

**Saudi Arabia and the Yemeni Struggle for the Gulf  
Cooperation Council (GCC) Membership**

**1979- 2014**

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## ABSTRACT

Upon the British withdrawal in 1971 from the Arabian Gulf region, three powerful states (Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran) were left competing among each other to gain influence. Accordingly, that competition transformed the region's dynamic into something of a Regional Security Complex (RSC) (Buzan and Wæver, 2003 p. 187) – to be more precise, the Gulf became a distinct sub-complex of the Great Middle East RSC. After the Gulf War II (1990-1991) and even more so following the U.S invasion of Iraq in 2003, this RSC was defined by the competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran, as each sought to expand their influence over the other regional states. Consequently, the region was divided in two camps: first, the multilateral security and political organisation of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (usually alluded to as the Gulf Cooperation Council or GCC), including Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Oman; and second, Iran and its proxies in the region. Yemen and Iraq occupied a shifting and unstable space in between these two camps, with the latter oscillating between quiet recipient of GCC assistance and outright hostility to the GCC states, and the former relying heavily on GCC assistance and gaining partial membership in the GCC Secretariat in 2001.

This paper asserts that the GCC approach to regional politics and security has been largely determined, whether passively or actively, by the policies and threat perceptions of Saudi Arabia. At the same time, Saudi Arabian policy has been tempered by the interaction of other actors behaving within Security Complexes at the global, regional, and domestic levels. By extending the RSC framework to the case of the Gulf region, this thesis examines the degree to which the nature of cooperation and conflict among the Arabian Gulf Countries (AGC) shapes their interactions with external powers, including Iran and Iraq, but especially with their southern neighbour Yemen. The importance of this project is that it should add to the ongoing debate on the importance of Yemen's security and stability for Saudi Arabia and the other GCC members. It concludes that at the core of Arabian Peninsula security dynamics, Saudi Arabia's relationship with Yemen affects other regional relations with the Smaller Gulf States and Iran, even at the same time that it is conditioned by those same relationships.

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*Table of Abbreviations*

AGC	Arabian Gulf Countries
APC	Arabian Peninsula Countries
APR	Arabian Peninsula Region
AQAP	Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
CPO	Central Planning Organisation
EEIC	English East India Company
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
IS	Islamic State
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
OPEC	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PDRY	People's Democratic Republic of Yemen
PFLOAG	People's Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf
RDF	Rapid Deployment Forces
RoY	Republic of Yemen
RSC	Regional Security Complex
SGS	Smaller Gulf States
UAE	United Arab Emirate
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WMD	Weapon of Mass Destruction
YAR	Yemen Arab Republic
YSP	Yemen Socialist Party

## ***1 Chapter One: Introduction***

“Saudi Arabia, the world’s energy superpower, and the economic engine as the last remaining political heavyweight in the Arab world, will continue to maintain stability and security in the Middle East” (Obaid, 2013). The leading challenge to Saudi stability and security, as well as the key place where Saudi Arabia’s has exercised its military might, is generally recognised to be the Republic of Yemen (RoY).

RoY has emerged as a strategic site where diverse international and regional interests are renegotiated and may end up in a conflict. While the international and regional players interest in Syria and Iraq attracted wide attention of political and economic analyses, the RoY has little attention of academic analysis and media focus, international and regional interest have remained somewhat foggy. While the complexity of the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran as the regional powers shaping and driving the political development in RoY suggests the need to further study and understand the motives and strategies of the states. Most notably Saudi Arabia’s and Iran’s motives and interests in RoY may be crucial and exemplary for clarifying the dynamics of regional foreign and security policies in the Arabian Peninsula Region. As regional powers, Saudi Arabia and Iran will carry on following up with the political race in RoY.

The RoY has remained a major site of conflict in the Arabian Peninsula Region (APR). The political and military events in Yemen over the past two decades have decisively influenced the security calculation and political evaluation in the APR. Irrespective of the Arab-Israeli conflict, RoY is a key player for securitising and destabilising the international and regional environment. In the past decades, the Gulf States especially Saudi Arabia’s experienced security, military, and ideology threats from RoY. RoY will make a battlefield for the looming regional conflicts, which both Saudi Arabia and Iran will unavoidably be the major players in these conflicts.

The APR is one of the high conflict regions because of its vast oil reserves. The foreign policy of the APC is firmly influenced and shaped by the regional security environment. The regional states share the same types of threats from non-traditional sources: transnational crime, budgets based on hydrocarbon revenues, water and other environmental challenges, terrorism, and

both external and internal insurgencies (Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) particularly in RoY).

The faults in regional and international security reactions to the problem of transnational terrorism were outlined by the appearance of two Saudi Guantanamo returnees to leadership status within Al-Qaeda in January 2009. After their discharge from Guantanamo, Muhammad Al-Awfi and Saud Al-Shihri spent five months in a touted counter-radicalisation and rehabilitation scheme and in May 2008 were proclaimed fit for reintegration within the community (Worth 2009). Their emergence in Yemen was an embarrassing and destructive blow to the counterterrorism tactics of Saudi Arabia, which had offered this gentle technique and stress on a “battle of ideas” as a creative new method in the battle with radical violence (Boucek 2008, 97:3). In the meantime, the connection with Yemen increases the credence of the growing proof of the groups and extremists linked to the Al-Qaeda regrouping, therefore, following their operational and strategic defeat in Saudi Arabia.

The intricate connections amid interior and exterior security within the GCC have been highlighted by the contraction of state administration and the availability of ‘uncontrolled’ spaces within the RoY. A new problem in the form of weapons smuggling from Yemen and terrorist infiltration due to terror cells making the most of state contraction and security spaces to reorganise and regroup are encountered by Saudi Arabia and alternative the GCC nations (Rabasa 2007). It was claimed by Abdu-Rabu Mansour Hadi, the Yemeni vice-President, that 16000 alleged Al-Qaeda participants had been deported from Yemen from 2003. Despite these arrests, in August, the security forces in Yemen discovered a cell related to Al-Qaeda that intended to destroy oil-installation facilities in the Saudi Arabian Eastern Province. This plot recalled the Abqaiq Oil-Processing Plant failed assault in February of 2006.

An alarming new occurrence was disclosed from the coordinated attack on the embassy of the U.S in Sana’a on 17th September 2008, a three from the six bombers were recent returnees from Iraq. Following their arrival, the men allegedly took part in Al-Qaeda camps within the southern provinces of Marib and Hadramawt that Yemeni authorities believe to have been training a forceful new crop of radical leaders (Sharp 2008). Simultaneously comprising a cause and a result of the narrowing of state control, the declining interior security circumstances in Yemen are

a considerable danger to the Arabian Peninsula's stability. Additionally, the Arabian Peninsula's regional security is connected to an alternative sub-region of security within the Horn of Africa. This includes within the security equation of the region the challenges of the fall of the state within Somalia as well as the gradual narrowing of the state in Yemen, massive streams of refugees to Yemen from Somalia and the growing challenge of maritime piracy within the Gulf of Aden.

The governance crisis and the narrowing of state control encountered by Yemen and its long-standing leadership led by Ali Abdullah Saleh are indicated by the increasing regularity of terrorism. In the Middle East Yemen is among the poorest nations, comprising a populace of 23 million (the second highest on the Peninsula behind Saudi Arabia) and having a per capita GDP in 2007 of merely \$2,500. A mixture of armed insurgency, collective opposition to the state policies and entrenched socioeconomic challenges are encountered by the government. A systemic social and economic emergency which has rendered Yemen at the brink of failure as a state is the outcome of the collective effect of bad governance, widespread corruption, insufficient economic progress, reducing oil reserves, a water table falling by 10 feet per annum, poverty, rates of unemployment reaching more than 40 percent and a swift rate of population growth of 3.7 percent yearly.

Intense regional and international activity is necessary to aid the infrastructure of the Yemeni state to deal with the increasing division between increasing requirement form and reducing supplies of fundamental resources and facilities, as this collapsing political economy perched on the southwestern flank of the Arabian Peninsula poses an immediate danger to the safety and stability of the GCC. Nonetheless, by the start of 2014, both the international community and the GCC did not have a mutual extended-term strategy to avoid the fall of Yemen. A scheme of political and economic inclusion that surpasses combating terrorism and addresses the basic reason for state collapse and societal pressures is necessary.

Indeed, RoY is a central challenge for the entire Gulf region, as belied by the GCC's decision in 2001 to grant partial membership to RoY despite that country's lack of any coastline along the Arabian Gulf. How do we explain this decision and the security dynamics that underlie it? Why was the RoY permitted to join selected committees such as education, health, and social affairs, but not more influential committees covering security and economic affairs? Is Yemen a

central security issue for the members' states of the GCC and the region as a whole, or is the GCC policy towards Yemen a reflection of broader security concerns for which Yemen is merely emblematic of greater challenges to cooperation?

### **1.1 Theoretical Overview**

These questions are the core of this thesis, “Saudi Arabia and Yemen’s struggle for GCC membership,” which aims to answer them from the point of view of RSC theory as first introduced by Barry Buzan. “RSC theory is an analysis of international security that gives special attention to the regional level as the centre of analysis and how both the international system and local levels of interactions influence regional security” (Buzan, 2007, p. 157). This widely acclaimed book takes as its main theme the question of how states and societies pursue safety from threats in an environment in which competitive relations are inescapable across the political, economic, military, societal and environmental landscapes. Throughout, attention is placed on the interplay of threats and vulnerabilities, the policy consequences of overemphasising one or the other, and the existence of contradictions within and between ideas about security. Buzan argues that the concept of security is a versatile, penetrating and useful way to approach the study of international relations. Security provides an analytical framework which stands between the extremes of power and peace, incorporates most of their insights and adds more of its own (Buzan 2007b, 165).

Through the lens of RSC, the core argument here is that the shift in Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy towards the RoY between the founding of the GCC in 1981 and Yemen’s cooperation agreement with the GCC in 2000 was symptomatic of a much broader shift in regional security dynamics. The story begins in 1971, when Great Britain ended its protectorate over the Smaller Gulf States (SGS) of Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, and Oman. It traces developments in the region from the ‘oil revolution’ of 1973-74 through the Iranian Revolution, the Iran-Iraq war and the Gulf War of 1990-91, to the toppling of Saddam Hussein in the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. Greg Gause has reviewed much of this history, including aspects of transnational identity issues, internal regime security and the politics of the world oil market, charting the changing mix of interests and ambitions driving American policy (Gause, 2009, p.3).

### 1.1.1 Parameters of the Thesis

The RoY has long borders with two formal GCC states, Saudi Arabia and Oman, which enables it to play a significant role in Red Sea security by controlling the southern Red Sea entrance (the Bab El-Mandab) that provides an important transit point for shipping from Asia to Europe. It is inextricably connected to the stability and security of Saudi Arabia, as well as other APC (Horton, The Jamestown Foundation, 2011). Saudi Arabia has repeatedly sought to influence its southern neighbour, seeking to control or restrain the pace of political change in the RoY including through, the use of the GCC as a tool for applying diplomatic pressure. A crisis in the RoY, such as a civil war or a humanitarian disaster, threatens not only the RoY, but also generates possibilities for spill-over effects into Saudi Arabia. Accordingly, Saudi policy-makers came to conclusion early on during the founding of the modern kingdom in the 1920s that Yemen was an unwieldy, complex state whose instability and potential crises needed to be contained. This was no less true circa 1979-80, when discussions for the formation of the GCC were underway. Yet during the 1990s, Saudi policy undergoes some subtle, though important, shifts, and not only regarding the RoY but also in relation to Iran, Saudi Arabia's traditional rival in the region.

Saudi Arabia had a desire and inclination towards exploring improved ties with Iran during the era of President Khatami, with Crown Prince Abdullah visiting Tehran for the Islamic summit in 1997 and Khatami visiting the kingdom two years later (Amiri and Soltani, 2011, pp. 191–192). Around the same time, Saudi Arabia sought to finally resolve its long-standing border disputes, concluding a border agreement with the RoY in 2000, even leading the Supreme Council of the GCC to welcome the RoY for partial membership in some GCC committees in 2001 at the 22nd summit meeting in Oman. The RoY membership was limited to four committees: the committee of the Ministers of Health, the Arab Education Bureau, the Labour and Social Affairs committee, and Arab Gulf Football Tournament. The GCC Supreme Council further pointed out that more integration was intended for the future: “Other steps will follow this step in relation to the RoY, including participation in the field of economy and other fields of cooperation” (Official GCC Web GCCSG, 16 Shawwal 1422 AH / 31 December 2001 AD). This development in ‘regional cooperation’ was viewed as a significant step towards a permanent solution to peace in the Gulf, with the assumption that large neighbouring states would benefit from cooperation, especially given the emerging local threats from extremism.

Through the lens of RSC, the Arabian Peninsula represents a sub-regional complex of the Middle Eastern RSC, which formed after the last wave of decolonisation in the 1970s. In terms of how the region fits into the international system, the Arabian Peninsula was subject to the vicissitudes of the Cold War, and the demise of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) did play a role in the region, but Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the defeat of Iraq in 1991 was probably the single most important event that shaped regional security dynamics, demonstrating the primacy of the regional level as a primary unit of analysis. The Gulf War of 1990-91 set in train four sequences of events that largely defined the security dynamics in the Gulf throughout the 1990s and to some extent into the twenty-first century. Extending the RSC framework to the case of the Gulf, this thesis examines the degree to which the nature of the cooperation/conflict relationships within the GCC shaped their interactions with external powers and with the RoY. The thesis raises three broad arguments:

- 1) The APC share a common historical inheritance, especially given their close ties of geography and populations, and they share common concerns about threats to their state security and regime stability.
- 2) The security dynamics of the APC are overshadowed on the one hand by the Saudi-Iranian rivalry for regional power, which has led both countries to seek proxies and allies across the region, and on the other hand by the closely intertwined nature of Saudi-Yemen security relations.
- 3) Internal rivalries and the common need to balance external actors further shape security dynamics of the APC; this means that to some extent, GCC contributions to the stability of Yemen are subordinate to other regional security concerns that are not at all intrinsically related to Yemen's domestic situation (Burke, 2012, p. 24).

### **1.1.2 Securitisation of Yemen**

While the RoY has a lengthy rugged border with Saudi Arabia, sits on a strategic access point to the Red Sea and successive governments in Sana'a have had little control over the provinces, these factors generally only have a direct impact on Saudi Arabia. The problem of the RoY is not at the core of the security dynamic of the smaller members of the GCC. Saudi Arabia's interests in the

RoY are primarily a reflection of its own fears and vulnerabilities, and the key role that Yemen has played in regional security dynamics represents a securitisation of Yemen's stability, particularly in the last four years since the start of the Arab Spring. In other words, this thesis will argue that in part it is Saudi Arabia that has repeatedly elevated the issue of Yemen's stability, seeking regional support or at least acquiescence towards Saudi policies on Yemen. While still acknowledging that Yemen's domestic problems can and have generated threats that either directly or indirectly posed a real danger to the region and the world, this thesis will nevertheless suggest that the way in which those security threats are dealt with by all regional actors depends to a great extent on Saudi Arabia's perception of the threat.

Yemen was and continues to be a relatively ungoverned space in which other regional security issues are projected and foremost among them is Saudi Arabia's perception of its own domestic instability prompted by a crisis spilling over its border. External actors from the GCC, the broader region and the international community, have all been drawn to Yemen in ways that accommodated or reacted to Saudi security priorities. At the same time, this securitisation of Yemen's stability does not entirely necessitate a negative outcome for security dynamics in the RSC, fuelling rivalries and leading to proxy wars similar to the current war in which Iran is helping to prop up a Houthi-dominated regime in Sana'a while Saudi Arabia provides military and diplomatic support to the elected government of President Hadi now in exile. Rather, the progressive evolution of GCC policy towards Yemen from 1981 to 2001 suggests that Yemen has the potential to focus Gulf States' attention on a common set of challenges, which could lead to greater security cooperation within the RSC that in turn spurs cooperation in other areas of economics and diplomacy.

### **1.1.3 Interpenetration of International, Regional and Local Security**

Furthermore, changes in the international security order, wars among other regional powers, and evolving domestic security concerns have also shaped the Saudi-RoY relationship. This means that even as Saudi security perceptions of the RoY have played a determining factor on regional responses to the RoY, other completely unrelated events have played a significant role in colouring those same Saudi perceptions of the RoY. In 1962, a group of Yemeni military commanders, enjoying support from both Egypt and revolutionaries in South Yemeni, successfully expelled the



YAR's ruling monarchy from Sana'a and installed a Republican government, leading to a civil war between Republican and Royalist forces lasting eight years. With British assistance, Saudi King Faisal provided financial and material support to Royalist forces as part of a broader regional effort to counter Egyptian President Gamal Abd Al-Nasser. The YAR civil war thus became a proxy war between Riyadh and Cairo, and King Faisal believed that Nasser's covert activities posed an existential threat to the security and stability of the Saudi regime (Sullivan, 1970). In the media, Riyadh promoted the civil war in the YAR as an opportunity to advance the cause of Islam against atheistic communism and its Arab nationalist allies (U.S History Documents, 1970).

The settlement of the civil war displayed ample evidence of the complex relationship between the YAR and Saudi Arabia. Faisal and Nasser reached a compromise after both sides realised they could not achieve a decisive victory, yet the local actors in the YAR continued fighting for two more years. The lack of demarcation along the Saudi-North Yemeni border represented a key source of continuing conflict, leading to two border skirmishes in the 1970s and the signing of the Kuwait agreement in 1979 (Adel, 2006). Yet, Saudi Arabia provided significant assistance to the YAR throughout the 70s in order to bolster the YAR as a counterweight to the Marxist government of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) based in Aden. Saudi leaders feared that the PDRY might spread rebellion into the YAR, much as the PDRY was doing with support to Marxist rebels in the Dhofar region of Oman, which in turn would put Moscow in a much stronger position to infiltrate the Gulf (Burke, 2012, p. 8). Thus, we see the Cold War impinging on the Saudi-Yemen relationship. With Yemeni support for Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, and Iraq's subsequent military incursion into the Neutral Zone that threatened Saudi territorial sovereignty, we find regional issues imposing themselves on the Saudi-Yemen relationship (Whitaker, 2009 chapter 7). In addition, in terms of domestic security concerns, Osama bin Laden and his Al-Qaida network even before the 9/11 attacks advocated for the overthrow of the government in Riyadh. Bin Laden's ties to Yemen included more than his family's heritage – they included his business relations and recruitment efforts, and several prominent Yemenis had invited bin Laden to take up residence in Yemen upon his removal from Sudan. Saudi security perceptions of the YAR are therefore a composite of many overlapping issues and concerns, based in part on international regional and local factors.

## 1.2 Research Objective and Rationale

This thesis is motivated by the following observations and assertions. Firstly, by the fact that despite the voluminous scholarly literature on Yemeni history and politics, Yemen's relationship with the Gulf States and its role in the region has been poorly understood and so far, insufficiently studied. Secondly, by the limited literature available analysing the national interests of members of the GCC and how these impact upon their international relations. Finally, this research is driven by the question of what exactly Yemen means to Saudi Arabia, for example in terms of strategic depth? Especially when we compare Yemen's role to that of other regional states: Kuwait effectively dragged Saudi Arabia into the 1990 Gulf War; Bahrain forced Saudi Arabia to become involved in an entirely domestic uprising; while Qatar and Oman have openly adopted foreign policies that run counter to Saudi goals in the region. Where does Yemen fit against such a backdrop?

The primary tool for analysis will have to be an examination of the historical record. This is necessitated by the closed nature of society in the Gulf and inaccessibility of government officials. Unlike in the West, government documents and similar official records are strictly private and there are no real mechanisms or formal channels for scholars to get access to such materials. Moreover, there were very few individuals involved in shaping GCC policy on Yemen and many of them are still actively involved in an official capacity, which presents great difficulties in terms of gaining access to decision-making circles. Fortunately, there is a lengthy historical record stretching back over several decades and the basic components of policy are well known. This research covers the period between 1979 and 2011. The start of this period was when the majority of Arab Gulf nations gained their political autonomy. The Gulf area faced weighty security issues within this time frame, even though the character of these issues altered with each passing decade. Oil prices remained highly volatile over this period. Governments in Iraq and Iran underwent complete changes of regime type. Successive waves of riots and protests threatened stability in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain in 1980, 1987, 1994 and 2011.

### 1.2.1 Background

Until 1990, the YAR and PDRY were not a high security priority for the AGC other than bordering neighbours Saudi Arabia and Oman, for several reasons. First, there was little contact between the SGS and the Yemens due to a lack of political compatibility – the political regimes in YAR and PDRY represented trends in the Arab world that were considered revolutionary and directly opposed to the autocratic monarchies in the rest of the Gulf. Second, the Yemens and the SGS were not significant trade partners – by the mid-20th century, Yemen produced little for export other than Qat, which is a controlled substance in the rest of the Gulf. Third, mechanisms with which to facilitate communications between the RoY and the GCC were wholly insufficient – while the AGC began rapid urban development during the oil price rises of the 1960s and especially after the oil boom of 1973, the Yemens remain largely rural and underdeveloped until today. Finally, regional diplomacy mostly took place in the Levant, with Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq playing the leading roles in regional and international fora. Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria played greater roles in Middle East Peace than did the APC. Bilateral summits between Washington and any of the Arab Gulf capitals were almost once-in-a-decade events, and a high level visit between Washington and Sana’a was virtually unheard of. In British press of the time, Aden is almost exclusively relegated to the status of way station for people and goods transiting to India and places farther east.

In the post-9/11 world, with Al-Qaida and other extremists prominent in Yemen, a Shi’a insurgent group overrunning the country and the perennial risk of a humanitarian disaster resulting from economic collapse, Yemen has naturally gained in prominence among regional security debates. In 2012, the GCC accomplished its first major diplomatic undertaking with the ‘Gulf Initiative for Yemen,’ with the goal of restoring Yemen’s stability and effecting a smooth transition of power at the height of the Arab Spring protests. As one Saudi diplomat noted at the time of the announcement, “The RoY has become chaotic and uncontrolled. The RoY was weak with the presence of Ali Abdullah Saleh. The Saudi government worried that Al-Qaida, Houthis or other aggressive groups could take over the country and pose a significant security threat to GCC states. Therefore, the GCC’s proposed solution could save the country.”

In recent years, the Saudi relationship with Yemen has also come under closer scrutiny, especially regarding the reported tens of billions of dollars that Riyadh has given in official and unofficial aid over the decades. The U.S Senate Committee for Foreign Relations has criticised Saudi misappropriation of assistance for ‘an absence of transparency and facilitating the continuation of bad governance’. Such criticisms are rumoured to have affected the resolution by King Abdullah to reduce the operations of the Saudi Ministry of Defence in 2010, which was nominally in control of much policy on Yemen under the guise of the Special Committee on Yemen run by the late Defence Minister Prince Sultan.

Finally, it can readily be argued that tensions and feuds between Saudi Arabia and the SGS long overshadowed any issues related to the two Yemens. Yemen is merely a sideshow to most of the major crises that impacted the SGS in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as the Buraymi War, the Hawar Islands dispute, the labour movements of the mid-1960s, and the post-Iranian revolution protest movements – even if one might have expected Yemen to have played a larger role if only as a pawn for bigger regional players. Some of that is reflected in the comment by Robert Burrowes that these states “several of which also possess enormous petroleum wealth might ally with the RoY in a joint effort to stand up to the sometimes-overbearing Saudi Arabia and to hold it at bay.” He further cites the example of Kuwait providing support to Republican forces during the civil war of the 1960s, while Saudi Arabia openly supported the Royalist factions (Noble, 1999). Yemen at least has the potential to become a useful tool for AGC that seek to gain leverage over one another, and certainly a regional rival like Iran could find numerous opportunities to antagonise Saudi Arabia by establishing an Iranian military or security presence in Yemen.

### **1.2.2 Hypothesis and Question**

This thesis scrutinises the connections and dynamics between Yemen and the GCC states that led to the incorporation of Yemen into the GCC in 2001, particularly in light of the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the RoY. It asserts that there is a direct association between the latter bilateral relationship and the former multilateral security relationship. The tense and complex relationship between the most powerful state on the Arabian Peninsula and the weakest state creates a driving force influencing other bilateral and multilateral relations on the Arabian

Peninsula and in the Gulf. The Saudi-Yemeni relationship is not quite a polar axis around which regional security revolves, but it is a key element influencing the rest of the RSC.

Realist theory leads us to predict that state behaviour is influenced by the structure of the international system, which forces the states to seek power to increase their prospects for survival. In order to pursue power, Saudi Arabia will choose to expand its relationship with the RoY that can deter the RoY from establishing political or economic ties with rival states and thereby maintain control over the political landscape of the RoY. Within the framework of RSC theory, we can apply realist theory to say that Saudi Arabia's efforts to limit and control Yemen's relations with the rest of the Gulf were a means to maximise Saudi influence and power, and Saudi Arabia so viewed Yemen as an extension of Saudi national interests.

### 1.2.3 Literature Review

There is a sizeable body of literature about the unique nature of each country on the Arabian Peninsula. Not all states share an equal level of wealth, nor are they similar in terms of their power structures. Abdulkhaleq Abdulla stated in his *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Nature Origin, and Process* that some of the GCC states are inadequate producers of oil, such as Oman and Qatar, and Bahrain might even be categorised as a non-oil state, while Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE are the major producers. In like terms, The UAE's Supreme Council comprises six independent sheikhs who have their own different economic and political challenges even as they meet in a federation whose executive branch is dominated by Abu Dhabi. The GCC states possess a high level of diversity both politically and culturally: conservative and traditional societies mingle with liberal and sometimes even revolutionary elements. The GCC states are diverse in other respects as well, such as in the levels of education and development, demographic size and composition, economic and military might.

Matteo Legrenzi in his book *"The Gulf Cooperation Council in Light of International Relations Theory"* presents a comparative picture of dramatic divergence of the individual GCC states in terms of their domestic politics. The political systems of the smaller states are gradually being liberalised – with Kuwait on a trajectory from liberalised autocracy to a constitutional monarchy – and this they are undergoing in different ways and at different paces. On the other

hand, traditionalists and Islamists attempt to influence what might be deemed the inertia of Saudi Arabia. From the standpoint of Legrenzi, these divergent trajectories may increase the gaps between them, and he considers that the operation of the GCC is being progressively impacted by the widening political diversity that the six countries are experiencing. It remains to be seen how and whether these political divergences affect the increasingly independent role of GCC member states in foreign policy decision-making.

Alaghbari in his *the RoY and GCC member states: A Political, Security and Strategic Study* clarifies the stated and unstated reasons behind the exclusion of the RoY from the GCC and the reactions of both the Yemens towards their exclusion. The differences of regime type and economic capability were cited as factors influencing the GCC position against the RoY's application to join the GCC in 1981. Furthermore, Alrahbi argues that the GCC is a club of rich Gulf Sheikdoms, intentionally designed to exclude the poor. However, as Abdulkhaleq Abdulla states, there is a huge gap between the GCC members and it was with these economic gaps in mind that the GCC was established. The GCC overlooked these differences and pushed forward to cooperate to seek survival from the regional chaos and disorder posed by Iran and others. The RoY's quest for integration was also highlighted in Mohammed Abbas Aldhali'i and Ahmed Mohammed bin Talib's *the GCC and Yemen – Opportunities and Requirements*. The writers discuss the importance of the RoY joining the GCC without referring to the mutual benefits accrued to the RoY and GCC by such a membership. They shed light on the different interests of individual Gulf States in RoY membership and highlight the disagreements between the GCC states towards the RoY accession. They believe this will delay the full integration of the RoY into the GCC. Kuwait held a highly restrictive position on the RoY's application, while Qatar adopted a more liberal opinion.

Additional work on the GCC-RoY relationship includes: *The RoY and the Gulf: Political, Economic and Cultural Dimensions of Yemen's Joining the GCC* from a seminar held in December 2003. The seminar was attended by a number of academic researchers, presenting studies dealing with the RoY's relationships with the GCC following its application and the economic, cultural and security dimensions of the relationships between the RoY and the GCC states. The papers provide valuable statistics and data on the economic dimensions, though without fully exploring the political dimension in detail. *The Dimensions of the Yemeni Role in the Realisation of Security*

*and Stability in the Arabian Gulf, 1990-2004* is a PhD thesis submitted by Mahiob Hassan Radman to the University of Asyut in 2008. The study aimed to provide a Yemeni perspective on the position of the Gulf region within the international system and the pressures the international community makes on regional cooperation. This includes the factors prompting the RoY to undertake a role of contributing to ensuring the Gulf's security and stability.

### **1.3 Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of nine chapters, including this introduction. The second chapter discusses Yemeni security issues and their impact on the region. It explores Saudi efforts to consolidate relations with the RoY, emphasising the critical role played by Yemeni instability in Saudi security, and how the increase in concerns in this regard affected the RoY's role and interaction with the GCC. The third chapter is concerned with the theoretical approach: namely, that state behaviour can be explained and predicted through IR theories. According to Barry Buzan, the theory of RSC explains the behaviours of states located in the same region and argued that they interact frequently more with one another than they interact with other states that in a more distant geopolitical area. In this study, RSC will help us understand and explain the behaviour of GCC members towards each other, and with other states in the international arena.

The fourth chapter discusses the foundation of the Gulf as a region, before illustrating the extent to which it forms an RSC. This both reveals the impact of the global level of analysis on the Gulf region, and how intimately involved Saudi Arabia and the RoY were in aspects of Gulf security during the Cold War. The repercussions that global superpower competition has had on the security of Saudi Arabia – or at least, Saudi perceptions of security – are highlighted here. The fifth chapter explores the dramatic changes in the global level over the period in question, drawing attention to significant events and themes, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Second Gulf War (GWII) of 1990-91, the 9/11 attacks in 2001, the Iraq invasion of 2003, and the war on terrorism. It aims to show that these changes influenced the RSC structure over time. It shows how American linkages and a dynamic shift in its relationship with Saudi Arabia developed throughout the period.

Chapter six examines the interaction of regional states with one another in the light of RSC theory. Iran, a traditional rival to Saudi Arabia for being the dominant power in the area, sought

hegemony by using both soft and hard power. The GCC states also behaved according to RSC theory: security dynamics shaped by regional patterns of amity and enmity, or cooperation and conflict. Chapter seven focuses on Saudi Arabia and SGS relations. The SGS engaged with the U.S progressively over time to develop close ties of mutual defence and security based on diplomatic treaties. They consequently, became less dependent on Saudi Arabia for protection, particularly after the crisis of Iraq's invasion in 1990.

Having argued in chapter seven that relations between the RoY and the GCC states are linked to the nature of RoY-Saudi relations, we can conclude that Yemen played a pivotal role in the formation of GCC securitisation in the ways that Saudi defined and shaped Gulf security perceptions. Chapters eight focuses on the security and stability of Yemen, which are essential considerations for Arabian Peninsula security and bring us back to the core questions that began this study. The shift in GCC policy from excluding Yemen in 1981 to partial inclusion two decades later depended upon a new understanding of Yemen's security and the implications for the GCC states.

In this chapter, I will begin by highlighting the regional and international variables, then move to Saudi Arabia-Yemen relations in the light of the previous variables in both chapter. Again, we will find that RSC theory is the most appropriate framework for examining this nexus of issues. Chapter nine is conclusions and it highlights the findings of this thesis.

There were strong linkages for Saudi Arabia to various regional and international conflicts during the periods under consideration here, but in other periods those connections were weak or even absent. Regional and international security threats increased the value of the RoY to Saudi Arabia, bringing Yemen into greater focus for Saudi security priorities, which in turn had a significant impact on GCC securitisation. The parallels to today could not be more evident, in light of an Arab Spring that overturned the regime in Yemen, prompting a drastic re-evaluation of policy in Saudi Arabia and provoking an activist approach by the GCC to preserve stability on the Arabian Peninsula. Therefore, the significance of RoY security and stability to Saudi Arabia has contributed to the shaping of policy among the other AGC as well, even until today. Such a reciprocal relationship has not previously been studied in detail in its own right. This dissertation attempts to remedy this gap in the literature. It starts, however, by examining a key factor to have



influenced both the stability and security of the AGC on the one hand, and their response to the RoY security conflict on the other.

## **1.4 Terms of Discussion**

‘Security’ has typically been pursued by states with the aim of guaranteeing the state’s survival, based on the idea of sovereignty and territory, assigning your neighbour the status of a potential enemy, and applying military means to achieve these ends. Neorealism – holding these ideas – has been the dominant approach to the study of security and international relations since WWII. Most studies of security in the Arabian Gulf have applied these rationalities in trying to understand the key actors and their primary strategies (Swain et al., 2009, p. 4). However, in the following I am approaching the task of analysing security in the Arabian Peninsula through the lens of RSC theory, which although not different from neorealism in some ways, does extend and amplify neorealism in other ways.

### **1.4.1 Regional Security Complex Theory**

The RSC theory was first introduced by Barry Buzan who defines regional security by groups of nations that share a geographic area and experience competition with each other. According to him, to consider a region an RSC, it has to host a number of states that are concerned about the possibility of a threat from one another (Buzan, 1983). Stated simply, regional systems have to encompass countries whose main security concern comprises each other, with time made apparent in the battles they have fought, and the time and funds committed to addressing each other. However, it should be observed that this formation of the regional system does not engender constructive communications like endeavours at regional cooperation. Systems are described by the concentration and strength of their security communications, either constructive or nonconstructive.

(Gause III, 2009, p. 5) “The regionalist perspective has sought to emphasise that security at the regional level is autonomous and distinguishable from the dynamics of the global and domestic levels and that, while each regional space is unique, particular variables are comparable and highlight interactions that would not occur were it not for the existence of an RSC” (Cruden, 2011, p. 3). In other words; “both the regional and the global levels are independently very strong

and distinct from one another. The domestic level is also significant, displaying the typical post-colonial pattern of insecure regimes with obsessive concerns about making themselves secure within their territorial boundaries” (Buzan and Wæver, 2003, p. 194).

This 2003 book develops “the idea that since decolonisation, regional patterns of security have become more prominent in international politics. The authors combine an operational theory of regional security with an empirical application across the whole of the international system. Individual chapters cover Africa, the Balkans, CIS Europe, East Asia, EU Europe, the Middle East, North America, South America, and South Asia. The main focus is on the post-Cold War period, but the history of each RSC is traced back to its historical origins, as best as two authors can accomplish who are not themselves experts in the detailed workings of every region in the world. In relating the regional dynamics of security to current debates about the global power structure, the authors avoid extreme oversimplifications of theorists who advocate for a necessary ‘polarity’ and the vision of many other theorists of globalisation who conceive of a boundary-less new world disorder. They stress the radical diversity of security dynamics in different parts of the world, which has the appearance of a greater veracity when compared with the experiences of regional studies experts who have immersed themselves in the history and politics of their countries of study” (Buzan and Wæver, 2003, p. 194).

Accordingly, it is likely that states located in the same region interact frequently more with one another than they interact with other states that in a more distant geopolitical area. The frequency of interaction occurs simply because they share common borders, yet it creates significant patterns and an intensity of security interdependence. This process of building local relationships is termed by Buzan and Wæver as a pattern of enmity and amity (Buzan and Wæver, 2003, pp. 45–50). Since decolonisation, regional patterns of security have consequently become more prominent in international politics. The authors combine an operational theory of regional security with an empirical application across the whole of the international system.

