee a steady global oil market (Evans-Pritchard, 2013).

Iran

Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia followed a cautious policy by giving the Iran's policies time to form; in other words, Saudi took a wait-and-see approach. After the cautious approach, King Khalid sent a message with a high-ranking diplomatic delegation congratulate the establishment of the new Iran. The diplomatic delegation was led by the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). King Khalid described the Islamic state of Iran as a pioneer, and Crown Prince Fahd showed respect to the new leadership of Iran. Although Saudi Arabia first approached the new Iran with political welcoming and gestures of acceptance, Iran replied aggressively to Saudi. There were a number of actions taken by the Iranian side against the Saudi government that escalated Saudi concerns. Iranian authorities made a number of political statements against the Saudi Royal Family and the Hejaz region (the Western part of Saudi where both Holy Mosques are located). In 1980, the Iranians organized protests during Hajj, the Islamic annual pilgrimage which takes place in Saudi. These protestors held an anti-Western approach against the American and Israeli policies.

Demonstrations in the Hajj season where Muslims around the globe gather to pay their religious duties in a peaceful manner were a red flag for the Saudi government and religious figures. Also, in this same year of 1980 in Tehran, groups of liberation movement's gatherings were combined with Saudi Shiites, and then were followed by the

establishment of the Saudi Liberation Front in Iran. Two other factors fueled the Saudi concerns: the seizure in the Holy Mosque by extremist Salafis in late 1979, and the uprising of the Saudi Shiites in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia in 1980 (Sadeghi & Amhadian, 2011). Even though Ayatollah Khomeini condemned the act of seizure in the Holy Mosque by describing it as being supported by Americans and Zionists who both were criminals (New York Times, 1979 as cited in Sadeghi & Amhadian, 2011), this did not fully calm the Saudi government's concern over Iran (Fuller & Francke, 1999).

The U.S. sanctions on Iran during the Khomeini period cost Iran a loss of \$12 billion, although Iran was able to sell its oil at that time to non-American buyers, as well as the oil purchased by American oil companies that bought Iranian oil and sold it to non-American companies. It still would have benefited from the \$12 billion it lost to face the cost of the war with Iraq. The drop in oil prices and the Iraq-Iran war exceeded the harm caused by the U.S. sanctions on Iran. The oil dropped from \$40 per barrel in 1981 to about \$10 per barrel in 1986 and the Iraqi damage to the Iranian infrastructure had a great effect on the Iranian economy, and U.S. sanctions cost Iran annually about \$1 billion while the war and oil drop price cost was in the hundreds of billions of dollars.

The policy Khomeini applied during the first post-revolution period created a more ineffectual bureaucratic system and an incompetent oil dependent system. This had a direct effect on raising the unemployment rates, inflation, corruption, and anemic rates. Khomeini also called for growth in the population of Iran, which also resulted in a catastrophe for the unprepared Iranian economy. The annual population growth reached 4% as about twenty million Iranians were born during the first ten years of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Labor laws were harsh on employers, and business owners and entrepreneurs were not able to expand or feared to do so to escape the law imposed by the Iranian labor law prohibiting elimination. To go around this law, employers hired Iranians on hiring contracts instead of full employment. Yet, Khomeini was able to meet the social promises of the Islamic Revolution. Iranians had the right to education and access to healthcare. Healthcare staff, clean water, and vaccinations were recorded to reach major improvements. The right to education was proven by the rising numbers of youth and women's literacy, as poverty reduced from 40% to 20% (International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, 2013).

The Iranian actions at the beginning of the Islamic Republic of Iran and statements shaped the reaction of the Saudis toward Iran and created a clear objective for the Kingdom in forming its foreign policy with Iran at that time. Saudi Arabia fully supported the Iraqis in the Iraq-Iran war in September 1980; publicly the Kingdom remained neutral in its statements about the eight year Iraq-Iran war. However, there was a believe that the Saudis were involved in the war since the Iraqi President Saddam Husain flew to Riyadh to meet with Saudi officials to discuss and confirm his military action plan (Sadeghi & Amhadian, 2011). The meeting that was held in Riyadh included delegation from all Gulf States; during the meeting Saddam was confident that he would be able to demolish the Khomeini government in a short period of time not longer than a few weeks. This was not only Iraq's estimation of the duration of the war considering Iran's capability to face a war; the U.S. had the same concept.

Harold Brown, the U.S. Defense Secretary, believed that the war was not major, and the CIA predicted that the war would only last for several weeks. The U.S. military

plan was to not get involved unless Iran sieged the Straits of Hormuz. After the U.S. announced its neutral position in this regard, Saudi Arabia called for American military support to protect the Kingdom's territory in case Iran retaliated. The Saudi fear of Iranian retaliation was a result of the Iraqi military plan to use some Gulf States to strike attacks against Iran. A week later, the Americans sent four Airborne Warning and Control Systems to Saudi Arabia as a protective act from Iran and the Soviet. It was understood that the U.S. sent planes to Saudi Arabia only to protect a friend. Saudi Arabia requested U.S. protection since the Kingdom's position was pro-war, and a support for the Saudis was understood as an indirect support of the war, especially since the U.S. Iranian relations were at stake due to the hostage issue with Iran (Tarock, 1998).

In May 1981, the Gulf States met in Riyadh to formalize the Gulf Cooperation Council as a reflective response of the six Gulf States' worries about the Islamic Republic of Iran. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were the only two countries who supported Iraq in the war against Iran with economic, political, and military machinery, while the rest of the Gulf States chose a midway approach with a slight shift to be on the Iraqi side (Sadeghi & Amhadian, 2011). In 1982, at the twelfth Arab League summit King Fahd stated that he discouraged the continuation of the war and only wished a peaceful solution that assured stability for both countries (Al-Fadhil Zeid, 2000). However, Prince Fahd's eight-point plan to build peace in the Middle East by recognizing Israel as a state in 1981 created more tension in the Saudi-Iranian relations (Alkawaz, 2007).

The establishment of the GCC in 1981 was intended to strengthen the political, economic, military, and security relations between the Gulf States. One of the main goals behind this establishment was to unite the region in facing Iran, as the new Iran was

implementing its idea of spreading and exporting the Islamic revolution to reach the Gulf States by claiming Bahrain and other parts of the Gulf to be Persian. In 1983, Iran stated its position against Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States; Khomeini threatened in a public speech to expand the war to reach the Gulf States as soon as the Iranians confirm the Gulf States involvement in the war. In the years of 1985-1986 Saudi-Iranian diplomatic relations witnessed some efforts to resolve the issue.

Prince Saud Alfaisal, the Saudi Foreign Minister, visited Tehran to discuss a number of unsolved matters between the two countries. Alfaisal met with Ali Velayati, the Iranian foreign Minister, and exchanged their opinions about Iranian organization for the demonstrations during Hajj, the Iraqi-Iranian war, and OPEC. Later on when Velayati visited Riyadh, Saudi Arabia focused their conversations during the meeting on ending the war in order to stop the Iranian revolution ideology from spreading in the region. However, the talks between the two ministers failed to reach any developing point (Alkawaz, 2007). The number of controversial topics only held both nations apart instead of solving the root of the dispute (Sadeghi & Amhadian, 2011). After the failed talks between Saudi and Iran, the Kingdom adopted a new strategy by fully supporting Iraq.

Saudi sold 280,000 barrels of oil to Iraq on a daily basis, partially paid for Iraqi military equipment, allowed Iraqi to benefit from using Saudi ports to transfer their equipment, and provided intelligence data to the Iraqi government. The Saudi response did not stop at supporting Iraq; it also applied more pressure on Iran by lowering the price of oil and raising its production. Mir Hossein Mousavi, the Prime Minister of Iran, stated that the increase in Saudi oil production was unreasonable, because it was the reason for collapse of oil price and threatened an Iranian reaction. Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the

speaker of the Iranian Parliament, threatened to completely stop Iranian oil exports and to take actions against Saudi if it was proven that Saudi was behind the drop in oil price (Alkawaz, 2007).

The policy Iran adopted in the years after the Iranian Revolution focused on agitating propaganda directed at the Saudi policy as Iran named the Kingdom as the American brand of Islam. Throughout the 1980s, Iranian Hajjis rioted during the Hajj season in Saudi Arabia; the Hajj riots increased in 1987 when more than 400 pilgrims were killed as a result of Iranian demonstrations. The Iranian government accused Saudi of being responsible for the accident and demanded that both the Holy Mosques should be handled by the Islamic Republic. After this event Saudi Arabia reduced the number of visas issued to Iranian pilgrims. In 1989, after the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, the relations between Tehran and Riyadh started to improve under the leadership of Khatami and Rafsanjani. In 1999, Khatami was the first Iranian president to visit Riyadh. However, since the Iranian presidents do not have control over the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) and are under the influence and power of the commander in chief which is the Iranian Supreme Leader, both Khatami and Rafsanjani were not able to stop the IRGC from taking action in neighboring countries including Saudi Arabia. Since 1989 Ayatollah Ali Khamenei became the Supreme Leader of Iran. Khatami's effort to reach out to Saudi Arabia and strengthen the relations between both countries is due to the fact that the United States put more pressure on the Gulf States to eliminate the Iranian power in the region. The U.S. took this position against Iran as a result of its efforts to support terrorism and its nuclear program (Terrill, 2011).

Tension and hostility controlled the Saudi Iranian relations during the period of the Islamic Revolution to the Second Gulf War in 1991. The diplomatic relations between both countries entered a new phase that calmed down the tension especially after the accusation that Iran was exporting its revolution throughout the Middle East started to fade. In 1990, Iran supported Kuwait and the Gulf States despite the position of the Gulf States during the Iraqi-Iranian war. Both presidents Rafsanjani and Khatami worked on establishing strong neighboring relations, particularly in the era of Khatami who proposed the idea of Dialogue Among Civilization, openness to the world, and normalization in relations with Arab States.

Khatami won two presidential terms; his focus was on the order of law, respecting rights of Iranians, understanding the various views of the public, an approach for extending international relations, and emphasis on women and youth. His policies provided political liberation not offered since the Islamic Revolution, as both Culture and Interior Ministries offered license to the establishment of dynamic press, as well as civic and political associations. He also mandated the resignation of two intelligence ministers while restricting a number of the ministry's extravagances. He was also able to meet the Iranians constitution article of local council elections that were never conducted prior to his time in office (Bakhash, 2010).

The drop in oil prices forced Khatami to reduce investments; other than the drop in oil price he had to divide his aides between economic liberalization and state control. However, his second term came with more relief. The government took more logical action to ease the hardship on Iran's economy by simplifying the tax code, importing regulations, unifying exchange rates, and allowing the entrance of private banks and

insurance companies to the field for the first time since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The government also saved a share of oil revenues to enable funding for investments and a rescue plan for hard economic times that might face Iran, as Iranian state owned industries privatization continued (Bakhash, 2010).

Khatami also took a positive step towards international relations and Iranian foreign policy by reaching out to the U.S. and the West. He was geared towards ending the position of Iran against Israel and a pro-Arab Israel peace process. He also offered to temporarily cut down the Iranian nuclear program to work on the negotiation process with the West. However, his openness was considered controversial by the Supreme Leader and IRG, as Karbaschi—the mayor of Tehran who helped Khatami in his development plans—was jailed and accused of corruption. Newspapers were shut down, and Sa'jd hajjarian who served as Khatami's chief political strategist and advisor faced an assassination attempt that resulted in him being disabled (Bakhash, 2010).

Rafsanjani planned to take Iran out of its isolation by taking practical steps; he freed Iran's economy from state control by allowing local and foreign investments. He also provided more social and cultural freedom to women, young Iranians, and the middle class. The shift was also very clear based on the free appearance of women in social life; women were seen in public dressed up in bright colors and wearing makeup. The government ignored the secretive selling of American movies, and art galleries were open again. The Ministry of Culture adopted more liberal policies that included movie production, theatre, art, books, and journalism. The freedom in culture and art provided to Iranians resulted in the international prizes received by the Iranian film industry (Bakhas, 2010).