### **1.4.2 The Domestic Level of Analysis**

National security institutions in the Arabian Peninsula are relatively closed and policy-making is limited to select individuals, which affects the patterns of decision-making. Policy formation is

mainly driven by factors such as loyalty to the government, hesitancy to devolve authority, and a culture of secrecy. In each of the GCC countries, the ruling elites followed traditional patterns of political consultation and authority, creating institutions of national governance to replicate tribal patterns of decision-making even after the advent of the modern oil era and the concomitant developments in education and infrastructure (Kechichian, 2008, p. 420). As Arab leaders play an increasingly important role on the world stage, they also face new and complex challenges at home, challenges that could affect both regional and regime stability. Exterior security partnerships, multilaterally in the form of the GCC and bilaterally in the form of relations with the U.S, addressed domestic requirements by buttressing the stability of governments while protecting their own societies from neighbouring countries (Panaspornprasit, 2004, p. 138).

These elements of domestic politics have become increasingly intertwined with regional and global concerns, expanding the limits of what we would normally consider issues of national sovereignty and territoriality. Four aspects form the contextual structure of its evolution. The first comprises the effect of globalisation and the transformation in Information and Communications Technology). These imply new types of public, private and virtual space within which to arrange, activate and direct participatory requirements. Indeed, the Gulf has become entangled in a broad interrelated nexus comprised of several real or possible sources of instability due to globalisation. These include the roots of radicalisation originating from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the growth of security states and their capabilities of surveillance, and ungoverned spaces in Yemen and Somalia (Ulrichsen, 2009, p. 2). In many ways, governments in the region have interpreted these areas as very real threats to their popular and political legitimacy, if not their material safety, which has directed the creation of heightened security measures to monitor and police these problems (Valbjørn and Bank, 2007, p. 9).

Regime fears of domestic instability sparked by global conflict played out most prominently following the incursion into Iraq led by the U.S forces in March 2003 (Kechichian, 2007, p. 290; Lowe and Spencer, 2006; Ulrichsen, 2009, p. 24). The U.S President George W. Bush was cautioned by Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al-Faisal as early as February of that year that the U.S would be addressing one issue but causing five more if Saddam Hussein was removed by force (Ulrichsen, 2009, p. 24). The toppling of the Ba'ath Party had the crucial, if unintentional, effect of empowering a Shi'a majority in Iraq and increasing Iran's involvement in internal Iraqi

affairs, as perceived both by analysts and officials within the Gulf. The outcome of this has been great suspicion over the promotion of non-state as well as state players in Iraq, which has given Tehran tactical depth and caused considerable discomfort among the GCC member states (Galen Carpenter and Innocent, 2007, p. 75; Ulrichsen, 2009, p. 24).

Accordingly, the Arabian Peninsula RSC is strongly shaped by the nature of domestic politics and identity, and local patterns of decision-making on issues related to security and stability cannot be easily separated from issues of global and regional security. We might think that even Saudi Arabia and Iran share the same types of threats from non-traditional sources: transnational crime, budgets based on hydrocarbon revenues, water and other environmental challenges, terrorism, and both external and internal insurgencies (Al-Qaida in particular, but also Jundallah and Ahvazi separatist groups in the case of Iran). Yet, their reactions to these threats differ, again showing the extent to which domestic insecurities shape priorities and thus the different ways these countries define their security priorities.

### **1.4.3 Terrorism as a Domestic Threat with Regional and Global Implications**

Saudi Arabia's insecurity not only stems from geographic proximity with an unstable Yemen, which, coupled with the inability of the state to control militancy in the border tribal areas, adds to vulnerabilities in terms of trafficking of arms, narcotics and Al-Qaida fighters. It also experiences insecurity because of rising extremism from within its own borders. Osama bin Laden famously declared a jihad against the Saudi Arabian government, seeking to overthrow the Al Saud Royal Family and replace them with an Islamic caliphate, leading Saudi authorities to cancel his citizenship in 1994 (Salter, 2006, p. 10). In October 2000, associates of bin Laden linked to Al-Qaida attacked the U.S.S. Cole and American naval forces stationed off the coast of Aden (Mueller, 2013, p. 80). The interlocking problem of transnational terrorism on the domestic and global levels was demonstrated by the recidivism of two Saudi Guantanamo Bay detainees who upon release returned to leadership status within Al-Qaida in Yemen in January 2009. After their discharge from Guantanamo, Muhammad Al-Awfi and Saud al-Shihri spent five months in a counter-radicalisation and rehabilitation scheme and in May 2008 were proclaimed fit for reintegration within the community (Worth, 2009). Their emergence in Yemen was a setback for the counterterrorism strategy of Saudi Arabia, which had offered this gentle technique engaging

in a “battle of ideas” as a creative new method in the fight against radical violence (Boucek, 2008, p. 3). In the meantime, the connection with Yemen lies in the growing proof of groups and individuals linked to Al-Qaida regrouping in Yemen following their operational defeat in Saudi Arabia (Crowley, 2015).

The intricate connections between interior and exterior security among the GCC states have been highlighted by the contraction of state administration and the availability of ‘uncontrolled’ spaces within the RoY. The GCC states face new problems in the form of weapons smuggling from Yemen and terrorist infiltration due to terror cells making the most of state contraction and ungoverned spaces to reorganise and regroup (Rabasa, 2007). It was claimed by Yemeni President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi that 16,000 alleged Al-Qaida activists had been deported from Yemen since 2003. Despite these supposed arrests and deportations, in August the Yemeni security forces discovered a cell related to Al-Qaida that intended to destroy oil-installation facilities in the Saudi Arabian Eastern Province (Bonney, 2011, p. 330). This plot recalled the failed assault on the Abqaiq Oil-Processing Plant in February of 2006 (Ulrichsen, 2009, p. 55).

Another aspect of domestic security is transnational identity. The APC many communities that view themselves according to transnational identities based on religious, sectarian or cultural origins, such as Sunni and Shia, Hawala and Ajam. Throughout the 1980s, Iranian leaders threatened to export the ideology of the Islamic revolution to Arab neighbours (Gause, 2009, p. 10). Iran found sympathy among Shi’a communities in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia and in Bahrain, who rioted in 1980 and 1981. During the period under consideration in this study, the long border of Saudi Arabia with the RoY witnessed tribal movements across the border as tribesmen sought economic and social benefits in terms of jobs and marriage opportunities. The Yam tribe in the southern part of Saudi Arabia, especially Najran, host around 400,000 Ismaili Shi’a (Burke, 2012, p. 12) and that community overlaps the border and might welcome Yemeni irredentist claims to retake the lands of Asir and Najran.

#### **1.4.4 The Global Level of Analysis**

After the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the USSR in 1991, the international system has sometimes been described as shifting from a bipolar system to a multipolar system. This is

based on the concept that following the end of the USSR, the U.S was the sole dominant power in the world, based on the military action that had the capability to contain threats and enforce a world order that reified American hegemony. The GWII in 1990-91 demonstrated this, in which the U.S effectively employed overwhelming force at the head of a broad international coalition to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait and restore the sovereignty of an American ally. America's credibility has since come into doubt following the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and voices who favour the concept of a multipolar world point to the rise of China, India and the European Union. The absence of a unifying consensus on the role of the U.S in international politics is reflected in the way the GCC states have taken a proactive role in leading the conservative reaction to the Arab Spring. Unilateral actions by the UAE and Saudi Arabia in supporting the regime in Egypt, the opposition in Syria and anti-Islamist forces in Libya, taken without consulting the U.S, could not have taken place in a world where America acted as the sole hegemon.

Accordingly, the end of the Cold War and the outbreak of the GWII dramatically changed the international system, and with its Saudi Arabia's position in the region was significantly affected by the SGS developing their own close relationships with the U.S and signing their own bilateral defence agreements. Just as the 1973 oil embargo empowered Saudi Arabia in its relations with America and the other SGS bandwagoned on Saudi success, the aftermath of the GWII ironically saw the SGS empowered by their relations with America at the expense of Saudi Arabia. The GCC as an organisation consequently suffered in terms of its unity and consensus, and it is only in the aftermath of the Arab Spring that we see the GCC member states realigning themselves around a common purpose and goal. Indeed, the Council means different things for each state – for Saudi Arabia influence over the SGS, for Bahrain it means legitimacy and protection from Iran – and those different viewpoints are reflective of the different security perceptions of each country. The gradual shifts from greater unity in the early 1980s to a diffusion of efforts in the 1990s and a recent return to combined efforts since 2011 were not dictated by events on the international stage, but the end of the Cold War and similar affairs at the international level of analysis did colour and shape these regional dynamics (Bojarczyk, 2013, p. 73).

Therefore, we can say that fundamental shifts in inter-regional security dynamics are partly a consequence of a shift in the concept of power at the regional level of analysis, which is influenced by the global and domestic levels of analysis. The period of confidence and trust

between the two strategic allies, Saudi Arabia and America, is over and this makes Saudi Arabia's regional status susceptible to decline. But to identify the source of these changes and to study the development of these trends with a view towards their larger significance in terms of regional security, we have to go back to the beginning with the founding of the GCC as a multilateral forum. From there, we can better understand the interrelationship between the domestic, regional and global levels, and better appreciate the Arabian Peninsula as an RSC of its own.

By appraising previous researchers, it has been established that they conversed the issue in a few areas of our research, while they varied regarding the temporal time frame and the method of treatment regarding discussing the character of the political communications amid the GCC and RoY in view of Saudi Arabia and the RoY relationship security, political and economic elements. The current research will concentrate on the Saudi international policy perception.

## **1.5 Research Methodology**

In pursuing this study, I have conducted some interviews with officials within the GCC and Yemen, to enrich the topic of the research as well as compare the results of such interviews with the written record and analyse them within the context of the events. For example, I conducted an interview with Dr. Abdullah Al-Nafisi and Dr. Ayed Almanaa from the Department of History in Kuwait University. The interviews were successful and offered very important information inasmuch as Kuwaiti academics generally talk freely and are happy to shed light on the nature of relations between Kuwait and Yemen. In Qatar, I was able to meet Dr. Mohammed Saleh Musfer and Dr. Fekry Alsyed. Mr. Waled Abdul Rahman Othman, a member of the GCC Standardisation Organisation in Riyadh and a Director General of the Yemeni Organisation for Standardisation, Metrology and Quality Control met with me in Riyadh in October 2013. Also, I had a meeting with a former South Yemeni Ambassador in Jeddah 2014. I visited Saudi Foreign Ministry twice and I interviewed a few people, but I am not allowed to release their identity.

This thesis relies entirely on qualitative research methods, involving semi-structured interviews in five states including those mentioned above and officials who work in the GCC Secretariat. The Headquarters of the GCC in Riyadh in Saudi Arabia was the main place to conduct the interviews with officials. In order that combat any potential feelings of vulnerability and to

make participants feel comfortable, safe, and able to make a decision to participate or withdraw, I provided them with clear and sufficient information about myself and my research topic. Also, I told him/her how the information they provided to me would be used and what potential risks it might entail, and I also informed them about their right to review the interview questions and withdraw from the process at any time. The semi-structured interview format was chosen because it provided the research participant with the greatest possible flexibility to address issues of relevance to his/her participation in Saudi Arabia-Yemen relationship. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain participants' views and opinions on the regional political landscape, and naturally this was very sensitive for participants in the Gulf. Consequently, most interviewees requested that I only use their information for background purposes, to help me understand and appreciate the broader context of this study.

I would like to stress that even though these interviews did not produce stunning quotations, the ethical code of scientific research was my overriding concern, including the values of "positive action" and "avoidance of damage." Such values were the pillars of ethical considerations during the research process. There were some considerations related to the ethical conducted practised herein including the following:

**Truthfulness:** The research results have been presented truthfully and honestly. The researcher was keen to be accurate in the documentation of information from participants.

**Safety:** The researcher sought to not expose anyone to physical or moral risks and took precautions as far as possible to steer clear of possible risk-related locations.

**Consent:** Consent was obtained in advance from those with whom the researcher communicated during the research period. Individuals selected for interviews or those working with them were notified of the objective of the study.

**Withdrawal:** Individuals were entitled to withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher was aware that the participants in the research donated their time, which was respected since the time they offered up for this research could be used to do other profitable and useful work.



Digital Recording: The researcher was keen to not to make recordings, take shots or videos without the consent of those targeted by the research. Their prior consent had to be obtained before any recording could take place.

Anonymity: The researcher protected the identity of the targeted individuals and their names were not made public except with their consent.

If no consent was given, a manual record of the interview was taken, and each transcribed record of an interview will be encrypted and saved in an encrypted folder on my laptop. The laptop has been password protected, which added an additional layer of security. Hand-written notes will be stored in a secure filing cabinet. No personal data of any of the research participants will be stored. Moreover, the interview questions have been carefully designed to ensure (i) they are easily intelligible for non-native English speakers and (ii) not biased towards any particular outcome. The number of questions has been kept to a minimum (8), so that the interview can be conducted in a reasonable amount of time (30-45 minutes).

## ***2 Background of the Two Yemens Relationship with the GCC States***

### **2.1 Saudi Arabia and the Exclusion of the Two Yemens from the GCC, 1960-2001**

### **2.2 Introduction**

Subsequent to the chapter on introduction this chapter follows the development of the GCC- the associations of the RoY at international, local and inter-state extents, outlining the highs and lows of this association resulting in the ultimate suggestion of a partial inclusion to merge the RoY in 2001. Commencing this evaluation, this chapter will offer a case study in the manner in which the association linking a strong regional authority, Saudi Arabia and a weak regional player, the RoY puts limits on regional security dynamics as well as multilateral institutions (GCC). As the association amid Saudi Arabia and the RoY altered and developed over the years, addressing or alleviating several security issues, a place was exposed for the GCC to provide partial membership to the RoY. The case study will concentrate on improving our comprehension of the GCC heads' objectives and anticipations in leaving the RoY out of the institution in 1981 and investigate the causes for the drastic alterations in the policies of the GCC regarding its southern neighbour during 2001.

Why was the RoY acknowledged as a partial participant of the GCC in 2001? And why was the RoY allowed to take part in chosen committees within the GCC encompassing just marginal matters like health, social affairs and education, and not stronger committees dealing with economic and security matters? More significantly, in what way did the Saudi-RoY association affect the tactical calculus of the alternative Gulf nations to deny Yemeni inclusion in 1981 and to sustain limited inclusion in 2001? Each of these questions provides the key to comprehending the associations linking the RoY and GCC nations. Nonetheless, responding to the previous query comprises the focus of this chapter.

The association linking the two Yemens with Saudi Arabia has had a considerable function in the general GCC view of the YAR and the PDRY during the period of the formation of the multilateral institution in 1981 and from then on. Following the appearance of the two Yemeni countries during the 1960s, Saudi Arabia has experienced an extended, uncertain border difference with these two countries to the South, resulting in two small battles in 1969, as well as several security occurrences during the 1970s. Additionally, from the 1970s on, Saudi Arabia embodied a

key function amid the Arab Gulf nations, regarding its greater geographic as well as demographic magnitude, its increasing impact on the international financial and energy markets, and its moderately sophisticated security and military gadgets.

Thus, the security issues of Riyadh have had a key function in all security discussions concerning the area following the institution of the Council in 1981. In this area, it is additionally essential to stress the wider cultural setting for the Arab Gulf nations, of which each desires discussion and accord in formation of resolutions, as opposed to unilateralism. Saudi Arabia and its safety issues signified the main hindrance for the two Yemens, as they tried to become part of the nascent GCC institution on 1981, and once more in 2001. The argument here will commence by clarifying the increasing function of Saudi Arabia in local and global politics before the creation of the GCC in 1981 and since then and carries on with a clarification of Saudi security issues about YAR and PDRY. It will show the manner in, which the intricate and differing relations amid Saudi Arabia and the two Yemens comprised a chief safety concern for Saudi Arabia before 1981, and the way several of those matters attained a level of settlement during the 1990s. It will converse Saudi Arabia's views of threat before the resolution to reject the RoY in 1981 from the GCC, especially the history of extended clashes within YAR from the 1960s that resulted in extended uncertainty down the southern Saudi frontier, and a Marxist government in PDRY which intended to oppose the authority of monarchical governments in the area. The following chapter will elaborate the GCC as an institution and the manner that the Saudi-Yemeni association impacted the alternative Gulf nations, especially Kuwait and Oman, in their stances on Yemeni inclusion in the association. The final substantive chapter will include this case study within our comprehension of the conjecture on global associations.

### **2.2.1 Saudi Arabia's Growing Importance in the Arab Gulf**

Comprising Mecca and Medina, the two holiest Islamic sites, right from the start Saudi Arabia has embodied a key cultural function in the Muslim world and the Middle East. The nation is situated amid two tactical waterways – the Red Sea, which offers passage by means of the Suez Canal to India from the Mediterranean and Europe, and the Arabian Gulf, which is the conduit for 25% of global oil supplies by means of the Strait of Hormuz daily. It has nearly 20% of globally verified oil supplies, is the greatest producer and exporter of entire global petroleum liquids, and sustains

the greatest quantity of surplus production worldwide, permitting Riyadh to embody the main function in sustaining stability on the international oil market (Sassanpour, 1996). Nonetheless, this tactical location at the juncture of international politics and global economics was not entirely fulfilled before the 1970s, following the 1970s oil boom and the upshot of the oil embargo in 1973. The subsequent pages will investigate the manner in which Saudi Arabia's increasing economic authority allowed Saudi Arabia the capability to appear as a main regional player within the Arabian Gulf area in the 1970s and beyond provided additional significance and credibility to the Saudi stability and safety requirements in the area. The aim is to illustrate that beginning from the 1970s Saudi Arabia acquired the economic and political authority to enforce its policy on the Arab Peninsula countries, as well as the Peninsula nations' associations with the two Yemens.

### **2.2.2 Saudi Arabia Economy Growth**

The international policy of Saudi Arabia aimed to sustain political stability and economic safety within the Arab Peninsula. Riyadh was eager to sustain amicable ties with its neighbours while improving its relations with global allies. Using its strong economic foundation, Saudi Arabia started to have an important function within the global community policy. Its economy is mostly founded on oil, with firm state control on key economic operations.

Following the 1933 discovery of oil, and its production in commercial quantities in 1938 (Cappelen and Choudhury, 2000) Saudi Arabia attained an essential part in global policy and drew the awareness of the superpower states. Thus, tactical schemes for social and economic progress needed to be drafted. In 1940s and 1950s there were various obstacles facing the Saudi Arabia leader's effort for long-term economic development. These were because of disagreement between government ministries due to lack of planning competence and qualified personnel. Nonetheless, during the reign of King Saud, the financial matters of the kingdom were chaotic, aggravated an economic crisis in the nation. However when Feisal came to power in 1964, he applied an inclusive development plan which aimed to speed up progress in the area (Vasil'ev, 2011).

During August 1970, the CPO (Central Planning Organisation) proposed to Faisal the initial five-year scheme encompassing the era between 1970-71 and 1974-75. It encompassed directions for methodical action in each area of the Saudi economy. The overall aims of the initial

five-year scheme in line with a report arranged by the CPO included: to establish a social and economic development scheme for the Saudi people, within which religious and Islamic principles could be sustained, an increase in the standard of living as well as well-being of the people attained, and which could offer material safety and financial and social steadiness. Those aims had to be attained through: raising GDP by 10 percent annually and establishing human resources so that Saudis would be capable of substituting the foreign qualified labour necessary in the primary development phases; broadening origins of national resources and minimising reliance on oil; and including scientific rationality within public-sector schemes and including activities to ascertain collaboration (Nehme, 1994). Oil affluence has rendered possible swift economic progress which is viewed as converting the nation dramatically during the 1970s (Quandt, 1981a). Nonetheless, the local differences setting in the 1980s had a reducing impact on the development of the Saudi and Gulf economies. It raised Feisal's anxieties regarding oil security. This uncertainty greatly assisted the institution of the GCC in 1981. Additionally, it may be asserted that the economic conditions of the Gulf areas comprised one aspect which restricted the participants in the GCC.

Nonetheless, the Gulf area is one of the more dynamic battle areas globally, and thus for Saudi Arabia, assuring safe movement of oil to the international market from the Gulf is a massive job, resulting from the regional political clashes like Tanker War 1984-1988 when Iran assaulted any tanker from the Gulf nations backing Iraq. Every day, billions of oil barrels are transported to different regions globally through oil tankers. The majority of Saudi oil exports are transported in tankers from Gulf ports at Ju'aymah and Ras Tanura. Saudi Arabia employs three varied shipping courses. Nonetheless, there are sections of raised risks for issues to go wrong with the oil transfer. Those conduits comprise Bab el-Mandab, the Suez Canal and the Strait of Hormuz. The majority of Saudi oil exports are transported from the Gulf ports to their destinations in Japan, China, Western Europe and the U.S, linking the Gulf of Oman and the Arabic Gulf. Nearly 40 percent of all movement of oil tankers goes through the Strait of Hormuz. The other oil exports are moved through the east-west pipeline spanning the kingdom to Yanbu, the Red Sea port.

As a result of the affluence and considerable revenues of the Saudi Arabian treasury from oil exports, Saudi Arabia aimed to raise its military aptitude. There were great weapons deals amid the U.S, the U.K and Saudi Arabia, which commenced sincerely throughout and after the Yemeni Civil War as well as the availability of Soviets in 1969 in PDRY, and have been maintained from

that time (Christensen, 2013). Nonetheless, there are real concerns regarding the efficiency of the implementation of this new equipment. To one side of the technological scale is the comparatively unattended military. The Saudis have the defensive aptitude to dissuade the majority of plausible dangers. However, they have no capacity to become immediately concerned in any except the most restricted offensive activities. Thus, Riyadh is entirely reliant on international aid to safeguard its oil reserves. Following the closing of British bases all through the Gulf in the 1970s, the U.S started to increase its military obligations in the area. During his 1980 State of the Union address, President Jimmy Carter guaranteed the USSR military in Afghanistan that: “An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Arabian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.” Carter’s outlook has maintained its direction of the U.S tacticians far past the ending of the USSR, with the U.S seeking regional safety and safeguarding amicable oil producers by the great militarisation of the Arabian Gulf. It has been approximated that from 1976 to 2007 the entire expense of keeping the U.S forces within the Arab Gulf comprised \$7 trillion, in addition to the expense of the last Iraq war. The U.S forces have actually employed their extraction from Iraq to additionally consolidate its ties with the Gulf States, placing 15,000 soldiers in Kuwait and promoting additional naval and air patrols for the area (Christensen 2013).

Additionally, Saudi Arabia was eager to offer aid to poor nations. The RoY comprised one of the Saudi state concerns as it comprised an impoverished country with a populace almost equivalent to that in Saudi Arabia. The U.S Census Bureau approximated that the RoY comprised a populace of 18.7 million during 2001 against 23.5 million in Saudi Arabia, and that the populace of the RoY will amount to 45.5 million in 2030 against 55.8 million in Saudi Arabia. The World Bank approximates that the population of the RoY will grow to 26.6 million in 2015 from 17.5 million in 2000, and 36 million in 2030. These statistics are contrasted with approximations of 33.7 million in 2015 and 46 million in 2030 for Saudi Arabia.

If the economic circumstances are not altered, the destitute RoY could actually have a role in regional uncertainty despite enhancements in Saudi-Yemeni ties. The nation’s persistent incapability to progress, added to massive population increase will place an increasing burden on an already challenging state of affairs. The populace of RoY is crowded within a resource-deficient

nation that has always had to send labour to Saudi Arabia and with restricted gas and oil stocks. It covers 528,000 square kilometres against of 1,960,000 square kilometres for Saudi Arabia. The CIA approximates that the RoY had a GDP per capita of an estimated \$820 regarding purchasing power parity in 2002, against \$10,600 for Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has been concerned that the sheer destitution of the RoY could cause it to spill-over into their country (Cordesman, 2003). During the period of King Feisal there was a considerable rise in petroleum income in 1974. After the 1973 Arab-Israeli battle, Saudi Arabia turned into one of the swiftest-developing economies globally. It benefited from a considerable excess in its general dealings with other nations; imports rose swiftly; and considerable state funds were accessible for development, security and assistance for other Islamic nations. This progress constructively enhanced the political development of Saudi Arabia.

### **2.2.3 Saudi Arabia in International Politics**

Faisal bin Abd Al-Aziz Al Saud governed Saudi international resolution formation beginning in the 1930s up to his demise in 1974, initially as Foreign Minister and subsequently as King. His international policy technique focused on the value of challenging global communism as well as pan-Arab Republican governments that endangered Saudi stability, mostly by constructing a coalition of reinforcement from Islamic countries and the West. As King, and previously in different functions, he had the final vote in all essential policy matters (Holden et al., 1981). In the early 1970s, with the state in Sana'a endeavouring to exercise power over the nation after the civil war, the growth of anti-monarchical governments in Iraq, Libya, Egypt and Syria, the extraction of British military in the Gulf, and local rivalry from Iran, Faisal believed that his state was encompassed by dangers to security all around (Quandt 1981). The development of the USSR control in the area after the British extraction satisfied these security deficiencies and utilised the local differences amid Saudi Arabia and several of its neighbours, as the Soviets intended to supply arms and army training for any power ready to receive their help (Sayigh and Shlaim 1997).

Consecutive American governments started to depend on Saudi Arabia as a stable ally in the Cold War period during the battle against communism. Even though they have a number of differences in their administration, culture and legacies, the two countries have generally assented on key financial and political concerns and have frequently relied on one another to attain

collective tactical/international policy aims. Although Washington wished to neutralise the danger of the USSR to American concerns in the area and American persuasion globally, Saudi Arabia encountered an additionally direct hazard to its own safety from local players like Egyptian President Gamal Abd Al-Nasser (1954-1970), who depended on the USSR help to sustain his political and ideological plans spanning the Middle East. It is predicted that by 1978, Saudi Arabia invested in the region of \$5 billion annually in international assistance, a great part of it to challenge communism. In a declaration published in 1974, Crown Prince Fahd declared, "I intend to get the Russian communists out of Somalia. My policy will be to help the moderate forces in PDRY. I will help the Sudan resist communist subversion" (Bowman 2006). Nonetheless, even though America had coinciding security matters with Saudi Arabia and the U.S firms were key to the establishment and use of Saudi petroleum stocks, the U.S-Saudi ties had a minor function in the wider picture of the U.S international policy, which gave Riyadh the extra leverage required to more efficiently enhance its own concerns in the area.

The actuality is that the previous ties amid the two nations have always been founded on autonomy, common respect, shared interests, and positive collaboration regarding regional and global concerns to address common concerns. Following the deposing of the Iranian Shah, the regional authority arrangement and the U.S policy concerning the area altered drastically. The competition amid Iraq and Iran to gain regional authority endangered the American concerns. Both of them wished to extend their control and turn into a key regional authority. Concurrently, the American "twin pillar" scheme altered to become completely oriented towards the reinforcement of its bilateral ties with Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia became the only partner within the Gulf to collaborate with America in repression of the Iraq-Iran clashes.

The war in October of 1973 offered a structure for the development and extension of the U.S-Saudi relations and resulted in a greater function for Saudi Arabia, being the main political player in the area and on the global front, although those incidents revealed tensions in the U.S-Saudi ties. In response to Washington's backing of Israel in the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war, Saudi Arabia headed an oil embargo which resulted in the cost of oil increasing four times, considerably injuring the U.S economy and disclosing the raised extent of the U.S reliance on oil (Bowman, 2006). Simultaneously, Riyadh openly displayed its capability to oppose the U.S and create a sovereign international policy when required. Oil turned into a crucial instrument for Saudi



international policy formation, and the income that the embargo generated caused great wealth for the state. However, while petrodollars aided the progress and modernisation of the kingdom, they additionally offered a novel instrument for Riyadh to offer aid to its partners globally and expand Saudi influence internationally using soft power.

The oil embargo aftershock changed the international balance of power concerning petroleum, increased the negotiating strength of oil-producing nations. All through the 1950s and 60s, key oil exporters were in great rivalry with one another to attain access of markets and developed western nations-controlled the costs and contract stipulations. After the 1973 embargo, the main exporters fruitfully instituted a precedent for immediate-term agreements and sales on the spot market that frequently left buyers in a bidding battle (Yizraeli 2000).

Additionally, Saudi Arabia's selection to restrict part of its export potential resulted in a new function for Saudi Arabia as the global "swing producer", having most of the global surplus output aptitude. Riyadh had considerable control over any effort to increase prices using output or export reductions (Pollack 2002). Saudi-American ties got to the point of disintegration in the 1973-1974 crisis, when American representatives would openly state the possibility of seizing the Arabian Gulf oil fields in Saudi Arabia as well as nearby countries. However regardless of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's irritation with Saudi oil policy throughout the embargo, consecutive American governments would expend the subsequent ten years endeavouring to collaborate with Saudi Oil Minister Zaki Al-Yamani to steady and ultimately reduce oil costs on the international market. Riyadh would gain from the U.S diplomatic outreach, with the extension of the American state endeavour to train a competent group of technocrats within the Saudi ministries concentrated on economic issues (the Joint Economic Commission) and the increasing sale of contemporary military weapons to Saudi Arabia, ultimately resulting in the purchasing of F-15 aircraft during the 1980s (harbinson, 1990). On its part, Saudi Arabia required safe and steady financial markets within which to implant its novel oil prosperity, and the U.S financial firms were appropriate conduits for moving the petrodollars and changing them into capital (Oppenheim 1976).

The October 1973 war comprised two extra political results for the Saudis that extended past the sphere of the U.S-Saudi bilateral ties. Primarily, Washington became the main interceder

in discussing a peaceful outcome for the Arab-Israeli war, which had been sought for a long time by the Saudis to challenge the USSR authority in the area. Extended Saudi attempts to leverage its ties to Washington abruptly acquired a new importance as Riyadh was ultimately in a principal stance to manipulate the Arab-Israeli conflict. Secondly, Saudi authority over the swiftly increasing oil price assisted in merging and strengthening the stance of Riyadh in mediating inter-Arab disagreements and in controlling the communications of other Arab nations with America (Quandt, 1981b). Riyadh benefited from a considerable excess in its general dealings with other nations, imports were swiftly raised, and considerable state resources were accessible for defence, development as well as assistance for alternative Islamic and Arab nations. This caused Riyadh to become additionally assertive and independent in its international policy. From the Saudi perspective, as the biggest crude oil producer globally in addition to be the custodian of the holiest Islamic mosques, the kingdom now owned the resources in addition to the global influence to presume a leadership function within the Middle East and the wider Muslim sphere.

Saudi Arabia has intended to revive its standing of distinction and direction in the Arabian Gulf area following the British extraction during the late 1970s, which is the reason for the Saudis trying to attain the backing of the minor Gulf countries. This is a leadership function the Saudis regard gravely. In sustaining the autonomy, maintained stability, and economic viability of the conservative Arab Gulf nations, Saudi Arabia is additionally protecting them from possibly aggressive states on its frontiers. In return, these countries observe Saudi local and global policy, enhancing the kingdom's aptitude to address Iran and Iraq from a more equal stance. The recently created Gulf States (Qatar, Oman, Bahrain and the UAE) acknowledged the Saudi 1976 initiatives so as to accept its safety by the creation of an association. The creation of the GCC in 1981 mirrored their wish to collaborate in the view of interior safety anxieties associated with exterior players (Iran and Iraq). From the Saudi view, the GCC was created after the British extraction 'to avoid the situation of those states lacking protection looking elsewhere' (Partrick 2011). The Gulf States did not yet have individual protection alliances with America. Broader insecurity in East Africa, Afghanistan and the USSR-supported PDRY enhanced the danger perceptions. Thus, an assembling took place in practical partnership as well as within an 'instrumental use of Gulf identity in order to enhance their security' (Gause 1990).

Nonetheless, there were great anxieties regarding Saudi authority amid those minor countries. Previously, the majority had been territorially pressed by Saudi Arabia and were anxious that significant political inclusion would merely improve impending Saudi domination. In this regard nations that previously in the twentieth century had encountered a Saudi territorial opposition – Abu Dhabi and Oman, in the instance of Buraimi in 1952, and Kuwait, which had lost two-thirds of its land in 1922 to Saudi Arabia – were associated with Saudi Arabia, so as to counter a greater danger, Iran and Iraq. Saudi Arabia, more or less, has attained its key aim in forming the GCC, which comprised raising its size and improving the strength of its economy. The minor Gulf nations, nonetheless, still repel Saudi influence within the GCC (Partrick 2011).

The subsequent chapter will elucidate the manner in, which this impacted the ties between Saudi Arabia and its GCC neighbours.

### **2.3 The YAR and the PDRY Relationships with Arab Gulf States**

Having outlined the increasing regional significance of Saudi Arabia, this division will now investigate more closely the bilateral associations amid Saudi Arabia and the Yemens. In 1962, several military commanders with backing from the Egyptian state, in addition to South Yemeni revolutionaries, effectively removed the governing Royal Family in Sana'a and instituted a Republican state. This resulted in a civil war amid Republican and Royalist fighters that endured 8 years. Alternatively, the British extraction from Aden in 1967 caused a newly sovereign country governed by a radical Marxist faction or Yemen Socialist Party (YSP), which was the only lawful party. Both the YAR and PDRY sustained significant associations with each of the Arab Gulf nations; however, their associations with Saudi Arabia and to a reduced level Oman, surpassed their associations with the countries of the northern Gulf. Making matters worse was the fact that the two Yemens had varying bilateral concerns in the balance in their ties with Muscat and Riyadh. In the subsequent pages the ties of those two nations and Saudi Arabia will be dealt with, in addition to connections to Oman that were of immediate pertinence to the RoY-Saudi bilateral association. It will be asserted that ideological elements integrated with political elements impacted the form of these associations. Additionally, it will be asserted that the state of the associations of Saudi and the two Yemens stopped the Yemens from acquiring GCC membership in 1981.

### 2.3.1 The YAR Relationship with Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has one of the most extended frontiers within the Arab Peninsula with the YAR, and there is an extended past of differences amid Saudi Arabia and the YAR starting with the creation of a Republican State in Sana'a. This division will deal with the bilateral ties linking them so as to comprehend the impact of Yemeni-Saudi ties on the Arab Peninsula nations' policies regarding the RoY. It is asserting that the GCC association with the RoY is exposed to the Saudi Arabia security viewpoint.

During 1962, a division of military leaders with backing from Egypt and South Yemeni revolutionaries effectively removed the Yemen's governing Royal Family in Sana'a and instituted a Republican state, which caused a civil battle amid Royalist and Republican forces enduring eight years. Throughout this civil war, Saudi King Faisal offered material and financial backing with British help to the Royalist fighters as part of a wider regional attempt to challenge Egyptian President Gamal Abd Al-Nasser's regional aspirations. Therefore, the civil war became a proxy battle amid Cairo and Riyadh, and King Faisal was certain that Nasser's secret operations presented an existential danger to the stability and safety of the Saudi government (Halliday, 2002). Nasser was blatant in his desire to depose the Saudi monarchy, as with his wish to head a sole united pan-Arab "republic" (Katz, 1992). Thus, Saudi Arabia funded, instructed and supplied all the conservative tribal and religious forces within the highland areas of Northern Yemen. The problem for Riyadh now comprised how to attain victory for its proxy Royalist troops within the YAR although no Saudi forces were on the ground. For five years subsequently, the Saudis fought a proxy battle with Egypt in the YAR. The majority of the country was under the authority of tribal militia supported by Saudi Arabia; nonetheless, the Saudi choice to interfere on the Royalist side, regardless of America acknowledging the new Republican government, was not the work of a U.S puppet. King Faisal started to shape a broadly efficient Saudi regional policy. Prior to the Six-Day War, he had enhanced ties with Nasser. Nonetheless, in the upshot of this divergence, the Saudis stood out. A harsh reduction in frivolous expenditure by the Royal Family members, raised oil output and a greater portion of oil income from the oil firms integrated to radically enhance the Saudi finances (although they were a long way from the extents attained during the 1970s) (Turner and Bedore 1978).

The clashes were convoluted by Nasser's employment of chemical arms for a short time, the incapability of the Imam to connect his own Royalist forces subject to his command, and the occurrence of a 'Third Wave' in Yemeni political movement which pressured for the extraction of the exterior powers (Schmidt, 1968). Egypt's exit of the YAR following the 1967 Arab-Israeli war opened the way for a novel stage in Saudi-Yemeni associations. The Saudi sustained their connections to some tribal divisions, but they additionally started to address the Republican State in Sana'a in the aspiration of preventing it from subjection to undue the USSR influence (Quandt, 1981c). Saudi Arabia did not have its own troops in Yemen and in a condition to immediately impact or influence these elements - it could only depend on its help and the danger of discontinuation of that help. Nonetheless, Riyadh maintained its seeking of victory, as it had maintained concerns within the YAR even past the directness of the civil war – in particular, to avoid the USSR and Egyptian troops from instituting a unified progressive Yemeni republic which would counter essential western and Saudi concerns in the Arab Peninsula (Yodfat 2011).

During this period, Egyptian President Gamal Abd Al-Nasser, entertained the notion of being the pre-eminent head of the Arab world. He sustained pan-Arab nationalism and collaborated with Syria on the formation of the United Arab Republic (1958-61), and funded Nasserite political movements in several regional nations that promoted his concepts of anti-imperialism, anti-monarchical rule, anti-Westernism and anti-Zionism. Therefore, for years, King Feisal and Gamal Abdel Nasser opposed one another – both had a strong individual and political hatred of each other. Nasser advocated and backed in various ways radical nationalist factions in Saudi Arabia and on its frontiers. The propaganda distributed by Egyptian media opposed the Saudi Royal Family. On their side, the Saudis provided backing to some of Nasser's numerous enemies (Keefer, Qaimmaqami, and Howard 2008).

During the five years after the 1962 coup d'état in North Yemen and the arrival of Egyptian troops in YAR, until the ultimate extraction of the 70,000 Egyptian troops from the YAR in 1967, King Faisal preferred a policy intended to encourage the Royalist effort to the point that it could annoy and dishearten Nasser's soldiers, but he did not provide the required backing to entirely thrash Nasser's troops. Alternatively, the Royalist forces were too disorganised to commence a decisive victory, and alternatively, Faisal did not wish to strengthen a Royalist army that could

ultimately present a danger to Saudi Arabia following their gaining of power by reinstating prior claims on Saudi land (Jazan, Najran and Asir) (Sullivan 1970).

And, like with Vietnam, where the USSR usually experienced a more careless and antagonistic Chinese military, so too within the YAR, Faisal's essential but closely monitored backing was an outcome of Saudi regional concerns, which did not completely agree with the local issues of its Yemeni Royalist partners (Haas, 2012). Saudi assistance for the Yemeni Royalists was aimed at establishing a buffer in the southern Saudi frontier from the novel Republican government and its communist and Egyptian partners.

Even though Riyadh and the Republican government in Sana'a were bitter rivals through the majority of the 1960s, Saudi-YAR associations became progressively collaborative following the extraction of Egyptian soldiers, the empowerment of an additionally conservative state in Sana'a and the comprehension that they had a common danger from the USSR-sustained Marxist rule that emerged in PDRY after Britain's extraction from the Protectorate of Aden in 1967 and the announcement of independence in 1967. Saudi Arabia was afraid, first and foremost, that the southern Marxist rule would destabilise and acquire control over the north too. The PDRY endangered Saudi Arabian safety in alternative manners as well, particularly with its permeable frontiers and sustenance for maintained insurgency within Oman's Dhofar region, which had turned into an insurgency looking to substitute British-supported monarchies with Marxist government all through the Arabian Peninsula (Sullivan 1970).

Saudi displayed its unease over the security of the YAR in 1979 when the USSR endorsed a massive weapons agreement with Sana'a during mid-1979 and immediately supplied the agreed weapons. This provided the USSR a chance to form a strong association with the Marxist state in Sana'a, the YAR capital, which possibly placed the USSR in an enhanced position either to compel Saudi Arabia and alternative conservative nations down the Arabian Gulf to become additionally reactive to the USSR international policy concerns, or to advance revolution within these nations. However subsequently, USSR-YAR ties were pressured by raised the USSR support for Aden and Moscow's incapability to supply weapons promised to Sana'a during the late 1960s and to offer considerable economic aid to the north. Subsequently, in the period 1972-78, consecutive the YAR administrations aimed to enhance ties with America and Saudi Arabia to acquire financial and

military assistance. The YAR did acquire great quantities of financial assistance from the Saudis but had less success with American weapons (Katz 1984).

From the beginning of the insurgency in YAR, the Saudis were resolute about maintaining the weakness of the central government, with a strong tribal arrangement which regulated the military and political arrangement (Fattah, 2010). Robert Burrowes concludes that one of the objectives of President Ibrahim Al-Hamdi's mid-1970s term in power comprised converting the military into a huge recruitment tool amid the tribes to attain provincial sustenance for the central government, which rendered YAR's military "the linchpin of the system of tribal power" (R. Burrowes 1986). In post-revolutionary the YAR, the army at its higher extents became a base for tribal strengths, while at its reduced extents it became a broad means for recruiting tribesmen as an element of the government's co-optation and survival politics.

The Saudis were anxious that reinforcing the army of the appealing Al-Hamdi could present an imminent danger, and they were unwilling to offer Sana'a arms, which had been suggested by America as an element of a trilateral accord. Alternatively, the Saudis sent a diplomatic indication of their disapproval to Sana'a, by declaring on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1976 their objective to regularise ties with the PDRY, and to form a setting of collective comprehension to aid the causes of the two nations and those within the area. The publicised Aden-Riyadh statement stressed the wish of the two bodies to collaborate on the foundation of "good neighbourliness, unity of destiny" and "non-interference" in one another's interior issues (Fattah 2010). The constructive difference in the Riyadh-Aden association gave the Saudis the excuse of arguing with Washington that the pressure amid the YAR and the PDRY had been resolved, and thus that the U.S military aid to Sana'a was redundant. The Saudis were not prepared to back President Al-Hamdi in his attempts to restructure and stock his forces, and to institute his central influence on the highland tribes (Fattah 2010).

Military aid turned into a key cause of tension amid Riyadh and Sana'a. The Republicans attained a considerable quantity of military help from the USSR throughout the civil war; nonetheless Moscow was unwilling to do this in the 1970s. Alternatively, Moscow concentrated on the PDRY. Additionally, the YAR disconnected communication with Washington over protests for American backing of Israel in the 1967 war, and the YAR did not re-establish these ties up to

1973. Consequently, the YAR tried to acquire military aid from different sources to protect itself against the danger from the PDRY. Saudi Arabia and America, following restoration of ties, both intended to push the YAR administration to entirely cut its relations with the USSR, encompassing the USSR advisers who carried on training YAR's Air Force and pilots for the MiG fighter jet they provided. The maintenance of modest links with the USSR and frequent endeavours to play Moscow against Washington to attain additional military and financial assistance was an origin of irritation and dismay to Saudi Arabia (Katz 1992).

Saudi Arabia's main anxiety in the period of the two Yemens was the likelihood that the PDRY's Marxist administration in Aden would disseminate insurgency within the YAR, which would subsequently place Moscow in a greater position to endanger Saudi Arabia and alternative conservative nations within the Arabian Gulf or compel them to observe the USSR international policy in the area. Efforts to unite the YAR and the PDRY were thus a problem for Saudi Arabia's policy of containing the PDRY and restricting communist authority.

In 1979 renewed fighting erupted amid the Yemens over a border clash. However, in March that year the two heads endorsed an accord at a conference in Kuwait conceding uniting of the two nations. This accord is broadly alluded to as the Kuwait agreement of 1979, and was subsequently reaffirmed within the Cairo Agreement of 1972<sup>1</sup>. Although cooperative effort on implementation took place spanning the following two years, most efforts to implement the spirit and letter of the Kuwait agreement were deferred until an insurgency sustained by the PDRY caused a break in diplomatic associations amid the Yemens (R. D. Burrowes 2010).

If Saudi Arabia has had considerable success in attaining a dominant voice in the affairs of the Arab Gulf neighbours, the YAR has comprised a less amenable client. Saudi diplomacy has been greatly tried during the years by the YAR, and a history of distrust and paternalism endures. During the lifetimes of Saudi Arabia's present heads, two armed battles have taken place amid Yemeni and Saudi forces. During the early 1930s, Faisal and Saud, the brothers of the current Saudi heads, headed military campaigns that determined Saudi prevalence above the disputed Jizan and Asir provinces. After a generation of comparatively calm relations following endorsement of the Treaty of Taif in 1934, Saudi-Yemeni associations disintegrated abruptly when Republican militia with Egyptian support unseated the conservative Imam in 1962. For five subsequent years,



the Saudis fought a proxy battle with Egypt in Northern Yemen. Most of the nation was subject to the control of tribal militia supported by the Saudis (Quandt 1981b). Additionally, the particular causes for Saudi interference in the YAR are easy to establish. Apart from territory arguments, the Saudis feared that the YAR could be simply subjected to communist influence, which would cause a considerable the USSR presence in the area. This would have offered an alternative platform for efforts to sway and subvert the Saudi rule. Frontier clashes would undoubtedly flare up, compelling the Saudis to select amid fighting a USSR-sustained regime or accepting and seeking political inclusions. Additionally, the YAR provided a great amount of Saudi Arabia's unskilled labour force. Approximations reach 500,000 and above. If the YAR were to be dominated by a regime unfriendly towards the Saudis, this great Yemeni populace within Saudi Arabia could be employed as a destabilising aspect (Quandt 1981b).

The previously stated associations amid Saudi Arabia and the YAR in the 1970s additionally had a considerable effect on the YAR's chance of inclusion in the GCC once formed in 1981. Saudi Arabia's divide-and-rule tactics, intending to remove the USSR influence from the Arabian Peninsula and maintain the YAR in a standing of reliance facilitated its ruling by proxy using challenging sheikhs, however the uncertainty of the commitment of the YAR government and the character of its association with the PDRY placed Saudi Arabia on alert; thus, Riyadh never had entire assurance in the YAR government.

### **2.3.2 The PDRY Relationship with Saudi Arabia**

As signified previously, from the independence of British colonial government in 1967, the PDRY presented a great danger to all the APC, particularly its neighbours the YAR, Saudi Arabia and Oman. It comprised a Marxist rule encompassed by pro-western countries. On its part, the PDRY government following independence from Britain in 1969 encountered great developmental alterations and was rent by interior political differences and feared any exterior involvement that could endanger the government's stability. The PDRY perceived itself as the guardian and front line of the Arab socialistic revolution, hosted crews of the USSR advisers offering political direction at the senior extent and aimed to offer a beacon of sustenance to alternative Marxist and communist factions within the area. The PDRY truly endeavoured to export armed revolution to its neighbours by sustaining and promoting liberation movements within the Arabian Peninsula,

which caused greatly stressed relations with Oman specifically. Even though the Arab sphere was no stranger to military coups, the Marxist direction of PDRY's social revolution comprised a new hazard for the oil-rich monarchies close by.

In the subsequent pages, the ties amid the PDRY and Arab Peninsula countries will be outlined. The aim of this subsection is to demonstrate that the PDRY's opinion regarding Saudi Arabia's impacted its associations with alternative Arab Peninsula countries, which unconstructively improved the PDRY possibilities of acceptance into the GCC on its formation in 1981.

After the PDRY became autonomous from British colonial government in 1967, Saudi Arabia did not diplomatically acknowledge the new government, as Riyadh was against communism. The PDRY independence pressure group commenced from the labour and trade unions that disseminated subject to British colonial government during the 1950s and 60s, and the administration that appeared following independence was sworn Marxist and subsequently created close military and political connections with the USSR (W. E. Smith 2005). Additionally, South Yemeni international policy commenced in 1967 by looking for partners amid revolutionary and alternative movements which were not yet in authority and in different states of organisation. This took place on one hand due to the ability of the PDRY to institute associations with movements which had, like it, appeared from interior conflicts to presume state authority, although further afield, like the Politburo Guerrillas from the Western Sahara, the Saharan African Democratic Republic, which was acknowledged in 1978, guerrillas exiled from Chile and alternative Latin American nations, and some urban guerrillas from the West of Europe. Additionally, all through the late 1960s and 70s, Aden offered financial and material backing to Marxist rebels within the Dhofar area of Oman; the uprising ultimately resulted in the Omani government looking for backing in the state of an armed intrusion from Pahlavi Iran, Saudi Arabia's historical opponent within the Gulf (Halliday, 2002). Previously, the Saudi administration intended to unseat the Aden government by the provision of monetary aid to the political exiles of southern Yemen encompassing the Arabian League as well as the Front for the Liberation of the PDRY who were camping within the Saudi Arabian frontier to act as a buffer on the frontier. During the late 1960s Riyadh helped the previous Sultan of Bayhan<sup>1</sup> to move militants to his tribal territory in an effort to regain his authority. Despite the varying philosophies and political agendas of these divisions,

several of whom had a sworn Marxist scheme while the rest had no specific ideological structure, the Saudis perceived them all as possibly practical instruments to weaken the Aden government. Most likely, Riyadh wished to overthrow the PDRY administration, or see the nascent government collapse on its own (Brian Robert Pridham, 1984). More significantly, Saudi Arabia had, and still has, maintained national security concerns within the RoY, regarding securing of its frontiers and preventing aggressive actors (regional rivals, terrorists, the Soviets) from employing Yemeni land to carry out activities which could weaken the kingdom.

Saudi Arabia saw several security hazards from the PDRY, from frontier safety to a basic undermining of Saudi authority in the area, which all necessitated Riyadh to sustain a vigilant defence stance. On 26<sup>th</sup> November 1969, a great PDRY military group crossed the unmarked frontier of Wudai'ah, seizing the Saudi frontier post and killing most of the 26-man Frontier Force regiment, arresting the others. Saudi Arabia quickly sent in ground units from Sharawra, with backing from F-5 fighter jets based out of Khamis Mushait and displaced the Southern Yemenis on 30<sup>th</sup> November (Keefer et al., 2008). In 1972 and 1979, the YAR and the PDRY had small frontier battles, with Saudi Arabia sustaining the north financially and with other resources.

Additionally, the PDRY challenged the interior security of Saudi Arabia. During the mid-1960s, unofficial institutions functioning as de fact labour unions within the Gulf funded demonstrations within Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, and by the start of the 1970s, leftist radical parties were apparent in Bahrain, Oman and Kuwait, and regional divisions such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf (PDLOAG) endangered all the APC. From the previous group's creation at the summit in Hamrin (Central Dhofar, Oman) in 1968, they declared that arranged revolutionary violence comprised the singular method of waging struggle and asserted a wish to work in the direction of the uniting of the great Arabian Gulf masses. The Aden PDLOAG front office functioned as a hub of propaganda and political work aimed at the exterior world and the guerillas were provided radio time for broadcasts that reached Oman from Aden. Consecutive South Yemeni government declarations and Front Congresses maintained backing for the guerillas in Dhofar, and Aden additionally offered key diplomatic backing for the guerillas within the Arab League and other places (Halliday, 2002. PDRY formal delegations calling on other nations provided debate for their hosts, promoting backing for the Front, and the PDRY administration provided diplomatic backing to the petitioning campaign of the Front in

1971 intended to obstruct the newly sovereign Arab Gulf nations of Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and the UAE from accepting global diplomatic acknowledgement. Up to 1982, the PDRY's backing for the Omani guerillas was discreet, maintained and inclusive (Saikal 2010).

Revolutionary leftist institutions like PFLOAG usually gained backing from the PDRY, Egypt and Syria, circulated publications from London, and employed a considerable diaspora of Yemeni and Palestinian labourers within the alternative Gulf nations to assist in disseminating their philosophy. Additionally, the YAR and the PDRY both held preparation camps and political bureaus for radical divisions from alternative sections of the Middle East, encompassing a number of Palestinian terrorist groups. This was partially due to the fact that these radical factions could function publicly in the two Yemens, where the administrations had little influence or power over the countryside. It was additionally partly because the administrations in Sana'a and Aden liked having the alternative of holding some small kind of leverage on alternative states in the area, so as to attain financial assistance or political backing. These operations were most likely greatly at the request of the administration in Aden.

Regardless of whatever anxieties Riyadh had during that time, it does not seem, nonetheless, that the USSR displayed any particular wish to bring down the Gulf Arab monarchies, although Aden did give Moscow an amenable vassal nation and a possible indication of success for the communist model of administration in the Arab sphere (Laiq, 1986). In 1979, the USSR endorsed an agreement with the PDRY offering collective protection and "economic, financial, technical and cultural collaboration", and the USSR with their partners gained unlimited access to seaports encompassing a USSR floating dry-dock in Aden, airports, and storage services in southern Yemen (Kechichian 1999).

Viewed in the setting of Saudi Arabia's wider security issues during that period, the altering circumstances in the PDRY post-independence was the ultimate in a sequence of regional security problems, several of which immediately endangered the stability of the Saudi administration. Thousands of labourers at Aramco oil plants performed boycotts, demonstrations, strikes and petitions from March 1953 to June 1956. Comparable to alternative regions on the Arabian Peninsula, the demands of the workers combined Arab nationalist, communist as well as Nasserite political mottos with social and economic needs (Chalcraft 2010). This sort of industrial operation

was unparalleled in Saudi Arabia and presented an immediate problem to the state's authority. On his trip to Dhahran in 1955, King Saud was suddenly greeted by a mob of protesters, demanding entitlements and improved pay. Additionally, during June 1960, a number of princes and commoners headed by King Saud's brother Talal drew up a draft constitution comprising a more restricted monarchy and a partially-elected parliament. After the collapse of their efforts for reform, a faction of insurgents supporting Talal (referred to as the 'Free Princes'), sought asylum in Cairo and joined the Front for the Liberation of Saudi Arabia, a faction of merchants created in 1958 with communist links. In Cairo, the Free Princes released regular broadcasts as the Liberation Front, calling for the removal of the monarchy and its replacing with constitutional democracy.

Also, a number of other small divisions of Saudi immigrants formed small dissident factions during the 1960s and early 70s, with the backing of Egypt and the Iraqi Arab nationalist Ba'ath Party (Laiq 1986). They were considerable opposition to Saudi government, Republican, liberal, leftist and labour opposition developed in various ways in the Hejaz, the oil fields of the Eastern Province and the armed forces. Arab migrants – Palestinian, Yemeni and Egyptian – played important roles. In 1955 and again in 1969, the Saudi government suppressed attempted military coups by isolated groups of soldiers, and from November 1966 to February 1967, a number of assassinations were attempted on key Royal Family members. In 1967, some of the police and military forces were charged with arranging and participating in protests and unauthorised activities. (During the crackdown following the attempted coup in 1969, several South Yemenis from the South Yemeni National Liberation Front were implicated in the events) (Chalcraft 2010).

That was the prevailing situation at the time of the formation of the GCC in 1981 – with Saudi Arabia and the PDRY working at cross-purposes in their bilateral relations and undermining each other's policies in the region. Tensions gradually decreased in the 1980s and the two states eventually reached a modicum of peace and stability in their bilateral relations, largely as a result of dramatic political changes in the PDRY. A moderate political faction in Aden seeking peaceful relations with Saudi Arabia and the West took power, led by President Ali Nasser Mohammed. A civil war in Aden ensued in 1986 between Ali Nasser's supporters and followers of the previous hardline President Abd Al-Fattah Ismael, which left dozens of political leaders murdered, and for a while crippled the government. Furthermore, the PDRY was dealt a severe blow in the waning

years of the USSR, as Moscow could no longer provide significant levels of foreign assistance. Saudi Arabia even made overtures to the PDRY with offers of foreign assistance, Saudi government offers of up to \$400 million, in exchange of a to stop the flow of arms and hoping to solve border conflicts. The PDRY committed to stopping supplying Dhofar's fighters, however, after Iran deployed his troops to Oman in 1973, the PDRY re-establish supporting Dhofar's fighters by arms, supplies and training. Though it is important to note that there was no serious discussion of resolving the border dispute and formally demarcating the boundaries (Halliday 2002).

The GCC held its first meeting in Abu Dhabi in May 1981. The concept of forming a regional security alliance originated in Iran, and throughout the late 1970s, there were discussions all across the Gulf about the need for a regional trade bloc, a common currency, and a customs union. The social upheaval and instability from the Islamic revolution and Khomeini's stated intention to export the revolution to the Arabian Peninsula rendered the Iranian proposal obsolete. Iraq, too, was striving for an increased influence among the Arab states of the Peninsula. In February 1980, Saddam Hussein tried, without much success, to sell his idea of a "National Arab Charter", banning any foreign military presence in the region, as Iraq sought to present itself as the policeman of the Gulf. With the start of the Iraq-Iran war in September 1980 there was no possibility for a regional security architecture that included both countries (Da Lage 2005). The PDRY, however, even since its independence has posed a challenge to all the pro-western states of the Arabian Peninsula, most directly to its neighbours, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the YAR. Nevertheless, for several reasons the PDRY still poses a significant challenge in the time of the GCC establishment in 1981. This threat eliminated the option to invite the PDRY to join the GCC.

The six AGC of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, found a common cause for excluding Iraq, Iran and the PDRY, but exclude the YAR from the GCC formation, is the Saudi Arabia decision. The aforementioned relations between Saudi Arabia and the YAR during the 1970s also had a major impact on the YAR's opportunity to join the GCC once created in 1981. Saudi Arabia's divide-and-rule strategy, seeking to expel the USSR influence from the Arabian Peninsula and keeping the YAR in a position of dependency, enabled it to govern by proxy through rival sheikhs but, the uncertainty of the loyalty of the YAR government and the

nature of its relationship to the PDRY put Saudi Arabia on alert; therefore, Riyadh never had full confidence in the YAR government.

When the GCC announced its formation in 1981 without either of the Yemens included, the YAR President Ali Abdallah Salih in particular decried the act of exclusion, calling it an insult to Yemen and Yemenis, and characterising it as an attempt to provoke the YAR (Al-Quranī, 1997). The rhetoric and propaganda issued by the North Yemeni government is indicative of how people in the region viewed the YAR's exclusion at the time. Although these press statements cannot provide definitive evidence of the decision-making process that led the six GCC states to exclude the YAR, they are probably reflective of the prevailing logic in regional capitals at the time. The YAR Prime Minister Abd Al-Karim Al-Iryani suggested that the GCC was a gathering of the rich that excluded the poor YAR. Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Ghalib Jameel, during his tour of the Gulf in September 1981, stated that such a regional bloc contributed to regional polarisation towards the West (Alaghbari 1999). These Yemeni officials portray a picture of discrimination against the Yemeni people, concerns over the YAR's flailing economy, and aversion to the YAR's ties with the USSR.

The PDRY reaction was publicly less sharp, largely because Aden had fully committed itself to an alliance with the USSR, and therefore probably did not have any real expectation of inclusion in a pro-western GCC bloc in the first place (Ubaid 2002). Moreover, the PDRY viewed the establishment of the GCC as a reinforcement of other American-backed activities in the region, including new the U.S-sponsored joint military exercises with Sudan, Somalia, Egypt and Oman, all of which potentially threatened the security of Marxist regime in Aden. The USSR arms continued to reach the PDRY in 1980s, the number of the USSR military advisers doubled, and the USSR naval forces were stationed in the Gulf of Aden (Halliday 1981).

## **2.4 Two Yemen Unification**

Up until the unification of the two Yemens in 1990, Saudi Arabia saw the PDRY as a source of Marxist radicalism and terrorism, and the YAR as a more conventional security threat to its southeast. The PDRY was in a weak position as the Cold War came to a close and was forced to make tough political compromises with the YAR. Sana'a and Aden successfully agreed upon a

reunification deal in 1990 that merged the two legal and constitutional systems, but the southern Yemeni political leadership became subservient to that of the north in terms of authority and decision-making. The former South Yemeni Ambassador in Riyadh relates, “It had been suggested to the PDRY President Ali Salem Al-Beidh to seek unification with a regional power state (i.e. Saudi Arabia) rather than the YAR, but the President ignored those suggestion and signed the unification constitution with Ali Abdullah Saleh on May 22, 1990, which Al-Beidh later regretted<sup>1</sup>”.

Former PDRY President Ali Salem Al-Beidh became vice-President of the unified Yemen and the senior government positions were divided among northern and southern politicians, with former the YAR President Ali Abdallah Saleh serving as head of state and retaining most of the key ministerial portfolios for his close allies. Political leaders in Aden and Sana’a began stockpiling weapons and southern leaders threatened to dissolve the union, as a civil war seemed all but inevitable. On May 21, 1994, a war broke out between the two sides and ended on July 7 of the same year with the defeat of the South, as northern forces took control. During the civil war, Saudi Arabia supported the PDRY in its failed attempt to break away from the union, signalling the positive change in relations that had occurred since 1981 between Riyadh and Aden, and demonstrating that Saudi Arabia believed it had a strategic interest in keeping its neighbours divided and weak.

In addition, Washington had expressed deep concern about the danger of an imminent union between the YAR and the PDRY in its interests in the region. NSC specialists recommended that Washington pursue a two-track strategy, the American officials the U.S demarches to President Saleh in the YAR and a Saudi Arabian demarche to Saleh. Most argued this is an unpromising course of action (Brzezinski 1980). Most argued this is an unpromising course of action. It is clear, that the U.S interests in the in the Arab Peninsula under significant threat, in addition oil states allies in the region, if the two Yemens united. Saudi Arabia has a key role to play in the security of the area. History suggests that the U.S relay on Saudi capabilities and influence to bring about a fundamental political change in the PDRY. However, Saudi Arabia as

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with the former South Yemeni Ambassador in Riyadh. Jeddah 2014.



the largest country in the Arabian Peninsula and was unwilling to see another powerful neighbour rising up. If the RoY had been reunified, its army offers military capacity would be strengthened, and its huge armed population would exceed Saudi Arabia's. Saudi Arabia would have had to directly face a strong competitor in its backyard, and would not only lose its traditional advantages of the Red Sea, but also would have had a dangerous intimidator in the field of national security (Lu 2010). Region ideology also, was a major factor in the Saudi Arabia attitude towards Yemen unification. As a conservative country believing in Islam, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia worried that either the YAR with a capitalist regime or the PDRY with a Marxist regime would pose a threat to its domestic traditional beliefs. In order to maintain its political, economic, religious and cultural interests in the Arabian Peninsula, Saudi Arabia supported the monarchists and the conservatives in both the YAR and the PDRY in their early establishments. The heightened interest Riyadh is showing in unification trends in the two Yemens, degrade or probably disappear their role as regional power within a rise of united Yemen's, as well as its attempts to play a role as intermediary between certain Middle Eastern states (Halliday 2002). Therefore, via proxy war in the late 1970s, Saudi Arabia devotedly, supported the RoY government, and gave strong backing to tribal Sheikdom in the PDRY, together with Yemeni actors opposed to the unification of Yemen, in order to fiercely fight against Marxism regime. In addition, Riyadh's interference in the two Yemens affairs had greatly deepened on Yemen separation (Stenslie 2013).

The argument has also been made that Saudi support for Aden was a form of punishment for Sana'a's political stance during the 1990 Gulf War in favour of Saddam Hussein's invading forces. The RoY was placed in a predicament when Iraq occupied Kuwait, which took place no more than three months following Yemeni unification. On the one hand, the RoY had received important military training and assistance from Iraq for many years, while on the other hand, it relied greatly on foreign assistance and remittances sent home by Yemeni workers from the GCC states. Sana'a attempted what it thought was an impartial response; by questioning whether the invasion could really be termed an attack on Kuwait and arguing against western military involvement. The RoY was a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, and its call for an Arab League mediation, as well as its abstention from the resolution condemning Iraq's actions, were not well received by Saudi Arabia and the GCC states, who themselves felt threatened by Saddam's actions. (Whitaker 2009).

There is no doubt that the position of the RoY during the Gulf War was disappointing to the Gulf States, especially to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, as expressed in an interview by some Kuwaiti academics and politicians who said that "the position of the RoY was a stab in the back of the GCC countries in general and Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in particular"<sup>2</sup>. The GCC leaders expected that the RoY would stand on their side against the Iraqi regime after all the aid and support they provided to the RoY, following decades of the GCC development assistance support and economic aid to the RoY. Aid to the RoY from the GCC states was delivered through bilateral channels in addition to aid provided through private equity and quasi-governmental development associations. Kuwait had been a regional leader in providing development aid to Arab countries, including the RoY, largely through the Kuwait Fund for Social Development and the Kuwait-based Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development. Figure 2.4.3 and Figure 2.4.4 The UAEs was next with the establishment of the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD) in 1971 see figures 5, 6. The Saudi Fund for the RoY came third see Figure 2.4.3, (Farhan 2003).

The PDRY was in a weak position as the Cold War came to a close and was forced to make tough political compromises with the YAR. The two Yemens successfully agreed upon a reunification deal in 1990 that merged the two legal and constitutional systems, but the political leadership of the PDRY became subservient to that of the north in terms of authority and decision-making. Political leaders in Aden and Sana'a began stockpiling weapons and southern leaders threatened to dissolve the union, as a civil war seemed all but inevitable. When fighting broke out in 1994, Saudi Arabia supported the PDRY in its failed attempt to break away from the union, signalling the positive change in relations that had occurred since 1981 between Riyadh and Aden and demonstrating that Saudi Arabia believed its strategic interests laid with divided and weak neighbours to its South. The argument can be made that Saudi support for Aden was a form of punishment for Sana'a's actions during the 1990 Gulf War. However, it is also true that, for Riyadh, maintaining the status quo with two separate and compliant Yemens was more important than the stability of a single, unified Yemen. That was the new situation that prevailed at the time of the RoY's application for membership in the GCC in 1996. The YAR has expressed a desire to join the GCC since 1981; the RoY first requested full membership in the GCC in 1996, but the

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<sup>2</sup> An interview with some Kuwaitis academics and politicians from Kuwait University on December 2012.

Council rejected it. The reasons given for rejecting the RoY's application were its security and economic situations and another, unstated reason: the RoY's position on Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. I do not believe those were the real reasons behind the application's rejection.

The RoY's security and economy in 2001 were still the same as or, to some extent, worse than in 1996. The stances of the RoY, Jordan and Sudan were also identical during the Iraq-Kuwaiti crisis and after the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait. When we look at the current relationship between the Gulf countries and Jordan and Sudan, on the one hand, and that between the Gulf countries and the RoY on the other hand, we can see that the Gulf countries do not depend, in these relationships, upon the events of the 1990 Iraqi-Kuwaiti crisis, but rather upon the interest according to the variables that followed as a result of the end of the Cold War. Let us review some examples to prove that claim.

On 23/9/2009, the Alrai Jordanian website published a news story stating, that Kuwaiti ambassador in Amman, Sheikh Faisal Al-Hmoud Al Malik Al-Subah, declared that the volume of Kuwaiti investments in Jordan reached up to eight billion dollars...". Therefore, Kuwait, which was the first party concerned with the 1990 crisis, owned investments of 8 billion U.S dollars, while its investments in the RoY were less than U.S 5 billion dollars during the same period. Ambassador Faisal Al-Subah stated regarding Kuwait's investment in Jordan, "Jordan is a safe country attracting investments; its laws and regulations encourages the coward money to be courageous...". The ambassador's justification for the number of this investment in Jordan, the first of which being that Jordan is a "safe country", was an indication that what attracted investments in Jordan was that the Jordanian government provided safety for investors, something unavailable in the RoY.

The Sudanese Economic Consultancy website in Kuwait published a news story in its January 28th, 2010, *Aldar* newspaper, stating that "Omar Faraj Allah, the economic consultant of the Embassy of Sudan in Kuwait, affirms that the trade relationship between Kuwait and Sudan witnessed a great development during the recent years, especially with the increase of the volume of Kuwaiti investments in his country where they reached 6 billion dollars". The news was an assurance that Kuwait was "the biggest investor in Sudan."