Rafsanjani conducted a five year foreign development plan that was debatable; the plan envisioned foreign borrowing and giving the private sector space for more participation. The exchange rates were reduced from seven to three, there was relief on the limitations on imports and foreign currency, price controls were stopped, state-subsidized goods lessened from seventeen to reach five, and a big number of state-owned investments were offered to privatization. The Rafsanjani development plan resulted in inflation and debt growth, due to large governmental spending, the policy of ease on imports, and the foreign exchange exhaustion from currency controls. During 1994 and 1995 plans were modified as imports stopped and restrictions fell on private sector credit and control over prices reoccurred. All these changes resulted in mass disappointments as riots broke out in 1992, 1994, and 1995. By 1995, Rafsanjani tried to rebuild Iranian relations with the U.S. by signing an agreement of \$1 billion with the Conoco and American oil company, yet Clinton during his administration banned American investments in Iranian oil via U.S. sanctions (Bakhash, 2010).

In 2000, Israeli troops withdrew from southern Lebanon and that was considered a major victory for Hezbollah, a strong ally of Iran. Hezbollah announced this victory as a victory for both Iran and Syria; Arab States and people directed their support to Hezbollah and its leader, Nasrallah. Saudi Arabia found itself in a situation where it had to obey Arab political pressure and support Hezbollah. The spread of Shiites was what worried Saudi Arabia as a result of Hezbollah's popularity after the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. In 2001, Iran and Saudi Arabia signed a security agreement that formed an important stage in the entire region of the Arab Gulf, and not just in bilateral relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. It moved from the stage of diplomatic protocols to the

stage of an established relationship on both diplomatic and social levels (Alkhateb, 2010). The accord was signed in Riyadh by Prince Nayif (the Saudi Minister of Interior) and Abdulwahid Musavi Lari (the Iranian Minister of Interior). Both countries agreed on a number of articles in accordance with the laws and regulations of their countries. The accord was formed in three main parts: economic exchange; science, cultural, and youth sports exchange; and general ruling. The following points are to give a broaden idea of the main part of the security accord: 1) The establishment of a security forum for strategic dialogue between Iran and Saudi Arabia aimed at monitoring common dangers that threaten the security of the two countries and the establishment of a joint mechanism to counter these dangers, 2) Cooperation in fighting organized crime and falsifying official documents, international terrorism, illicit enrichment, money laundering and other, smuggling of weapons, smuggling of ancient pieces, 3) Cross border and maritime rescue cooperation, 4) Cooperation against drugs trafficking, 5) Cooperation in training security forces, the exchange of experiences, and security information, 6) Prevention of illegal immigration, and imposing border control, 7) Cancellation of the Saudi decision banning Iranians from performing Hajj and easing their visa process, allowing GCC people to visit Iran without visas as long as the stay is no longer than three months, 8) Increase in trade and manufacturing exhibitions between both countries by encouraging exchange visits between economic, trade, and technical professionals in order to boost trade, 9) Prevention of all aspects that might damage the economic relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia, 10) Cooperation in the fields of culture and youth sport, by exchange programs, and 11) Establishment of a ministerial committee that will meet

annually to work on developing progress between both Iran and Saudi Arabia (Altoraifi, 2012).

This resulted in highly sophisticated coordination and exchanged visits between Saudi and Iranian top authorities. In 2003, Saudi Arabia did not recognize the new government of Iraq because of the Shiite opposition who were able to take over the government and received much support from Iran. Saudi Arabia's argument was that the new government was under occupation. This allowed Iran to be in a progressive position with respect to the Iraqi government, especially since the Saudi clergies played a magnificent role in widening the gap by publicly stating hatred of Shiites, and these statements included criticism of Iraqi clergies. However, in the same year the Saudi government realized the harm of escalating conflict between Sunnis and Shiites locally and therefore, established a national dialogue forum to engage both Shiite and Sunni religious figures in discussions.

In 2006, the Iranian Saudi relations entered a new diplomatic phase after the election of President Ahmadinejad; hostility returned between both countries. Saudi headlines accused Iran of exporting the Islamic revolution, sectarian conflict rose, Iran's nuclear program development was active, Iran's role in Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Iraq, and the presence of American troops in the Gulf region were the main topics that continued to create intimidation between Saudi Arabia and Iran (Alkawaz, 2007).

An important aspect of Iran's role in the Middle East region revolves around the oil which was discovered in Iran in 1908 during the Shah regime. The Iranian government at that time produced oil by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. Between the 1930s and 1950s the company entered different phases of development and ownership. In

1935 it was named Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), and in 1954 British Petroleum (BP). Prior to the removal of Mohammed Mossadegh, the Iranian prime minister, in 1953, many efforts to nationalize AIOC were made. These efforts of nationalizing oil production in Iran caused a UK oil embargo on Iranian oil exports while putting more pressure on Iran by trying to preclude Iran from selling oil to other countries. After the removal of Mossadegh and the return of Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi from exile, oil production policies changed. Western companies including BP, Royal Dutch Shell, CFP of France, and a number of U.S. oil companies signed an agreement with the Shah's government sharing 50% of Iranian oil net profit with the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC). Oil production was controlled by these foreign companies until 1973, as the Shah was able to accomplish an agreement with the companies to nationalize their resources.

Later, oil production control was passed to NIOC, and the British, French, and American companies received privileged consideration and treatment for twenty years as they were allowed to stay in Iran via contracts with NIOC. However, this agreement did not continue for longer than six years, as the Shah was removed by the Islamic Revolution in 1979. The new Iranian government ended all previous agreements and contracts with foreign oil companies. The revolutionary Iranian constitution banned concession to any foreign company to invest in Iranian natural resources, as all main areas of Iran's economy were brought under the control of the state. Throughout all of the years of Iranian oil production it never reached the production peak that it did in the mid-1970s. Iran was able to produce about 6 m/b/d, which was considered a great increase in comparison to its production of 2 m/b/d in the 1960s. The political changes that followed

the Islamic Revolution including the Iraq-Iran war created an unstable environment in Iran; this instability affected Iranian oil production. By 2007 Iranian oil production started to boost again by reaching 3.9 m/b/d. The absence of local and international investment after the Iraq-Iran war played a role in the oil production decrease alongside of other factors. The Iranian government took a step to appeal to foreign investors in the 1990s; their steps were geared towards the oil and gas sector by applying buyback schemes. This structure allowed the government to work with foreigners in relation to their natural resources without any violations of their constitution. However, Western control and offers from the Iranian side were not appealing enough for foreign investment to continue as Total, Statoil, and Eni discontinued their investments as European companies in Iran (The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, 2012).

The first sanctions Iran faced from the U.S. were during the Carter presidency. The sanctions were a reaction from the American government when fifty-two Americans were held as hostages at the American Embassy in Iran. President Jimmy Carter in 1980 stopped the import of Iranian oil and froze Iranian investments and assets in the U.S. worth approximately \$12 billion. In a later stage the Carter Administration forbade all trade and travel with and to Iran. These sanctions were removed when all American hostages were freed. During the Reagan Administration in years 1983 and 1987, the U.S. imposed new restraints on Iran's imports and civilian goods that could be utilized for military action. These sanctions were placed as the United States confirmed Iran to be a terrorism sponsor state.

In 1995 President Clinton imposed more sanctions on Iran as it was still considered a state sponsor of terrorism and with the growing fear of Iran starting to

develop its own weapons of mass destruction. The new sanctions on Iran included a ban of any American participation with the Iranian oil sector, but in 1997 President Clinton cut off all types of investment with Iran. However, President George W. Bush during his presidential period froze all business and foreign assets related to any form of support to Iranian terrorism, or anything which could act as a threat disturbing Iraq stabilization or by working or sponsoring the Iranian weapons program. During the Bush presidency the U.S. government stopped “U-turn” financial transfers that have any involvement with Iran. President Obama was acute with the topic of sanctions on Iran; Congress allowed the Obama Administration to go further on these sanctions by banning the import of food and carpet from Iran. They also allowed the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act (CISADA) (S. Jones, 2013). The CISADA added more sanctions to energy related activities that allow the act to connect the energy sector to Iranian nuclear activity. The increase in sanctions was intended to put more pressure on Iran, and to direct the government toward diplomatic talks and solutions as their actions and non-compliance with the international community and obligations created international concern (U.S. Department of State, 2011).

In May 2011, Obama’s sanctions reached Venezuela for trade between Venezuela’s oil company with Iran, and in June of 2011 sanctions were proclaimed on the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. By the end of 2011 Obama agreed on a defense bill that permitted the American government to terminate any type of business with any other business that deals with Iran’s central bank (S. Jones, 2013). The goal of U.S. sanctions on Iran started with the anticipation of forcing Iran to stop its support of terrorism and to try to minimize or limit Iran’s influence in the Middle East, while from the mid-1990s the

objective of U.S. sanctions against Iran shifted progressively to convince Iran to limit the usage of its nuclear plan to a more civilian usage. From 2006 this concern became one of the international community's concerns, especially in 2010 when they joined the U.S. with its sanctions against Iran to reach the intended goal (Katzman, 2014).

According to a 2007 economic report, the Iranian economy was facing many problems; however, it did not reach the level of a catastrophe. The Iranian economy in the past fifteen years showed a reasonable growth in its economy, the growth reached the GDP and per capita investment growth. In 2004, 2005, and 2006 Iran reached an average growth of about 5.8% (The World Bank, 2014). Poverty rates in Iran dropped since the 1990s; this drop remains due to governmental efforts and services. The issue of economic inequality is not a main issue in Iran as it is stable and not progressing throughout the country. However, unemployment is still a huge issue facing the Iranian government. Iran suffers from the shortage of job offerings every year; there are about 300,000 to 500,000 new openings while there is an estimation of 700,000 job seekers every year. Fresh graduates face a waiting period of two to three years in their job search, even though they are educated. President Ahmadinejad delayed the economic and political reform initiated by Khatami and Rafsanjani. Instead of focusing on one of the key factors of Iran's economic issues, Ahmadinejad concentrated on the nuclear program, and he also drained the annual budget by approving projects that were never listed in the budget.

The population of Iran is skilled and well-educated, while the country has other economic sectors that are growing such as manufacturing, agriculture, and the service sector. The government has the manpower and a solid foundation for economic growth in non-energy sectors. However, the political issues related to the Iranian economic reform

are blocking this progress. For instance, the Iranian government has to lift the pressure from private sectors and show more economic transparency (Campbell, 2007). In the beginning of 2012 when the European Union enforced additional economic sanction against Iran targeting the Iranian energy sector, the main goal behind these sanction were not to affect the Iranian people but to weaken the funding source of the government and the Revolutionary Guard.

The Revolutionary Guard is in control of the oil industry and the mainspring of nuclear program. Iran is considered to have the fourth largest oil reserves and ranks the second in gas reserves; this makes the energy sector the main source of Iran's economy; about 50-60% of the government's revenues are from oil revenues. The EU exported 80% of Iranian oil related materials in 2011; these materials are considered 92.4% of Iran's exports.

The smart sanction imposed by the EU was planned to have an effect on Iran's economy for two reasons. The first was banning any activities with Iran's central bank, and the second was the EU being the purchaser of 18% the Iranian crude oil exports. To guarantee that Iran does not project its oil exports to the East, especially China, India, Japan, and South Korea, the European ensuring companies, which are considered to be the global leaders in this sector by ensuring a total of 95% of the world's oil exports, were banned by the EU to ensure Iranian oil shipments. Iran was able to rescue its oil revenues from this dilemma with the help of China and India. By mid-2012, China traded Iran a total of 12 super tankers with Iran. The tankers permitted Iran to transport its oil to China. While India, the second Iranian crude purchaser, agreed to pay up to \$50 million to cover oil shipments from Iran to India. Japan also adopted sovereign guarantees to

cover Iranian oil shipped to Japan, and South Korea adopted the a policy similar to China by shipping Iranian oil to South Korea on Iranian ships.

Even though Iran put many efforts to escape the losses resulting from the EU sanctions, they were not able to fully cover the damages of losing the EU. The Iranian fleet was not able to function to the degree needed to export oil to China and South Korea; the \$50 million Indian guarantee was considered a partial coverage in comparison the EU \$1 billion coverage. This created a concern for the Indian refiners buying Iranian oil. The sanction total effect on Iranian oil exports during the first year after the 2011 sanctions were between 20 to 30% less Iranian oil exports from China, Japan, South Korea, and India.