Figure 2.4.1

## Yemeni labour figures returning from countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council in 1990

State	Number of workers
1 Saudi Arabia	671571
2 Kuwait	46547
3 Qatar	1763
4 UAE	1547
5 Bahrain	551
Total	721,979

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, "the final results of the census expatriates returning from the Gulf" Sana'a October 1991

Figure 2.4.2

## Yemeni labour figures returning from countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council in 1990

State	Number of workers
1 Saudi Arabia	671571
2 Kuwait	46547
3 Qatar	1763
4 UAE	1547
5 Bahrain	551
Total	721,979

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, "the final results of the census expatriates returning from the Gulf" Sana'a October 1991

Figure 2.4.3

## Loans provided by the Kuwaiti Fund for Development to North Yemen

Loan number	Objective of the loan	Date of signing the loan agreement	Kuwaiti Dinar
1 17	Economic feasibility study for Wadi Zabid	6/6/1968	320,551
2 22	Salt production from the mine Salif	28/2/1970	2,981,472
3 33	Maintenance of Taiz/Turba Road	14/8/1972	283,035
4 68	Maintenance of Taiz/ Almafraq Road	17/1/1976	1,484,134
5 69	Maintenance Tehama- Zabid Road	19/9/1973	443,979,2
6 96	Support the development of live stock farms	7/11/1977	2,666,229
7 106	Port development	7/11/1977	1,964,119
8 107	Economic feasibility study for Valley of Seham	7/11/1977	364,437
9 161	Maintenance Tehama- Romaa first stage	13/6/1979	1,999,922
10 132	Support of the Central Agency for Planning	19/2/1979	5,000,000
11 131	Maintenance Tehama- Romaa second stage	19/2/1979	3,500,000
12 140	Development of Tuhama-Mocha Road	1/9/1979	3,600,000
13 205	Supporting Industrial Bank	25/1/1982	3,868,640
14 216	Funding Electrical station of Mokha	24/5/1982	10,000,000
15 304	Support the earthquake-affected areas	25/12/1986	6,000,000
16 312	Maintenance Tehama- Romaa fifth stage	25/12/1986	4,000,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>47,972,331</b>

Source: Ministry of Planning Yemen

Figure 2.4.4

**Flans provided by the Kuwaiti Fund for Development to South Yemen**

	<b>Loan number</b>	<b>Objectives of the loan</b>	<b>Date of signing the lone agreement</b>	<b>Kuwaiti Dinar</b>
1	27	Agricultural, economic and social Survey to develop Abyan Delta	7/4/1971	329,973
2	50	Maintenance of Almokla/Hadrmot Valley Road	25/6/1975	4,500,000
3	147	Funding Alrayan Airport	7/1/1980	4000,000
4	194	Construction Alnakab/Nasab Road	27/6/1981	3,000,000
5	86	Multi-Purpose Loan in Almokla city	12/11/1976	2,700,000
6	42/167	Develop Abyan Delta	12/5/1974	6,000,000
7	255	Develop Hadrmot Valley first stage	3/12/1983	3,400,000
8	287	Expand and develop the port of Aden	22/5/1985	6,000,000
9	121	Maintenance Adan Ring Road	27/6/1984	3,800,000
10	313	Funding water station in Aden	16/2/1987	2,250,000
11	354	Funding water station in Almkala	20/12/1988	2,850,000
12	373	Develop Hadrmot Valley second stage	20/12/1989	3,500,000
<b>Total</b>				<b>42,329,973</b>

Source: Yemen Ministry of Planning

Figure 2.4.5

**Loans from the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development to North Yemen before 1990**

	<b>Objectives of the loan</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	Financing Sana'a port	4,000,000	29/10/1974
2	Improve the standard of living of twenty thousand families as a first stage	39,000,000	20/10/1975
3	Preparing maps of the copper mines in the valley Abar	6,000,000	28/4/1976
4	Project financing fishing boats	29,100,000	28/4/1976
5	project financing Valley of Seham	5,000,000	15/2/1978
6	Finance project of water and sewage for Taiz	54,900,000	1/7/1978
7	Improve the standard of living of twenty thousand families as a second stage	37,500,000	14/9/1981
8	Funding electricity project of Taiz- Tamar	23,990,000	15/8/1982
<b>Total</b>		<b>200,780,000</b>	

Source: Yemen Ministry of Planning

Figure 2.4.6

**Loans from the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development to South Yemen before 1990**

	<b>Objectives of the loan</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	Funding electricity project of Adan- Almansoura	109,300,00	10/9/1980
2	Financing Nashon port	60,000,000	10/9/1980
3	Financing expanding Adan port	37,000,000	125/9/1985
<b>Total</b>		<b>206,300,00</b>	

Source: Yemen Ministry of Planning

Figure 2.4.7

Loans from the Saudi Fund for Development to North Yemen before 1990			
	Objectives of the loan	Amount	Date
1	Electric power project of Sana'a first stage	17,500,000	22/11/1975
2	Financing the project of Tamar-Abitha Road	134,181,075	17/8/1976
3	Project storage and manufacturing of crops	38,540,540	17/8/1976
4	Sana'a sewage Project first stage	51,290,000	3/7/1977
5	Electric power project of Ras Alkatheb first stage	88,250,000	16/7/1977
6	Project of the Road of Sada -Dahran Ajanob	197,534,989	27/9/1978
7	Sewage renovation project of Taiz	100,000,000	4/12/1978
8	Project of the Road of Hodeidah -Jizan	278,384,283	27/12/1978
9	Electric power project of Ras Alkatheb second stage	53,600,000	11/3/1980
10	Project storage and manufacturing of crops	36,850,000	11/3/1980
11	Electric power project of Am Albkariah	87,250,000	7/4/1982
12	Sana'a sewage Project second stage	46,900,000	1/3/1982
13	Building College of Agriculture in Sana'a University	40,000,000	12/10/1987
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,170,280,887</b>	

Source: Yemen Ministry of Planning

This was a twofold penalty for the RoY as in addition to the abrupt loss of income, which is 1.7 billion SU dollar see Figure 2.4.2, they also had to deal with a large number of emigrants returning to the country see Figure 2.4.1. The RoY faced a 7% increase in population and a 15% growth in the size of its workforce within just three months which greatly worsened unemployment in the nation in order to understand the degree of mayhem this caused one may compare it to approximately four million British expatriates, homeless and unemployed returning unexpectedly to Dover (Whitaker 2009).

Immigration has been a major source of income in the RoY. It was not uncommon for Yemenis to find jobs outside of the RoY and transfer money back into the country to their families. Over one million of these emigrants were working in Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, the funds from these emigrants played a crucial role in upholding the standard of living. Other structures were also set up to generate state income (Whitaker 2009).

As stated earlier, the RoY was encouraged in 1996 by some GCC states (Qatar, the AUE and Oman) to apply for the GCC membership, but its application at the 1996 summit in Qatar was politely rejected. However, the three states wanted to include the RoY in the Council, probably to maintain a balance of power against Saudi Arabia, their dominant neighbour. As previously stated in this chapter, some states had lost part of their territory to Saudi Arabia. The smaller GCC states resented Saudi Arabia's dominant position and often resisted its attempts at leadership. However, the nature of the Saudi Arabia- the RoY relationship suggests that political conflicts were the

reasons why the GCC Council rejected the Yemeni request. The RoY, a non-monarchical country with a large population (including a substantial portion of Saudi Arabia's blue-collar labour force), has caused persistent problems for Saudi Arabia. These include territorial disputes over water-rich Asir province and extensive, non-demarcated, oil-rich desert areas. Therefore, Saudi Arabia exercised its influences on the GCC members to reject the RoY's application. Saudi Arabia stands out from the other GCC states by virtue of its size and resources, as well as by its need to be seen as a regional and Muslim leader, given the religious basis of the Royal Family's claim to legitimacy as protectors of Mecca and Medina in the birthplace of Islam. It also stands out, however, from the ruling family's size and the division of labour and opinion within it. Moreover, Saudi Arabia has the longest and most problematic border with the RoY and a long history of migratory, economic and political involvement with the country – from war and civil war to informal intervention and unofficial subventions to tribal and other players (Hill and Nonneman 2011).

Saudi Arabia in terms of military power alone, the Saudi forces were far more advanced than those of the small AGC, having around 51,000 troops, a modern air force, two naval fleets stationed on the East and West coasts, and a National Guard of 25,000 men (Albishi 1988). However, in 2001 the RoY was accepted into the GCC. No significant development in the RoY security can be seen during the period of 1996-2001. The Yemeni central government still is unable to control the country, in particular the arms smuggling and illegal migration, and the economy is also still under the poverty line. The major development was in solving the border dispute between the RoY and Saudi Arabia, which was the key to the RoY entering the GCC Council in 2001.

## **2.5 Conclusions**

This chapter explored the potential linkages and dynamics in the relationship between the two Yemens and Saudi Arabia, providing a discussion of relations up until 1981 (the time of the formation of the GCC) and showing how those relations changed in the later period leading up to 1996 (the time of the RoY's application for membership in the GCC). As a sign of Saudi Arabia's changing relations with the RoY in the late 1990s, Riyadh conducted successful negotiations to finalise the border with newly unified Yemen that resulted in the border agreement of 2000, the so-called Taif agreement. This discussion above provided a context for the GCC decision to exclude the RoY at the organisation's inception, but the historical background was also necessary

to show the nature of the complicated and constantly evolving relationship between a strong regional power like Saudi Arabia, and two very weak regional actors like the two Yemens. Saudi Arabia had enduring national interests, focused on security and maintaining its political influence in the region, while the two Yemens were competing with each other for external support and foreign assistance.

The RoY containment strategy has to be considered in the Saudi foreign policy. Robert Burrowes suggested that these “states -several of which also possess enormous petroleum wealth-might ally with the RoY in a joint effort” to stand up to the sometimes-overbearing Saudi Arabia and to hold it at bay” (R. Burrowes 1986). While the smaller monarchies, especially Kuwait, are unlikely at present to provide much aid, if any, to the RoY as a result of its support for Iraq during the Gulf War, this might change if Kuwait feels threatened by Saudi policy, as they sometimes have in the past. An example was during the North Yemeni Civil War: when the Saudis backed the Royalists, Kuwait supported the Republicans. Whether any of these states will actually provide military assistance to the RoY remains to be seen. If the RoY had been fully co-operated with Iraq in WWII, their military power would be greatly strengthened, together with its location significance, and total population would exceed Saudi Arabia’s. Saudi Arabia would have had to directly face a deadly threat. Their military combat power ratios for the coalition are about three times greater than the GCC and six times greater than Saudi Arabia. The consequence of such cooperation would be disastrous to the region’s states.

Saudi policy-makers have to consider the Saudi policy towards the RoY and evaluate potential threats in case the RoY steps up to break the power of Saudi regime, which has interfered indirectly in the RoY’s affairs. Moreover, Saudi policy has shaped the relationships of the RoY with other Arabian Gulf States in the region. There are anti-Saudi power brokers that could assist the RoY militarily in Iran. Despite the restoration of Saudi-Iranian diplomatic relations, it is doubtful that the long rivalry between these two powers has ended. Tehran may yet hope to support potential Islamist opposition throughout the kingdom or Shia opposition in the oil-rich Eastern Province. If the Saudi-Iranian rivalry revives, Tehran is likely to offer support to the RoY. In addition, because Iran is also an oil-rich country, it could provide substantial assistance to Sana’a. Yemeni-Iranian discussions on security issues may have already begun.



Even while Saudi Arabia and the two Yemens are engaged in this back and forth struggle, the smaller AGC are organising a regional security pact, the GCC, and they are faced with the question of whether and how to include their poorer Yemeni neighbours to the South, while accommodating the political and security concerns of their larger Saudi neighbour to the West. The next chapter will explore the issue of regional security, Multilateralism in the Gulf, and the role of the internal factors in the security of the RoY.

### **3 Theoretical Approaches**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In order to consider the interactions of the APC, we must first establish the concept of a sub-region within the international system. RSC theory will play a key role in that regard, as part of a constellation of concepts in international relations theory developed by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever. These scholars and other researchers of the “Copenhagen School” (i.e. the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute) sought to explain the post-USSR unipolar world of the 1990s, making them directly relevant to the period under study here. Delineating the Arabian Peninsula as a political unit of study will allow us to consider aspects of power dynamics within that sub-region, in terms that are normally reserved for great powers operating at the global level. In particular, this thesis will examine how powers decline and face difficult transitions in which they must make choices about retrenchment or resurgence. The work of a young generation of constructivist scholars will be important here – scholars who we might consider inheritors of Hedley Bull and the English School of international relations theory, but who are more deeply indebted to the writings of Alexander Wendt. Their theories will help shed light on the choices that Saudi Arabia and the small AGC made in relation to Yemen and to each other over the course of four decades.

#### **3.2 Regional Security Theory and Securitisation Studies**

Regional security dynamics have existed throughout history and around the world, even at times when superpower competition overshadowed local rivalries. While these dynamics were formerly the realm of historians and area specialists, since the end of the Cold War international relations theorists have sought to develop a vocabulary for describing and explaining relationships within regions, correlations among regions, and connections between regions and the international system. One of the attractions of the Copenhagen School is their insistence that the regional and global levels of analysis are distinct and separate, even if the two overlaps at times. For scholars like Buzan and Waever, there is an essential meaning to the concept of region, “which if it does not mean geographical proximity does not mean anything.” (Buzan and Waever, 2003: 80) Therefore, that, for example, the U.S and other great international powers may have a sustained presence with the Middle East, but they are not subject to the same constraints and pressures as the local member states of the Middle East. The U.S can withdraw its ambassador from Algeria

with few immediate consequences if it so chooses, but Morocco would face much more immediate problems along its border and in Western Sahara if it did the same.

Advocates of ‘new regionalism’ attempt to avoid simple dichotomies, advocating instead that the international, regional and local levels of analysis are all interconnected in complicated ways that cannot be separated. They contend that on the one hand some multilateral regional organisations were genuinely founded in the 1950s and 60s with a singular avowed purpose of anti-colonialism, economic integration or mutual defence. However, these scholars now prefer to view regional pacts and institutions as the result of competing regional actors often with opposing regional agendas that manage to co-exist.

When Buzan and Waeber delineate a ‘Middle East Regional Complex’ and a ‘Gulf Sub-complex’ that includes Iraq, Iran and the Arabian Peninsula, they base their definition of these entities on their observations of the political dynamics within these groupings. However, new regionalism theorists assert that: “Since regions are social constructions, none are ‘given’, and there are no given regionalist interests either, but instead the interests and identities are shaped in the process of interaction and inter-subjective understanding.” (Söderbaum, 2016: 29) For the sake of convenience, this thesis will refer to the Gulf as a region within the broader Middle East, and the Arabian Peninsula as a sub-region within the Gulf, but the reader should be reminded that these divisions are constructed in the minds and actions of the states and the peoples involved and are therefore subject to change.

Local and regional dynamics inform the global system just as much as great international powers influence regional dynamics. Neither a top-down approach of categorising regional conflicts according to generalised typologies nor a bottom-up approach of accumulating mounds of data derived from local situations is sufficient. The former approach begins by identifying common traits that disparate nations share, such as a generalised desire for material power and natural resources, but this method can become so reductive that it loses all meaning when applied to a particular setting. The latter approach treats every region as a unique and irreducible set of conditions that can only be related to the workings of other regions in terms of how they respond to superpower interference. Ultimately, scholars need to be able to do both, by creating credible theoretical frameworks for analysis but at the same time testing and refining them through analysis

of concrete examples. For that, researchers need a constant set of variables that cut across local, regional and international levels of analysis. Buzan and Waever hoped to ground their methodology by examining the cross-cutting variable of securitisation, which accepts that, “the security agenda is about different things in different regions.” (Buzan and Waever, 2003: 86) In other words, local political actors contest and negotiate their views of threat perceptions and appropriate security responses, which in turn come to inform and shape those states’ relationships with other regional and international actors.

Despite this appeal to security as a fundamental motivation for state behaviour at the domestic, regional and international levels, Buzan and Waever leave room for social and cultural factors as additional variables that shape decision-making: “the peculiarities of societal security caused by the inherent paradoxes of securing identity.” (Buzan and Waever, 2003: 87) Some scholars have developed this line of analysis by showing that all sorts of local actors can have an impact on how security is defined by a state, including political parties, religious clerics and media outlets. Moreover, public opinion can contribute to the process of defining security when members of the public take the messages delivered by political entrepreneurs and reinforce those messages through their participation in other civic organisations with overlapping interests. (Karyotis and Patrikios, 2010) This is a type of path dependency on the domestic level.

Other scholars have questioned whether securitisation studies have any explanatory value at all; in as much as two scholars studying the same set of events can derive opposite conclusions based on whether they are examining linguistic speech-acts or physical practices and processes. (Balzacq and Guzzini, 2015). Yet the increasingly complicated ways in which states craft their security priorities and signal their intentions should not invalidate securitisation studies as a core mode of theorising, as long as the author’s biases and assumptions are stated from the outset. (Williams, 2003)

### **3.2.1 Social Theory and Constructivism**

There is increasingly a broad understanding in international relations that inter-subjectivity matters, and we can consider the international system in terms of perceptions and social constructions. The international system is in part constructed by the expectations of its members,

and those expectations derive from social norms that have a basis in culture, identity and ideology. States and institutions exist in treaties and laws that are passed and enforced, but they also exist in the minds of men, in our shared experiences of history and society. Structural Realism, with its associated concepts of a world in fundamental anarchy where all states seek power and security, could not have predicted the end of the Cold War. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) did not dissolve as the threat of the USSR aggression receded; the major states of Europe did not rebalance against each other or against the sole remaining superpower, the U.S. The concept of the European Union did gain momentum and establish stronger institutions in areas of economics, governance, and to some extent foreign policy. Nevertheless, member states participating in these western multilateral security institutions and agreements have not fundamentally altered their arrangements, even if they have struggled to find purpose and reaffirm their commitments. These states are motivated by more than just material power and security, and the liberal institutions they participate in are more than just tools for bargaining and leverage.

As Alexander Wendt has explained, even “materialist explanations... acquire their causal powers only in virtue of the contexts of meaning which make them what they are.” (Wendt, 1999: 136) Just as states define their security priorities through a process of political debate among societal factions about threat perceptions and national interests, so too are those very same threat perceptions and national interests articulated through a process of individual and collective identity formation. States within the international system, much like individuals in domestic society, make adjustments to their behaviour based on how they perceive themselves and others, and those reactions and counter-reactions create new dynamics of their own. If enough members of a group adopt certain practices, those practices can become normative values and the group may continue to re-enact them even if they go against those member states’ interests, simply because their governments and/or publics have become accustomed. (Wendt, 1999: 242, 312, 340)

This view of cultural or ideological adjustment applies equally for a group of states reacting to the power of a hegemon as it does for members of a liberal multilateral organisation. It is just as valid for competitive rivals as it is for cooperative partners. “The vast majority of states today see themselves as part of a ‘society of states’ whose norms they adhere to not because of ongoing self-interested calculations that it is good for them as individual states, but because they have internalised and identify with them.” (Wendt, 1999: 242)

### 3.2.2 Power Transition Theory

The preceding sections argue that we can analyse regions and sub-regions according to the same terms and using the same methods as we might understand the international system, and that states react to one another just as much out of cultural and ideological bias as they do out of material fear and desire. What then causes change and how do regional powers come to define or impose order? Power transition theory as developed by A.F.K. Organski was originally focused on explaining war as the result of a rising power threatening the dominance of a declining power. (Organski and Kugler, 1980) Other scholars like G. John Ikenberry have extended this line of analysis to explain how a state can emerge from war with a predominance of power and thereby shape the rules of the system to its advantage. (Ikenberry, 2001) Domestic power changes within these states, whether as a result of regime change, monarchical succession or rapid industrialisation, become defining moments – moments when the international order is most susceptible to the outbreak of war. In stark opposition to traditional realists, these theories assume that power parity among different states is highly unstable and it is not possible to achieve equilibrium unless a powerful state imposes it on others. Moreover, states who perceive their power to be declining (relative to others) struggle to maintain a status quo, and consequently they risk escalation and miscalculation.

Subsequent scholars have countered by highlighting the fact that in history there are few examples where one power had the necessary hegemonic or dominant power to impose its will to the extent of defining the international order. Moreover, power transitions are much less common than power shifts, in which the rising power assumes increasing authority but not enough to overtake the leading power. Finally, war might create conditions in which a transition occurs, but power shifts do not necessarily have to be a cause of war. (Lebow and Valentino, 2009) Those points are all quite valid, but such criticisms are not directly relevant to the study below. There have not been any transformative wars or complete reversals of power dynamics within the Arabian Peninsula in the last 80 years, even if the Islamic revolution in Iran and the U.S invasion of Iraq had major, long-lasting impacts on the region. More relevant to this study, there is a growing body of literature that seeks to demonstrate how declining powers act and react to rivals.

They can choose to retrench by selectively reducing overseas commitments, relying more on partners, and increasing the burden on domestic populations, all in the hope of regaining power

and authority later on. Moreover, it is not just material considerations that determine the choices of declining powers, but also ideological and cultural considerations, which may produce results that run counter to logical expectations. Declining powers show anxiety not just over losing their military edge: "...a dominant state is also worried about its identity, values, and way of life, which are tied to the conservation of its high status." (Onea, 2013: 126)

We can apply this theory of declining great international powers to regional power dynamics, as long as we conceive of a region as a relatively self-contained hierarchy of power relationships that nonetheless interacts with larger and more powerful hierarchies at the international level. In other words, the reasons why states compete at the international level are the same reasons why states compete at the regional level, namely, "...to control the local hierarchical system, to establish relations within the local hierarchy to the liking of the challenger, or to preserve the local status quo for the local dominant power." (Lemke, 1996: 83) We might add to those reasons the motivating factor of status, which is defined here as prestige granted to a member of a hierarchy by others according to that member's position within the hierarchy. Some sociologists have sought to explain hierarchies in terms of a division of labour according to the specialised skills of each member, while others explain hierarchies in terms of structural conditions that confer status according to fixed roles. In line with our focus on cultural theory, Robert Gould offers a definition that accounts for hierarchies in terms of the social interactions of the members. "The status of public figures, then, is the respect accorded to them by each observer *just because* they are accorded respect by everyone else..." (Gould, 2002: 1147) It is a recursive process, whereby individuals (or states) confer prestige on others based on expectations about what kind of behaviour is proper, and other individuals (or states) will respond in like fashion, even if it is not always in their interests, simply because such behaviour has now become a habit or custom of that community. "A central conclusion from all these lines of research is that the uncertainty and subjectivity inherent in quality judgements gives rise to a self-reinforcing process in which collective adherence to socially provided assessments reproduces and thereby validates those very assessments." (Gould, 2002: 1148)

We might sum up the salient characteristics of power shifts as follows:

- 1) The leading power perceives a narrowing gap with its nearest rival, and policy-makers feel pressured to react before the rising power overtakes them or diminishes their authority.
- 2) Domestic political changes often provide the impetus for change, whether that means a new regime acting to assert its authority or other states moving to exploit their neighbour's weakness.
- 3) Power shifts create the conditions for war, but declining states have a range of options for dealing with rising powers short of war, and their choices are influenced by a range of material, political and cultural factors.
- 4) Status and prestige are key considerations affecting the decisions of policy-makers in all the states involved, and although these qualities are hard to measure, the members of the regional or international hierarchy are keenly conscious of them.

### **3.3 Initial Applications to the Arabian Peninsula**

This framework allows us to view the Arabian Peninsula as a hierarchy of states, with Saudi Arabia functioning as the closest equivalent to a hegemon that such a small sub-regional unit might experience. Relative to its neighbours, Saudi Arabia has such a large territorial and population size, such a high level of hydrocarbon revenues, and such a prominent role in international politics that in many ways it dominates them. We can also view the GCC, and the various economic and political agreements that preceded its creation, as a form of institutionalisation of Saudi Arabia's relationships with its Arabian Peninsula neighbours. The existence of the GCC allows Saudi Arabia to show the world that Riyadh has broader regional support for its policies and that it has recognition of its regional leadership. At the same time, the existence of the GCC allows the smaller AGC to constrain Saudi Arabia through the GCC Secretariat's routinised processes of consultation and consensus.

Within this sub-regional hierarchy, Yemen is clearly at the bottom of the pile. With an elected government and history of military regimes in the north, coupled with a legacy of Marxist politics and revolutionary activity in the South, Yemen's highly politicised society is the polar



opposite of its monarchical neighbours on the Peninsula. Yemen's large, impoverished population and recurring insurgencies in the provincial countryside have repeatedly presented humanitarian challenges and potential security threats to Saudi Arabia. In addition, in as much as Saudi Arabia is a sub-regional hegemon, Riyadh's securitisation of Yemen naturally makes the Saudi-Yemeni relationship a concern that other members of the Arabian Peninsula have to consider and account for in their own foreign policy.

Over time, Saudi Arabia had to shape policies to deal with its long, porous border, the thousands of undocumented Yemeni workers crossing over every day, and occasional border wars. Popular Saudi fears of crime, guns and drugs originating from Yemen were also partly informed by societal biases directed towards a Yemeni population that did not share the same religious beliefs or tribal heritage. Various Saudi governments legitimised the use of violence as a method for resolving disputes with their southern neighbour, in order to stop the spill-over of destabilising activities from Yemen. In addition, Riyadh worked to convince the smaller AGC to adopt those same security values as part of a collective security identity in solidarity with Saudi Arabia, their much more powerful sub-regional ally. It is these features, in part, that help define the Arabian Peninsula as a sub-region with unique security characteristics of its own.

These relationships have been complicated by the interactions between this sub-regional hierarchy and other players at the regional and international levels. Iran and Iraq proved to be even greater security threats than Yemen at different times, and both countries tried to maintain relations with Sana'a and Aden in order to apply their own form of pressure against Saudi Arabia. Events related to Iran and Iraq therefore had an impact on how Yemen was prioritised as a security threat by Saudi Arabia and its smaller Arab Gulf neighbours. Moreover, the ebb and flow of the U.S and Russian involvement in the region has had an impact on the power dynamics of the Arabian Peninsula.

Summarising the case studies mentioned below in the following chapters, we can view the Islamic revolution of 1979 and the start of the Iran-Iraq war as a pivotal moment of ascendance for Saudi sub-regional hegemony, as Riyadh was able to effectively make the case for the GCC's formation. The AGC were eager to reach consensus at that time, for the sake of preserving collective security as much as for the sake of preserving their status and prestige within the regional

and international order. By contrast, the U.S intervention against Saddam Hussein in 1990-91 and the subsequent Arab-Israeli multilateral peace talks encouraged the smaller AGC to develop their own relations with the U.S, thereby undermining Saudi Arabia's control over the sub-region. Riyadh may have had the sub-regional authority to shape the GCC's exclusion of Yemen in the 1980s but shifting power dynamics within the GCC in the 1990s may have led GCC officials to reconsider the utility of including Yemen. A failing GCC policy of support to PDRY in 1994 and Riyadh's willingness to sign a border agreement in 2000 may have further signalled to the smaller AGC that Riyadh was ready to explore more collaborative policy alternatives for Yemen.

### **3.3.1 The Role of Ideology and Culture**

Power transition theory places a premium on domestic politics as a determining factor in how states mobilise resources and project strength. It ideally envisions an alignment of domestic interests with the state's foreign policies. (Lemke, 2002: 22-26) We can summarise power transition theory in the following points:

- 1) Dominant states are those most adept at maximising their ability to penetrate society, mobilise the population, and extract resources from it.
- 2) Regimes take those policies that have proven most successful at home and project them overseas, thereby building legitimacy at home and potentially also abroad.
- 3) Dominant states seek to encourage other states to adopt similar economic, military, political and cultural practices, in the hope of reaping benefits both directly and indirectly over the long-term.

This view of the international system implies that foreign policy decision-making can be very personal for the decision-makers. Competition is not just a matter of trade benefits and technological superiority; it is also a matter of pride and prestige for the regime and for the citizenry.

Power transition theory has a great deal in common with cultural theory in terms of those points. Members of a hierarchical group value their status and maintain it based on mutually formed judgements about each other's proper or improper behaviour. Those value judgements are formed based on ideological, cultural, historical or religious beliefs, with the leading power serving

as an arbiter of what is and is not appropriate, and thereby using that power to extend its influence and reap benefits. The smaller the number of potential rivals and the closer the competition among them for status, the greater will be their anxiety over a potential loss of status. “Consequently, dominant actors do not enter rivalries over status against every other member of society, but against a set of very specific, and in fact similar rivals in their immediate social vicinity...” (Onea, 2013: 135) It is that anxiety over preserving status, just as much as the aspirations of rising competitors, that creates the potential for power shifts or conflicts.

### **3.3.2 Ideological Polarity**

Given the close proximity of regional or sub-regional powers, we would expect them to develop intense rivalries. However, the long historical accumulation of grievances and claims over time can create a range of overlapping factors that are hard to disentangle as we seek to understand what motivates regional rivalries. We can easily imagine that neighbouring states living in very close proximity will tend to develop similar sets of threat perceptions, resource needs and subsequent rivalries, as Tudor Onea suggests. Mark Haas goes one-step further to suggest that while territorial claims or competitions for resources are certainly sources of tensions, it is rather competing ideologies that fundamentally drive the formation of polarity in any system. “The more alike individuals’ domestic identities, the more likely they are to view one another as members of the same transnational group. Conversely, the more dissimilar groups’ domestic identities, the more likely members are to view one another as ‘others’.” (Haas, 2014: 718)

It is not just that cultural or religious identities shape threat perceptions and these in turn are projected onto foreign policy decision-making. More than that, Haas defines ideology as the values or norms that domestic actors apply to questions of governance, preferred rules or arrangements that decision-makers adopt for their political institutions. In addition, when those ideologies are under threat, that threat provokes a response. Again, this is most likely to happen at moments of domestic political conflict, including when domestic leaders disagree about the fundamental principles of governance or when a state is vulnerable to regime change. It is at these moments of extreme tension that domestic actors experience “an increasing identification of their interests with those in their transnational ideological group and against the interests of rival ones,” resulting in the projection of security fears and escalation of conflict. (Haas, 2014: 719) Under

these conditions, unipolarity or bipolarity can have a stabilising effect on a system, in that states undergoing domestic political crisis have clear choices to make in terms of aligning with a larger power or opposing it. In a multipolar system, however, nuances in different ideologies are more pronounced because states have more options for comparison, making alliances less stable and rivalries over small ideological differences more likely.

### **3.3.3 Retrenchment and Preserving the Status Quo**

With all this in mind, it is easier to understand why states often preserve the status quo, even when there is no clear hegemon enforcing the rules of the system. It is not just a matter of “sticky” multilateral institutions, in which both dominant powers and weak powers feel they benefit too much to walk away, though such institutions can also help preserve peace and stability. More than that, decision-makers are motivated by their belief in a set of rules and processes that they rely upon to buttress their legitimacy at home and abroad, which makes them risk averse even when their assessment of material costs and benefits might lead them to take more risky decisions. These ideological leanings, which originate in local culture and project themselves outward in the threat perceptions and foreign policy decisions of policy-makers, lend a certain amount of flexibility to the international system.

Indeed, when great powers are faced with the fear of relative decline, they more often choose retrenchment over war, and many of those who do so end up recovering their leading place in international society. States adapt to the prospect of decline by redefining their national interests, redistributing resources from the periphery to the core, cutting expenditures and reducing commitments, and relying more on allies. According to Paul MacDonald and Joseph Parent, states are just as keen to seize new opportunities for growth and expansion, as they are to respond swiftly and responsibly to adverse changes: “Thus, it may be true that great powers behave ineffectively when reacting to slow change, but they are able to manage acute decline adroitly.” (MacDonald and Parent, 2011: 13) Under this theoretical model, states can jostle and compete, forming ideological alliances while still engaging in other transactional relationships, regardless of the existence of functioning multilateral institutions or agreements, all while avoiding war.

### 3.4 Further Applications to the Arabian Peninsula

All of the APC certainly do have irredentist territorial claims and border disputes with their neighbours, and those disputes have resources attached to them in some instances. For example, none of the AGC has a well-defined maritime border with Iran, and there are contested offshore oil deposits all along the floor of the Gulf. Each of the countries has a slightly different mix of religious identities, from Oman (nearly half Ibadhi) to Kuwait (nearly quarter Shi'ite) to Saudi Arabia (majority Salafi), and that has created tensions at various points in history. Such factors play a role in shaping the political identity of these states. For example, a state like Bahrain does not have enough hydrocarbon resources to sustain an extensive welfare system or enough arable land to develop other agricultural or industrial resources. A Sunni-led government rules by the will of the Royal Family and a considerable Shi'ite population is represented in elected office by a parliament that has only limited authorities. It is a delicate balance, fiscally, politically, and religiously. Consequently, at moments of fierce domestic competition like the Arab Spring in early 2011, when the public is contesting the validity of the social compact and the political system, the government is most afraid of malign interference from Iran (the Bahraini Government's ideological opposite) and most accepting of intervention from Saudi Arabia (the Bahraini Government's ideological cousin). Domestic tensions over the nature of the political system therefore lead decision-makers to project their hopes and fears outward.

Political ideology is a basket of cultural, religious and historical identities that are organised and arranged into a set of political institutions and processes around which security hopes and fears become attached through societal debate and negotiation. The Saudi government was established in the 1920s under Ibn Saud, who sought to bring together all the disparate communities of the Arabian Peninsula under the rule of a single, unifying authority. Given that, his base of support was loyal to a particular form of Salafist religious beliefs and tribal practices that not all other communities adhered to, these other communities were not readily accepting of his rule. Ibn Saud had to offer religious concessions and financial subventions in some cases and rely on force in other instances. These tensions persisted even after the consolidation of the state and these same solutions to resolving tensions became enshrined in state institutions, whereby the Saudi government maintained peace and stability through extensive patronage networks and a strong security apparatus. In turn, the Saudi government projected these same processes onto its

foreign policies. This was especially true during King Faisal's tenure in the 1960s and 70s, when Saudi Arabia became a leader of the global Islamic Umma by establishing multilateral Islamic institutions that could help maintain lines of patronage to like-minded states. Many of these institutions, like the World Muslim League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, were originally conceived in the mid-1960s when Riyadh was undergoing the most significant domestic challenges to its form of government.

Saudi Arabia was never able to fully dominate its neighbours, due in large part to British colonial involvement in the Arabian Peninsula and later American security partnerships that replaced the British role. Moreover, the growth of Kuwait, Manama, Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Doha as hubs for regional trade and finance has led them to adopt policies that are more independent over the last quarter century. The region has therefore taken on aspects of multipolarity at times, creating a certain degree of instability among these potential rivals who have so many overlapping elements of social and cultural heritage. In fact, it could be that such close proximity and shared history has bred contempt, as some members of the sub-region have sought to accentuate their differences with others they perceive to be the closest rivals. We might even apply this theory most accurately to those moments of regime transition, when the accession of a ruler in one country was by no means assured and other countries interfered in the process.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

Power dynamics among states within a region or sub-region in many ways mirror the interactions among great powers and weak states operating at the level of the international system. States seek material benefits and construct alliances as a form of bargaining, which can lead to hegemony, collusion, bangwagoning, balancing, and free riding types of behaviour. Nevertheless, policy-makers reach their decisions about threat perceptions and policy responses after an internal debate with other civic leaders, and that debate is heavily influenced by cultural, religious and historical identities. The resulting ideology formed by this internal debate helps serve as a basis for securitisation and power projection, either in the sense that policy-makers use that ideology explicitly or implicitly to justify alliances and rivalries.

Taking this cultural approach to international relations theory allows us to conceive of regional systems as multi-layered and adaptable entities, penetrated by international politics but not determined by international great powers. A regional power like Saudi Arabia perceives its friends and foes through a prism of cultural and historical beliefs, crafts its policy responses based on a political ideology forged in the domestic sphere, and seeks to preserve its status in terms of prestige as well as military and economic strength. The various points in history when Saudi influence has risen or fallen have as much to do with outside powers like the U.S as they have to do with tensions within the Arabian Peninsula. Just as Saudi Arabia sought to expand its power and influence in the early twentieth century, so too it has ardently defended its gains in the face of various challenges during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

## **4 : *The Foundation of the Gulf Cooperation Council***

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter follows the theory chapter, which explains the states behaviours in the Arabian Gulf counties. It considers the motive concluding that the shift of the Saudi Arabian policy in 2001 towards the RoY is firmly linked to its security perception. The structure of the international system is generally determined by the distribution of power between the dominant states; this may give special importance to several units of this system over others. This situation forces the states to seek power to increase their prospects for survival. In order to pursue power, Saudi Arabia will choose to expand its relations with the RoY in order to contain the RoY to not create political or economic ties with rival states and maintain control over the political landscape of the RoY.

During the late 1970s, the Gulf region experienced great political turbulence, motivating the establishment of the GCC to counter the potential threat posed by distinct sources such as Iran, Iraq and the USSR (Kechichian, 1985). Indeed, it would be difficult to envisage the relationship between the GCC-RoY without the need for the Council to adapt its behaviour concerning the presence of the two regional powers, which were Iraq and Iran. In the following brief history of the region's environment, hints of dramatic changes in the GCC's behaviour towards the RoY are observed.

Thus, what is the origin of the GCC? Politically and ideologically, the GCC states resemble each other, and it is this connection that provides the basis for cooperation. States with dissimilar characteristics will find it more difficult to realise any common ground (Abdulla 1999, 144). However, such views of cooperation have to wrestle with the inconvenient fact that the GCC is not an 'integrated organisation' in the accepted international meaning of the term, although it undoubtedly demonstrates several 'cooperation' features (Abdulla, 1999, p. 116, Legrenzi, 2002, p. 11, Noble, 1999, p. 62).

However, the AGC' behaviour is linked firmly on the regional level to the outcome of the GCC states behaviour, which is shaped by regional level interaction with the outcome of the global and local levels. During the late 1970s, the Gulf region faced turbulence, which resulted in the establishment of the GCC to counter the potential threat by distinct sources such as Iran and Iraq



at the regional level, and the USSR at the international one (Kechichian, 1985), when the USSR established a military base that was called 'Al-Anad' in PDRY, which was one of the biggest military bases in the area at that time. In the hope of unifying the two Yemeni countries under the banner of Marxism, the USSR tried to spread its influence in the South Arab Peninsula. The Gulf States sought to balance the power in the region in their attempt to establish the Council. In line with Barry Buzan: "RSC theory which is an analysis of international security that gives special attention to the regional level as the centre of analysis, and how both the international system and local levels of interactions influence regional security" (Buzan 2007a), Waltz discerns that a balance of power politics occurs when states imitate their neighbours' policies. His neorealist interpretation perceives that the international order defined in this way, by power balancing as states, must operate in like terms with each other to secure their own survival (Waltz, 1979). The regional level has greater influence on the GCC behaviour and this has been illustrated in many literatures, which I will highlight in the following subsection.

This chapter highlights the formation of the GCC in 1981. It shows that the motivation of establishing the Council is firmly linked to the development of the international and regional structure. There are several mutual interests for the six members of the GCC – UAEs, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain and Kuwait: political and socioeconomic frameworks, political culture, as well as concerns regarding safety and threats. Although their awareness of threats varies, the GCC countries describe security in a considerably narrow, basic manner: as comprising the status quo permanence of the political governments. This is crucial in illustrating the importance of the regional security to the West Country community, hence provoking the crucial need for balancing in an instance of a single dominant state so as to bring the international distribution of power the presser has posed on the regional states into balance (Waltz 2000).

In this chapter, I will begin with examining the region under super power competition. The importance of this examination is to show the difference between the regional orders under unipolar and bipolar features, followed by the establishment of the GCC Council in 1981. The importance of this chapter is to give a background of the regional structure during the study period. It shows that the GCC cooperation was still unable to not obtain the objectives that the states were hoping to achieve. The security of the GCC relies heavily on external power, namely the U.S. The disagreements between the states and the fear of being dominated by Saudi Arabia are slowing

down the GCC performance. The relative gains to the small states to surrender their sovereignty to act in the form of a united organisation are insufficient for those states. Therefore, the GCC organisation appears to be a symbol of cooperation rather than a true regional organisation. It serves the purpose of a study argument, that there has been reciprocity of impact between the change in Saudi Arabian policies, linked to the changes in the international, regional and inter-state structure, which has shaped the Saudi-RoY relationship.

## **4.2 The Motivation to Establish the GCC**

### **4.2.1 Introduction**

According to Article 1 of the 1981 GCC Charter, the Council was established upon the “unique associations and common features and structures, founded on the Islamic doctrine” of the six nations. Article 4 expressly states that the ultimate objective of the GCC is to produce a political union of the six nations. In practice, the impetus for the Council’s creation was nearly completely security-directed, according to all historical studies of the subject. The internal decision-making processes within the GCC were more dependent on exterior threat perceptions as opposed to internal socioeconomic conditions. Security concerns at the time of the GCC’s inception included the geostrategic Cold War rivalry between the U.S and the USSR, regional conflict centring on the Iran-Iraq war, and localised threats from instability in the two Yemens.

It is obvious that international and regional motives have had a significant influence on the Gulf countries’ push for convergence. However, local motives, being key factors in the establishment of the Council, cannot be ignored. Moreover, internal motives have been associated with the increased perception of teamwork for the AGC, as the unilateral action in all areas was exposed to difficulties and challenges. We can discern the beginning of many of the steps taken by such countries for the founding of the Council, resulting in the idea of joint -cooperation among them.

Gamal Kassem also emphasises that political and economic transformations, which have occurred in the Gulf Arab countries, have contributed to their significantly increased cooperation among the AGC, as their fortunes have made possible their ability to influence the course of Arab politics. Hence, such countries have risen as centres of influential political and economic power.

It is worth noting matters following the use of oil and oil embargo on countries supporting Israel during the October war in 1973 and, in the aftermath, the shift of the AGC, from playing a marginal role in the Arab-Israeli conflict to taking part in that conflict effectively (Kassem 2001, 106).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia played a prominent political role in the preparations for the establishment of the Council since the independence of the small Gulf countries from Britain in 1971 as highlighted earlier. It was very keen to resolve the border disputes between the countries of the region with no foreign interference. Saudi Arabia makes up the largest part of the area of the Arabian Peninsula, as well as being an independent and financially more powerful political entity, due to its enormous oil reserves. It successfully resolved the border problems among the AGC, and its outstanding issues with Iran concerning the Gulf's territorial waters (Al-Tahawy 2004, 165).

The location of oil reserves, especially those present on the border areas, has been the main cause of such border problems. Saudi Arabia managed to settle these disputes by conducting talks between the conflicting parties over the borders, as well as resolving differences with its neighbouring Gulf countries. Bahrain was the first stop: Saudi Arabia was capable of reaching a settlement with Bahrain by entering into a convention in 1958, which would become the cause of Saudi-Iranian tension due to the Iranian ambitions for Bahrain (Al-Tahawy 2004, 165).

Later on, Saudi Arabia managed to settle its border disputes with Kuwait after its independence from Britain. Both countries agreed to share the Neutral Zone, according to a convention entered into on July 7th, 1965 (Al-Tahawy 2004, 166). In December of the same year, the signing of the Saudi-Qatari border convention took place (A. H. Cordesman 2003, 71).

In light of IR theory, this chapter examines how the concept of "Gulf security" is evolving, as internal political and socioeconomic changes in the Gulf States interact with the processes of globalisation, and the impact of international events in this volatile region. Starting from the basic assumption of "regime security," it primarily outlines the parameters that guide the ruling elites in the six member states of the GCC in constructing local and regional security agendas. The chapter then focuses on a range of current and evolving threats to security, in order to make the distinction between the "internal" and "external" dimensions of security and how these relate to each other.

### 4.3 Theorising the Arabian Peninsula Interaction

As Buzan and Wæver observe, “states with limited capabilities largely limited their security interests and activities to their near neighbours” (Buzan and Wæver, 2003 p. 46). This formed security interdependence among regional actors. Possession of regional power thus tends to push the weaker states to become locked in the RSC trend. Usually, regional powers will seek to influence regional states. The RSC exists in a region when there is a sufficient degree of security reliance among actors which distinguishes them from others’ security around them (Buzan, 2007a p. 26; Buzan and Wæver, 2003 pp. 47–48).

Remarkably, that security cooperation or collaboration may be regarded as a favourable political association connecting two or more countries intending to meet their requirements through relations with others who have corresponding security interests and concerns, cultural, geographic, or historical boundaries. This is the principle behind the formation of multilateral organisations, including those based on common socioeconomic interests as well as those based on other territorial or functionally based mutual interests. States may compromise several practices and principles, as they adapt their conduct to real or expected preferences of others by means of policy synchronisation. Collaboration creates a web of relationships that collectively form the international system, and shape the convictions, regulations and norms that constitute the context for imminent action (Buzan and Wæver, 2003 p. 72).

Waltz explains that one of the chief dangers of bandwagoning is that it necessitates minor states to obtain substantial assurances from the potentially dangerous state whose side they take. These states are more likely to bandwagon due to their being defensively weak. Their restricted abilities would render it less practical to become part of a collective military alliance, as they do not have sufficient reserves in order to efficiently play a part in such an alliance. Thus, such feeble nations will most likely bandwagon when encountering a greater entity, such as an international or regional hegemon (Waltz 2000).

During the Cold War, for example, Eastern European states may have bandwagoned onto the USSR’s side, as a means of dissuading the military and political threat it posed. Bandwagoning itself provides an optional means through which a researcher could appraise the logic underlying

the establishment of coalitions; however it occurs in tandem with the realist perceptions of self-interest, as well as the prevalence of threats as significant considerations for decision-making and national endurance (Waltz 2000).

There are also occasions on which alliances are instituted on the foundation of dissuasion or power equilibrium. This is normally explained via ideas of ‘Balancing’: defined by Waltz as conditions in which “countries join coalitions to safeguard themselves from countries or alliances whose greater resources could present a hazard”. Balancing constitutes an especially practical approach to appraising inter-state coalitions, as it emphasises the realist viewpoint that states are mainly concerned with their own viability or endurance in the global structure, and thus will aim to sustain their endurance in the face of exterior threats. This can be carried out by setting up inter-state alliances, which intend to mutually oppose a possible threat posed by a more powerful state; or an alliance of nations by means of combining resources (Waltz 2000).

As noted above, taking sides with a more powerful nation may present hazards to the smaller state, as it may ultimately become subordinate to its dominance and immediate authority. Arguably, this applies to the relationship between Syria and Lebanon. However, forming a coalition or alliance with alternative countries of comparable power could be perceived as a more secure tactic here: as those involved would divide up particular resource concerns, in line with their collective defence or security.

The idea of collective security has comparable points to those of dissuasion or balancing. Though the basis of balancing as well as joint security comprises the availability of a likely aggressor, they may be defined somewhat differently. Kugler and Organski describe balancing or the power equilibrium as representing conditions within which states aim to increase their strength in relation to an opponent (Kugler and Organski 1989). However, mutual security is compelled by the rationale of avoiding violence: using national safety and defence as a basis. Alternatively stated, the compulsion behind equilibrium is more focused on power (geographical, economic, military, political etc.) as it is related to threats. To raise your strength is to level your proficiencies with those of an opponent, as a means of avoiding its possibly violent intervention.

Thus, balancing functions is a remarkably convincing realist technique for the appraisal of security or alternative coalitions inside international associations; it also appears to explain the conduct and interests within the GCC. It is logical that states with comparable strengths or weak points may aspire to form a collaborative coalition as a means of balancing their mutual strengths with those of an international opponent. Within this setting, the Gulf States appear to have sought to protect their security and restrict their weaknesses by joining a united political coalition.

No sole determinant led to the formation of the GCC; instead, it was the outcome of a sequence of occurrences, which augmented one another and helped to foster a sense of regional anxiety. Global and domestic events shaped the regional states' policies outcome. The 1979 Iranian revolution and eruption of the Iran-Iraq war a year later, only served to aggravate this sense of anxiety the concept of balancing helps to explain how a number of Gulf States then responded namely, by creating the GCC.

That said though, while the six SGS plainly felt threatened by their aggressive neighbours with many resources – Iraq in the north and Iran in the East – their protection from the geographically much larger, and geopolitically much more powerful Saudi Arabia, was not an example of bandwagoning, as Saudi Arabia could possibly be construed as ‘threatening’ these states; but rather, one which shared their security interests. This remains apparent over three decades on albeit, a number of SGS have begun to branch out and reject, at least to some extent, Saudi hegemony and control.

#### **4.4 The Regional and International Threats to the Arabian Gulf States<sup>3</sup>**

##### **4.4.1 British Withdrawal from the Arabian Gulf**

In addition to the urgent need for cooperation between the Gulf countries in order to serve their common interests, there were external and internal factors, which led to speeding up the cooperation process among these six countries. One of the most important reasons was the external threats to the security of the Gulf: some researchers believe that one of the primary reasons for

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<sup>3</sup>In this research, there exist some controversial expirations or spellings for names, so the common ones have been used. For instance, for the expiration of the Arab Gulf or Persian Gulf, we used the Arab Gulf.

establishing the GCC was to fill the vacuum remaining from the departure of British troops from the region.

After the termination of the British treaties with the Arabian Gulf rulers in 1961 and 1971, the Arab countries started to have new friendship relations with other countries. In addition, they initiated the GCC in 1981 in order to regulate the relations between those states. However, there remained two countries in the South of the Arabian Peninsula that did not join the GCC.

The English East India Company (EEIC) emerged in the Gulf as allies with the ruler of Iran, Shah Abbas. The Shah had the ambition to regain Hormuz<sup>4</sup> from Portuguese hands. The Portuguese dominated the Arabian Gulf, and established colonies in Bahrain, Hormuz, Muscat, Sohar and other places. In 1622, Shah Abbas the first proposed that the EEIC send an expedition to the Gulf, to help him to expel Portuguese from his territories. In contrast, the EEIC gained privilege in the Gulf. Therefore, his request was accepted by the President and Council of the Company's factory at Surat, and British fleets launched an attack on the Portuguese at Hormuz in January 1622. As a result of the English support, the Shah of Iran regained Hormuz, and drove out the Portuguese domination from Iran properties (Lorimer, 1986 pp. 23–28). Consequently, the English trade rose and flourished. Nevertheless, the EEIC had no plans to follow the Portuguese approach in the Gulf, and its attitude in the eighteenth century towards the Gulf was only driven by commercial purposes (Kelly 1986, 50).

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the British government approach changed, as the British sought full domination over the Gulf. In order to achieve that, Britain tried to eliminate its rivals such as the French, Dutchmen and Turks in order to influence its own foreign policy in the Arabian Gulf, and nearly the entire APR, which allowed it to become hegemonic regional power. In 1763, the British government established a residency in Bushier. Since then, the main interests of commercial activities in the Gulf turned political (Al-Baharna 1968, 4). The new regional development placed the British government in direct contact with the Gulf policy-maker. Noticeably, The Gulf has two sides, (a) the Persian coast that starts from Shatt -Al-Arab in the

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<sup>4</sup> The Strait of Hormuz is a strait of water between the South-West short of Iran and East of (UAE). It is a strategic point to control maritime from and to India.

north until the Strait of Hormuz in the South, (b) the Arabian coast that starts from Basra in the North along to the top of the Strait of Hormuz on the UAE to the corner of the Arabian Peninsula along the Omani shore. The commercial trip usually started from the Indian coast through the Arabian Sea entering the Oman Gulf, and vessels had to cross the Gulf of Oman, South of the Arabian Gulf, then via the Hormuz Strait to reach Basra in the North of the Arabian Gulf, which hosts the English factory<sup>5</sup>.

Arabs have depended on the sea for decades and have wide knowledge of the Arabian Gulf that consists of six Arab states, from north Kuwait, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE and Oman. All these states, except for Saudi Arabia, had a relationship with the EEIC and signed treaties for protection.

The British government was engaged in treaties with Arab Sheikhdoms and they were under its protection. Those agreements were a high priority for the British government to eliminate the threat of piracy in the Gulf, which was mainly conducted by Qawasim fleets that frequently attacked British vessels and largely affected trade profits. In order to protect its sea trade route, the (EEIC) sent expeditions to put an end to the Qawasim threat. The first expedition was sent in 1809, but it was defeated by Qawasim force. The second expedition was in 1819, succeeded in its mission, and forced the Qawasim to sit and negotiate with the (EEIC). The agreement of 1820 was conducted between Qawasim and the British government, and focused on suppression of piracy, plundering and slavery trade. In addition, Bahrain was included in this treaty (Husain 1968, pp. 25-30).

Later on, the British government had more treaties with Arab Sheikhdoms and put British protection into effect on those rulers individually. More importantly, in those individual agreements the sole objective was to prevent Arabs Sheikhdoms from involvement with foreign

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<sup>5</sup>In 1723 the (EEIC) initiated a factory in Basra and it operated as an agency as well. Moreover in 1778 the (EEIC) established residency in Bushier. The British government had to secure trade routes, and that was the duty of the residency on the Persian side. That aim was broadly achieved, and though the British government had good relations of friendship with the Shah of Iran, Arab Sheikhdoms' loyalty had to be secured. See: (Paul 1991, 98).



powers other than the British government, to give legal institutions on the Arab territories. In addition to this, those sheikhs acted under the Britain umbrella.

Lastly, the British government announced in 1967 that it would withdraw all its forces from the Gulf by the end of 1971 (Al-baharna, 1968 pp. 25–30). It is important to mention here that Kuwait gained its independence prior to this date.

The state-building process within the region was articulated by the great powers in the early twentieth century, most famously in the form of the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement, and in several cases, the resulting borders did not reflect the demographic and historical realities of the region (Sorli, Gleditsch and Strand, 2005 p. 146). The British later defined several borders according to their own petroleum needs (Iraq, Jordan), their weak understanding of local tribal dynamics (Saudi Arabia, Oman, UAE) or their desire to legitimise their protectorate status (PDRY). This left several lingering conflicts amid different states of the Gulf, based on both land and maritime boundary disputes that often involved the existence of potential petroleum reserves (Kemp, 1995pp 20- 21). Inter-state warfare has been on the decline since the mid-twentieth century globally, because the acquisition of territory is no longer an efficient guarantee of increasing wealth; however, in the Gulf new territorial acquisitions could very often still increase natural resources significantly (Gause, 2007).

However, this had no effect as far as the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war in September 1980, in which they were no longer subjected to the British protection. The following subsection is going to highlight this. The Gulf War outbreak is considered as one of the factors that influenced regional states' behaviour and pushed them to accelerate the GCC formation. However, independence of individual states in GCC will be presented to show the vulnerability of those states prior to the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war.

#### **4.4.2 Iranian Revelation Ideological**

Iran is regarded as the regional power, which has threatened and continues to threaten the security and stability of the Arabian Gulf and its countries. The Khomeini revolution brought down Shah Reza Pahlavi, an important ally to America in the region, in January 1979. In addition, the new leadership in Iran planned to export this revolution. Counter-movements of the ruling regimes had

risen up in the Gulf through the Shia minorities in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, stirring unrest in the region (Alakkad, 1991 pp. 374–375).

In 1979, the Islamic Republic of Iran came under the Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's leadership, the leader of the revolution, supported by various leftist and Islamic organisations and Iranian student movements. The 1979 revolution fundamentally changed the orientation of Iran's foreign policy and created lingering instability in the region. Its primary aim was to export the revolution, which was driven by ideological and tactical motivations (Milani 2004, 2). The leaders in Iran maintained that the Islamic Republic was a model for other states until such a time as the entire Muslim world was united. This meant that monarchies, like the Shah's Iran, had to be overthrown. The governments, which felt most threatened, were those geographically closest to Iran: the Arab states in the Arab Gulf (Marschall 2003, 25).

Iran's Islamic revolution is a source of concern contributing to tense relations between the GCC states, and Iran and has been characterised by a confusion of complexities and contradictions. Prior to the Islamic revolution in Iran, Iranian aspirations were reflected in more than one behaviour and in more than one place; from the Shah's declaration that Bahrain was part of the Iranian State, to the occupation in 1971 of the three islands belonging to the UAE (Marschall 2003, 8).

From the outbreak of the revolution in 1979, there has been concern and fear felt by AGC due to the ideological expansion of the Islamic revolution into the Gulf, especially in those countries where Shiites constitute a significant part of the Arabian Gulf States' social fabric, and it has become a common threat. Bilateral relations deteriorated during the Iraq-Iran war as a result of the Gulf countries' support of Iraq. Such support did not have a pan-Arab dimension alone, but was also an attempt to halt the export of the revolution to the eastern coast of the Arabian Gulf (Marschall 2003, 35). The Islamic revolution displayed an aggressive character towards the countries of the region. This aggressiveness was a factor in the establishment of the GCC.

The British and Americans were dominant on the Arabian Peninsula throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The United Kingdom occupied the SGS as protectorates, helping to establish their bureaucracies and negotiate their territorial boundaries. The U.S increasingly took over the role of

leading provider of military training and equipping and provided a key destination for Saudi financial investments. The French maintained significant military and trade relations, particularly with Qatar, and to a lesser extent the UAE, and Japan also became an important industrial partner in oil production. These relationships continued and even flourished after the British withdrew their military forces from the Gulf in 1971, and the oil companies were nationalised. Before, during and after the Cold War, the economic, political and security ties that linked the GCC states to the West were deeply entrenched and were to a great extent mutually beneficial, in that the oil producers and oil consumers had a naturally symbiotic relationship, which was based on capitalism and consumerism. Many of the Gulf States rationalised their alliances with the West in terms of sharing a common enemy in communism, which they opposed based on its antagonism towards religion and Islam. However, elites and publics in both the GCC states and the West greatly benefited from the financial arrangement (El-Hamad 2004).

It should be pointed out that the majority of the GCC's decisions were in reaction to developments taking place in the region. At the start of this chapter, we reviewed the efforts made by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to solve its disputes with other Arabian countries for the purpose of speeding up the establishment of the GCC, for the reasons already stated. Added to the driving force of the reaction leading to the establishment of the GCC was the political vacuum that was left following Britain's withdrawal from the Gulf in 1971, and the Iranian revolution followed by the Iraq-Iran war, as well as the communist threat represented by the USSR, which the subsection is going to highlight.

The GCC's roots reach back to an era when the rulers of these originally tribal communities were suddenly forced to consult each other and establish some form of cooperation while facing an uncertain future. When the British Labour government announced its decision in 1968 to withdraw the British military and diplomatic protection from the Gulf, Bahrain, Qatar, the seven Trucial States and Oman emerged reluctantly from their status of semi-dependence on Britain into full statehood. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait had a reason to be apprehensive of the power vacuum in the Gulf after the British withdrawal in 1971. The predominant threat facing them at the time was the animosity of the majority of Arab governments, which – being socialist and anti-west – endeavoured to undermine some of the conservative regimes of the Gulf. In President Gamal Abdul Nasser's Cairo, public opinion was mobilised against these 'stooges of colonialism', and

Baghdad proliferated revolutionary cells and anti-regime organisations in Bahrain, Oman, the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG) and others elsewhere in the region, while PFLOAG had a revolution for the entire Gulf written on its banner.

One can explain the reaction in 1981 as the evolution of the concept by the leaders of six AGC to establish the GCC as a closed-membership organisation, in order to balance the power in the region. According to Waltz, "state behaviour can be a product of the competition among states, either because they calculate how to act to their best advantage, or because those that do not exhibit such behaviour are selected out of the system. Alternatively, states' behaviour can be a product of socialisation: states can decide to follow norms because they calculate it to their advantage, or because the norms become internalised" (Elman 2007, 13). Obviously, Yemen's integration to the GCC at that time was in the GCC states attention, although the justification by Gulf countries at that time for the exclusion of Yemen was the status of its division and PDRY's choice to ally itself with the USSR. From the GCC viewpoint, it was illogical to include YAR, with its strong ties with GCC member states, and award it membership while there was another part of Yemen that had radical Marxist inclinations and conflicts with some GCC members. As has already been pointed out, the establishment of the GCC was in response to a new requirement in the region.

The newly and independent states recognised the power of the international organisation in implementing their governments' legitimacy in the international community (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 903). When a state becomes a part of an international organisation, it has two advantages: first, it elevates its image among others. Second: it enhances the government legitimacy on its homeland (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 903).

The significance of the Gulf grew exponentially during World War II as a result of its geographic location along the supply routes between Britain and its colonies in the Subcontinent, the growing need for oil in the industrialised world, and the rivalry between emerging Cold War powers seeking alliances. The small populations and lack of heavy industry within the Gulf States meant they could devote their hydrocarbon resources to generating export revenues, and consequently they became dominant players in the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) upon its foundation in 1960. By 1980, oil output in the Gulf comprised 30% of the entire output of OPEC. Oil output in the GCC continued to increase significantly throughout the 1980s

and 1990s, while the output of most other exporters either remained steady or diminished, such that between 1994 and 1998, the GCC generated around 50 percent of the entire oil output from OPEC. This equated 20 percent of global oil output over the same period (Group 2004). The GCC not only holds the most proven oil reserves compared to any other region in the world; light, sweet Gulf oil is the most economical to obtain and is of a superior standard.

#### **4.4.3 The Iraqi-Iran War**

The AGC' decision to form the GCC was a gradual process of consultation and discussion dating back through the late 1970s, and the events in Afghanistan and Iran played a major role, however once that decision was made, it was the Iran-Iraq war that shaped the agenda of the new organisation. Saddam Hussein believed that with Tehran engulfed in turmoil, he could find support from Sunnis in western Iran and win a quick victory, however the initial attacks by Iraqi forces in September 1980 were indecisive and the conflict became a protracted fight in which many lives were lost, and little territory was gained. The meetings in late 1980 and early 1981 that led to the formal establishment of the GCC were generally concerned with signing a defence cooperation agreement among the six AGC. The U.S and the GCC saw both sides as potential threats, and feared spill-over of the war, though they later gave support to Baghdad as the lesser of two evils (Mainuddin, Aicher, and Elliot 1996, 6).

On February 4, 1981, the foreign ministers from Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, UAEs and Saudi Arabia endorsed a declaration that created the GCC. On May 25, 1981, the heads of the six nations endorsed the Basic Law of the 'Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf', which required member states to collaborate in all areas with the explicit objective of political union. While economic integration was a topic of discussion in the early years following its formation, the GCC's accomplishments were centred on security cooperation, with the creation of a combined military known as Peninsula Shield in 1984 and the joint protection of the member states from the U.S in re-flagging their oil tankers with the American flag in 1986-1987. The security threats were real, as Iraqi forces bombed an oil refinery in Kuwait in 1984; GCC tankers came under attack and Saudi forces were engaged with Iranian fighter jets in 1984 over Jubail, Saudi Arabia (Chubin and Tripp 2014, 11).

#### 4.4.4 The Soviet Union Alliance with PDRY

In December 1967, PDRY was instantly acknowledged by the USSR after its attainment of autonomy from Britain. Diplomatic associations were initiated, and an accord endorsed in February 1969 concerning technical, financial as well as trade collaboration. PDRY turned into the sole communist Middle Eastern state. Unacknowledged by Muslim states in the area, PDRY depended on assistance from communist countries, and permitted the Soviets to maintain naval stations within its borders (Halliday 2002).

The British withdrew forces and left the Arabian Gulf, and the external threats began to be imposed on the region represented by the USSR. The USSR threat was posed by the region's security by the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, which will be approached below at the global level.

The presence of over 100,000 USSR troops in Afghanistan brought the threat of the USSR much closer to the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. It also tightened the perceived noose around the neck of the conservative regimes, by adding the USSR presence there to the existence of the USSR proxies in PDRY and Ethiopia. The other dimension of the USSR threat was the so-called Brezhnev proposals for neutralising and demilitarising the Gulf region (Ramazani and Kechichian 1988, 8).

America, on the other hand, issued several statements, stressing that it would protect its interests in the region. In 1974, Henry Kissinger, the U.S Secretary of State said: "Protecting its interests, the U.S of America believes that if such were threatened in the Gulf, it would resort to force to ensure the flow of oil"(Al-Qarni 1997, 33). Then, following this statement, an announcement from the formation of the U.S Rapid Reaction Force in 1980 was made by the U.S President, J. Carter, who stated, "Any threat or attempt by any foreign power to control the Gulf is to be considered as aggression against the vital interests of the U.S. Such aggression will be met by all means, including the use of military force," (Al-Qarni, 1997, p. 34). The region could come to pate filed for the superpowers rivalry.

The Soviets were firmly entrenched in the PDRY, where they were free to support Marxist and communist insurgent movements in other parts of the region. The West saw oil in the AGC as

essential for the global free market economy, and security cooperation was generally predicated on a fear that the Soviets might sweep through the Gulf and seize oil fields. While the USSR sought a foothold in the Gulf from which it might later expand its influence, the U.S sought to preserve its economic gains and contain the USSR, in line with the Truman Doctrine, and its principle of financial assistance to Third World nations allied with the West (Blunden 1993). Securing oil tanker traffic and other forms of global shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, the Bab Al-Mandeb and the Suez Canal was vital.

#### **4.4.5 The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan**

The USSR invasion of Afghanistan later that year renewed fears of a USSR invasion through the Gulf. The USSR forces were now a mere 300 miles from the Straits of Hormuz, greatly elevating the geopolitical risk in the Middle East in general, and the APC in particular. The Soviets justified their assault on Afghanistan in terms of retaliation for American diplomatic moves in the region – Washington had sent Airborne Warning and Control Systems(AWACS) to the Gulf, provided weapons to YAR, appeared to intervene in Iran in support of the Shah, and backed Afghan rebel groups (Laham 2002). During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the U.S was “anxious because of possible clashes in the area, subversive as well as terrorist operations, and the anticipated requirement of the USSR for Gulf oil that it was not capable of settling anymore”. Washington responded by increasing its military activity in the area.

President Carter implemented the idea of maintaining a direct the U.S armed force presence within the Gulf, in contrast with the previous policy of indirectly depending on its allies within the region. The Carter Doctrine required the institution of Rapid Deployment Forces (RDF), which could be swiftly deployed in support of the U.S allies around the world. It stated that the U.S would not permit any exterior authority to acquire influence over the Arabian Gulf. Carter declared, “any endeavour by an external power to gain authority over the Gulf area would be considered an attack on the essential concerns of America, and this type of attack would be opposed by any methods required, as well as military action”. At first, it was not clear whether Islamist factions in Tehran or the communist “Tudeh” party would win, and the AGC worried that the Iranian revolution might inspire similar uprisings from restive populations in their own countries.

The USSR involvement in the Yemeni Civil War, meanwhile, encompassed the concluding two years of Khrushchev's government, as well as the initial six years of the Brezhnev period. Between October 1962 and December 1965, the USSR armed assistance was directed entirely by means of Egypt; with its direct participation restricted to financial aid, publicity and diplomacy. A subsequent phase commenced at the beginning of 1966, after the Haradh conference, when the Jeddah accord of Egypt and Saudi Arabia started to collapse. During this period, Nasser's dedication to maintaining Republican Yemen with his personal forces wavered, resulting in the immediate provision of minor amounts of weapons to Sana'a from Moscow. Military reinforcements were also offered by Czechoslovakia. However the Egyptian army was not withdrawn, and the majority of the USSR assistance still moved through Egypt (Sullivan 1970).

However, at the end of 1967, Nasser was forced to withdraw his 70,000 forces from Yemen due to Israel's victory over Egypt in the June war. This left the Royalists with a distinct military edge over the Republicans. Thus, the USSR oversaw conveyance airlifts and sealifts for army apparatus to Sana'a and Hodeida. Weapons, ammunition, fighter airplanes, tanks, and a multitude of the USSR combat and technical instructors helped to destabilise an imminent Royalist coup on the Republican capital, leading to ultimate victory. Weapons consignments from the Soviets continued to play a key part in residual clashes, which concluded in March 1970, when Saudi Arabia assisted in negotiating a compromise between the RoY and the majority of the Royalist tribes. The RoY was acknowledged by Riyadh in July that year (Sullivan 1970).

The USSR obstinacy in the RoY was owed, of course, to its awareness of the strategic and economic importance of the Arabian Peninsula and Middle Eastern sea-lanes. Poor, undeveloped YAR owned barely any natural reserves which would pique the attention of a superpower, while its armed forces were nominal; however its border with Saudi Arabia, closeness with Ethiopia, and its location on the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb rendered it a priceless tactical asset (Porter 1986).

Therefore, YAR and Saudi Arabia began to collaborate more following the removal of Egyptian forces; the accession of a highly conformist administration in Sana'a; and the awareness of the mutual hazard represented by the USSR-supported Marxist government, which had come to power in PDRY following British withdrawal in 1967.



#### **4.4.6 Oil Price Revolution**

Following the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1973, prices of crude oil started to escalate in a drastic manner, rising from \$3.01 on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1973 to \$5.19 on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1973, to \$34.41 on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1980. Being some of the greatest manufacturers of oil, with the greatest known sources of oil globally, the future GCC countries took on a crucial function in the economy of the world. In this manner, six nations with a collective total population of an estimated 13 million people became essential to the constancy of the international economy as well as its political order (Haykal 1993).

### **4.5 The Foundation of the Gulf Cooperation Council in 1981**

#### **4.5.1 Historical Background**

The area of the Arabian Gulf went through a minimum of five considerably significant developments within the ten years before the creation of the GCC at the beginning of 1981: the extraction of the British, the oil price revolution, the Iranian revolution, the USSR incursion into Afghanistan, and the Iran-Iraq conflict.

#### **4.5.2 Emerging Regional Security Agenda**

While the U.S continued to play a pivotal role as a security guarantor in the region during the 1980s, there was a subtle, yet fundamental change in security dynamics in the Gulf after the founding of the GCC. The theocratic regime that consolidated power in Tehran was a threat to the U.S citizens and the U.S allies in the region, particularly after Iran and its proxies in Lebanon seized American hostages and directed attacks on the U.S Embassy in Beirut, although Iran was no longer a likely candidate for the USSR invasion and occupation. The conflicts in the Gulf were of regional importance, but they were not a central component of the American-USSR geostrategic rivalry. Moreover, Saudi Arabia took on a more assertive role in managing and responding to these conflicts; Riyadh hosted and commanded the combined Peninsula Shield force and was the mediator for peace talks in Geneva in 1987 that helped end the Iran-Iraq war, and resolve the Lebanese Civil War with the Taif Accords in 1989. Even as the U.S was defending its own interests in the region and working with the GCC to promote regional security, the GCC states and Saudi

Arabia in particular were taking an initiative on multiple fronts in the region according to their own national interests.

By the late 1980s, superpower rivalry no longer determined the level and nature of the U.S participation in Gulf regional security, and the GCC states could pursue their own security interests in parallel with the U.S efforts within the region. The U.S leadership of an international coalition to repel Iraqi forces from Kuwait in 1991 helped to assert the U.S hegemony in global security, although at the same time the end result was the re-establishment of the monarchy in Kuwait, and the bolstering of monarchical authority in the GCC. During the 1994 civil war in Yemen, the GCC states threw their support behind the separatist government in Aden, even as Washington held onto hope for preserving the country's unity. In 2002, Saudi Arabia sponsored the Arab Peace Initiative, offering a comprehensive peace between Israel and the Arab world on the condition that Israeli-Palestinian peace was achieved, but this came at a time when the U.S was not substantially engaged in peace talks. GCC initiatives from the organisation's inception onwards, which were often led by Saudi Arabia with public statements of support by the GCC Secretariat, did not pre-empt, or subvert the U.S activities in the Middle East, although they are notable for the way in which they increasingly emerge in a separate sphere from the U.S policy concerns. This trend has become most prominent in the last four years from the start of the Arab Spring, with Saudi Arabia and the UAE leading GCC efforts to support stability in Egypt, Bahrain and Yemen, fight back against the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya and counter the Syrian regime in Damascus. These more assertive and vocal foreign policies have been designed in GCC capitals without any consultation with the West, and often in response to what GCC leaders have publicly criticised as western hesitancy and policy incoherence.