The price of Iranian crude did not decline significantly as expected. However, total revenues of oil in Iran declined by 50% as the numbers show that in 2011 the total oil revenues in Iran were about \$100 billion and dropped to \$50 billion in the year after. Furthermore the Iranian economy was affected by a number of factors, from sanctions on the Iran central bank to the Iranian government not paying attention to the needs of economic reform. These three factors played a great role affecting the people of Iran financially; in 2012 the unemployment rate reached 20%, inflation in Iran was about 30%, and goods reached extremely high prices (Blockman & Waizer, 2013). The second half of 2012 included further sanctions against Iran. In August 2012, the U.S. imposed additional sanctions for Iran's support to Syria which was in violation of the Human Rights Act. The new sanctions added a ban on all energy-related services including insurance services on shipping and oil and gas technology projects. On October 2012 the EU reinforced more sanctions to harden the situation on Iran by banning all financial

transactions between banks in Europe and Iran, yet financial transactions were permitted if used for humanitarian purposes. Sanctions also reached the shipbuilding and oil storage field as it banned all European countries from importing Iranian gas (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012).

The Obama administration's policy tightening economic sanctions on Iran with the help of the EU was able to strike a progressive step in limiting Iran's nuclear program. In November 2013, the P5+1 countries and Iran were able to sign an agreement after a three-day series of talks in Geneva. The first step that was taken in November of 2013, as an initial plan to the final outcome, consisted of a six month plan effective by January 2014. The agreement entitled Iran to limit its uranium production while Western countries would eliminate some of their sanctions against Iran, as a final agreement between them is established. The nuclear production limitation will ease the international community as it will prevent Iran from producing a weapon of mass destruction (Sciutto & Carter, 2013). The initial agreement points were: 1) a \$7 billion relief from financial sanctions against Iran, 2) Iran will reduce its uranium production to 5%, this percentage is normally used for energy production, 3) banning Iran from the production of 20% of enriched uranium while neutralizing this percentage in the six month period, and 4) Iran should allow and offer transparency to international inspectors visiting Iranian nuclear plants (Karimi, 2014). Saudi Arabia and Israel have a different view on this dispute resolution; they believe that this accord would only allow Iran to enjoy its nuclear infrastructure thus, enabling Iran to build a nuclear weapon (Joshi, 2013)

Iran and Saudi Arabia's View on the Arab Spring

Iran carefully monitors possible consequences that can be produced by the revolutions and protests that have swept many Arab countries at the beginning of the revolutions. In fact, despite the fact that Iran was one of the first regional powers that welcomed what may be called the first waves of these revolutions, this situation gradually changed when it stretched and reached to Syria, its ally in the region, to the degree that Iran's vision or position towards these revolutions is unclear.

Iran considered the initial efforts of these revolutions a success of its ideology, since it provides evidence of the failure of the U.S. policy in the Middle East. Hence, Iran not only affirmed their blessings to the Egyptians and Tunisians, it was considered a sign of an Islamic awakening in the region inspired by the Iranian Islamic Revolution. As the Supreme leader Ali Khamenei stated in his Friday sermon on February 4, 2011, that Egyptians sought to coincide the overthrow of Mubarak with the thirty second Islamic Revolution anniversary to signify the strength of the impact of the Iranian revolution in its regional environment. The Quds Force commander, a unit from the Revolutionary Guard, moreover stated that the waves of revolutions sweeping the region in Egypt and other Arab countries were creating new "Irans," united in their hatred against the U.S. Iran believed that these regional developments put extreme pressure on their regional opponents such as Israel by losing Mubarak, one of its top regional allies, leaving them with narrowed alternatives. Israel lost one of their key strategic regional allies after the overthrow of Mubarak in Egypt. Due to this loss, Iran will be able to gain more regional power over their opponents. In addition, this expansion in Iran's power and authority will

reduce the effect of their opponents in putting pressure on Iran's regional political spread within the region.

When protests reached Bahrain, the Iranian government found it to be a great opportunity for intervention and gaining more hegemony in the region. This proposed power Iran is looking for would empower Iran in the region against other regional powers, such as Saudi Arabia, that are refusing its nuclear program. Moreover, Saudi Arabia received criticism from the Obama administration for its intervention in the Bahraini crisis trying to resolve the dispute. This resulted in the Saudi foreign policy not agreeing with the U.S. efforts in some regional issues such as the Syrian crisis.

At the Iranian domestic level, revolutions contributed to two developments. The first development was the local demands to activate Iranian opposition calls rejecting Iranian presidential election results, thus taking advantage of the Iranian government's position on the Arab Spring, because the demands that were raised from the Arabs were similar to the Iranian ones, such as the fight against corruption, bribery, social freedom, reduction of poverty, inflation, and unemployment rates. However, Iran realized the danger of these renewed calls, and took aggressive action by repressing protestors and controlling internet communication. It ended by putting Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi, the leaders of the movement, under house arrest. The Iranian government was able to control these movements and stop them, since they lacked inner strength and it seemed to be opportunistic. The protestors raised signs that are against Iranian support to other international organizations such as Hezbollah and leaned more towards nationalism. This criticism of the Iranian policy made the movement appear to take advantage of the regional changes in order to address their political agendas.

The second development was the division in the political system in Iran with president Ahmadinejad on one side also described in Iran as the perversion part, and the other team led by the Supreme leader and the clergies was the most influential group. Ahmadinejad was trying to achieve two changes. The first was to activate more presidential power as the representative of the executive power in the Iranian political system. The second was to follow a more liberal and nationalist style; this new approach would limit the role of the Supreme Leader and clergies, create more openness to the West, and completely reduce reliance on Syria as an ally.

The first desire of the president of taking over the political decision was evident during his attempts to completely manage the state affairs and overthrow some of his rivals that hold governmental positions. However, these rivals are considered close to the Supreme Leader, and the President's efforts to take control of the office and government are impossible. For instance, the Supreme Leader dismissed the president's decision to lay off the Minister of Intelligence, Heidar Moslehi, in April 2011. This action forced the president to realize that his battle against the Supreme Leader is a huge loss. Although Ahmadinejad appears to be religiously oriented in his political speeches, he seems to be using a pragmatic approach to go forward in adding a new layer to the president's battle with the Supreme Leader's group. This is already realized by the Supreme Leader as he did mention that Iran can return to the parliament political system, meaning the cancellation of the position of the president in the Iranian political system (Naji, 2013).

Iran's holds a contradictory position on the Arab Spring. According to Tehran, the Arab Spring is a continuation of the Islamic Revolution which happened in Iran 30 years ago. However, this is not the case considering the Iranian position on the Syrian situation.

The official position of Iran is in favor of the Arab Spring, since the Supreme Leader Khamenei and President Ahmadinejad declared their support for revolting populations and believed that the transformation of power in the region of the Middle East is an extension of the Iranian Revolution that happened in 1978 and resulted in ending the Shah's regime following the Islamic awakening model that was created by the Iranians.

The Islamic awakening applies to the Egyptian revolution according to the Iranian government as it was able to overthrow Mubarak, an ally to the West. Though the position Iran is holding is questionable since it is stating that religion is the main factor of these revolutions and the reason for power shifts in the region. And the optimism Iran is enjoying is strengthening their political relations with these new administrations as religious democracies. Neither the Tunisian revolution nor the Egyptian one was based on religious demands, even though both countries ended up being ruled by parties representing the political Islam. Both revolutions were asking for social and economic reform; in Egypt the Islamic brotherhood party did not engage with other parties in Tahrir Square from the very beginning. However, they became the party that influenced the presidency's leadership.

Comparing this Iranian position of supporting political change in the Middle East as an extension of the Islamic awakening model in Egypt and Tunisia with the Syrian revolution, puts Iran in a contradictory situation of owning two different reactions. The Iranian government positions itself against the revolution by supporting Assad, disapproving of the Iranian position of supporting all uprisings in the region. These contradictions frame Iranian actions as it supports the notion that the revolution does not have an effect on its political alliances and regional security. Yet, it offers support in

countries where it will benefit from the change or this change will not have any type of influence on Iran's political system ("Tanagud Irani Hival," 2013). This position held by Iran in support of Assad against the demands of the Syrian people, revealed the cover Iran was hiding behind namely, their support of the oppressed people of Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain, and Yemen.

Iran's position was clarified as pursuing a policy of expediency to protect its strategic interests in the region while not adhering to the ideological frame imposed by the Islamic Revolution. Nonetheless, President Mohamed Morsi is the first Egyptian president to visit Iran since 1980 when political relations were broken. During the visit there were no scheduled meetings with authority members in the Iranian government; it lasted for hours and Morsi was to attend the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement. The Egyptian's president spokesman stated that Egypt under this presidency will work on strengthening its political relations with all countries. The U.S. government, however, was concerned about this international engagement with Iran. This signals change in Egypt's foreign policy by not considering the concerns of the U.S. (Londoño, 2012).

In the beginning of 2013 Hossein Amor Abdollahian, the Deputy Minister of Iranian foreign affairs in the Middle East, rejected the belief that Iran will get involved in Egyptian policy and affairs. However, the Iranian news agency FARS stated that the Iranian Supreme Leader sent a letter to Morsi to provide him with some advice on how to establish and manage an Islamic state. Yet, this letter was denied by the Egyptians (Gulhane, 2013). Political analysts posit theories of the possibility that Morsi had been thrown as a result of his relationship with Iran. The visit of Ahmadinejad to Cairo was not generally welcomed by the Egyptians as shoes were thrown at him in his visits to

places in Cairo. The relationship was on the verge of collapse between General Sisi and President Morsi when President Ahmadinejad visited Cairo (Greenfield, 2013).

According to the Iranian government, revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt happened because their relation with the U.S. and Israel was not for the purpose of social, economic, and political reform. Iran also implied that these revolutions are reflections of the Islamic Awakening urging revolution in Iran (Ersoy, 2013). According to Khamenei's annual speech on the Persian New Year, Iran supported all revolutions and did not differentiate between them using the basis of Shiite and Sunni majorities in these countries. He supported his statement by mentioning Iran's position in support of the Palestinian case, and Iran stood in the same supportive position with Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Bahrain. However, two years after Morsi was elected president, he was facing the Egyptian justice for providing intelligence and top secret Egyptian governmental secrets to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards (Zarrabi-Kashani, 2014).

On January 26 of 2014, Tunisia celebrated its new constitution in a ceremony; the Iranian parliament speaker, Ali Larijani, attended to represent his country in this ceremony. During the ceremony Larijani made a statement accusing the U.S. and Israel of standing in the way of democracy by destroying the democratized revolutions in the region ("U.S. Walks Out of Tunisia," 2014). Weeks after the ceremony President Rohani, the new president of Iran, held a meeting with the envoy of Tunisia and described Tunisia's post-revolution as the democracy pioneers of the Middle East.

In the Libyan case, Iran took slow steps in recognizing the National Transitional Council (NTC), Libya's temporary government. Ramin Mehman-Parast, the Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman, was happy for the Libyan population and congratulated

them on the death of Qaddafi. Ali Akbar, Iran's Foreign Minister, stated that Iran delivered humanitarian aid to Libya during the revolution through the NTC as Iranian support to the rebels. The Minister then traveled to Libya to meet with Mustafa Abdeljalil, NTC former chairman, to emphasize the Iranian's will to strengthen relations with Libya by providing further aid to integrate building Libya's infrastructure. And yet, Iranian-Lybian relations have only come this far since Iran has been pro-Alassad while Libya is pro-Syrian National Council.

The diplomatic relations between Yemen and Iran were always at a low level, as Yemenis blamed Iran for widening the gap between sects in Yemen as they aided Houthis with arms. Houthis in Yemen are a group of Shiites located in the North region of Yemen, who have been against the government. While the position of the Bahraini government towards the rebels in Bahrain was highly criticized by Iran, Bahrain lately took a more open practice by encouraging Iran to take thoughtful steps in the nuclear negotiations held in Geneva in order to stabilize the Middle East.