#### **4.6 Forming the GCC**

The realist theory of international politics argues that cooperation between states is very difficult to achieve in practice, and that even in those cases where cooperation is initiated it is difficult to sustain over time (Waltz 1979). The reason why cooperation is difficult to initiate is that it is often difficult for states to clearly identify benefits of cooperation, which are sufficiently large and sufficiently certain, to outweigh the strategic uncertainties inherent in cooperation between different states, which could have differently perceived strategic goals. The realist theory goes

further, however, and claims that even when states identify benefits that will justify the initiation of cooperation, it is likely to break down. This is because in the process of cooperation, one state is likely to come to believe that the process favours one side more than the other, or that, even in cases where it is clear that both sides benefit equally, one partner becomes fearful of how the other will come to use its increased capacity. This process is especially evident in newly formed states, such as the GCC states, that lack the confidence that may be acquired over time and can lead to at least some degree of regional cooperation (Abdulla 1999). In addition, regional integration, for the majority of neorealist thinkers, is on similar grounds with regards to alliance formation politics. The pioneer proponent of the neorealist paradigm, Kenneth Waltz, makes use of much less time in differentiating between political regionalism and economic. Regional consolidation is regarded as a reaction of weak countries to the possible hegemonic forces, in conformity to the belief that countries will strike a balancing power instead of bandwagon (Legrenzi 2011).

The GCC existence was a result of the dynamic change in the international and regional environments. It is an exception to the rule outlined above. The member states of the GCC have found it mutually advantageous to cooperate and overcome the suspicions inherent in the realist theory, which should make such cooperation impossible. The process has been incremental, although the states have modified their actions and expectations, with the goal of each member being in a better position than they would have been if they had acted independently. The states appreciate the benefits that have derived from cooperation.

Without a region-wide GCC enlargement, the Gulf will continue to be a tense area. The establishment of the GCC has intensified major regional powers' political breaches, as Iraq and Iran clearly doubt and suspect the motivations and intentions of the GCC. Iraq and Iran have their convincing reasons for regarding the GCC as a Saudi tool that aims at acquiring a more important regional role at their expense. To add to this, some countries within the GCC itself have also suspected the GCC as being a manoeuvre to add them either to what was later called the unholy alliance with the USA, or to the Saudi saddlebag (Abdulla 1999). In a competitive world, the only way states can survive is by developing allies and countering enemies to achieve security against both internal and external threats. Alliance is driven by states' need to fulfil their requirement for security and desire for prosperity (Amin, shtiaq, and Naseer 2011).

Regional integration, for the majority of neorealist thinkers, is on similar grounds with regards to alliance formation politics. The pioneer proponent of the neorealist paradigm, Kenneth Waltz, makes use of much less time in differentiating between political regionalism and economic. Regional consolidation is regarded as a reaction of weak countries to the possible hegemonic forces, in conformity to the belief that countries will strike a balancing power instead of bandwagon(Legrenzi 2011).

Grieco believes that realism gave a stronger understanding of the international cooperation. He added that neoliberalism failed to specify the anarchy influence on the character and aims of states, even though neorealism and neoliberalism share the same assumption that the states are the main actors in the international affairs, and they acts within their anarchical political context (Grieco 1990). Realism can provide a convincing analysis of inter-state cooperation when compared with neoliberalism, on the basis of a greater awareness of the consequences of anarchy on inter-state alliances. Neoliberalism, on the other hand, realises an unwarranted vision of inter-state collaboration, as a result of its investigation of anarchy (Grieco 1990).

The GCC is one of the most important regions in the world. Regarding the significance of the Gulf region to the superpowers and the region, states' fragile characteristic encouraged powerful states to practice its influence on these states, to insure its interests without any consecration to these states nation interests. Waltz (Waltz 2010), the originator of systemic neorealism, established a firmly systemic concept of international politics, which overtly separated itself from purported 'reductionist' concepts of international conjecture. Systemic neorealism intentionally eliminates professed unit-level or second-image aspects (like local state structures, views and political culture) as well as first-image aspects such as human nature. Structural neorealists do not refute that local aspects could have an impact on international policy conduct but attribute a unique descriptive worth to systemic evaluation. The concentration of a neorealist evaluation is thus initially placed on the international structure.

The influence of the international structure can clearly be seen in the above five occurrences which took place hard and fast inside ten years, pushing the area from the fringe of world affairs to its actual core, and making it a stage for the Cold War too. So as to at least have a modicum of power over their own future, the Gulf Arab nations discovered that they had to

function in unison. Suspicion and sensitivities were still present amid the six; however, the noted exterior hazards, as well as the interior implications surpassed all alternative issues. With the safety and stability of the area being endangered, and thus the very validity of the governments, the GCC needed to be created.

It resulted in the formation of the GCC on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1981. The international ministers from Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, UAEs and Saudi Arabia endorsed a declaration that created the GCC. After a few months, on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1981, the heads of the six nations endorsed the Basic Law of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (their constitution), which required participants to collaborate in all areas, with the ultimate objective of political alliance.

This impressive discussion notwithstanding, security issues comprised the key catalyst for the creation of the institution. Consequently, the efficiency of the GCC was reliant on the anxiety over threats. During periods of peace, tensions amid the GCC countries escalated; during times of conflict, these vanished. As stated by the renowned Arab proverb, “I and my brother against my cousin, and I and my cousin against the stranger”. The time span of two years separating the Iraq-Iran war and the incursion into Kuwait (August 1988 to August 1990) when risks were reduced, observed the Council losing significance. In total, the GCC is entirely a security organisation; the rest comprises window-dressing. The efficiency of the GCC is subject to hazards.

However, cooperation did not last long. The majority of GCC nations turned into sovereign nations just after the British extraction in 1971, after which they experienced an economic boom, which allowed them to attain affluence without encountering the stages of economic progress. The mixture of new independence and financial strength caused a variety of tensions inside and amid the GCC countries. Preferably, the Council should promote concession and oppose argument among participants inside a structure of collective concerns and aims. However, this has not been true: uptight national opinions as well as fragile sensitivities block GCC reason. Combined endeavours have not achieved much; practically all the accomplishments of the GCC have been acquired using bilateral accords. Specifically, bilateral agreements have sorted a number of frontier disputes, the more pressing challenge inside the GCC, like those amid Saudi Arabia and Oman as well as the UAE. However, even these challenges are only temporarily sorted, provided the view that any resolution is only temporary until a more suitable one may be attained.

Taking a phrase from Alexis de Tocqueville, “the missing element from the GCC comprises the art of endeavouring together”. Necessitating as it does that political resolutions require unison comprises a concrete means of thwarting a collective institution. The fact that the elites are unsure of one another places an additional dimension on the issue; truly, nearly all GCC countries view another country as a likely threat. Small countries are afraid of greater ones. The participants of one dynasty are part of a particular tribe as opposed to another tribe, and in the desert, tribal associations were founded not on identifiable territories with set frontiers, but on pure, swiftly altering power associations. The combination of this historical setting with the contemporary countries provides the Arabian Peninsula most of its uniqueness. By permitting countries to utilise oil wealth, as opposed to employing the regular means of modernisation, the oil boom had the impact of increasing this extension of convention and modernity. For instance, it formed interest factions that were afraid of any kind of collaboration amid the six; this phenomenon is most obvious within Oman and several aspects of the UAE.

The idea of a nation-state is still completely foreign to the area, although Saudi Arabia, which was created by means of military campaigns, and thus relied more on immediate involvement of its citizens, is more of a country than the alternative GCC counties, which were created as a result of the British extraction in 1971. Kuwait has the most greatly established political organisations, and Oman has a keen sense of history.

Frontier arguments have turned into the most dangerous factor within the GCC. Frontiers have particular significance within the Gulf area, in which great pools of oil could be found under any stretch of water or land, regardless of how detached. Therefore, any minor reduction in magnitude could considerably impair the finances of a country. Should the frontier observe colonial divisions, historic dynamic territories, tribal regions under a specific family and bilateral accords amid leaders before independence, or de facto situations at a particular time? In comparison to the Organisation of African Unity, which necessitates participants to recognise their colonial frontiers, regardless of how impossible so as to avoid possible arguments, the GCC does not have such a rule.

#### **4.6.1 External Threat Perceptions**

The West, especially America, views Iran and Iraq as being the chief, or even only, exterior threats to the Gulf area. Within GCC countries, considerably varied perceptions of the exterior threat are present; as usual, there is no collective perception of the GCC in its entirety, but singular ones for each country. Generally, the GCC nations do not experience many direct and immediate exterior hazards. As noted by Gregory Gause in 1995: “By a traditional description of safety, that is to state safeguarding from international military assault, the countries of the GCC are more secure compared to any other time during their independent being.”

#### **4.6.2 Internal Threats**

If the GCC nations encounter no grave exterior hazards, they have considerable interior challenges. Each of them has grave economic issues, resulting from a mixture of reduced oil prices, abundant and unreasonable administrative expenditure especially on security and defence, unstable economic agreements, and increasing debt. Consequently, living conditions are deteriorating.

Integrated with the elevated level of international employment, these economic circumstances have resulted in official challenges: increasing unemployment, increasing crime, and growing terrorism. These could have political implications: additional dissatisfaction, an inability by the government to integrate new aspects, a broadening philosophical range, additional claims for political involvement, and increasing pressure for radical changes.

Moreover, after thirty years, the GCC itself failed to act as an organisation, and to achieve firm coherence between members. In addition to this, the weaknesses of the GCC institutions are evident in their failure to initiate joint Gulf security arrangements in order to maintain the Gulf security and stability (Noble 1999). In addition, the GCC has failed to achieve a firm cooperation between the GCC states after great wars in the last decade (Noble 1999) it has failed to act as unified organisation so far, which shows that each state has its own fear of being dominated, obviously by the big sister Saudi Arabia. Therefore, cooperation as the rational theory claim is limited in the GCC case for short term; in other words, the GCC states become active when there is an immediate threat to one of the GCC members, and we can see that in Kuwait’s case in 1990 and recently in the Saudi Arabia-Bahrain unity skim after the unrest-hit Bahrain, cooperation

become gloomy when the threat passed. Some writers illustrated this descent of cooperation in their literature. For instance, in the case of Qatar, it can be seen how it has always behaved as an individualistic member of the GCC (Abdulla 1999). In Muscat in 1995, a Qataris delegation announced its objection to Saudi Arabia's proposed candidate for General Secretary of the GCC, Jamil Alhujailan, and threatened not to attend any further meetings attended by Jamil Alhujailan. In addition, Qatar emphasised its independence in its foreign affairs and conducted friendly relations with Iran, Iraq and Israel without regard for the sensitivity of such relations. Gariup pointed out that the GCC states were not subject to the strengthening Council capability; instead they sought western protection by signing bilateral defence agreements with external defenders (Gariup 2008).

In addition, the customs union agreement between the GCC states in 2003 was undermined by the bilateral free trade agreement, signed between Bahrain and the U.S in 2004 (Harders and Legrenzi 2008), as well as the economic and security sectors: as Abdullah states: "Progress towards economic integration of the GCC is almost flat. The often-repeated claim that the security and defence of its members is exclusively a GCC affair finds its ultimate denial in the excessive reliance of the AGC on the U.S protection. Political coordination, once the hallmark of the GCC, has declined sharply. Today, the institution suffers from a credibility gap" (Abdulla 1999). In fact, the region states are facing strong pressure from the non-Arab states Israel and Iran, (Noble 1999) and by superpowers at the national level. However the GCC states limit their cooperation to the increase of threat in the region, which evidently can be seen in the behaviour of the states after Iraq invaded Kuwait, when the GCC states became more active to increase their military cooperation and strengthen political coordination (Legrenzi 2002).

The GCC states put effort into the regional conflicts among each other and forgot about the RoY, and the result was catastrophe. The RoY has now landed in the hands of the Iranian proxy, which means permanent threat. Despite the current alliance between Riyadh and Tehran to fight ISIS, I believe, in the long run that Iran will use the RoY to put pressure on Saudi Arabia.

This not only threatens the Saudi Arabia security, but the U.S interest and ally in the region too. However, the next chapter is concerned with the dynamic shift in the U.S foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia.



## 4.7 Conclusions

This chapter considers views of the nature of the GCC Council in light of the international theories. The GCC failed to act on behalf of its member states in both economic and politics respects. There is a lack of trust among the GCC states, and none of the states is willing to give up their own sovereignty, which accords with the realist claim that this behaviour describes human nature; but because of the SGS lack of options, they formed the GCC. In addition, this chapter shows that the GCC has become active in terms of reacting to any changes in the region's environment and how changes could threaten its security or sovereignty. The AGS established the GCC in 1981 due to the rise of the Iranian power in the region, which displayed aggressive behaviour towards the newly independent Gulf States. This new change in the balance of power in the region's system caused alarm to the AGC because of the danger that could threaten their territory.

RSC theory claimed that this kind of change in regional balance between Iran, Iraq and the Arab Gulf affected the regional system, which drove the weaker states to serve their own needs for survival by forming cooperation between similar states, which share a common threat in order to protect their own. This can be seen in the behaviour of the small states such as Qatar, Bahrain, the UAE, and Kuwait. However, for the bigger states like Saudi Arabia and Oman, RSC holds that the motive of these states to form an organisation is driven by the desire to balance the power in the region. It is not beneficial for Saudi Arabia and Oman to become involved with powerful states like Iran in any kind of regional cooperation, because the RSC claimed that Saudi Arabia and Oman may become dominated by Iran, and therefore it would definitely be a better option to engage with smaller states than Iran in terms of increasing their power.

The GCC states are facing two diminutions of threats, one in the East posed by Iran and the lesser threat in the backyard of the Arab Peninsula, the RoY that fell into the Houthis' hand and became a serious threat. In the balance of power thought, Waltz tried to anticipate the conduct of countries. He noted that power is a means, not an end, thus countries prefer to join the weaker part of two alliances instead of joining the stronger part, because this will lead to an international control of one power. This single power hegemony is not preferred by both big and smaller countries. If it has the ability to choose, a secondary country in the international system builds an alliance with the weaker part because the stronger part represents a threat to its interests. Therefore,

I believe that the GCC has chosen the RoY to balance the power in the region and secured the southern part of the region.

## **5 : *Shift in Global Power Policies Towards Saudi Arabia***

### **5.1 Introduction**

It has been argued in the previous chapter that there has been reciprocity of impact between the changes in Saudi Arabia policies, linked to the changes in the international, regional and inter-state structure, which shaped the Saudi-RoY relationship. This chapter looks in depth to the shift in the international structure under the U.S, as the single greatest power in a multipolar world.

In this chapter, I will examine the change of the U.S foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia after the WWII, which greatly affected Saudi Arabia foreign policy, especially with the RoY. This is crucial in answering my research question of why Saudi Arabia shifted its policy towards the RoY in 2001.

I will start by examining the early stages of the U.S relations with Saudi Arabia; it shows that the U.S government never interfered in the Saudi Arabia internal affairs or sought to implement democracy in the region. Its concern was the energy sources and the oil flow to the industrial countries. Subsequently, in chronological order I will highlight the historical relation between the two countries. It will show that following the changes in the international order after the end of the Cold War, the U.S government has become less interested in the Saudi Arabian services. Therefore, the U.S government now calls for democracy in the Middle East without exception. That supports this thesis argument, that the shift in Saudi Arabia was influenced by the development in the international structure.

The rapport between Saudi Arabia and the U.S has, for many years, comprised the basis for American Middle Eastern policy. Despite their considerable variations in history, administration and culture, the two nations have agreed on significant political and economic matters, and regularly depended on one another to accomplish shared objectives. Throughout the Reagan and Carter Administrations, the Saudi government backed worldwide anti-communist movements, in accordance with the U.S policy. The Iranian revolution in 1979, as well as the USSR attack on Afghanistan at the end of that year, ignited a decade of joint the U.S-Saudi policy efforts, which featured mutual backing for the anti-USSR Mujahideen rebels in Afghanistan, as well as for the war waged by Saddam Hussein against Iran (Blanchard 2010).

However, when the Cold War came to an end, the motivations behind American-Saudi collaboration appeared to fade somewhat. Moreover, oil prices fell throughout the 1990s, reaching major lows in 1994 and 1998. This seriously influenced upon the Saudi economy as well as its regional authority.

From the end of the Cold War, the U.S has followed a consistent strategy in the Middle East, founded on four pillars. First: ascertaining its authority over oil reserves in the area. Second: sustaining industrial and economic advancement in Israel and guaranteeing its safety. Third: preventing any global or regional power from gaining authority over the area. Fourth: maintaining (or at least, seeking to maintain) stability throughout the Gulf.

This strategy has, however, encountered progressively more serious challenges: the rise of Jihadi extremism; Iran's emergence as a major regional power and its nuclear programme; mounting American economic and geopolitical weakness because of the 2008 global financial crisis; and the Arab Spring, which significantly altered the regional and international political backdrop, as well as tacit social agreements concerning the association between Arab governing elites and their people. Saudi Arabia's position, meanwhile, has continued to decline. It differs with the GCC colleagues on a number of key issues and is threatened by Iran's influence in several Arab states.

Moreover, the U.S withdrawal from Iraq, as well as its shale gas and tight oil boom, growing discussions of a "turn" towards Asia, and the resolution of the Obama administration to cease its armed interference in the area, have all served to weaken Saudi Arabia, which is already loathed across much of the region due to its implacable opposition to Iran.

The international policy of Saudi Arabia is based on two key components: its relationship with the U.S and helping to counterbalance Iranian influence. Throughout the Cold War, Saudi Arabia and the West shared the common aim of containing and defeating the USSR and communist

expansion<sup>6</sup>. In exchange for easy access to Saudi oil, the U.S safeguarded the kingdom from risk. It protected it against Egypt during the 1960s, Iran in the 1980s, and Iraq in the 1990s.

Even serious disagreements over American support for Israel did not undermine the central requirement of maintaining a united front during the Cold War, and protecting Saudi territorial integrity; indeed, American support for the peace process between Israel and Egypt; and later, an abortive peace process between it and the Palestinians, helped assuage Saudi concerns.

Following the conclusion of the Gulf War of 1990/1, Saddam Hussein was forced out of Kuwait – but allowed to remain in power. Thus, the U.S was unable to protect Saudi Arabia without establishing long-term military barracks in the Gulf. Low intensity clashes between the West and Iraq persisted; however, over time, the Saudi people became more hostile towards the draconian UN sanctions placed on Iraq, as well as the idea of the U.S warplanes harming Iraqis with assistance from Saudi bases.

The failure of the Arab-Israeli peace process towards the end of the millennium then left the U.S without any means of placating the Saudi people over the increasing bloodshed in Palestine. The Bush administration demanded that the Palestinians ended the second intifada, although they disregarded the violence towards them intrinsic in the military occupation and enforcement of settlements by the Israelis.

Given the suffering of both the Iraqi and Palestinian people, Crown Prince Abdullah had begun to significantly challenge the Bush administration by the time of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. These attacks were carried out mainly by Saudi citizens and resulted in even closer ties between the U.S and Israel, while Saudi Arabia was lambasted by American commentators. Their criticisms – often largely prejudiced and ignorant – focused on those elements of Saudi community and culture, which were greatly averse to liberal democratic philosophies. “The unusual prejudice of Islam, the purported anti-Jewish as well as

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<sup>6</sup> Personal interview with Saudi Foreign Ministry official October 17, 2014

anti-Christian partiality of the learning structure, and the inferior standing of women”: all of this engendered the image of Saudi Arabia as an adversary, and not an ally.

An increasingly anxious Saudi leadership then sought to extend its local alliances in a bid to protect itself and stave off possible Iranian regional dominance: a process, which is discussed later in this chapter. It focuses, however, on the detail of Saudi-American relations over the period of 1990-2011. Therefore, this chapter is divided into three subheadings; the first subheading focuses on the early stages of the U.S-Saudi relations, which includes the Israel-Arab conflicts; the second subheading focuses on the GWII and its impacts on the Saudi Arabia internal and external policies. This is followed by the era of President Clinton and the “Dual Contamination” negative impact on Saudi Arabia in its internal stability. This ends with President Gorge W. Bush, which is considered as the turning point of the two states’ relations and since then, the Saudi Arabian position has deteriorated.

## **5.2 Saudi Arabia Ceases to be a Tactical Priority**

The fragile relationship between the U.S and Saudi Arabia is founded on collective concerns for regional stability, imports and exports of oil, and economic progress in the region. Outwardly, both countries attempt to portray a collaborative picture to the world; however in reality, both disagree significantly on diplomatic, religious, cultural and historical questions, and both have wildly diverging national interests (Heard 2003). Particularly since 9/11, this divergence has created mounting difficulties for the relationship, with significant implications for future policy.

### **5.2.1 Early Stages of the U.S-Saudi Relations**

The prolonged existence and strength of the U.S-Saudi relationship is exceptional when we take into account the obvious incongruity of the U.S, being a western liberal democracy, maintaining an accord with Saudi Arabia, a fundamentalist Middle Eastern kingdom instituted by means of inter-marriage and invasion. This association, whose foundation dates back to 1945, and a meeting between President Roosevelt and King Abd Al-Aziz Ibn Saud, founder of Saudi Arabia, aboard the U.S.S. Quincy, has persisted over seven decades.

Between 1932, following the institution of Saudi Arabia, and 1945, American associations with Saudi colleagues was greatly left to corporate players such as the oil firm, Aramco (Citino 2002). Concerned that the Saudi monarchy might make significant oil concessions to Britain, Aramco representatives were key in persuading Roosevelt to provide financial assistance to Saudi Arabia in 1943: despite the wartime lend-lease usually only being available to only democratic countries (Bronson 2006). Roosevelt aimed to guarantee the post-war availability of oil, as well as his country's geostrategic position, while King Abd Al-Aziz merely sought the assurance of safety and protection. In exchange for easy access to oil, the U.S pledged to safeguard Saudi Arabia from exterior hazards.

However, the close association between the U.S and Israel has posed serious problems for the Saudis, who view Washington as a clearly biased negotiator in the Arab-Israeli conflict. From the initial phases of the conflict, King Abd Al-Aziz believed that he had a significant role to play and challenged Zionist factions as well as Jewish immigration into Palestine. He was infuriated by the request at a meeting in the U.S for the formation of a Jewish nation. Interestingly, just a week prior to the former's death, Roosevelt pledged to the King that the U.S would not attack any Arabs, and that no additional moves would be made into the area without consulting with both Jews and Arabs.

Nonetheless, when Truman became President, he breached this agreement by enabling the settlement of 100,000 Jews in Palestine. Abdul Aziz was furious, and in 1946, the U.S envoy to Saudi Arabia handed in his resignation. Subsequently, King Saud, who succeeded Abdul Aziz, would describe Zionism as comparable to cancer.

When Israel was acknowledged as an independent state by the UN General Assembly in 1948<sup>7</sup>, despite the opposition of the Arab world, anxiety grew. The Arab people, as well as those in Saudi Arabia, demanded the liberation of Palestine (Kirsten, Karch, and Karch 2011; Ross

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<sup>7</sup> The UN Partition Resolution 181 (1947) gave the Jewish state only 54 %of Palestine.

2004). Abdul Aziz found himself pressured by different Arab heads – and even his son, Prince Faisal - to punish the Americans by rescinding the Aramco oil concession. However he desisted from this, in the awareness that his nation required resources and technology, which could only be offered by the Americans (Lippman 2013).

Less than a decade later, a joint British, Israeli and French assault attack on Egypt, in response to the latter's nationalisation of the Suez Canal, led the Saudis cutting off diplomatic relations with France and the U.K, and ceasing oil provisions to both. Israeli involvement appeared to vindicate the anxieties of numerous Arabs that Israel would fulfil the function of an armed western armed proxy within the Middle East, while pursuing hostile growth ambitions of its own. In April 1957, King Saud declared that he would shoot any Israeli ship trying to traverse the Gulf of Aqaba and the Saudi Straits. In May, the kingdom complained to the UN over aggressive Israeli naval and aerial operations within the Gulf of Aqaba: providing notice that it was obliged to apply whatever steps it considered essential for self-defence (Lippman 2013).

Then, in 1967, Israel occupied the remainder of Palestine as well as parts of Syria, Egypt, Jordan, and two minor Saudi islands. The involvement of Saudi Arabia and various Gulf States in this war was mainly a diplomatic and economic one, although some military donations were made. All of the Gulf States were increasingly concerned over Israeli strategic ambitions and oil requirements, to the point where it appeared to threaten their own safety (Lippman 2013). Saudi Arabia thus resolved to play an increasingly important role within the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In May 1973, Aramco executives were cautioned by King Faisal that American strategy put the kingdom at risk of being isolated from its Arab allies. During an interview with NBC, the King asserted that the total backing of Zionism, and opposition to the Arabs by the U.S rendered it a considerable challenge for Saudi Arabia to maintain its oil provisions, or even merely be friendly to the U.S (Pollack 2002).

However, Washington ignored this warning. In consequence, the Gulf States then implemented a radical policy of oil diplomacy. On 17 October, Arab oil ministers agreed to reduce output by 5% every month. On 19 October, in response to Israeli requests for re-supplies, the U.S administration announced an instant, extensive military assistance package. The following day,



when the Arab capitals heard that Egypt would surely lose, they announced the stoppage of all provisions of oil to the U.S, which would have a devastating effect on the American economy (Wilson 1994). On 20 October, Saudi Arabia applied a complete oil ban on the U.S. This was designed to choke the American economy, force it to choose between Israel and the Arab world (Farnsworth 1973), and assuage the increasing fury of the Saudi people (Golub 1985).

The U.S administration had plainly failed to factor in the hugely difficult internal balance required by any Saudi leader, and especially disregarded the seriousness of the King's religious obligations. Had it done so, the U.S might have been able to prevent the ban: for example, it could have declared a far more serious aim of attaining fair peace, based on UN Resolution 242 (restoring the 1967 frontiers of Israel). Both options would have given King Faisal additional space to breathe, and none would have contravened American policy (which amounted to enabling a restricted, but not complete win for Israel). Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State, was on his way to Moscow to negotiate ceasefire stipulations when the news of the ban broke; merely altering his itinerary could have been adequate in order to prevent the ban (Clements 1987).

For both sides, the ban underscored the importance of their relationship. In consequence, every subsequent American government would pursue some sort of Middle Eastern peace strategy. The Saudi regime desisted from wielding the oil weapon in later Arab-Israeli crises, as it was by this time concerned about the harmful impact of a new ban on the extended-term oil market, as well as the driver it would offer to the institution of optional energy reserves. A draconian American response was also considered likely in such circumstances. Thus, Saudi decision-makers have endeavoured to maintain the cost of oil within a "sweet spot" aimed at increasing demand and income, a tactic restricted only by OPEC's portion of global output and ability to cooperate (Clements 1987).

Moreover, of greater import to both Washington and Riyadh was the maintenance of a united front against the USSR. This took precedence, with the successful peace efforts between Israel and Egypt further placating the Saudis. Differences over substantive matters could therefore be largely disregarded, for the time being.

### 5.2.2 Gulf War II: The End of Cold War Necessity

The U.S-Saudi relationship was significantly altered by the Second Gulf War of 1991. Hitherto, the close relations between the two countries had been maintained privately, below media radar. This was no longer an option; technology was rendering it more of a challenge for the Saudi state to police what its people gained possession of, while in the U.S, criticism of the kingdom grew considerably. As time put it, “the lack of democracy, freedom of speech, women’s parity, as well as religious multiplicity within the kingdom fail to endear it to Americans as a likeable associate.”

In August 1990, Iraqi troops attacked Kuwait and began to gather along the Saudi frontier, posing a direct threat to the Saudi monarchy. King Fahd resolved to call on French, British and American protection: this proved successful, although it set in motion a chain of extremely negative consequences, which are still being felt today.

Dispatching American forces to the kingdom, Bush set out the four guiding principles of ‘Operation Desert Shield’: the instant and entire withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait; the reinstatement of the rightful Kuwaiti government; the safety and stability of the Middle East; and the safeguarding of Americans overseas<sup>8</sup>.

On the day of the invasion, the UN Security Council implemented resolution 660: this denounced the attack and insisted that Iraq remove itself “unconditionally and immediately”. The U.S moved swiftly to freeze Iraqi and Kuwaiti assets. Soon after, the UN enforced economic sanctions on Iraq, while Bush called on world leaders, in order to begin constructing an international coalition, which would compel Iraq to pull out. The administration was careful not to encourage Israel to take part, for fear of estranging those Arab states, which had consented to take part in the alliance. Israel agreed to its exclusion, and that it would not strike back if attacked (Beres 1990, 102).

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<sup>8</sup>To listen to the whole speech of U.S President see <http://millercenter.org/president/bush/essays/biography/5>

However, after months of resolutions and diplomatic endeavours, the position remained the same. Iraq refused to withdraw, while the U.S was doubtful that economic sanctions would persuade it otherwise. In November, the Security Council passed resolution 678, which endorsed participant nations to “employ all necessary means” for Iraq to withdraw its forces from Kuwait, if it had not done so by 15 January 1991. As the deadline drew nearer, Bush adopted a moral tone, portraying Saddam as the personification of evil, and outlining his many violations of human rights (Halliday 1991, 233).

On 17 January, ‘Operation Desert Storm’ commenced coalition forces led by the U.S began huge air strikes on Iraq. The ground war commenced on 24 February; with the Iraqi army swiftly routed, an immediate cessation of hostilities was announced on 28 February. The war was successfully concluded in less than two months, without incurring heavy allied casualties. On 6 March, President Bush spoke at a joint Congress session and declared, “Tonight Kuwait is free.”<sup>9</sup>

However, the threat from Iraq remained, and western forces maintained a presence in Saudi Arabia, despite the lack of any official accord regarding their standing. Unofficially, this presence was subject to the “dual containment” of Iran and Iraq. The stipulations of the enactment of the “no-fly area” above the South of Iraq by the U.S and British aircraft remained an issue of considerable sensitivity, with deeply negative consequences.

When American forces were deployed in 1990, the Saudis were assured of their extraction immediately following the war; however, they remained in place. The control of the U.S over Saudi Arabia was therefore undeniable. At a local level, its credibility was significantly undermined, as there had been great resistance to the troops’ deployment in the first place. In August 1990, King Fahd summoned the *ulema* as well as members of the Al-Sheikh family, discussing with them the issue of permitting international non-Muslim military into Saudi Arabia. The superior *ulema* emphatically opposed this.

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<sup>9</sup>Miller Centre of Public Affairs. <http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/bush/essays/biography/1>

Only following extensive consultations with the King and high-ranking members of the Royal Family did the grand mufti, Sheikh Abd Al-Aziz bin Baz, approve the proposal; and only after stipulating that the state provided concrete substantiation of a clear threat to it. It did, and the *ulema* acquiesced, partly due to satellite pictures provided by the U.S Defence Secretary Dick Cheney and General Norman Schwarzkopf, illustrating thousands of Iraqi forces gathered at the border. Simultaneously, accounts from the Saudi military did not offer reassurance regarding the ability of the monarchy to defend itself. King Fahd summoned 350 Islamic heads and academics to Mecca to discuss this, and this followed the issue of this edict by Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Baz:

Although the Americans are, within the conservative religious perception, equal to non-believers due to their not being Muslims, they merit assistance as they are here to protect Islam (Abir 1993).

However, the *ulema* required further concessions from King Fahd for their approval to be provided: to guarantee that non-Muslim forces would abide by the conventions of the state; and that as soon as they were no longer required, would depart instantly<sup>20</sup>. This assurance was especially important to the Committee for the Prevention of Vice and Propagation of Virtue, known more broadly as the morality police (A. H. Cordesman 1997).

Although the war against Iraq was won, it led to accusations of dishonour, which within a tribal community, are not easily removed. It also invoked the grave Islamic charge of Fitna (dissension): that is, Muslims fighting other Muslims. Years later, the King told the Consultative Council, "The Lord of grandeur and glory assisted us with troops from different parts of the world. Numerous stated that the attendance of international forces was not right. However I state that it was an instance of grave necessity."(Obaid 1999)

Washington did not appear to consider the consequences of maintaining their military in Saudi Arabia following the war. This amounted to a complete misjudgement of Saudi religious institutions, and an inability to comprehend the animosity caused by the presence of international forces on Muslim soil (Obaid 1999).

### 5.2.3 The U.S-Saudi Relations in Light of Arab-Israeli Conflict

When George W. Bush became the U.S President in 2001, the vexing question of Israel and Palestine was continuing to place huge amounts of stress on Saudi-American relations. Crown Prince Abdullah was unhappy with both the policies of the new President, as well as the increasing suffering of the Palestinians. Bush stated that under no circumstances could Israel negotiate subject to a terrorist threat; and that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat should put 100% of his efforts into ceasing terrorist operations. In response, Abdullah wrote to Bush, and highlighted his discontent with Washington: “We are certain there has been a tactical resolution by the U.S that its concern in the Middle East is founded entirely on Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel. America has the right to do so; however, this resolution is unacceptable to Saudi Arabia. Beginning today.... You Americans follow your own path; I and Saudi Arabia will follow our own. From today, we will safeguard our national concerns, no matter where the concerns of America are within the area”(Morgan 2009).

The letter amounted a severe warning. Bush responded by confirming his readiness to deal with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict within his term of office. The letter served its purpose, placated Abdullah, and crisis was avoided (Delaney 2009).

Following the Cold War and Gulf War, “a considerable amount of mutual interest (between the U.S and Saudi Arabia) vanished”, as Chas W. Freeman Jr, a former the U.S envoy to Saudi Arabia, put it. In particular, the U.S support of Israel made the Saudi Arabia ever more anxious, as it served as a recruiting sergeant for terrorism. In 2006, Turki Al-Faisal, then Saudi ambassador to the U.S at the time, stated his belief that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was the key driver behind the majority of global terrorism, and that a perusal of terrorist literature only confirmed this (Delaney 2009).

Washington then found itself boxed in between Israeli demands that it be safeguarded from terrorism; and Saudi demands for vigorous American intervention in pursuit of a just peace. A senior Saudi Prince asserted that American standing within the Arab region had fallen to nil; and that to adopt an overly partial stance would make life extremely difficult for the U.S allies within

the region. Distancing themselves from the U.S, the Saudis donated \$225 million to the Palestinian Authority in April 2001.

Bush, meanwhile, chose to ignore Arafat, and regularly played host to Israeli Premier Ariel Sharon. Perhaps in response to this, Prince Abdullah rejected an invitation to Washington, opting to interact through a number of telephone conversations and letters.

In July 2001, the *New York Times* reported that former President Bush had telephoned the Crown Prince to assure him that his son's heart was in the right place, and that he would do what was right. Yet despite this, Abdullah resorted to private brinkmanship: sending Prince Bandar to warn of a breakdown in the previously close relationship. Abdullah did not intend to be made the next Shah of Iran: "There comes a time when individuals and countries separate. We have reached a crossroads; now America and Saudi Arabia have to look at their own concerns."

Washington responded by affirming its commitment to the institution of a Palestinian state. Abdullah made Bush's letter as well as the content of his own available to other Arab leaders, including Arafat, who was called to Riyadh. The Saudis replied to Bush by attaching a letter from Arafat, which pledged to meet the U.S stipulations for re-commencing the peace negotiations, and sent their envoy back to Washington.

Subsequently, however, and to Riyadh's great dismay, Washington became even more supportive of Israel following the game-changing events of 9/11. Might, however, there still be a possibility of resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict? Abdullah now suggested a peace plan during an Arab League conference. The 2002 Arab peace plan, generally referred to as the 'Abdullah plan', amounted to the clearest, mutually agreed Arab statement in support of a peaceful, collectively accepted resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict ever set out; and represented an overt acknowledgement of Israel (Beres 1990, 106).

Moreover, the Saudi view was not merely of how essential a resolution would be to peace in the area, but that it appeared increasingly beyond the will or scope of Washington to provide. Riyadh had no wish to take up the issue by itself; thus, led the Arab League to reaffirm its support of the plan, and provide unconditional recognition of Israel in return for its withdrawal behind the pre-1967 borders; acknowledgement of East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine; and of the "right

of return” for Palestinians to homes within Israel itself. Tel Aviv took note of the new proposal, but however called for alterations: particularly concerning the right of return as well as the complete return of captured land. The League responded by demanding that Israel first accepted the proposal, before going on to discuss possible alterations.

Riyadh also became increasingly involved in Palestine itself. In 2007, with internal conflict increasing within the Gaza strip between supporters of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas Prime Minister, Saudi Arabia negotiated an end to the fighting, and creation of an uncomfortable “unity government”(Graz 1990).

Riyadh did not anticipate any praise from Israel and America for achieving this; but it certainly did not expect what then resulted. Israel and the U.S increased already harsh sanctions towards Palestinians in Gaza, by way of an effort to compel the dismissal or resignation of the Hamas-ruled administration. This is because Hamas rejected the clear acknowledgement of Israel’s right of existence and refused to renounce violence. Enforcing additional sanctions on Palestine, the U.S rejected King Abdullah’s entreaties to the contrary (Chubin 1991, 141).

Only three months later, the unity administration was destroyed in a shower of gunfire, which left hundreds of dead in Gaza. President Abbas announced the dissolution of the Palestinian cabinet and parliament; and from the West Bank, elected a Fatah-dominated cabinet. The Bush government swiftly acknowledged the new cabinet as the only valid administration for the West Bank as well as Gaza. On its part, Israel made available some of the tax resources it had captured to the Fatah cabinet, in order to remunerate government employees on the West Bank: and specifying that the revenues must not be diverted to Gaza (Halliday 1991).

At a crisis meeting of the Arab League in June, Riyadh stated its opposition to Abbas and his new administration. Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal stated that, according to the Palestinian Charter, Abbas was authorised to dissolve parliament and put forward a date for fresh elections; however he was not allowed to form a government or parliament in the absence of those elections (Halliday 1991).

Saudi discontent is often better measured not by public pronouncements, but by the amount of hospitality, it provides to, does not provide to, accepts or does not accept from others. The

obvious support by the Bush administration in the destabilisation of Palestine led King Abdullah to reject an invitation to an official White House state dinner in his honour (D. O. Smith 1991).

Israel also effectively prohibited the U.S from selling high technology military hardware to the kingdom. Specifically, Tel Aviv prevented the sales of long-range air-to-air missiles for F-15 American fighter aircraft, as well as radar pods and fuel, which would place Saudi air forces on a nearly equal footing to those of Israel. Alone, this sort of “second class” treatment may have been disregarded, but when considered in conjunction with other arguments between Israel and the Saudis (e.g. over financing for the authorities in Gaza and the West Bank). Riyadh was left with no inclination to officially acknowledge Israel, or even request assistance from Tel Aviv, in spite of their mutual objective of limiting the growth of Tehran’s sphere of influence (Halliday 1991).

Overall, Saudi Arabia had begun to question more the sense of maintaining American forces within it. Serious points of contention threatened to supersede the mutual concerns of the two nations.

#### **5.2.4 Gulf War II: The End of Cold War Necessity**

The U.S.-Saudi relationship was significantly altered by the Second Gulf War of 1991. Hitherto, the close relations between the two countries had been maintained privately, below media radar. This was no longer an option. Technology was rendering it more of a challenge for the Saudi state to police what its people gained possession of; while in the U.S., criticism of the kingdom grew considerably. As time put it, “the lack of democracy, freedom of speech, women’s parity as well as religious multiplicity within the kingdom fail to endear it to Americans as a likeable associate.”

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of the rightful Kuwaiti government; the safety and stability of the Middle East; and the safeguarding of Americans overseas<sup>10</sup>.

On the day of the invasion, the UN Security Council implemented resolution 660: which denounced the attack and insisted that Iraq remove itself “unconditionally and immediately”. The United States moved swiftly to freeze Iraqi and Kuwaiti assets. Soon after, the UN enforced economic sanctions on Iraq; while Bush called world leaders, in order to begin constructing an international coalition which would compel Iraq to pull out. The administration was careful not to encourage Israel to take part: for fear of estranging those Arab states which had consented to take part in the alliance. Israel agreed to its exclusion, and that it would not strike back if attacked.

However, after months of resolutions and diplomatic endeavours, the position remained the same. Iraq refused to withdraw; while the U.S. was doubtful that economic sanctions would persuade it otherwise. In November, the Security Council passed resolution 678, which endorsed participant nations to “employ all necessary means” for Iraq to withdraw its forces in Kuwait, if it had not done so by 15 January 1991. As the deadline drew nearer, Bush adopted a moral tone: portraying Saddam as the personification of evil, and outlining his many violations of human rights.

On 17 January, ‘Operation Desert Storm’ got underway. Coalition forces led by the U.S. began huge air strikes on Iraq. The ground war commenced on 24 February; with the Iraqi army swiftly routed, and an immediate cessation of hostilities announced on 28 February. The war had been successfully concluded in less than two months, without incurring heavy allied casualties. On 6 March, President Bush spoke at a joint Congress session and declared: “Tonight Kuwait is free.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> To listen to the whole speech of U.S. President see <http://millercenter.org/president/bush/essays/biography/5>

<sup>11</sup> Miller Center of Public Affairs. <http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/bush/essays/biography/1>

However, the threat from Iraq remained, and western forces maintained a presence in Saudi Arabia: despite the lack of any official accord regarding their standing. Unofficially, this presence was subject to the “dual containment” of Iran and Iraq. The stipulations of the enactment of the “no-fly area” above the South of Iraq by U.S. and British aircraft remained an issue of considerable sensitivity: with deeply negative consequences.

When American forces were deployed in 1990, the Saudis were assured of their extraction immediately following the war; yet they remained in place. The control of the U.S. over Saudi Arabia was therefore undeniable. At local level, its credibility was significantly undermined: for there had been great resistance to the troops’ deployment in the first place. In August 1990, King Fahd had summoned the *ulema* as well as members of the Al-Sheikh family: discussing with them the issue of permitting international non-Muslim military into Saudi Arabia. Superior *ulema* emphatically opposed this.

Only following extensive consultations with the King and high-ranking members of the Royal Family did the grand mufti, Sheikh Abd al-Aziz bin Baz, approve the proposal; and only after stipulating that the state provided concrete substantiation of a clear threat to it. It did, and the *ulema* acquiesced: partly due to satellite pictures provided by U.S. Defence Secretary Dick Cheney and General Norman Schwarzkopf, illustrating thousands of Iraqi forces gathered at the border. Simultaneously, accounts from the Saudi military did not reassure regarding the ability of the monarchy to defend itself. King Fahd summoned 350 Islamic heads and academics to Mecca to discuss this; and was followed the issue of this edict by Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Baz:

Although the Americans are, within the conservative religious perception, equal to non-believers due to their not being Muslims, they merit assistance as they are here to protect Islam(Abir, 1993).

However, the *ulema* required further concessions from King Fahd for their approval to be provided: to guarantee that non-Muslim forces would abide by the conventions of the state; and that as soon as they were no longer required, would depart instantly<sup>20</sup>. This assurance was especially important to the Committee for the Prevention of Vice and Propagation of Virtue: known more widely as the morality police(Cordesman, 1997).

Although the war against Iraq was won, it led to accusations of dishonour: which within a tribal community, are not easily removed. It also invoked the grave Islamic charge of Fitna-dissension: that is, Muslims fighting other Muslims. Years later, the King told the Consultative Council, “The Lord of grandeur and glory assisted us with troops from different parts of the world. Numerous stated that the attendance of international forces was not right. However I state that it was an instance of grave necessity.”(Obaid, 1999)

Washington did not appear to consider the consequences of maintaining their military in Saudi Arabia following the war. This amounted to a complete misjudgement of Saudi religious institutions, and an inability to comprehend the animosity caused by the presence of international forces on Muslim soil(Obaid, 1999).

### **5.3 The U.S-Saudi Relations During the Clinton Administration, 1993-2001**

The priority accorded to the U.S-Saudi relations reduced considerably following the January 1993 inauguration of President Bill Clinton. Internationally, the incoming President was greatly concerned with negotiating an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict; domestically, with restoring the economy to health, and improving the balance of trade. The Clinton period was distinguished by three significant incidents with regard to Saudi Arabia; the Dual Contamination undertaking, the bombing of an American training scheme for the Saudi National Guard in Riyadh, and the bombing of the U.S forces at Khobar Towers.

After the Kuwait war, the majority of the superior *ulema* opposed the stationing of American forces on Saudi soil, resulting in a wave of anti-western oratory. Numerous preachers imprecated against the presence of international infidels and condemned Saudi leaders for their reliance on the U.S. The most outspoken of these were Sheikh Safar Al-Hawai and Sheikh Salman Al-Awda<sup>12</sup>. The latter contrasted the Royal Family with the last sultans from the Ottoman Empire and cast the U.S as an invading force. His as well as alternative extremist factions acquired substantial popular backing, by means of declarations directed at French, the U.S and British

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<sup>12</sup> Non-political Wahhabist scholars backed the Saudi government’s decision to allow the American military to defend the Kingdom; but do not appear to have fully understand American imperial intentions.(Wiktorowicz 2006)

forces. His backing came mostly from Burayda, a town renowned as a stronghold of Islamic extremism (Obaid 1999).

The state arrested the more unruly of these people following the Kuwait war. When it held Sheikh Al-Awda in 1994 (Kapiszewski 2006), his supporters sought to intervene; indeed, the arrest was only enforced when he resolved to go to the precinct in the company of his supporters, who all surrendered themselves to the police. All were placed under house arrest, and his supporters were freed a few weeks later; although the sheikh was kept under house arrest until June 1999 (Obaid 1999).

On 13 November 1995, at the control centre of an American training scheme for the Saudi National Guard in Riyadh, a terrorist attacked and killed seven people, of whom five were Americans. The authorities went on to arrest, convict and execute four Saudis for this act. Nonetheless, of still more gravity was the June 1996 attack on the Khobar Towers complex in Dhahran, claiming the lives of 19 American airmen, and one Saudi (Prados 2002).

Denouncing the attacks, Clinton commissioned Louis Freeh, the FBI's Director, to supervise the investigation. Yet details of incidents occurring elsewhere in Saudi Arabia were all over the American media, and the White House was greatly dissatisfied with the assistance provided by the Saudis during the investigation. The National Review declared, "Saudi response to each terrorist assault on the U.S which has been linked to the kingdom of late has comprised a combination of dishonesty, avoidance and passive aggression." (Jamieson and Anderegg 2008)

The Iranian-supported *Saudi Hezbollah* was soon identified as responsible: important information, as at the time, the Clinton administration had been attempting to normalise relations with Iran. Saudi officials stated that this was incorrect; (Prados 2002) the regime was hugely concerned that should the U.S impose punitive measures on Iran, it would suffer a backlash from Muslim society. Thus, it helped the investigation only so far (Teitelbaum 1998).

Gradually, however, Riyadh was reassured of Washington's commitment to better relations with Tehran. In 1999, Clinton stated, "I consider it essential to acknowledge, nonetheless, that Iran, due to its geopolitical significance with time has endured considerable abuse from different western countries. In addition, I believe that at times, it is quite essential to say to people look; you

are entitled to be angry at a deed that my country or culture or alternative nation that is generally associated with ours at present did to you 50, 60 or 100, 150 years previously. But that is not comparable to stating that I am not within the faith and you are God's chosen.”

The Saudi government viewed this as an apology by Clinton and the West; however, it was also confused as to how to respond. Reluctant to charge Iran with responsibility for Khobar without knowing in advance how Washington would react, the Royal Family both feared religious opposition from within the kingdom, and the withdrawal of full American support. Eventually, on 1 June 2002, Prince Ahmad, Saudi Deputy Minister of the Interior, stated that an indeterminate number of individuals arrested in relation to the Khobar attacks had been sentenced by an Islamic court. On 13 June, the Prince stated that those convicted were not Saudi citizens, and that the verdict would be appraised through higher courts and confirmed at a suitable time (Kemp and Stein 1995).

In the meantime, Riyadh was dismayed by the American handling of Iraq. Washington's approach of 'pinprick', tactical attacks in addition to sanctions did not generate positive results, and in fact only aided Saddam. The world watched the Iraqi population begin to starve, and living circumstances collapse due to the scarcities resulting from sanctions. An individual notorious for torture and corruption could not be depended on to take care of his people under any conditions, particularly when subjected to the sanctions enforced by the international community. Sanctions were also imposed by the U.S on Syria, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Lebanon and Sudan, with little by way of a positive outcome. As Prince Bandar observed, surely international policy should involve engaging with people, as opposed to sanctioning them? (Morgan 2009)

Saudi leaders resisted the U.S and the U.K's implementation of 'Operation Desert Fox' in 1998, as they believed it would only aggravate their hurt, precarious neighbour. Instead, it favoured encouraging a Sunni Ba'athist coup; although this did not receive support from Washington, as several previous such attempts had fallen flat (Bronson 2006). Throughout, Saudi Arabia remained most fearful of the danger of Iran taking control of a power vacuum in the destabilised Iraq.

#### 5.4 The U.S-Saudi Relations Under George W. Bush

As noted previously, the early period of the Bush administration was characterised by deteriorating relations between it and its Saudi counterparts. So much so that, as noted above, Crown Prince Abdullah threatened to break them off completely.

The risk of Saudi Arabia politically turning away and ceasing its collaboration with the U.S would have constituted a great diplomatic earthquake. There would be a considerable effect on the U.S economy, as Saudi Arabia was a key investor in American markets. The Saudis traded their oil and immediately reinvested the revenue in the U.S, towards arms and infrastructure deals. Thus, the majority of American dollars actually flowed back to American firms.

This “petrodollar recycling” was essential for the American economy, and for the American currency. If the Arabs were to start selling their oil for Euros, as Saddam Hussein called for in 2000, international demand for dollars would fall so dramatically that the superiority of the U.S currency would be placed under enormous threat.(Schreyer 2013)

It is not easy to picture what could have taken place if Bush had not capitulated so swiftly and declared his administration’s support for a Palestinian state. The Saudis were already inclined to arrange an emergency summit of Arab heads, to create an alliance in the support of Palestine; and even to seriously question armed and intelligence collaboration with the U.S. Nonetheless, rather in the nick of time for Washington (in one sense, at least) came 9/11:(*Exposing The Lies Of 9/11 - Fake Planes & No Debris* 2013; Wolin 2010) a terrorist outrage committed by 15 (of a total of 19)Saudi nationals; after just ten months the terrorist faction managed to attack the U.S on its own soil. In response, Bush declared that Americans should not anticipate a single battle, but an extended operation, incomparable to any previously seen. It would encompass dramatic attacks and clandestine activities, which would be kept secret even in the event of their success.

The U.S strategy aimed to deprive terrorists of finance; turn them against one another; and chase them from one location to the next, until they found no respite or shelter. It would also pursue those states, which provided assistance or sanctuary to terrorists. Each country, in every area, had to make a choice: “You are either for us or for the terrorists. Beginning today, any country that

maintains its support or protection of terrorists will be considered as an antagonistic government by America.”(Bush 2001).

Subsequently, the American government categorised Islamic radicals as their number one enemy. Senator William Bennett described the conflagration as a battle between good and evil; while Bush employed the alarming language of “a war, a holy crusade”. Immediately, Saudi Arabia was charged with participation in these attacks, even though it had contributed to American intelligence for over six decades. It was unthinkable that Saudi Arabia, harbouring 5000 American soldiers and navy vessels could have financed the terrorists who had attacked the U.S; indeed, Colin Powell, the U.S Secretary of State, acknowledged in July 2003 that the kingdom had been unfairly and perversely charged with involvement. Powell stated that it had been refuted through the numerous public declarations of the President and officials, who had actually commended Saudi Arabia as a strong, dynamic partner in the battle against terrorism.

9/11 greatly altered Saudi-American relations; and indeed, the fundamental geopolitical order. In international relations, the concept of RSC presumed the quest of authority, social or material, and was the main stimulator of national conduct. Morality, ethics and theories are the outcome of power, and these material concerns, and not vice versa<sup>13</sup>.

The U.S press began a ferocious assault on Saudi Arabia a few days after the attacks. The kingdom was depicted as the origin of terrorism due to its religious order; the corruption and venality of its government; and a learning structure, which advocated extremism, and an abhorrence of all non-Muslims, especially westerners. Right-wing columnists queried the worth of maintaining the U.S alliance with Saudi Arabia, and demanded a broad-reaching, inclusive restructuring of Saudi polity. Some additionally supported the instant deposing of the Royal Family and its substitution by a democratic government<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> During the Cold War, Saudi Arabia contributed a great deal of money towards covert American actions, which the U.S Congress would have refused to fund. See: (Lang 2014).

<sup>14</sup> Congressional 9/11 Report Missing Pages: Saudis Ask for Full Disclosure’. Excerpt From An Interview With Secretary of State Colin Powell on July 30, 2003. Published: July 31, 2003. <http://susris.com/2003/07/31/congressional-911-report-missing-pages-saudis-ask-for-full-disclosure/>.

Some important American voices even demanded the occupation of Saudi Arabia. The July 2002 briefing provided to the Defence Policy Board (comprised of individuals on the hard-right participants such as former CIA Director James Woolsey, Newt Gingrich, Richard Perle and Kenneth Adelman) by the hitherto unknown intellectual, Laurent Murawiec, was leaked to the press at the beginning of August and publicised internationally. Murawiec, a French intellectual with Polish-Jewish roots, until then had only been known as the author of an Eastern European book published in the 1980s and appeared to possess no experience of Islamic and Arab affairs. Yet his presentation to the Board was composed of a harsh condemnation of Saudi Arabia as the origin of global terror and ended with the suggestion that the nation be bifurcated, and that the oil-rich Eastern Provinces be divided from the Western and Central Provinces, which comprised the holy cities.

Murawiec encouraged an inclusive reform scheme for the kingdom, and even proposed that the holy mosques of Madinah and Mecca be destroyed if this did not occur. He declared that Saudi Arabia was the core of evil, the main mover, and the most treacherous rival of the U.S. He added that the White House should present Saudi Arabia with the choice of prosecuting or isolating the people concerned in the terror chain, as well as the Saudi intelligence division, and terminate all misinformation concerning Israel; or face invasion of their nation, confiscation of oil fields and occupation of Mecca.

The U.S government formally discarded the Murawiec proposal; nonetheless its comments seemed so half-hearted that it did little to assuage Saudi fears; their declarations were mostly half-hearted and formal, and did not have the dramatic worth of Murawiec's declarations, which all resulted in considerable apprehension for Saudi Arabia (Subhan 2003).

In fact, Riyadh had been stunned by 9/11 and was essentially unable to understand how the kingdom could have produced the suicide bombers. It was especially fearful of Washington's response: would it remove its support? After the Iranian revolution of 1979, the Carter administration did markedly little to aid one of its closest regional partners: this served as a disturbing precedent. If American reliance on oil, the risk to regional stability and the holding of the U.S hostages had not led to American help, what would?



Moreover, there was another precedent from further afield. In the Philippines, as the democratic opposition became increasingly popular, and the violence of President Marcos more apparent, President Reagan removed his support (Indyk and Wittes 2007). Of course, prior the U.S support for Saddam Hussein throughout the Iran-Iraq war had not stopped it from attacking Iraq following Saddam's annexation of Kuwait<sup>41</sup>. Most dauntingly of all, might the U.S have attacked Saudi Arabia instead of Iraq?(Woods 2009).

Following four years of rigorous investigation by the Joint Intelligence Committee inquiry concerning 9/11 - the collective House and Senate scrutiny of 9/11 – a 900-page Congressional report was published, suggesting that individuals with government connections could have provided financial backing to the attackers. President Bush declared that his government would not permit the declassification of twenty-eight pages, as the involvement of such individuals implied that the Saudis had supported the attacks. Saud Al-Faisal, Saudi Foreign Minister, described the implications of any connection as “an offence to any concept of fairness”; and stated that his nation had been unfairly and morbidly charged with involvement in the assault<sup>15</sup>.

However, Bush maintained that he was unable to accept the Saudis' request to clear the reputation of Saudi Arabia, as publicity of the document could impair the U.S intelligence activities and disclose origins and techniques, which would make it more of a challenge to win the battle on terror<sup>16</sup>. He stated that it would assist the enemy if they were aware of the sources and techniques employed (Johnston 2003). The collaboration of the Saudi government with the U.S

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<sup>15</sup> “The U.S has not had wholly “friendly” intentions towards the Kingdom for the past 30 years. Any appearance of such is only the visible veneer of real the U.S military policy. Declassified documents reveal that there has been a constant drumbeat to invade Saudi Arabia that has sounded behind the closed doors of our government. The Pentagon, for three decades, has formulated and updated secret plans to seize Saudi oil wells and rid the Kingdom of the ruling House of Saud. This is not only a neo-conservative cabal. Time and again plans have been made for an invasion of Saudi Arabia for a larger purpose: the U.S control of the global oil supply thereby dominating global economic markets”. See:(Hsu 2004)

<sup>16</sup> In its final report, released on July 23, 2004, the U.S. National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States (the 9/11 Commission) described Saudi Arabia as having been a problematic ally in combating Islamic extremism. However, the Commission found no evidence that the Saudi government as an institution or senior Saudi officials individually funded Al Qaeda. See:(Blanchard and Division 2008)

throughout the 9/11 enquiry nonetheless maintained the connection between the nations when it was under more pressure than at any other time.

The word ‘terrorism’<sup>17</sup>, it has been argued, is often wielded by strong nations over other nations in order to bully them (Fwzi 2003). Following 9/11, it has become widely used, even in the Arab press, without paying attention to its real significance. It is easy to apply this to Palestinian resistance groups, for example, by referring to them as terrorist organisations. In the case of 9/11, the U.S could use this epithet towards Saudi Arabia in order to achieve their tactical objectives with backing down from the international community.

UNSC resolution 1368 was passed only 24 hours after the catastrophic attacks. It provided for the international community to take any required steps to fight any kind of terrorism, in line with the UN Charter (UN. Security Council 2001). From this point, the U.S became a superpower prepared to use its military strength with no diplomatic accord or the support of main allies (McCarthy 2006).

Even though the connections linking Al-Qaeda and Baghdad were feeble at best, the Bush administration appeared to conclude that in the context of a war against terrorism, pre-emptive war against states pursuing weapons of mass destruction programmes was justified. In international relations, the RSC views states as the key players; and therefore, as the main origin of threats. The administration considered that the most dangerous, apocalyptic form of terrorism – one which used biological, nuclear or chemical weapons – was most likely to occur via state sponsorship, or even state utilisation. In consequence, Washington effectively lowered its threat appraisal threshold for Iraq, determining that it was essential to challenge Baghdad immediately, before it was in a position to launch the very attack it most feared.

When the U.S proved unable to discover either Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD) or connections between Saddam and Al-Qaeda, Bush instead advocated invading Iraq in the name of advancing democracy; and argued that toppling Saddam would result in a diplomatic domino

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<sup>17</sup> Terrorism is defined here as a political act, ordinarily committed by an organized group, involving the death or the threat of death to non-combatants. See: (Schreiber 1978)

impact throughout the region. Thus, the advancement of democracy became the tertiary objective of invading Iraq (Mousavi 2011).

It became apparent that any state opposing America would suffer the consequences. Vice-President Cheney suggested that Iraq was on the verge of acquiring nuclear capability, through which it could blackmail the world, acquire authority over the whole Middle East, and obtain power over a considerable amount of the world's energy reserves. However, his detractors, comprising almost all Arab states and the majority of the U.S' European allies, responded that if Washington had proof of any forthcoming disaster, they had apparently kept it to themselves (Sanger 2002).

In spite of all the legal concerns on attacking Iraq, war began in March 2003. In May, Paul Wolfowitz even acknowledged that the administration had simply focused on something with which all states would concur: focusing on Iraq's possible use of WMD (Hay 2010). However, additional motivations included Saddam's alleged support for terrorists; the danger of him providing terrorists with WMD; and the cruelty he had carried out against his own people.

In an opinion poll published on September 13, 2001, 78% of respondents considered that it was "very likely" or "somewhat likely" that Saddam had been individually complicit in the attacks. Thus, the administration attempted to construe non-existent links between Iraq and Al-Qaeda: purely in order to persuade Congress and the American people that an invasion was essential. This propaganda achieved its purpose: many Americans remained convinced that Saddam Hussein was hiding WMD, while over 50% were certain of his complicity in 9/11 in a survey taken immediately prior to the invasion of Iraq.

Moreover, the Downing Street Memo of 23 July 2002 shows that the U.S was intent on attacking Iraq even prior to the 9/11 terrorist actions. It demonstrates that Bush was keen on toppling Saddam; and effectively compelled intelligence agencies to find information which he could use to advocate such a policy(Manning 2002).

Information was in fact readily available which completely disproved that Iraq had any WMD, and that it had any links with terrorists; nonetheless, Bush pressed on regardless. Moreover,

the administration paid no thought to the consequences either: the Downing Street Memo clearly states that no preparations were made for the aftermath at all (Hay 2010).

Throughout, Saudi Arabia warned the U.S persistently as to the dangers of upsetting the regional balance. Beyond this, it would not permit the U.S forces to utilise its airspace and mount attacks against Iraq if a UN Resolution was not acquired; however, it did accept the U.S Air Force planes, which carried out over flights to impose a no-fly zone over the South of Iraq. Saudi officials were against large-scale allied military operations aimed at Iraqis. On a number of occasions, Prince Sultan, Minister of Defence, stated that his country would not allow allied aero-planes to carry out pre-emptive or key responsive attacks on Iraq from Saudi bases (BBC Arabic 2010).

However, in mid-September 2002, there were indications that Saudi leaders could be reconsidering their resistance to U.S or allied assaults on Iraq originating from Saudi land. The Saudi Foreign Minister re-stated that he was against attacking Iraq in theory, but that if the UN Security Council implemented a resolution sanctioning military action, all would be compelled to observe this (Prados 2002).

Several commentators opined that providing access to the U.S military opposed both inside and outside the kingdom, could weaken the stability of the Saudi government. For security reasons as well as the sensitivities of the host nation, the U.S military staffs were accommodated in distant compounds far from key population centres or Islamic holy places. Saudi Defence Minister, Prince Sultan, declared on 10 April 2000, that the U.S military in Saudi Arabia were there within the structure of UN designation only to maintain their scrutiny of southern Iraq; in addition to the borders with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, and the rest of the GCC (Prados 2002).

The position of Saudi Arabia was therefore central, wedged as it was between its responsibility as head of the Islamic world and keeper of the holy places and its most important western ally. The Saudis were concerned about the possible local impact of any form of cooperation with the U.S endeavours to attack Iraq, but were also eager to rebuild relations with Washington, which had been considerably impaired by the 9/11 attacks(Hardy 2002).

Senator Joseph Lieberman cautioned Saudi heads that their alliance with the U.S would be greatly damaged should they decline the provision of military amenities for American troops.

Lieberman stated that if they resolved to sustain American endeavours against Iraq, this would assist in repairing the damage from the 9/11 terrorist actions to the association between the two countries(Hardy 2002).

Although Saudi Arabia did not agree with American action in Iraq, it effectively offered complete backing. The war's command-and control centre was at Prince Sultan airbase at Kharj, close to Riyadh. Airports within the kingdom's northern territories were placed under American management; over flight, amenities were offered to the U.S planes and missiles. Provisions for the war were accepted at a port to the north of the Red Sea and shipped over Saudi land to Iraq. There were additional unsubstantiated reports that almost 15,000 U.S. soldiers actually came into Iraq from a Saudi border post.

Saudi leaders were evasive regarding their readiness to permit allied forces based in their country to initiate attacks on targets in Afghanistan. At a press conference, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal told reporters that Saudi Arabia would do anything within its power to back the allies in fighting terrorism but did not offer details. The U.S Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, stated that his administration would not make any demands on the Saudis, and that it had an extended alliance with them. Some assumed that the Saudi leaders were permitting the employment of bases for the logistical sustenance of allied activities, but not as departure locations for combat operations (Prados 2002).

#### **5.4.1 The Bush Doctrine**

The attacks of 9/11 occurred on American soil and represented a great offence to the dignity and pride of the U.S. Although, it responded swiftly in attacking Afghanistan, its real reaction was embedded in the announcement of President Bush's Strategy in September 2002. Scrutinising this strategy and the fundamental ideas represents the most efficient means of understanding the causes of the change in American policy towards Saudi Arabia, at a regional as well as international level.

As William Burns, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs noted, the U.S faced threats from the region targeted at both its interests and security. The Middle East contained some of Washington's closest allies as well as 60% of global oil stocks; however the terrorists of September 11 were from the Middle East too (Burns 2002).

The 'Bush Doctrine' is founded on perception of risk emanating from a mixture of "technology and radicalism" - in particular, religious and political extremism - in addition to weapons of mass destruction. In its pursuit of "full spectrum dominance", the U.S should therefore address opposition, not via conventional containment, but by means of "pre-emptive wars"; the option of unilateralism, with ad-hoc "coalitions of the willing"; advancing the perception that countries not supporting the battle against terrorism are opposing it; and the assertion that the U.S liberal model is the sole valid one, with independence sparing no country from the requirement to comply.

This was, of course, a considerable departure from conventional the U.S foreign policy, which had generally been based on containment, and had hitherto treated hegemony as derived from acceptance drawn from many-sided consultation (deviation), potentially restricted by international law and organisations. Diplomacy had also been traditionally favoured over military might. However, the designers of the Bush Doctrine had long promoted a tactic of hegemony, founded on the employment of the outstanding military aptitude of the U.S.

Consecutive American governments, up to the collapse of the USSR, had not been particularly interested in the interior behaviour of Middle Eastern allies, so long as their governments functioned stably and aided American interests. Despite continually oppressing human rights and democracy campaigners, such governments found that adopting an anti-USSR position and guaranteeing the flow of oil was essentially all that mattered, where Washington was concerned. For example, Kuwait came under no pressure whatever to alter its internal repression of dissidents following its liberation in 1991.

Yet on 8 November, 2002 (Burns 2002), Burns made a significant address to the World Affairs Council in Baltimore, where he declared that the conflict in the Middle East presented a danger to the American people just as much as those in the region. He added that it served the best interests of the U.S to promote extended-term political and economic structural alterations, and that the majority of these issues were not within its control. In this regard, the Arab Human Development Report was of significance, as it highlighted an Arab plan for hope, which would be supported by the U.S.

In May 2003, Burns further expanded on the administration's new policy (Burns 2002) towards the Middle East, which he described as primarily to "provide priority to the attainment of political structures within the area for the involvement of the general public". He had served as American ambassador for 21 years, survived four governments, and expended considerable time dealing with Middle Eastern matters. Yet in his view, all these efforts had never sufficiently considered the extended-term significance of opening highly stagnant political structures, particularly within the Arab sphere. He stated that the attainment of political transparency was not merely an issue of American principles or of ascertaining fundamental human rights; but that hard-headed American interests must maintain that stability was not a motionless phenomenon, and political structures, which did not adjust to the ambitions of their people, would become brittle and flammable.

He stressed that the Middle East was no more insulated from that than anywhere else in the world; that some Arab administration would find it more of a challenge to adapt than others; some would not move sufficiently far in adequate time; and others would not attempt it at all. The latter would be most likely to ultimately collapse. He added that himself, President Bush and Secretary Powell were certain that it was intensely within their extended-term interest to sustain democratic alteration.

In order to achieve this, the Bush administration established the "Partnership Initiative between the U.S and the Middle East (MEPI)"<sup>18</sup> and schemes which focused on educational, political and economic restructuring. The chief threat to the security and interests of the U.S was that of international terrorism (Bezhekenov 2013) - or more explicitly, Islamic terrorism – and thus Washington was intent on altering the setting within which this terrorism had hitherto thrived.

No previous the U.S administration had challenged the interior matters of Saudi Arabia: albeit, all had continued to advocate for democracy. Even here, though, while Bush appeared

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<sup>18</sup> MEPI is the primary the U.S Government tool for civil society support in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). MEPI supports civil society through training, organisational development, networking, and direct grants that expand the impact of local activists. MEPI also supports civil society participation in the G8 Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) Forum for the Future, which brings governments, civil society, and the private sector together to discuss, develop, and advance shared goals. <http://mepi.state.gov/mobile/about-faq.html>

ardent regarding support for democracy in Iraq, he was uninterested in the challenges faced by democrats in, for example, Russia or Pakistan. Moreover, the U.S had a long history of trading off political freedoms for tactical and economic concerns in, among many other countries, Iran, Iraq or the Philippines; the elder Bush responded feebly to the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989, while Clinton ignored the unsavoury human rights record of China in order to protect American trade interests. Instead, American administrations had merely removed support for dictators once they were weakened (Mousavi 2011).

This strategy was highlighted by Condoleezza Rice in June 2005 at the American University in Cairo: “Over 60 years, my nation, the U.S, aimed at stability to the cost of democracy in this area within the Middle East...presently we are following a different path. We are sustaining the democratic hopes of everyone. Democracy and freedom are the sole concepts strong enough to address violence, division and hatred.” Rice appeared to view democracy as a universal remedy for aggression in the world; and spoke without even mentioning the appalling chaos in Iraq. There, American leaders had displayed zero foresight over the effect of the invasion, with the forcible application of democracy resulting in a gruesome playing out of the law of unintended consequences.

As we have seen, then, the change in the U.S-Saudi relationship was owed entirely to the dramatic changes in international politics: notably, the collapse of the USSR and the fall of communism; the disappearance of Arab nationalists and the emergence of Islamist factions; the invasion of Iraq; and finally, the increasing threat of Islamist terrorism. Each of these altered how the U.S proceeded towards the Middle East. The importance of Saudi oil, which had served to reinforce the U.S-Saudi alliance for so long, rather lost its sparkle as a result of American access to Iraqi oil; and moreover, the rush by Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait to befriend Washington came close to rendering Riyadh as almost unnecessary.

This left Saudi Arabia poorly placed, and in need of restructuring its interior and exterior policies. In this regard, it finds itself well behind the SGS, who have become considerably more autonomous, and charted a different course. The changes in the stance of the SGS towards Saudi Arabia are covered in the next chapter.



### 5.4.2 Consequences of the Invasion of Iraq

The invasion of Iraq had considerable consequences. Saudi concerns regarding the destabilisation of the region were vindicated as Iran gained strength, and took the opportunity to enhance its nuclear scheme, influence Shi'ite factions, and attempt to weaken Saudi Arabia and various GCC states (Abdul Ghaffar 2012).