Whereas the revolution in Syria holds a different scope in the Iranian foreign policy, all other revolutions were mentioned by political figures in Iran. Yet, Syria was rarely mentioned. Iran is a Syrian ally; it had been supported by arms, fighters, and financial aid. The Syrian-Iranian relations can be traced back to the Iran-Iraq war, when Hafiz Alassad, the President of Syria, supported Iran as the only Arabian political leader to support Iran. Iran also would like to save and maintain the current Syrian government to protect the Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah triangle (Zarrabi-Kashani, 2014).

Saudi Arabia has taken varied positions on the revolutions in the Middle East. Sometimes the Kingdom used direct military intervention as was the case in Bahrain,

while sometimes it used diplomatic intervention such as shutting down its embassy and withdrawing of the Saudi ambassador and staff from Damascus. In the case of Tunisia, Saudi Arabia was the only state to host the ousted Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali after the fall of his regime. However, in Egypt the Kingdom has cooperated with the Egyptian military by providing financial support despite the close ties between the ousted Egyptian President Mubarak and Saudi. According to Ulrike Freitag, the director of the Centre for Modern Oriental Studies in Berlin, these divergent positions of Saudi Arabia in relation to the Arab Spring is based on regional interests. She emphasized that the political problem between Saudi Arabia and Iran is the key to understanding a lot of these policies. However, Dr. Mohammed Alzulfa, a former member of the Shoura Council, has a different view. According to him, Saudi Arabia constitutes a factor for stability in the region. Their positions have not changed as they are committed to the most important foundations of non-interference in the internal affairs of different countries. Alzulfa explained the Saudi interference in Bahrain as it is a member of the GCC, and according to the agreement between the GCC countries, military interference is allowed if the state of security and stability of any of the members is threatened. Furthermore, he provided a previous example, namely the Saudi intervention in Kuwait during the Iraqi war on Kuwait in the 90s (Karam, 2011).

The Saudi position on the Tunisian revolution was explained by Jamal Khashoggi, a U.S.-educated Saudi journalist. Khashoggi stated that Bin Ali will be treated in Saudi Arabia as a political refugee not a president. Bin Ali will not be permitted to practice any political action during his stay in the Kingdom or conduct any type of communication in

order to arrange his matters in Tunisia, as the government of Saudi Arabia stresses its position to be on the side of the people of Tunisia (“Bin Ali Yumdi Yawmahu,” 2011).

Whereas the Saudi position varied, from the second day of the Egyptian revolution on January 26, 2011, Prince Turki Alfaisal, the Director of the Saudi Intelligence, criticized Mubarak’s regime. He stated that the future of the Egyptian president relies on the ability of Egyptian government leaders to understand the needs of the people demonstrating. However, when Mubarak was in the critical situation, the Saudi King Abdullah declared his support to the president. The highlight of the Saudi position comes when King Abdullah warned the Obama administration that the Kingdom will provide Egypt annual financial aid if the American pressure on Mubarak to step-down does not stop. However, Saudi Arabia realized its position and welcomed the fact of a peaceful transfer of power, after Mubarak was overthrown. The Saudi government also provided financial aid to help the Egyptian caretaker government to recover from its economic crisis (Salamah, 2011). On July 3, 2013, President Morsi was ousted from office by General Sisi, the Chief General of the Egyptian army, after public demands. Two hours after the announcement of the overthrow of president Morsi, King Abdullah issued a public announcement congratulating the new Egyptian president, Adly Mansour, who was appointed by the army. After the public announcement of the Saudi position, King Abdullah called General Sisi which was also announced publicly (Riedel, 2013). After removing Morsi from power, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates provided Egypt with a \$14 billion financial aid, as the two countries promised to send \$40 for economic aid (Neriah, 2013).

In the case of Yemen, Saudi Arabia collaborated with the GCC and met with Saleh the Yemeni president and his opposition in Riyadh to seal a deal between both parties. The negotiation process ended with a signed settlement. They agreed that Saleh would hand over his power to his deputy in return for not facing legal prosecution (Sharqieh, 2013). However, during the demonstrations in Yemen, King Abdullah hosted Saleh in a hospital in Riyadh for three months to receive treatment, and this hurt so many Yemeni people. After the end of Saleh's presidency period, Saudi Arabia changed its policy towards Yemen, because it wanted a strong Yemen instead a weak one. In 2012 Saudi sent financial aid twice; the first time was \$3.25 billion and the second was \$1 billion to stabilize the Yemeni currency. Yemen's dependence on Saudi Arabia after Saleh allows Saudi Arabia to have further influence in the country (Stenslie, 2013). In Bahrain, Saudi Arabia sent approximately 1000 troops to Bahrain as a response to the request of the Bahraini kingdom. The United Arab Emirates also sent troops to Bahrain. Troops cooperation is part of the GCC agreement between the Gulf States. The purpose of sending troops from the Gulf States is to protect gas and financial facilities in Bahrain ("Gulf States," 2011). The Saudi-led military intervention in Bahrain was faced by the denouncement of the Bahraini opposition. The members of the ruling family in Bahrain were Sunnis whereas the majority members of the population were Shiites; the uprising was an opportunity to remove the Sunni ruling leaders. However, Gulf States fear any divisions or weakening in Bahrain's political system in order to protect their own states. The fear is also from Iran gaining more influence in Bahrain if the majority Shiites gained more political power. This influence would allow Iran to have a base point to

attack its biggest rival, Saudi Arabia, utilizing the causeway that connects Bahrain to Saudi Arabia (Murphy & Khalifa, 2011).

However, the Saudi position on the conflict in Syria is different; this position is reasoned to end the Syrian-Iranian coalition and to not repeat the Saudi experience in Afghanistan. The Saudi clerics called for jihad in Syria by encouraging Saudi youth to get involved in this revolution as it is a war against Shiitism and Alawite ruling power (Wagner & Cafiero, 2013). Earlier in 2012, Saudi Arabia attended the Friends of Syrian conference in Istanbul and was in a supportive position to the idea of arming the Syrian rebels (Barnard, 2012). According the Wall Street Journal, Saudi Arabia was pressuring the Jordanian government to allow Saudi arms aid to enter Syria via Jordan's borders (Abi-Habib, 2012). However, the government of Jordan denied that this request ever happened from the Saudis (Barnard, 2012). In 2014, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia issued a decree stating a punishment up to 20 years of jail against any Saudi citizen who gets involved in any war outside the Kingdom, while the same decree stated a punishment of up to 30 years in jail against any Saudi who joins or supports any terrorist group. This decree was issued as the Saudi government fears the danger of radicalizing Saudi youth by participating in such wars ("Saudi Arabia: Decree Lays Out Penalties," 2014).

Findings

From the data collected about Iran after the Islamic Revolution and Saudi Arabia, the key points were specified and coded. The key points from the data collected were appointed as A, B, C, ...I. Additionally, the numbers 1, 2, 3, were used in relation to the different periods of the bilateral relation between Iran and Saudi Arabia. To illustrate the

concept used by the researcher, A-1 refers to the first point from the first period investigated (A). The table demonstrates using three columns; the left column contains the identifiers of the key points, the middle column contains the exact text, and the right column contains the codes.

Table 1

Emerging Themes and Coding

ID	Key Points	Codes
C-1	Since its formation in 1932 Saudi Arabia adopted a steady pro-West foreign policy; this policy included development in politics, economics, and military dependency with the U.S.	relations with the West, foreign policy, West dependency, seek power
A-1	Iran was looking for more independence, adherence to an anti-imperialist ideology, and opportunities to create more stable political relations with the Third World.	independence, seek power, anti-West
B-1	The Grand Mosque seizure projected a new opposition model into the Saudi government. This group not only sought a ban on women's social involvement, but they also sought bans on television broadcasting and movies, as well as strict obedience to Sharia law. They forced religion into politics by accusing the Royal Family of not being religiously fit to rule the Kingdom.	opposition, women, freedom, equality, technology, religion, Sharia law
B-1	As a result of this arrangement, all anti-regime activity was discontinued by the Saudi Shiites in Saudi Arabia and overseas. From the King's side the government promised and started to ameliorate Shiite treatment, to provide funding for development plans and projects to improve their living conditions, and stopped Wahhabi leaders from agitation against the Shiites. Fahd also went a step further and promised all Shiite	agreement, improvement, Shiite, development, living standards, discrimination, safe, welcome, equality, religion, Wahhabism

	political exiles that they would be respected and never harassed upon return to Saudi Arabia.	
A-1	The Gulf States met in Riyadh to formalize the Gulf Cooperation Council as a reflective response of the six Gulf States' worries about the Islamic Republic of Iran.	GCC, formation, power, agreement, security, defense, plan, future, fear, cautious, policy
D-1	Iran stated its position against Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States; Khomeini threatened in a public speech to expand the war to reach the Gulf States as soon as the Iranians confirm the Gulf States involvement in the war.	enemy, fear, security, war, power, defense, policy, threat
C-1	Fahd had to make a critical decision to allow U.S. troops to enter Saudi Arabia.	military, West dependency, power, security, fear
D-2	In 1989, after the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, the relations between Tehran and Riyadh started to improve under the leadership of Khatami and Rafsanjani. In 1999, Khatami was the first Iranian president to visit Riyadh.	new era, improvement, policy, bilateral relations
D-2	Saudi Arabia never disconnected its diplomatic relations with Iran even under the worst conditions. These Saudi efforts started to pay off, and President Rafsanjani made the first Iranian attempt to strengthen the relations. The Iranians stopped the support of Saudi Shiite uprisings, as well as the Iranian attacks against the Royal Family, as the Iranian's also stopped supporting rioters during the season of Hajj.	cautious, political relations, decision, improvement, leadership, opposition, domestic security
E-2	In 1995 President Clinton imposed more sanctions on Iran as it was still considered a state sponsor of	sanctions, economic, effort, foreign policy, nuclear, terrorism, U.S.

	terrorism and with the growing fear of Iran starting to develop its own weapons of mass destruction. The new sanctions on Iran included a ban of any American participation with the Iranian oil sector, but in 1997 President Clinton cut off all types of investment with Iran.	
B-2	Khatami was a reformist; however, as the Iranian political system is intertwined and complicated, he had to face the common conservatives and their right to veto as members of the clerical councils and the Supreme Leader Khamenei. More press freedom was approved by reformists while the conservative authority would shut down newspapers and arrest political critics. Khatami also started to build good relations with the West.	development, control, power, religion, freedom, U.S., influence
D-2	Both countries agreed on a number of articles in accordance with the laws and regulations of their countries. The accord was formed in three main parts: economic exchange; science, cultural, and youth sports exchange; and general ruling.	development, diplomatic improvement, leadership, exchange, foreign policy
B-3	King Abdullah, the current king, leads the moderate group as he appeared to encourage steady and gradual openness and more involvement of citizens in politics limited to the fact that this involvement and freedom does not interfere with the supremacy and stability of the Royal Family.	freedom, social equality, religion, control, stability
F-3	The year 2002 shows a change in the Saudi religious establishment. The	religious power, shift, openness, demolish, equality

	actions of the moderate group of the Royal Family created dissatisfaction within the establishment. Clerics have always voiced their opinion of the risk of political openness. The Ulema enjoyed an escalation in their own power right after the golden liberal Saudi years ended in 1960.	
B-3	Earlier in February during a broadcast about the King's financial aid program, citizens were warned that the government would harshly respond to protestors. These were not the only responsive actions taken by the government to demolish the calls for the day of rage.	policy, domestic, security, wealth, citizenship, opposition, control
E-3	After the 2006 approval of limited sanctions on Iran, the U.S. policy increased its pressure against Iran. In January 2007, Ali Larijani, the top nuclear negotiator for Iran, met with King Abdullah. The purpose of the meeting was for Iran to ask Saudi to mediate between Iran and the U.S.	sanctions, west, power, control, policy, security, hegemony, peace, agreement, development, trust
D-3	Precautions also focused on Iranian military actions as it worried the GCC, Iranian involvement in Lebanon, and the Iranian nuclear programs.	power, fear, unity, energy
D-3	King Abdullah asked the GCC countries to financially support the Iraqi Sunnis and the Sunni, Druze, and Christians in Lebanon to resist the Iranians' support of Hezbollah in Lebanon. Saudi Arabia also financially supported Fatah in Palestine to lessen Iran's effect over there. According to U.S. officials, both Iran and Syria provided Hezbollah with long range missiles	support, power, ally, diplomatic relations, Middle East, causes, hegemony, fear, security

	that could easily strike a raid on Israel. Iran had allegedly warned the GCC countries that any attack on Iranian soil from any of the U.S. military based in the GCC would result in a harsh backfire from Iran against the GCC.	
C-3	The American presence in countries surrounding Iran escalated the insecurity in Iran, as a result, the next presidential elections were controlled by the Iranian conservatives, and Ahmadinejad was elected president.	U.S., security, social freedom, religion, power, control
G-3	Iran's urge to own its own nuclear weapons and infrastructure to empower its position in the region as the Iranian authority and elite proves that the country is facing security obstacles and seeks to be in a leading position in the Middle East.	power, hegemony, leadership, security, energy
E-3	President Obama was acute with the topic of sanctions on Iran; Congress allowed the Obama Administration to go further on these sanctions by banning the import of food and carpet from Iran. They also allowed the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act.	U.S., sanctions, control, peace, politics, security
G-3	This agreement will have an effect on the global oil market; Iran has the world's fourth largest oil reserves and second largest natural gas reserves. This deal concerns Saudi Arabia, as U.S. companies will be interested in doing business with the Iranians. The estimations of the added value Iran oil will contribute to the international market is about 800,000 oil barrels per day.	development, peace, security, energy, oil, agreement, threat, price, worry

E-3	The Obama administration's policy tightening economic sanctions on Iran with the help of the EU was able to strike a progressive step in limiting Iran's nuclear program. In November 2013, the P5+1 countries and Iran were able to sign an agreement after a three-day series of talks in Geneva.	U.S., power, sanctions, improvement, agreement, peace, world power
H-4	Iran considered the initial efforts of these revolutions a success of its ideology, since it provides evidence of the failure of the U.S. policy in the Middle East.	revolution, change, hegemony, Iranian influence, anti-West
H-4	This proposed power Iran is looking for would empower Iran in the region against other regional powers, such as Saudi Arabia, that are refusing its nuclear program.	power, security, ally, hegemony
I-4	Saudi Arabia received criticism from the Obama administration for its intervention in the Bahraini crisis trying to resolve the dispute.	politics, U.S., GCC, unity, power, security, hegemony, cautious, trust, diplomatic relations
H-4	The Islamic awakening applies to the Egyptian revolution according to the Iranian government as it was able to overthrow Mubarak, an ally to the West. Though the position Iran is holding is questionable since it is stating that religion is the main factor of these revolutions and the reason for power shifts in the region.	Iranian influence, anti-West, religion, support, power, change
H-4	The Iranian government positions itself against the revolution by supporting Assad, disapproving of the Iranian position of supporting all uprisings in the region. These contradictions frame Iranian actions as it supports the notion that the revolution does not have an effect on	contradiction, ally, diplomatic relation, strategic policy, power, security, region, hegemony

	its political alliances and regional security. Yet, it offers support in countries where it will benefit from the change or this change will not have any type of influence on Iran's political system.	
I-4	In the case of Tunisia, Saudi Arabia was the only state to host the ousted Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali after the fall of his regime. However, in Egypt the Kingdom has cooperated with the Egyptian military by providing financial support despite the close ties between the ousted Egyptian President Mubarak and Saudi.	power, security, decision, support, exile
I-4	The highlight of the Saudi position comes when King Abdullah warned the Obama administration that the Kingdom will provide Egypt annual financial aid if the American pressure on Mubarak to step-down does not stop. However, Saudi Arabia realized its position and welcomed the fact of a peaceful transfer of power, after Mubarak was overthrown. The Saudi government also provided financial aid to help the Egyptian caretaker government to recover from its economic crisis.	power, U.S., independence, foreign policy, political support, peace, financial support

The data was divided into three time frames and the Iranian and Saudi position towards the Arab Spring. The first time frame includes the first Iranian presidential period after the Islamic Revolution and the Saudi government at the exact time. The second time frame embraces the period of both Presidents Khatami and Rafsanjani and the Saudi government ruling the Kingdom during the same period. The third time frame

consists of President Ahmadinejad and the Iranian current President Rouhani, and the Saudi current King Abdullah. The last part of the analysis explains the positions of both Saudi Arabia and Iran during the Arab Spring. Analysis of the qualitative data follows a process that includes sorting, reorganizing, and restructuring the mass of the data collected (Patton, 2002). From an additional standpoint, Schatzman and Strauss (1973) state that “probably the most fundamental operation in the analysis of qualitative data is that of discovering significant classes of the things, persons and events and the properties which characterize them” (p. 110).

For the analysis of this research, the researcher employed qualitative analysis stages. The first step was data reduction: rationalizing and sieving non-practical data. Data reduction is used with caution and balance to avoid losing vital information, and to avoid misdirecting the results. Systemic categorization and coding were adopted to assure the validity of the analyzed data. The second analytical step was categorization; in this step the researcher was able to cluster observed patterns from the data to meaningful classifications. The clustering tool is used after the formation of codes within the analysis process. Categorization provided identification of indigenous typologies from the political systems of both Saudi Arabia and Iran throughout the examined period. This process involved determination to highlight the explicit and implicit of diplomatic relations, political action, social needs, and regional positions taken by both Saudi Arabia and Iran.

First Time Frame

Saudi Arabia during the Islamic Revolution was on the side of existing government; Saudi announced and took this position publicly. The Saudi position was

one of fear of the new Iran, especially as it concerned Iran's ability to impact and potentially change the region in the future, as well as the need to stop the bloodshed. Saudi Arabia acted as a regional power by stating these points; however, it did not state the Saudi worries over the formation of a new Iran and the threats that might come along with it. Saudi Arabia's support to the Shah shifted after the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, though this shift was not a quick one. The Saudis took their time until the government announced its entire support and congratulated the new Iranian government. This shapes a clear picture of how Saudi Arabia positions itself with other countries in regards to revolutions and governmental changes with neighboring countries. The Saudi government does not favor political change with neighboring allies, yet it is vividly clear that their position changes as developments on the ground progress. The wait-and-see policy practiced by Saudi Arabia during the Islamic revolution has been used in other situations with other governments as the analysis will describe later. Even though the Saudi government did congratulate the Iranian government by sending a prestigious delegation to the new Iranian government, Iran did not accept this gesture. Iran and Saudi already had their shared fear and ideological differences, and their interpretation of Islam as well as relations with the U.S. and the West were enough reasons for Iran to not accept the gesture. There was a trust issue that should have been resolved from the very beginning.

Iran desired to set the base of its relationship with Saudi and show its capabilities; the Iranians wanted to create a clear image of where they stand in regards to their Saudi neighbor. Not accepting King's Khalid welcoming gesture resulted in a number of incidents. Statements against the Saudi Royal Family were made by Iranian officials, Hajj

protests were organized, and the Saudi Liberation Front was created in Iran. The different interpretation of Islam between both countries and the Saudi's loyal friendship with the U.S. instilled an Iranian perspective that the Saudi Royal Family was unworthy of being the custodian of the two Holy Mosques in Saudi. For the Iranians to inspire others to believe in their ideas, they had to take some actions. Publicly they announced their position, as they also supported the Shiite Saudi minority in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.

The position Iran took after the Saudi government congratulated the Islamic Republic of Iran as a pioneer escalated the threat to Saudis. Saudi Arabia reacted in a diplomatic manner. It formed a new power against Iran aggressiveness. In 1981, Saudi Arabia initiated the idea for the GCC to form an entity for security, and military and economy wellness. This idea was quickly developed and executed as the Republic of Iran changed its relation with all the GCC countries, not only Saudi Arabia. The same thing happened during the Iraqi war on Iran; Saudi Arabia did not react immediately. At the beginning the government held a neutral position towards the war, which was the same approach after the formation of the new Iran. Even though it was believed that the Kingdom is involved in supporting Iraq, this was not what was publicly announced by the Saudi government. The neutral position was taken by the Saudis until the announcement of U.S. neutrality; after this announcement the Saudi government requested protection from the United States, since Saddam's announced military plan was to use some Gulf territories to strike Iran, and this was the reason for Saudi's fear of Iran.

Demonstrations in Saudi were treated differently by the Saudi government. The social demonstrations by the Shiites in Saudi Arabia were dealt with positively. The

government responded to the Shiite minorities in Saudi with living improvements. Even though progress and development were executed in stages, no one can ignore the fact that the Saudi government responded to their calls for improved living situations. These improvements covered different aspects of life, such as securing jobs, providing proper education such as the education provided to Saudis in other parts of the Kingdom, and providing health services. On the other hand, the demonstrations during the Hajj season were treated differently; to end the incident the government got involved with the use of power. As a result, a number of Iranians, Saudis, and pilgrims were killed due to this demonstration. The demonstrators held posters and signs of Khomeini and Palestine, a sign of support to the Islamic revolution, which is considered a direct threat to the Saudi government and its foreign policy.

However, this was not the case with the other demonstrations that happened in Makkah. It was not Shiites who seized the Holy Mosque, but rather it was done by Saudi Sunnis. The demands were different; Juhaiman, the leader of the seizure, demanded the fall of the Saudi Royal family. This Sunni group of 500 people gathered in the Holy Mosque and demonstrated against the government; they did not ask for social or political reform. They wanted a different level of change—a change in the ruling authority. In Juhaiman's view, the Royal Family was not legitimate and not worthy of holding this honorary position and responsibility amongst the Islamic states due to their different interpretation of Islam, relations with the West, and corruption. The Saudi government responded with military action against Juhaiman and his group, and executed all men involved in this incident. The Saudi government did not respond to both demonstrations based on whether they were Sunnis or Shiites; the governmental response was based on

the demands and actions each group took. Even though the Shiites in the Eastern Province of Saudi were supported by the Iranian government, when governmental action was taken, the Iranian support was not taken into consideration as much as the actions and demands of the protestors.

The U.S.-Saudi relations are one of the most important aspects of the Iranian actions towards Saudi. The Republic of Iran aimed to build political relations with third world nations instead of having strong relations with the West. While Saudi Arabia is a great ally of the U.S., this political relation is not accepted by the Iranian government and is considered one of the reasons why the Saudi Royal Family is not a legitimate government for the country. There have been a number of actions taken by the Saudis that triggered a reaction from the Iranians, including the support Saudi asked from the U.S. during the Iraqi war on Iran and this continuous steady relation with the U.S. Although the Israeli Palestinian conflict was not solved and new developments were occurring during this time, such as the peace treaty that was signed between Egypt and Israel which resulted in ending the Saudi Egyptian relations, the Western influence on the Saudi society included education and technology development, as well as military and economy dependency on the U.S. Iran holds a clear position against Israel and does not affiliate its foreign policy with governments that support or have diplomatic relations with Israel. Both the Hajj riots and Juhaiman's uprising happened using the Saudi-U.S. relation as an excuse.

The Iranian oil policy prohibited any type of trade with any foreign investor when it comes to its natural resources. Khomeini was known as a radical OPEC member.

Meanwhile, the Saudi oil policy partnered with the U.S. foreign policy and altered its production to meet international demands.

The economy of Iran during Khomeini faced a number of dilemmas, including U.S. sanctions, the drop in oil prices, and the Iraq-Iran war that harmed the Iranian social and oil infrastructure. The Iranian population faced employment issues even though governmental plans aimed to provide job security. However, other crucial needs were met by the Iranians such as healthcare developments, the right to education, and poverty rate reductions. On the other hand, King Khalid's economic plan was a historical changing point in Saudi Arabia. Growth and progress touched all aspects of society, thus moving Saudi to a more modern state. Commerce, education, healthcare, and employment all benefitted from huge positive changes.

Second Time Frame

The next era which includes President Rafsanjani and President Khatami was the best period in the Saudi-Iranian diplomatic relation based on the literature review. Right after the death of Khomeini the scope of the relation between Iran and Saudi Arabia took a different direction. Progress started to occur on both sides. During the Iraqi war on Kuwait in 1991, Iran was against Iraq and sided with the Gulf States. This was evidence of improvement on the Iranian side. Rafsanjani did not just settle with the new Iranian position in supporting the Gulf nation during the war; he went even further in establishing peace. He stopped many tactics Iran previously used; he stopped the support of Saudi Shiites uprisings, attacks on the Saudi Royal Family, and the Iranian support of the Hajj riots. Both countries also agreed to cooperate on the level of OPEC to request oil production to reduce in 1997. Iranian airlines started to fly to Saudi Arabia in 1997 as

well. A high joint committee between Iran and Saudi Arabia was founded to activate trade and economic cooperation, and annual meetings were held up until the year 2001. In 2000, the volume of exchange between the two countries reached \$500 million. The ban on Iranian visitation Saudi outside of the scope of pilgrimage was removed, and they were granted access to the country once again, while Saudis were allowed to enter Iran with no need of a visa as long as the stay was no longer than three months. In 1999, the first Saudi expedition in Iran happened in reply to the three Iranian expeditions in Saudi. Both Saudi Arabia and Iran agreed that the Palestinian conflict was a major topic of consideration. However, each country took its own path in supporting the case; Iran supported by providing material and moral support to the Armed Islamic resistance groups Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine, while Saudi Arabia supported the case by more peaceful tactics such as the eight point peace plan proposed by King Fahd in 1981. In 2001, the Iranian-Saudi relations took an advanced progress, and a security agreement was signed. The agreement consisted of eleven points that covered many aspects not only including security but also cultural, economic, and sport program exchange.

Other than progress between both countries, this era also witnessed some diplomatic actions from both countries that refer to hegemony in the Middle East. King Fahd acted as the mediator and peace builder in the Middle East. He restored the Saudi-Egyptian relations; this had an effect on the image of Saudi in the Middle East. Saudi also succeeded in saving the Lebanese conflict in 1989 by ending it in a peaceful manner, as Saudi invited the Lebanese authorities to Saudi and held a meeting to resolve the conflict. In 2003, Saudi established a forum for national dialogue to grab both Sunnis and Shiites

in Saudi and move them closer. On the other hand, Iran supported Hezbollah in Lebanon which had direct efforts in freeing Lebanon from the Israeli occupation. This changed the Middle East's view on Hezbollah which became a hero, and which also positioned Iran in a positive position as it supported Hezbollah. Iran also proposed the Foundation for Dialogue among Civilizations; the foundation was actually founded in 2007.

Although many positive diplomatic actions were made and progress was witnessed during this time, there were pressures on both Iran and Saudi Arabia that had an effect on the functionality of their relationship. The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) had more power over the Iranian presidents, and this was to some degree holding up the progress. This power affected Iran's foreign policy and domestic policy, as the power of conservative authority in Iran was against the freedom provided to the press by Khatami, the Iranian reformist president, while the 9/11 events had a different type of power on the Saudi-Iranian relations, and the Iranian U.S. relations. It harmed the outstanding efforts of president Khatami to strengthen the Iranian relations, and the U.S. put pressure on the GCC nations to eliminate Iran as powerful nation in the region. The U.S. sanctions on Iran had another type of pressure on Iran, however, since it shifted from pressuring Iran by limiting its support of terrorism which limits its affect in the Middle East according to the U.S. foreign policy to limit Iran's nuclear activity, despite the fact that Iran wants to strengthen its regional position by establishing an Iranian nuclear program.

The drop in oil prices effected Iran and Saudi Arabia. Iran was forced to limit its investments during Khatami's first presidential term, and it affected the function of social governmental programs and services by limiting funds.

During this period of time both Iran and Saudi Arabia allowed the private sector to help in developing the economy. In Iran the private sector was involved in Rafsanjani's and Khatami's period, as Rafsanjani allowed the private sector to invest and state-owned industries were privatized and continued to privatize during Khatami's presidency. At the same time King Fahd allowed the private sector to invest in the industrial sector and provided generous funds to encourage investors. Private banking and insurance companies were allowed to operate in Iran, while the banking industry in Saudi shifted to become shareholding companies.

Third Time Frame

The word reform and liberation were vivid in both Saudi Arabia and Iran during the era of King Abdullah and President Ahmadinejad. However, it was not treated in the same manner. Ahmadinejad was elected president while these elections were under the control of conservatives. He won the elections to be the new face of conservatives and face the power of the free young Iranians who gained their freedom during Khatami's presidency. Iran's policy is shaped by the Islamic Revolution and Iran's strategic interests. Iranian policy would be determined based on both the inspiration of the Islamic Revolution and their strategic interests. On the other hand, King Abdullah is considered a reformist himself and the leader of the moderate part of the Royal family. As much as Saudi pro-reform activists gained attention from the moderate group of the Royal Family, this attention escalated in another direction when calls for a day of rage were voiced. At this point the balance between the Saudi religious institutions and Saudi Royal Family was restored again to face the escalation of liberal power as their calls were beyond the plans of the King's type of reform to provide equal rights to all Saudis and to provide

more civil political participation. The Saudi government policy has always maintained its balance with religious institutions in other words the kingdom demanded the need of development as much as it kept its balance towards the Ulema. President Rouhani, since he arrived in office, was able to show more openness and changed the Iranian foreign policy direction by accepting to negotiate with the P5+1 group.

At this point Saudi Arabia and Iran are back to acting as rivals on the level of foreign policy in the Middle East. They would choose to support opposite positions in major Middle East causes and in issues. After the rise of Shiites in the Iraqi government, support was provided from Iran while the U.S. military still existed in Iraq to stabilize the country. Saudi Arabia supported Iraqi Sunnis and stated that the support would continue if the U.S. withdrawal would raise the issue of marginalizing Sunnis in Iraq. Saudi also financially supported Sunni, Druze, and Christians in Lebanon as a political defense tactic to face the Iranians' support of Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Even in the Palestinian case, Saudi chose to support Fatah to also face Iranian support of Hamas in Palestine in order to lessen the Iranian effect in Palestine. Having the U.S. as an ally to Saudi is also considered one of the points Iran has used in defining action toward Saudi. The American presence in the GCC area caused changes in the Iranian presidency by electing Ahmadinejad; it also provided Iran a reason to threaten Saudi Arabia and the GCC countries to react if any harm would happen to Iran from any of the U.S. military bases spread out in the GCC. With the escalation of sectarian conflict, Saudi Arabia accused Iran of reinforcing the idea of exporting the Islamic Revolution. During the previous period, King Fahd's era, Saudi Arabia acted as the mediator of the Middle East, and continued to support regional causes during Abdullah's

era. However, Saudi refused to mediate between Iran and the U.S. upon an Iranian request to Saudi in 2007, while Saudi responded to Iran by requests related to the security of the GCC.

Saudi Arabia considers Iran's nuclear program as a threat since Saudi has poor military capabilities, has no local expertise in nuclear manufacturing and technology, has no nuclear resources, and has no experience in enriching uranium. Yet, in 2008 Saudi Arabia along with the GCC announced a collaborative peaceful nuclear energy program which was understood by the Iranians as a reaction to their own nuclear program since the program is planned to be a cooperative program with the U.S. and the French.

The nuclear program put Iran under tremendous pressure from the international community due to sanctions imposed on Iran. The U.S. sanctions on Iran during the Ahmadinejad presidency era caused the appearance of more Iranian radicals. The radicalized Iranians did not stop the U.S. and CISADA from imposing more sanctions on Iran in their efforts to attract Iran to peaceful negotiations. Throughout the history of U.S. sanctions on Iran, Iran made no progress in comparison to the one made in 2013. Rouhani agreed to meet with P5+1 to negotiate and rescue Iran from sanctions. On the other hand, the Iranian nuclear program is considered a threat for the Saudi regional power and especially in the Gulf region. It is also a Saudi fear due to its limited capabilities to own and develop its own nuclear program, as mentioned above.

The populations of Saudi Arabia and Iran are educated and are considered the appropriate manpower. In Iran they are a solid foundation for non-energy fields, while the Saudis meet international education standards and lack professionals in the field of nuclear power. Annually Iran faces the issue of providing jobs for 700,000 job seekers

while it is only able to secure 300,000 to 500,000 jobs and poverty rates continued to drop in Iran. In contrast, Saudi Arabia faces a range of 534,000 job seekers every year with an unemployment rate of 12% in 2013.

Iran faced additional sanction that hurt its economy by reaching a 50% decrease in Iran's oil revenues in 2012, even though Iran tried to escape the effect of sanctions by exporting to the East. Sanctions on Iran were due to its nuclear activity and unwillingness to negotiate to find a resolution, while the Saudi oil revenues were growing. However, the Kingdom is facing other threats in relation to the global oil industry as Iraqi oil production increased, and new oil reservoirs in North America are discovered. In addition, Saudi is facing the dilemma of uncontrolled usage of oil on energy.

Iran continued to work on their nuclear program until the P5+1 agreement in 2013 and 2014. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia is considering starting a renewable nuclear energy program to reduce the usage of oil to meet the domestic energy requirements.

The Arab Spring

According to critics, both Iran and Saudi Arabia acted as rivals during the Arab Spring revolutions. Iran took the position of supporting all revolutions except Syria, failing to consider calls of social and economic reform thus fueling the causes of these revolutions. Iran viewed the social uprising as an extension of the Islamic Revolution, even though the revolutions were not even lead by religious parties. Further, all the Arab uprisings were social, and were met with Iranian support; the case in Syria is different due to the fact of regional strategic interest. Iran would empower the Syrian ally to protect the triangle of Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah. The Saudi position, in contrast, varied depending on the situation of each country and Saudi's obligations towards it. Saudi

Arabia supported all revolutions, except the one in Bahrain as GCC responsibilities require Saudi to get involved in supporting the Bahraini government. On the other hand, Saudi would protect its own soil from any Iranian attacks in the future, and that would only be possible if the Bahraini opposition succeeds in Bahrain.

According to Iranian statements, the government viewed the revolutions as extensions of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, and a sign of the U.S. policy in the Middle East. In the Egyptian case, Iran supported the revolution as it is a failure of an Arab government allied with Israel, and supported the new Morsi regime by providing guidance on how rule an Islamic state. In Tunisia, the revolution was supported since the position of support would not affect Iran's strategic interests. The case of supporting Libya did not go any further than Iranian governmental statements and humanitarian relief during the revolution as the position of Iran with Syria does not meet the position of NTC in Libya. Bahrain was also supported by Iran, and would have been a strategic location for Iran to have more power and control in the GCC region, whereas the Syrian case is not considered an extension of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, and is rarely mentioned in the Iranian news.

According to Saudi statements, the position Saudi Arabia took in the Arab Spring was the same position Saudi Arabia took as a major power in the Middle East. In Egypt, at first the Saudi position was understood to be pro-Mubarak, yet this position was clearly changed and became pro-revolution, and the government provided financial support to the Egyptian military. This financial support continued to be offered during Morsi's regime. However, critics believe that Morsi's relations with Iran were the reason why he was overthrown, and Saudi directly congratulated Sisi as the new Egyptian president and

also provided financial support. The Saudi military intervention in Bahrain is reasoned as a Saudi obligation to the GCC, while the position Saudi took with the Tunisian and Yemeni presidents was reasoned to be taken to protect the people of these countries by the banning of the Tunisian president from practicing all political actions and communications during his stay in Saudi, and by reaching a diplomatic agreement with the Yemeni president to step down. In Syria, it has not been officially announced that the Saudi government supported the rebels in Syria financially, though the Saudi King declared any Saudi involvement with the Syrian rebels will lead to punishment that might reach as much as thirty years in jail.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications of the Study, and Conclusion

This chapter is aimed to offer the relevant conclusions and suggestions based on the data provided in the study. Precisely this study offers a better understanding of the conflict of hegemony between Saudi Arabia and Iran and its affects from being a unified power in the Middle East. This understanding of the continuous conflict is based on an analysis of the historical relations and political exchange between both countries, as well as tracking the changes and their effects on this relation. The focus of the analysis was to use a qualitative method to create themes from the codes found in the data, and then to connect them in order to grasp a meaning from the text. The analysis showed cause and effect actions, as well as similarities that can be utilized as a common ground for the bilateral relation between Iran and Saudi Arabia. This understanding suggests a shift in this relation based on academic analysis of the political demeanor throughout the history of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia. The study examined the period from 1979 to the first quarter of 2014, as there were diplomatic efforts that took place to bridge the differences between the two countries. The Saudi-Iranian relations have been witnessing convergence and divergence in regards to geo-politics issues, and sometimes required a severance of diplomatic relations.

Summary of Findings

Findings for this study were obtained from categorizing areas of investigation; the researcher focused the inquiry efforts on the political systems of Iran and Saudi Arabia, the economic position of each country, bilateral relations, and domestic and international crises in which both countries were involved. First, it was discovered that the situation between Iran and Saudi Arabia is based on caution and fear; the lack of trust between

both countries is revealed obviously through the data. The perceptions regarding each other depend on the actions taken by the other state; the data show that their exchange behavior pattern is basically a reaction to which country makes the first move.

At the very beginning of the Islamic Republic of Iran, right after the 1979 revolution, Saudi Arabia waited for an action from Iran before showing its position towards the new Iran. The wait-and-see policy was adopted by Saudi at the beginning of the establishment of this relation and continued to be the policy used with Iran at most of the times. Even though Saudi Arabia did not react immediately in the Iranian case and rather waited to form a diplomatic position or gesture, the actions taken by Saudis were not enough to establish a strong relationship with the new Iran.

Kind Saudi gestures were not enough, as Iran got involved in the local security of Saudi by supporting the Saudi Shiites in the Eastern Province of Saudi to ask for more social freedom and equality, as well as during the Hajj riots. As much as these actions acted as a security threat to Saudi, the Kingdom did not react directly to Iran using any military action. The government of Saudi Arabia responded to these incidents as a local matter and took action based on the category of them. Shiite demonstrations were countered by reform and citizens' demands were met in stages. However, riots during the Hajj season were treated as security threats to the country and to the pilgrims performing Hajj. A harsh and appropriate action was taken by the Saudi government in order to restore order and peace quickly.

However, this was not the status of Saudi-Iranian relations in the past 35 years; there were times where tensions eased. This was obviously noticed during the Rafsanjani period, as Iran stopped accusing Saudi and the Royal Family, and it also stopped its

support to the Shiites of Saudi Arabia. It not only ended the attacks on the Saudi government, it went further in establishing stronger ties by establishing exchange programs that included culture, sports, and business. These positive actions taken by the Iranian government were responded to equally by the Saudis as Iranian Hajjis were allowed once again to enter the Kingdom in other times not limited to the Hajj season. An agreement of eleven points was signed between Saudi and Iran, and this exemplifies the steady and strong political relations they can enjoy. However, the limitations put on any Iranian president by the IRGC would result in restraint in any peacebuilding efforts.

The presidency of Ahmadinejad was geared towards the Revolutionary Guards, and this was the cause of tension and cautions controlling the political relation between both countries. During the Arab Spring when Ahmadinejad was still in office, the Saudis and Iranians took a rivalry position in relation to these uprisings. The support Iran offered to Morsi and Syria, and the support Saudi offered to Sisi were illustrative in this situation. The opposite support positions to existing and new governments were based on strategic interests, security, and hegemony. Even though, their statements of support were not to prove this interest, both Saudi and Iran exposed their support in a diplomatic manner by choosing politically correct statements. However, the current president Rouhani appears to be more open to the world; this is vividly observed through his agreement to negotiate with the P5+1 powers and take action in regards to their agreement. The Saudi relations with the U.S. was the main issue standing in between them in resolving the conflict; the new approach of Iran towards the West shows a major change in their foreign policy.

During the severance of Saudi-Iranian political relations, both states worked on developing opposing allies within the region. Saudi Arabia initiated the idea of the GCC,

and Iran took a different direction by allying with Syria and Hezbollah to strengthen its position in the Middle East. They were seeking security, empowerment, and hegemony by allying with influential states and political parties in the region. Popularity also was pursued and gained via the cases each one of them have supported and actually worked towards resolving regional conflict, such as the Iranian support of Hezbollah and the appraisal they gained after freeing Lebanon from the Israeli occupation. In contrast, the Saudi government also gained popularity through mediating in regional conflicts such as the situation of isolating Egypt and the Lebanese governmental conflict. Yet, this was not the situation during the Iraqi war on Kuwait; Iran took a different position and supported Kuwait as this support would be understood as support to Saudi since Kuwait and Saudi were in the same situation and facing a war with Saddam. Furthermore, Iran might have chosen this position to retaliate against Iraq; it could have chosen a neutral position instead of supporting neither side in this conflict. Strategic interests are the motivators of Saudi and Iran at the stage of forming political bilateral relations and allies.

In addition, the policy of Iran and Saudi Arabia influenced the population of both countries and enhanced their uncertainty about each other. During the worst period of the bilateral relation, excessive and harsh actions were taken such as hatred speeches and the use of clergies to spread sectarian conflict between the people of Iran and Saudi Arabia. These hatred activities directed the citizens to engage in riots and demonstrations in Saudi Arabia by Saudis and Iranians. Ideology was the card used and played by religious figures to widen the gap between the people of Saudi and Iran, in a way to support the cautious policy adopted. Based upon the data, it is evenhanded to contemplate that Saudi and Iran did not want to get politically nor socially involved in emphasizing an

affirmative relation. On the social level data show that the ban on airlines of each country when ties were cut was a sign forbidding citizens from culturally and socially engaging with each other, which results in negative feelings that people hold against each other. The lack of connectivity in the Saudi and Iranian experience evolves into uncertainty and ignorance of the culture and humanity of the people. Saudis and the citizens of the GCC enjoy strong ties and relations that reach to marriages and business cooperation, yet this is not the case between Saudis and Iranians. The only interaction between Saudis and Iranians happens during the visit of Iranians to Saudi to perform Hajj, which is not enough to build trust and knowledge about their cultures and mutual social concepts. While the channels of culture exchange through travel are not utilized, the internet and social media might serve as a tool of culture exchange. However, when examining the political and social relation between Saudi and Iran, it is considered a negative trait.

Interpretation of Findings

All in all, the findings suggest some interesting angles to consider. Strategic interests are the core cause of this conflict; in fact, ideological conflict was part of the mechanism of the Iranian and Saudi strategic interests. The fear of spreading the ideology of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, and the spread of Saudi Sunni ideology that favors relations with the West and the U.S. were blocking these two nations from acting as a unified, powerful player in the Middle East. This appears throughout the history of their relations and actions during the period examined from 1979 to 2014. However, the current change in the Iranian foreign policy under the presidency of Rouhani shows a pivotal change that has to be considered. This dramatic shift should be understood by the Saudi government as a chance to be well-thought-out to connect with Iran on many

levels. Diplomatic efforts and more attention should be brought to the current situation; it is recommended that Saudi Arabia take the initiative to get across the past barriers and meet with the new Iranian administration. An invitation to Iran to visit Saudi and discuss future plans would be considered more than a kind gesture. Iranians are experts in the nuclear field, while Saudis lack the knowledge and expertise. A nuclear knowledge and expertise exchange program can be established between both governments. If executed successfully, the Saudi-Iranian relations will reach its strongest level in history. Nuclear is a security concept to Iranians, and lately they have negotiated with the West and agreed to terms in relation to their nuclear program in order to lift sanctions on Iran and ameliorate their economy. If a nuclear program is agreed upon, economic exchange programs can be added to the agreement in a further stage. In the past during King Fahd's reign, Saudi and Iran were able to meet and agree on economic, security, and social agreements. However, these agreements never included a nuclear agreement as it played out as a key concept of conflict between both states in the past and a security threat to Saudi.

The findings indicate the readiness and acceptance of both Iran and Saudi Arabia to reconnect. A move from Saudi towards Iran to close the gap should be made. As the data clarify, a kind gesture from the Kingdom would not be enough. If history is taken as a cue, that which happened with King Khalid at the beginning the Republic of Iran was not enough to build trust. It was not accepted as a gesture to build a steady relation, as the Khomeini ideology was against the Saudi Royal family. However, after the Khomeini period relations were built gradually. Rouhani, the current Iranian president, illustrates a

new face for Iran. As much as Rafsanjani and Khatami were considered liberal presidents, ties with the West were never established as they are in the present time.

The conflict between Saudi and Iran is not only between the governments; it also reached the people of both countries making the conflict even harder to defuse and tackle from all sides. Clergies in Saudi and Iran were exploited to broaden the concept of sectarian conflict. The degree of hatred towards each other is enormous, and this can be solved progressively. Resolving this sectarian conflict reached by clergies should be managed on two different levels: clergies should be warned by the government to not engage in escalating hatred, and programs that target the population of Iran and Saudi Arabia should be formed.

Both citizens of Iran and Saudi Arabia should be exposed to each other on the human level by the use of social media, entertainment, and culture exchange programs. Social media was the tool that encouraged and coordinated the Arab Spring. Through social media clergies are able to spread hatred and boost the sectarian conflict. Therefore, governments should get engaged in indirect programs to effectively educate the masses through such tools. Media and entertainment can also be used, benefiting from TV shows and series.

The Turkish culture was introduced to the Middle East by a Turkish series dubbed into Arabic; in a short time these shows abridged efforts that may have been taken years in order to make the Turkish culture and social life so familiar to Arabs. According to Aldulaimi (2010), the cross culture programs and exchange of knowledge between communities is essential to the development and growth of these communities, and openness of countries towards each other has multiple advantages in contributing to the

creation of an atmosphere of cooperation. Exchange of cultural can boost the exchange of knowledge, trade, and industry. Media is the most important means of cultural exchange and knowledge among countries. Satellite channels started to present Turkish series on Arab screens in 2006. As with any new drama the percentage of views at the beginning was lower in comparison to Arabian dramas. However, the pace accelerated remarkably and the number of viewers skyrocketed to reach high percentages. According to data from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey, the number of Arab tourists who entered Turkey in 2013 rose 9% compared to the percentage of 2012. The number of Arab tourists visiting Turkey from 2011 to 2013 witnessed a steady growth, as many Arab tourists changed their holiday vacation destination from Europe to Turkey; all this came as a result of the impact of the Turkish series broadcast (Karasu, 2014). The researcher finds that it would be a very clever move if taken by both Saudi and Iran to introduce each country's day-to-day life to each other through the art of media. This will result in exchange visit between Iranians and Saudis; these simple efforts will improve the understanding of each other through reflecting the simple life and social norms of each other. In addition to the indirect effect of media and social media, the ministry of higher education of Saudi and Iran can form an agreement for research cooperation. This cooperation will help in exchanging the knowledge of scholars between both countries and bring them closer. Students may be part of this cooperation by attending conferences and being a part of these research teams.

As much as bringing the citizens of Iran and Saudi close to one another, the Saudi Shiites should also be considered. The current King has paid attention to their matters, and Shiites reached ministerial levels and members of the Shoura Council. These

legislative positions are highly ranked and prestigious. Saudis that are appointed to these positions must be trustworthy as they are considered part of the government. This is a major advancement to gain the loyalty of the Saudi Shiites in the Kingdom. However, demonstrations in the Eastern Province still happen, and the Province is always monitored by the government to control the security of the area. The scholarship program that started in 2005 as part of King Abdulla's educational reform program did not discriminate against Shiites and offered equal opportunities to study abroad by the Saudi Ministry of Higher Education. This young educated generation has lived with Saudi Sunnis outside the country. During their educational journey gaps were closed and they were considered Saudis amongst each other. Even though sectarian conflict was not fully resolved, friendship between young Sunnis and Shiites were gained. Friendship is a proof that peacebuilding and resolution of sectarian conflict may be accomplished through exploitation of the lifestyles of one another.

Context of Findings

The data collected and analyzed from the case study mainly revolves around the subject of nuclear anxiety is a major issue to the security of Saudi Arabia. Moreover, Saudi Arabia is forced to make a decision in this matter. The pattern Saudi followed in the past was based on relying on a powerful state not from the region; this ally has always been the United States. Saudi Arabia avoided making political decisions while taking quiet petro-diplomacy decisions (Wehery, 2012). This was the pattern of Saudi Arabia towards Iran's nuclear program which it continues to adopt even though historical noteworthy changes have had happened within the Iranian foreign policy.

The policy Saudi Arabia has been adopting for a long time in regards to Iran has never changed; aggressiveness towards Iran by the use of political actions and decisions is not the pattern Saudi is practicing in this case. Saudi might have opinions about Iran exposed only behind closed doors; these opinions will not be the Saudi behavior in public and the U.S. must acknowledge this fact (Terrill, 2011). As the Saudi government plays as a regional power in the Middle East, this position pressures Saudi to consider all their diplomatic efforts to comply with their strategic interests. Based on this behavioral pattern and strategic position, the findings direct the Saudi government to take the initiative and move forward in building steady ties with Iran in the near future.

Examining the bilateral relation between Iran and Saudi Arabia since the 1979 Islamic Revolution to 2011, and understanding the pattern of political exchange between them of decline and incline, the possibility of rescuing this bilateral relation through cooperative liaison is high. Succeeding in embracing a positive, proactive approach mutually, by launching measures of cooperation, can rescue the situation of conflict, enhance reliance, and create a firm path of joint policies that will be beneficiary for both states. Also in the findings of the same research, the authors believe in the need for Saudi and Iran to understand the indecency, identity, essential foundations, and characteristics of one another, and their national interests (Sadeghi & Ahmadian, 2011). In the findings of this research, the researcher found that Saudi and Iran are witnessing geopolitical changes within the region and political advancements on the Iranian foreign policy. Exchange programs have been recommended to regain trust and collaboration; it was stated above that Saudi should start the initiative of association, and this is noted for two reasons. The first is that it is evident through an earlier diplomatic gesture that a kind

gesture from King Khalid in recognition of the new Iranian state was not accepted and was responded to harshly. The second reason is the policy King Fahd took working proactively with Khatami in forming an eleven point agreement. For the governments to understand the identity of each other, more has to be well-thought-out. Saudi Arabia or Iran do not want to face an opposition movement in their countries due to allying. This also has to be accomplished by the people of Iran and Saudi Arabia. The researcher found that strict measures on clergies should be enacted to ban any discriminatory activity or statements, media should be used to bring the nature and structure of both countries closer, and an academic research based agreement should be formed between ministries of higher education.

Implications of Findings

This study has enriched the field's knowledge of the nature of the pattern of the Saudi-Iranian relation. Precisely, this research considers the new updates to this matter; constant research is needed as this topic represents a continuous conflict and changes occur to shift the dynamic of the conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The findings of this research are in accordance with the theoretical framework mentioned and discussed in the literature review chapter and reflected on to further understand the data. Much like the data provided on the behavior of Saudi and Iran within the international community to remain in power, the neorealism theory implies that the structure of international power is a key reason of states to pursue power. In addition, the nonexistence of an authoritative power that acts as a greater power among the rest and the nonexistence of security will produce worries and uncertainties of security attacks from other states. This endeavor for

power between countries and the worry of any future attack sets them up in a trap of competition in order to obtain security and insure survival (Waltz, 1979).

According to the data provided, both Iran's and Saudi's foreign policy parallel the notion of neorealism. In seeking security, Saudi Arabia chose to ally with the United States and adopted a long term foreign policy to ensure this alliance. The Kingdom faced domestic objection from religious figures and extremists due to this strategic decision. However, Saudi maintained its position and never changed it, even during the early 1990s when U.S. troops entered the country to defend Saudi against Iraq; the government was supported by the Ulema to save its face from domestic rejection. The alliance with the Americans is understood as having an authoritative power that will be able to secure the Kingdom from any security threat. Saudi Arabia made tremendous efforts to pave the way for this bilateral relation to last, while Saudi also continues to ally with regional states that are allies with the U.S. to powerfully position itself. On the other hand, Iran allies with Russia, even though their constitution conflicts with this tie. However, strategic interest is the main reason of this diplomatic relation to continue. Iran disregarded any attention to its contradictory policy and chose to maintain it to ensure their security, allying with a powerful state such as Russia. Similar to Saudi, Iran also allies with states that choose Russia as an authoritative power such as Syria to broaden its regional spectrum and power, and insure its security.

According to neorealism, the resemblance in culture and government type does not rule or control this political bond; these differences are not what shape this relation. Neorealism explains it by the equality of states; however, power is the differentiating factor. Power among states is identified by material capabilities and latent power

(Mearsheimer, 2006). Saudi Arabia is one of the largest oil producers in the world, and according to theory it meets the standards of wealth that the U.S. will accept to continue—on the wish of the Saudi government— to have a long term political relationship. However, Iran is a nuclear state and one of the world's largest oil producers; nuclear capabilities and oil production shape the reasoning behind the Iranian-Russian relations.

The second theory mentioned in the theoretical framework discussion was idealism in international relations. The concept of this theory revolves around establishing a political system for a country based on ethics (Brown, 1992). War is not an option according to this theory, since the expenses of war exceed the benefits behind it. Religion conceptualizes ethics and morality, and the validity of Iran and Saudi Arabia is gained through this morality. The Sunnis' ideology is Saudi and Shiite one in Iran and relies on the justification of domestic and international policies. When King Abdulaziz established the Kingdom, the Ulema was consulted on political and social topics, as all Saudi Kings followed the same practice. The consultation of Ulema was witnessed throughout the history of the country.

As for the second concept of idealism in international relations, Saudi Arabia does not favor the state of war and hostility. This appears in its mediation roles and interventions with other states in the region to peacefully gain order. The Arab Spring and King Fahd's era were the best times to record this position adopted by the Saudis. Furthermore, Iran's constitution since the Iranian president's power is limited and controlled by the authority of the Supreme Leader whose position stands for religion. The limitations on the Iranian president only leave him with the power to supervise the

application of the constitution on the executive branch, while the Supreme Leader is in control of armed forces, security, defense, and key foreign policy matters. In theory this political approach taken by Iran is consistent with the understanding of idealism in international relations in applying ethics to building a nation. Although Iran views Saudi Arabia as its main rival in the Middle East, they never got involved in a war using military power. Moreover, the demonstrations during King Khalid's reign that were supported by the Iranian government were not a war but were social uprisings to gain equal rights for the Saudi Shiites, despite the fact that the demonstrations which happened at the time of King Abdullah were not proven to be supported by Iran even though Saudi political critics accused Iran of such.

The third theory chosen to explain the policy of Iran in Saudi Arabia was soft power; the connotation of this theory distinguishing the efforts made by states makes other states desire the same goals they believe in or that will meet their strategic interests (Nye, 2004). This policy does not use power to change the direction of other states; it uses attraction and persuasion as an approach. This theory not only reflects the good will of states, it can also be used in negative influence. Soft power relies on the culture of a state and its places that might attract other states, such as the international or local policies that a state adopts, and the validity of a state's foreign policy (Nye, 2011).

For example, Iran uses soft power in allying with Hezbollah. The attraction Iran used with Hezbollah is the Shiite ideology which Iran practices; it also attracts them by the Iranian support of the Palestinian case and supports Hezbollah financially in this regard. Iran through Hezbollah was able to grab regional attention and support after the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from the southern part of Lebanon. It also appears when

Iran fully supported Morsi, the Egyptian president, and offered its guidance to provide knowledge to Morsi's administration in how to build an Islamic state.

Corresponding to Iran's application of soft power, Saudi Arabia is able to attract other states within the region due its religious position of hosting the two Holy Mosques. Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring supported Egypt financially to reconstitute their country and empower them during their worst times. The kingdom was also able to attract the Gulf states by initiating the GCC to stand as a unified power in facing any threat. These two examples of Saudi Arabian policy demonstrate the use of soft power in gaining their goals through the attraction of other states.

Limitations

The study's limitations arise from the enormous amount of data the researcher had to go through and choose from. The period of the examined conflict was from 1979 to 2014; the reader had to recognize the needed data and extract it from a pool of information. At the planning stage of this dissertation, the researcher chose to design a method in extracting data. The researcher focused on pinpointing data related to the foreign policy, local policy, economic status, and interactions between both Iran and Saudi Arabia. This enabled to researcher to focus her mind and only concentrate her thoughts on the conflict and its surroundings. During the analysis part, the researcher used another design to cluster this bulk amount of information. She worked on dividing the data into timeframes, instead of the layout used in the literature review; this layout helped the researcher to deliberate on all the details and carefully pay attention to the actions taken. Timeframes allowed the researcher to analyze the data and determine periods of progressive practice between Saudi Arabia and Iran. These clusters of periods

directed the efforts of the researcher to discover the findings proposed in this study to be practiced in the near future.

Future Avenues of Research

Further research must concern the topic of conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The findings of this research provide possible solutions; however, it raises more questions. To illustrate this statement, the application of a Saudi-Iranian nuclear agreement would need more studies to create a fully detailed program to be applied, in order to explore the possibilities of applying this recommendation. An agreement on a nuclear program is a major action, and because this topic has been considered a threat, providing research on the program itself would provide the needed data to have a well-structured program for proposal while insuring the strategic interests of both states as well as security. Iran and Saudi Arabia had previously signed an agreement of trade, security, social, and culture exchange, yet such a sensitive topic was not agreed upon. Accordingly, a study that examines such a political transition would be instructive and likely noteworthy, since this research suggests a Saudi-Iranian security partnership.

There is also a possible threat from the public perception of presenting Iranian drama broadcasts to Saudis views, and the opposite in Iran is also a probability. Thus, research is needed to address the psychological effect of presenting such drama to the people of Iran and Saudi. The shows and the timing of their broadcast should not be randomly chosen. Moreover, many other factors should be considered in a detailed research to present the recommendation as a solution and avoid the creation of more sectarian conflict.

Final Reflections and Conclusion

Explicit historical exchange signifies great prospects in further evolving and understanding the nature of the behavior of both states. This research intended to expound upon a relevant research topic; however, the researcher sought to investigate the current developments and grasp valid findings to resolve the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran both politically and socially to examine their roles as positive factors in the Middle East. The important goal of resolving the issue from a social point is to provide governments with the suitable support of their own people to peacefully strengthen this tensioned relation. Many scholars have researched this topic on a diplomatic level; the originality of this research emanates from combining social and political factors in the findings. The researcher argues the importance of reaching out to the citizens of both countries in accordance with diplomatic efforts, to achieve the ultimate goal of this research in resolving the Saudi-Iranian conflict and benefiting from these two powerful states in stabilizing the Middle East. The objective of forming a cultural exchange program through media, for example, is not limited to removing the ban of social disengagement between the people of Iran and Saudi Arabia or neutralizing their points of view. It is to enrich thought, establish the value of tolerance among people, pave the way for fruitful cooperation with returns on all parties, and search for common denominators that form the constructive bedrock cooperation between nations and people. The significance of these proposed resolutions stems from Islamic teachings as stated in the Qur'an: "The believers are naught else than brothers. Therefore make peace between your brethren and observe your duty to Allah that aptly ye may obtain mercy." Quran (49:10).

Both countries are Islamic states that believe in the concept of peace and brotherhood, and that hatred and discrimination is against the peaceful practices of Islam. Reflecting on this Islamic practice, Iran and Saudi Arabia have to agree on cooperating in a peacebuilding program as recommended in this research to indirectly embrace a transformation through acceptance of their different cultural backgrounds.

Moreover, neither social exchange nor political alliance will work unaccompanied; efforts on both levels must be exerted equally to support the process of building peace in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia and Iran have a substantial role in restoring stability to the region in liaising and collaborating instead of acting as rivals; it has been noted that ties have been constructed between Iran and Saudi, and the near future is the superlative chance to reconnect on many levels. This research will contribute to the field of conflict analysis by offering a peaceful resolution to a political conflict that has been progressing for decades. The emphasis of this peaceful resolution stems from its potential to facilitate an end to the conflict by proposing a political and social solution; both elements must be combined to reach the ultimate goal. Many scholars have proposed solutions to the Saudi-Iranian conflict; however, analyzing the different factors integrated in this case from a conflict resolution point of view provided a combined political and social plan to gradually and peacefully end this conflict and strengthen the bilateral relation.

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