The attack on Iraq altered the regional balance of power within the Gulf and posed a new problem for the GCC. Saudi Arabia and its GCC allies had long pursued a plan aimed at ensuring equal levels of influence over Iraq and Iran, and preventing one from dominating the other (Bronson 2006). The invasion of Iraq, which deposed Saddam's government, damaged Iraqi military and security facilities, and divided its central government, changing all this, and allowed Iran to assert itself (Al-Motairy 2011).

Tehran additionally perceived an opportunity to shape and impact Iraq post-Saddam. During the subsequent two years, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) of Iran, along with its intelligence ministry, began an intricate movement, which employed hard as well as soft power. The increasing role of Iran disturbed the GCC states. In 2005, Prince Saud Al-Faisal, Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister, denounced the U.S policy in the area, asserting that Washington was deliberately moving in a contrary direction to that of the GCC. "We fought a battle jointly to prevent Iran from occupying Iraq following the expulsion of Iraq from Kuwait. Now we are giving the entire nation to Iran with no cause".

The alteration in the balance of power in the Gulf resulted in a new administration in Iraq comprised mostly of Shi'ites, causing additional complications. Beginning with the Iranian revolution in 1979, Saudi Arabia was worried about the impact of Iranian Shi'ism towards their Shi'ite society. The invasion resulted in the Shi'ite majority taking control of Iraq. Thus, for Saudi Arabia and the GCC, there was now the danger of Iran both wielding greater influence over Shi'ites in the area, and of its using this influence to persuade states such as Iraq to oppose it.

The new Shi'ite administration in Iraq intensified sectarian splits throughout the region, which Iran could seek to take advantage. The possibility of it being able to export Islamic

revolution and unseat the Gulf monarchies was now much greater; regional security had rarely come under so much threat (Stenslie 2013).

Iran's conduct within and regarding Palestine and Lebanon constitutes examples of it acting against Saudi policy. Saudi Arabia and other GCC states are fearful of organisations such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Palestine and Houthis in the RoY; and of Iranian interference in internal Arab affairs, particularly in the RoY and Bahrain. With the region also under greater sectarian stress than at any point since the Iranian revolution, Saudi King Fahd noted the requests of Saudi Shi'ites and held a conference with their commission in Jeddah in 2005 (Stansfield 2008).

Iran, indeed, has supported the Houthi uprisings in Sa'dah, north Yemen, as part of a strategy to control the area. More generally, the government in Riyadh has become increasingly concerned about the relationship between Iran and Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and the RoY. Pressure in Lebanon following Israeli attacks in 2006, and the effort by Hezbollah to occupy Beirut in 2008 only provided further evidence regarding the extent and consequence of Iranian interference (Stansfield 2008).

After the invasion of Iraq, Iranian policy went through two distinct phases: those of Mohammad Khatami; and of Mahmud Ahmadinejad, elected in 2005 (Kostiner 1998). During Khatami's period at the helm, Iran was essentially defensive: focused on preventing hostility from the U.S and backing the newly empowered Iraqi Shi'ites. The GCC made steps towards the moderate Khatami, calling for a new mutual security agreement that would include Iran, Iraq and the RoY in an alliance with GCC participants, which would serve as a security guarantor to the UN Security Council (Kostiner 1998).

On the question of the nuclear agreement between Iran and the international community, Saudi Arabia viewed discussions as a zero-sum game, in which an apparent win for Tehran was of detriment to Riyadh. If it became a nuclear power, Iran would achieve hegemonic stature in the Gulf and entire Middle East. The Saudis were additionally afraid of what they perceived as an accord between Tehran and Washington, which would disadvantage them (Akhlaghi 2014).

Security analysts such as Anthony Cordesman suggested that this apprehension must be taken seriously. Cordesman highlighted increasing asymmetric threats emanating from Iran:

notably through its efforts to weaken Shi'ite populations; support for forces which endanger targets as well as shipping within the Gulf; behaviour and growing influence in Iraq; its links to Hezbollah; and its connections to Syrian President Assad (A. Cordesman, Mohamed, and Shelala 2013).

Saudi confidence in the U.S was further eroded when Washington abandoned its long time partner, Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, and thus helped facilitate the political progress of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Saudis were additionally affronted by the absence of backing from the U.S for the subsequent overthrow of Brotherhood leader Mohammed Morsi. In addition, Saudi Arabia tried to prevent Egypt from falling into Iranian hands when Morsi visited Iran (Hendawi n.d.)<sup>19</sup>. Iran is the tradition rival to Saudi Arabia, which is the subject of the next chapter.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

By scrutinising Saudi foreign policy in connection with a variety of issues, it becomes clear that it is characterised by pragmatism and restraint. Saudi Arabia views its function as that of a peacemaker in the region, which is mirrored by its approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as the Iraq war. Unlike several of its Arab neighbours, Saudi Arabia does not have a border argument with Israel and is thus better placed to negotiate between the two factions. Thus, the Saudis brought about the effort of the Arab League, which declares that peace with Israel is attainable and must be worked towards for the benefit of the entire region.

Riyadh warned the U.S persistently about the dangers of invading Iraq: warnings, which were largely vindicated. However, as the invasion took place during a period in which it had been charged with complicity in terrorism, it found itself caught; and ultimately provided the U.S with tacit support, so as not to infuriate Washington to the point whereby its own safety could be undermined.

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<sup>19</sup>Hendawi descried Morsi visit to Tehan saying "Morsi's visit to Iran, to attend a summit of the 120-nation Nonaligned Movement, was the first by an Egyptian president since the 1979 Islamic Revolution there". <http://www.timesofisrael.com/egypt-trying-to-persuade-iran-to-drop-assad-support/>

This chapter drew attention to an important fact, which is that the era of absolute trust between the Saudi Arabia and the U.S was long gone; this has left the former's regional status susceptible to severe decline. This new development resulted in regional states instead establishing new alliances, and the best example can be found in the shift in Saudi Arabian policies towards the RoY, which supports the argument of this thesis.

## **6 : Saudi Arabia and Iran**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The AGC saw a dramatic change in their relations with Iran following the Islamic revolution of 1979. Before 1979, Iran's intervention in support of the Sultan during Oman's Dhofar rebellion in the early 1970s and willingness to go along with the "Twin Pillars" strategy of the U.S was stabilising factors in Gulf relations. After 1979, the Islamic Republic's threats of exporting the revolution and its modest successes in the ensuing Iran-Iraq war came as direct threats to its Arab neighbours. The threat from Iran was therefore an immediate impetus for the founding of the GCC in 1981, even if the AGC had been discussing cooperative economic measures during the previous ten years.

However, the threat from Iran cannot explain divergences in the foreign and defence policies of the AGC, nor can it explain the later evolution of the GCC as an organisation. Even Iran's relations with the two Yemens prior to the Islamic revolution cannot explain divergences within the GCC about whether to include or exclude Yemen from the multilateral organisation. This discussion of Iran's relations with the GCC will attempt to demonstrate the political forces that brought the GCC together, while other chapters focused on GCC-Yemen relations will show those political forces that pulled the GCC states in different directions.

### **6.2 Iran as a Threat to the GCC**

Iran has presented a very real and explicit threat to the AGC, not only since the advent of the Islamic revolution in 1979 but also under the Shah. In fact, it was the Shah in the 1970s who first began Iran's pursuit of a nuclear programme and who viewed Iran as the natural policeman of the Gulf. Immediately upon Britain's withdrawal from the small Gulf States in 1971, Iran seized three islands off the coast of the UAEs (Abu Musa and the Tunbs) and reiterated its long-standing claim to Bahrain. The U.S attempted to implement a "Twin Pillars" policy in the early 1970s, whereby Iran and Saudi Arabia would jointly manage security in the Gulf through a cooperative pact with America at the centre, but this produced little tangible cooperation between the two (Haass, 1981, pp. 151–169). Since the 1970s, the GCC states have by and large presented a unified stance in opposition to Iranian aggression in the region.

### **6.2.1 Iranian-Inspired Groups in the Gulf**

Shi'ite Muslims constitute a substantial proportion of the population in Kuwait 25 percent, Bahrain 50 percent or more, Saudi Arabia 10 percent, and smaller percentages in the other GCC states. The Islamic revolution inspired violent protests among some of those Shi'ite populations in 1980 and 1981. The new government in Tehran announced its intention to export the revolution and GCC governments were concerned that they may have a Shi'ite fifth column within their midst. Indeed, various militant cells have been uncovered by Kuwait, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia in recent years, most notably the Abdali cell linked to Lebanese Hezbollah that was sentenced earlier this year by the Kuwaiti courts. Armed Shi'ite terrorist groups operating in the Gulf have also found inspiration from Iran, such as the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain in the early 1980s and the U.S.-designated Al-Ashtar Brigades in the mid-2010s.

### **6.3 Saudi Arabia and Iran Rivalry in Context**

One of the key compulsions that pushed Iran and Saudi Arabia into additional regional rivalry, providing their otherwise local security issues with international importance. Primarily, Saudi Arabia was debatably the acknowledged religious leader within the area due to the Al Saud reign promoting Wahhabi Islam, a key aspect of the leadership of the Saudi monarchy from its 1744 union with Sheikh Mohammed Ibn Abdul Wahhab, which caused the Al Saud dynasty to command the majority of the Arabian Peninsula (Fürtig 2002). This dynamic was totally altered by the Iranian revolution, with the rhetoric of Khomeini reinforcing Iran as a novel strong menace to the domination of Saudi Arabia in the Gulf. Iraq would have an important function within the power balance up to the deposing of Saddam Hussein in 2003. From that time on, a weakened Iraq has placed Saudi Arabia in a defensive position as it aims to oppose what it perceives as increasing Iranian strength. The nuclear programme in Iran comprises the most substantial from numerous security hazards, but the philosophical influence and possible authority of Iran over the Shiite minorities within the Gulf States in addition to its political authority in countries not within the Gulf area additionally intimidate Saudi domination. To Iran, foreign policy comprises a philosophical as well as safety battle. The Arab Spring has merely increased the doubt faced continuously by the Saudi government.

### 6.3.1 The Rise of Anti - State Quo:

During the 1950s and 1960s, these were a danger to monarchical nations presented by the representatives of the USSR in the area. From the start of the 1950s, monarchical Middle Eastern nations have especially been worried by indications of Arab radicalism, particularly on the part of those opposing leaderships intending to maintain the status quo. The incentive for these movements opposing the status quo varied considerably, but all posed hazards to particular rules, particularly the Gulf monarchies. In addition to being anti-western and anti-colonial, Arab radicalism has, more perilously, usually been populist, anti-monarchical, secularist, activist, progressive and often in favour of the USSR.

The rule of Saudi Arabia, which has been tied to the ideas of monarchy, convention and Islam, and which has esteemed stability and organisation, at least from the 1940s, the idea of revolutionary alteration in whichever form has comprised a hazardous one. Just as perilous has been the readiness of the radicals to summon the Soviets into the Middle East.

Commencing with the Egyptian revolution in 1952, Iran and Saudi Arabia observed a number of bloody uprisings within the Arab world under the guise of social justice, nationalism and the people. Conventional monarchies were under attack everywhere. The assault was headed using several varied names: Arab nationalism, the catchphrase of Nasser following 1956; Arab unity, a preference for Nasser and the Baath party following 1958; social justice and equality, the premise for Nasser following 1962 as well as for a variety of communists and Marxists all through the 1960s and 1970s. The outcomes of Arab radical confrontations of the status quo were considerable. In 1952, the Egyptian monarchy was done away with. In 1958, the Iraqi Royal Family was executed and substituted by a government that comprised communists, Baathists and nationalists. In 1962, the conservative Northern Yemeni Imamate was unseated by Republican militia supported by Egypt. For each of these circumstances conservative governments that favoured the West were overthrown by some kind of Arab radicalism, in Yemen, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Tunisia and Algeria.

Even though the Saudi-Iranian relationship was delicate facing increasing nationalism in their various nations, the 1960s observed some cordiality, particularly when the Shah provided

open-ended assistance and armed help to Saudi Arabia after the Egyptian assault on Yemen in 1962 (Fürting 2002). The development of Ba'athism within Iraq additionally pushed the two nations closer as they tried to fortify the stability of their own leadership (Van Duijne and Aarts, 2009). The U.S made the most of this and supported enhanced associations amid the nations in the application of its "twin pillar" strategy. This was a response to American anxieties of the USSR persuasion within greatly anti-imperialist countries like Egypt and Syria.

In 1968, the British declared that they would move out from the "East of Suez". By 1971, they had carried out this task, thereby surrendering to America the main job of maintaining regional stability. This obligation was not taken up immediately by Washington. Instead, Iran, and to a smaller level, Saudi Arabia, made up the pillars from the Nixon government's "Twin Pillar" strategy, which was planned to safeguard the American-Favoured situation. Subject to the Twin Pillar strategy, America could depend mainly on Iran to protect regional stability in return for American weapons and technical backing. This strategy made sense to American decision-makers as it removed the requirement for the U.S, in the post-Vietnam era, to intrude directly within the area. What the U.S did not want in the 1970s, as is common knowledge, was another obligation for the U.S in a distant area not regarded or comprehended by the Americans. The U.S was unaware that its depending on regional players would render it greatly susceptible in 1979 following the unseating of the Shah of Iran, when American hostages were held by Islamic Iranian radicals and Afghanistan was attacked by the Soviets. In the 1970s, the U.S depended on Iran to assist in safeguarding the regional concerns of the U.S, but Iranian-U.S associations encountered considerable issues. Sometimes, the ego-compelled Shah of Iran seemed more eager to accept American weapons than counsel and appeared to be implementing essential local and international strategy resolutions within a void. When Washington anticipated Iran to sustain elevated generation of oil and reduced oil prices, it was taken aback to discover that the Shah headed an endeavour in the 1970s for increased prices of oil.

Even though the backing of America for the Shah was difficult, it provided Washington several tactical advantages. From 1974 to 1979, the Shah instituted satisfactory associations with all Gulf countries, and was on the whole an arbitrating authority. The AGC were uncomfortable with the imperialist plans of the Shah, saw his arrogance as irritating and were also afraid that he could eventually use Iranian power against them. However, they also viewed Iran ruled by the



Shah as a restraining power. Iran assisted in stabilising the area and generally had a constructive effect on the prices of oil worldwide. The Shah proved a challenging partner to the U.S, although he had a security function within the area that the U.S chose not to take up itself. Ayatollah Khomeini came in, who was the Islamic cleric who led the Iranian revolution and substituted the deposed Shah at the beginning of 1979.

### **6.3.2 Decade of Conflict 1979-1988**

The 1979 revolution in Iran drastically changed the geopolitical equilibrium of the Arabian Gulf. It basically changed the direction of international policy in Iran and caused constant instability in the area. The main objective was to export the revolution, which was compelled by philosophical and strategic motivations (Milani 2004). The government of Iran believed that the Islamic Republic comprised an ideal for alternative states up to such a time when the entire Muslim world was joined. This signified that monarchies, such as the Shah of Iran's, had to be pulled down. The administrations that considered themselves more endangered were the ones geographically nearer to Iran: the Arab nations within the Arab Gulf (Marschall 2003).

Ayatollah Khomeini's request in 1984 for joint sovereignty covering Mecca and Medina jeopardised the Saudi uniqueness as the leader of Islam. In addition to this, pilgrims from Iran battled with Saudi security forces during the entire 1980s, with the Saudi leadership charging Tehran with trying to seize the Grand Mosque in Mecca to proclaim Khomeini as the leader of the Islamic world (Ekhtiari Amiri et al. 2011). Consequently, Iran maintained great antipathy to the Saudis for years, with Khomeini condemning the Royal Family and declaring that the Saudi King would not live long (Ekhtiari Amiri et al. 2011). These conflicts outlined the increasing importance of religious sectarianism in the associations of the two nations. In the years subsequent to the revolution, Gulf Arab governments met the hazard of Iranian interference.

The Hajj clashes in addition to a 1981 coup conspiracy in Bahrain led by the Iranian-supported Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain resulted in numerous Gulf nations regarding Iran a larger hazard than Iraq led by Saddam Hussein (Chubin 1992; Friedman 2012). Saudi Arabia responded strongly to the coup endeavour; most of this was the result of extreme anxiety as Iran appeared in place to become even stronger. In response, Saudi Arabia utilised its influence in

OPEC to additionally impair Iran's already damaged oil production by implementing an export quota (Fürtig 2002). The coup effort was perceived by Riyadh as extra validation for its backing of Iraq, with the Saudi Interior minister denouncing Iran as the "terrorist of the Gulf" and pushing other Arab nations to likewise put in assistance. Saudi Arabia provided Iraq with \$40 billion to sustain its military (Ekhtiari Amiri et al. 2011). This resolution was a great one, as the Saudi leadership was worried about the aspirations of Saddam Hussein too; nonetheless, they perceived Iran as more dangerous (Van Duine and Aarts, 2009). They would regret this ten years later when a destabilised post-war Iraq would attack Kuwait with unfounded assertions. The desperate actions of Saudi Arabia to sustain Iraq and ascertain its own safety signified the likelihood of extended-term consequences within the contention.

This only comprised the start of a metaphorical decades-long battle amid the countries. The Iran-Iraq war, the Iranian revolution and the assault on Kuwait obliged Saudi Arabia to implement steps to ascertain its individual safety. The Saudis were worried about the wish of Ira to export its revolution in addition to its denouncing of the Saudi leadership as unlawful and in favour of America. The creation of the GCC established the rest of the Gulf kingdoms inside the Saudi area of authority, although this displeased several of the ruling parties who were concerned with Saudi dominance. The drastic alteration in the political arrangement would continue to impact American authority within the area as it grew and reduced in the subsequent years. However, for the Gulf kingdoms, having America as a security guarantor became essential. For instance, in 1991 within the Iraqi assault on Kuwait, the U.S positioned hundreds of thousands of soldiers to safeguard the oil fields of Saudi Arabia (Kitfield 2011). This action was jointly advantageous for both countries, even though the availability of the U.S armed forces in Saudi Arabia would present local challenges as a consequence of philosophy. The people begrudged the U.S presence, and numerous Muslim radicals challenged the legality of the leadership; they were certain that the Saudi leadership was permitting the defilement of the holiest lands of Islam (Fürtig 2002).

Associations amid Iran and Saudi Arabia oscillated during the subsequent years with alteration in orientation, guidance and aspirations. The conclusion of the Cold War observed Iran change from a philosophical international policy to a more practical approach, partly as the country's interior configuration was destroyed by the Iran-Iraq war (Ekhtari Amiri et al. 2011; Jawan and Naji 2011). The alteration was greatly apparent after the ascendance to presidency of

Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and Mohammad Khatami. Their international strategies seemed more amenable as contrasted to the inflexible philosophical technique from the Khomeini reign; subsequent to both elections in 1989 and 1997 correspondingly, there were also discussions about a possible reconciliation between America and Iran. Although the initial Bush government was open to this likelihood, the Clinton government was unapproachable (Bakhash and Wright 1997). However, subsequent to the September 11 terrorist assaults, Iran permitted America to enter its airspace and offered essential intelligence about the Taliban. With Khatami, the Iranian administration reached the extent of giving the U.S a proposal to acknowledge Israel inside its frontiers pre-1967 and discontinue its assistance to Hezbollah and Hamas (Sahimi 2009). In addition, within the first term of Ahmadinejad, Iran intended to be compliant so as to avoid the escalation of inter-state contention (Barzegar 2010). This provided an opening into the possibility for a jointly advantageous rapprochement.

Saudi Arabia's King Fahd looked for closer connection with Iran following the Iran-Iraq war in view of the danger of a strong Iraq. Associations were in the least ostensibly enhanced following Khatami's election (Van Duijne and Aarts, 2009). From then, the Saudis have endeavoured in the background with a discreet "rollback" strategy concerning Iran strength in countries such as the Palestinian Territories and Lebanon. Before the Arab Spring, they additionally accepted the plans of the Bush government to construct an alliance of countries in the Middle East to weaken growing Iranian authority (Gause 2007). However, connection to the U.S has a price: the Saudis are conscious that, in the instance of a U.S armed battle with Iran, Saudi Arabia will be an initial target for retribution (Gause 2007). With Iran constantly continuing nuclear scheme despite sanctions, anxiety has just been raised.

### **6.3.3 Iranian Proxies in the Region**

Iran's support for proxy groups within the region, such as Hamas and Hezbollah, also has the potential for threatening AGC' interests and diminishing their influence. Iran's policy of supporting radical Shi'ite groups in the region was almost entirely a development of the Islamic Republic. According to Graham Fuller: "While it would seem natural for almost any regime in Iran to take a special geopolitical interest in the welfare of all Shi'ite, the Shah actually devoted little time to this issue... A key consideration in the Shah's preference to avoid strong support to

the external Shi'ite was his desire not to hand a strong political card to the Iranian clergy, who over the last 200 years of Iranian history had grown increasingly politically independent and outspoken." That political independence is evident in the demands and activities of Shi'ite protest groups in the GCC states, who commonly all for human rights and equality, but have sometimes sought to obtain those rights through armed militancy.

The Movement for Vanguard Missionaries and the Islamic revolution Organisation, under the influence of Iranian cleric Ayatollah Muhammad Al-Shirazi and Bahraini cleric Ayatollah Muhammad Taqi Modarissi, as well as Saudi Hezbollah, were all violent organisations conducting attacks in Saudi Arabia during the early to mid-1980s. They were established along the same lines as other transnational Shi'ite organisations with political wings separate from armed units, similar to Dawa in Iraq, and they held up the Islamic revolution in Iran as a liberating force for change and a source for emulation for all Muslims (Ibrahim, 2006, p. 133). The 1993 amnesty deal offered by Saudi King Fahd succeeded in moderating some of these groups, though Hezbollah famously conducted the Khobar Towers attack in 1996.

#### **6.3.4 Concerns Iran's Nuclear Programme**

Iran's nuclear programme presents another potential threat to the GCC states, whether in the form of radiation leakage from a nuclear power plant failure or in the form of an actual nuclear weapon. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between the West and Iran in 2015 was ushered in amid loud complaints from the GCC and Israel that the deal would only allow Iran to succeed in accelerating its military programme while the U.S and the Europeans eased sanctions. Moreover, a common complaint was that the limited nature of the deal and the failure to address Iran's malign activities in the region would embolden Iran and its proxies.

From a realist standpoint, those fears represent very significant threats that feed into long-standing fears of the GCC states and Israel. However, we can also understand GCC and Israeli fears in terms of the diplomatic consequences of Iranian engagement with the West. The JCPOA offered, in theory at least, the prospect for Iran to engage with the U.S on a host of other issues, expand trade ties with the Europeans, and end its pariah status as an outcast of the international community. In that regard, the GCC might have faced competition for American attention and

increased difficulty in promoting an Arab Gulf agenda in Washington. To some extent, American military sales, defence training and security cooperation with the GCC is predicated on the perception of a shared threat from Iran.

#### **6.4 The U.S-GCC Alliance Against Iran**

This combined GCC-American leverage against Iran, particularly as it overlaps with Israeli interests in the region, provides the GCC with power projection in ways that the AGC could never manage on their own. American forces stationed in each of the Gulf States since the early 1990s (and since as long ago as the 1970s in the cases of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain) act as a major deterrent force for any conventional Iranian attack. Close GCC-American political relationships mean that Iran must first work to change the pro-GCC preconceptions of American policy-makers and legislators before it can even begin to address bilateral U.S-Iran concerns. American support for GCC policy goals in the region also helps project strength to Arab publics in the region. Iran's support of Islamist groups like Hamas plays to an anti-American narrative that runs across the region, even among Arab Gulf publics who may not always understand or appreciate their governments' close relations with the West (El-Hokayem and Legrenzi, 2006, pp. 6-7). However, holding up Iran's nuclear ambitions and demonstrating American resolve in helping the Gulf to combat that threat creates the image of a common enemy and a common strategy for defeating it.

This combined force projection is especially relevant in light of the fact that Russia has proven itself a relatively consistent ally of Iran. Russia has consistently followed through on its agreements to construct and supply the Bushehr nuclear facility, even if there were periodic delays in implementation, and despite the fact that Russia is a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which Iran appears to flaunt (Smith, 2007, p. 619-20). Russia has repeatedly protected Iran by vetoing resolutions at the United Nations Security Council that would seek to penalise Iran.

If Iran were to demonstrate a proven ability to detonate and deliver a nuclear device, it is still an open question as to whether Saudi Arabia would obtain a nuclear weapon of its own, possibly from another friendly country. As Thomas Lippman notes, this would only become necessary if the U.S was unable to provide assurances, and there is no evidence that Washington has ever supplied written assurances (Lippman, 2008, p. 5). Moreover, it is difficult to test those

assurances except in a state of actual war, so that Riyadh would never be absolutely certain of the U.S resolve until it calls on America to act. Leaked the U.S diplomatic cables revealed that in the late 2000s, senior Saudi officials called on Washington to strike Iran first and remove its leadership if need be, and former the U.S official Dennis Ross told an Israeli interviewer that if Iran obtained nuclear weapons Saudi Arabia would follow suit (Shalev, 2012). However, there is no evidence that Riyadh has actually moved in this direction yet (Al-Tamimi, 2013).

### **6.5 Saudi-Iranian Proxy Conflicts and Diplomatic Outreach**

Moreover, the Iran-Saudi rivalry has most visibly and tangibly manifested itself in terms of armed proxy conflicts across the region. The Saudi government, along with other GCC states, provided billions of dollars to Saddam Hussein in the 1980s to carry on his war with Iran (Furtig, 2007, p. 629). Saudi Arabia consistently viewed Iran as a greater threat than Iraq, to Riyadh's later regret as the GCC's failure to continue payments after the Iran-Iraq war and Saddam's inability to repay many of his loans contributed to his motivations for launching the invasion of Kuwait in 1990 (Duijne and Aarts, 2008, p. 7). After the Iran-Iraq war, Saudi King Fahd sought improved relations with Iran in order to check a strengthened Iraq, most notably with King Fahd stopping Saudi media attacks on Iran in late 1988 (Karsh, 2009, p. 85). Nevertheless, Saudi provided financial support to allies in countries where Sunnis were under threat from Iranian-backed militias, like Lebanon with the Hariri family. Saudi Arabia also accepted the plans of the Bush Administration to construct a regional alliance through which to weaken Iran and the "Shi'ite Crescent" (Yazdani and Hussain, 2006, p. 281).

There have been a few rare moments when relations briefly warmed between the two sides. Before the Islamic revolution, Saudi Kings Saud and Faisal had conducted several bilateral summits in Tehran, and numerous senior Saudi officials had visited Tehran to meet their counterparts. Even in the late 1980s, President Rafsanjani conducted quiet negotiations to restore diplomatic ties after the events at the Hajj in 1987 that led Saudi Arabia to place a complete ban on Iranian pilgrims. In the late 1990s, Saudi Arabia conducted outreach to the reformist government of President Khatami, beginning with a visit Crown Prince Abdullah to Tehran to attend a summit of the Organisation of Islamic Conference and ending with a security cooperation agreement in 2001. It was during the latter period, when hopes were high of a new trend towards

liberalism in Iran, that Dubai, Doha and Kuwait expanded trade opportunities for Iranian businesses and investments.

### **6.5.1 Iran's Relations with Yemen**

Iran's relations with Yemen have been an irritant in the Saudi-Iranian relationship, and therefore an important concern for the entire GCC. However, Iran had few significant relations with Yemen prior to the sixth Houthi war in 2009, and it would therefore be difficult to explain the AGC relations with Yemen in terms of their threat perception from Iran, with the major exception of the current Yemen war that began in 2015. While Saudi Arabia decried Houthi relations with Iran during the 2009-10 period of conflict in Yemen, that war was largely an internal Yemeni conflict with Saudi involvement only coming as a direct result of Houthi attacks across the Saudi border at Jabal Dukhan. The Houthis proclaimed their admiration for the Islamic revolution in Iran and the Iranian media praised the Houthis, but aside from a weapons shipment that the Yemeni government intercepted on the Red Sea coast, there was little evidence of the Houthi forces receiving large-scale external support (Winter, 2011).

Even during the National Dialogue Conference and the constitution drafting process in the 2012-14 period, Saudi Arabia continued its support for the Yemeni government and its efforts to reach out to the Houthis through a peaceful political process. Saudi Arabia maintained this posture despite mounting evidence during that period that Iran was beginning to supply advanced military equipment to the Houthis, according to journalists with high-ranking U.S. Government sources (Schmitt and Worth, 2012). It was only when the Houthis assumed full control of Sana'a and threatened the legitimate government of President Hadi in early 2015 that the Saudis led an international coalition of forces to oust the Houthi militia from Sana'a and restore the legitimate government.

### **6.5.2 Religious and Tribal Identities**

As we consider Saudi Arabia's relationship with the Houthis as distinct from its relationship with Iran, we have to consider religious differences between Fiver and Twelver Shi'ite. Zaydi Muslims, who comprise around 45 percent of Yemen's population and mostly in the northern highlands, hold to a different lineage of the Prophet Muhammad. While mainstream Shi'ite in Iran believe

the twelfth descendant of the Prophet occulted and will reappear in the days of redemption as a Messiah, Zaydis believe that certain Hashemite families can trace their descent all the way to the Prophet through a different branch. This has significant consequences for theology, as the Zaydis do not have the same concept of Messianism, and they believe that only these proven descendants of the Prophet have the right to rule today. At the same time, certain facets of Zaydi belief also make them very foreign to Salafism as practised in the Najd, in that Zaydis believe in worshipping at graves and venerating ancestors.

For all of these commonalities and differences in religion, the Houthis also share a common tribal heritage with many populations in Saudi Arabia and therefore bear certain cultural similarities that the Saudis are familiar with. The Houthis believe they are legitimate hereditary rulers of Yemen by virtue of their religious credentials, and they seek to build coalitions among the tribes of the northern Yemeni highlands through very pragmatic and transactional deal-making. Moreover, many of those tribes exist on both sides of the Saudi-Yemeni border, and there are numerous Zaydis (and Ismailis) in the southern Saudi governorates of Najran and Jizan whose relatives in Yemen are involved in the fighting. This brings us back to Constructivism as a defining characteristic of Saudi-Yemeni relations, in a way that we do not find in Saudi Arabia's relationship with Iran. The cultural characteristics that help constitute political legitimacy in Sana'a by a Houthi family that upholds hereditary autocracy underpinned by religious doctrine are similar in their interrelationships and internal logic to the understanding of political and religious authority in Riyadh.

### **6.5.3 Iran's Historical Relations with Yemen**

Iran under the Shah supported Saudi intervention in Yemen in support of the Royal Family that was deposed in the 1962 military coup (Halliday, 2002, p. 88). At the same time, the Shah's regime tried to maintain positive relations with the Marxist regime in PDRY (Salisbury, 2015, p. 4).

This should not give the impression of particularly close relations between Iran and the two Yemens in the 1970s. The Shah had his own challenges from communists at home and support for the Royalists during the civil war meant support for monarchy as a legitimate form of governance. As for the military governments that took shape in Sana'a from the 1970s through Ali Abdullah



Saleh, they sought financial assistance from any foreign partners they could find. In that regard, Saleh supported Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq war and again during Saddam's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, largely because the Iraqis provided free military trainers for Sana'a and because Saddam's proposed Arab Cooperation Council (1988-90) held out the prospect for financial assistance.

#### **6.5.4 Iranian Objectives in Yemen Today**

Yemen potentially offers Iran two strategic opportunities, namely: 1) a position along Saudi Arabia's southern border from which Iran can conduct attacks on the kingdom, and 2) access to smuggling routes that could help Iran to move weapons to other allies and proxies in the Red Sea region. By maintaining pressure on Saudi Arabia's southern border, Iran can use the leverage in negotiations with Saudi Arabia and the West in other areas, while claiming plausible deniability of its support for the Houthis. This is similar to the conditions that Iran seeks to create in Syria and Lebanon, in terms of Iran's support for allies and proxies in those countries that are willing to combat Israel. Beyond that, Iran might hope that a Shi'ite government emerges in Sana'a in the form of the Houthis, but Iran would probably benefit more from a situation similar to that of Lebanon, where Hezbollah has a blocking majority in government.

If the Houthis were to legitimately govern their own state, they would face domestic political pressures to moderate their behaviour and they might expect Iran to provide massive foreign assistance subventions. Moreover, proxies are difficult to control once they assume power, and even the Houthis may have ignored Iran's instructions to remain outside of Sana'a in late 2014 rather than take over the capital (Grim, 2015).

#### **6.6 The GCC in Relation to Iran**

The roots of the GCC as an organisation stretch back to combined economic and diplomatic efforts in the mid-1970s, including meetings of the AGC' foreign ministers with their Iraqi and Iranian counterparts in 1976. During a regional tour in late 1978, the Kuwaiti Crown Prince issued a series of statements in Riyadh, Manama, Doha, Abu Dhabi and Muscat, calling for collective action and unity by the AGC (Peterson, 1988, p. 98). Even in Washington, the view of the GCC at its inception was clearly one of an organisation seeking economic integration, though some American policy-

makers held out hopes for military sales as a joint the U.S-GCC defence partnership against the Soviets and other threats (Twinam, 1992, p. 14).

However, the first Experts Committee meeting for drafting the GCC Charter did not convene until February 1981, by which time Iran was already past the revolution and well into the Iran-Iraq war. As J.E. Peterson notes, the Iranian revolution and the Iran-Iraq war accelerated the talks among the AGC for a security pact – an idea that had circulated since the early 1970s but had never gained momentum prior to 1979 (Peterson, 1987, pp. 170-1). Some of the very earliest substantive meetings within the GCC took place among the military Chiefs of Staff in September 1981 and among the Defence Ministers in January 1982, with joint military exercises taking place for the first time in October 1983 and the creation of a combined military force (Peninsula Shield) the next year.

We can see GCC unity of approach to Iran exemplified in the 1990-91 period. Iraq's increasingly expansionist policy alarmed the GCC and Iran saw an opening to conduct its own diplomatic outreach. Rafsanjani sent overtures to the GCC in early 1988, renouncing Iran's intentions to export the revolution and Iran's desire to be the policeman of the Gulf. Iran had initial success with Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman, who announced their interest in normalising relations. This might have opened up serious divisions within the GCC, were it not for Saudi Arabia's willingness to end media attacks on Iran, while pressuring Iraq to be more flexible in ceasefire talks with Iran (Furtig, 2002, pp. 98-99).

## **6.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has highlighted the significant connections between security in Saudi Arabia and Iranian aspirations. The chapter highlighted that the potential hazard to the security of Saudi Arabia posed by Iran was a result of the dramatic alterations in the international structure, which had an impact on the balance of power within the area. The incapability of the U.S to secure Iraq following removal of its forces caused turmoil in the structure of the area. Disorder in American politics resulted in the loss of influence in Iraq by the Arabian Gulf nations to Iran.

Principally, this was displayed in the increasing strength of Iran within the Gulf area. The tactics of the U.S within the area following WWII upset the balance of power and permitted Iran

to escalate its intimidation of its Arabian bordering countries, which placed Saudi Arabia as well as the rest of the APC in an uncertain position. The capability of Iran to manipulate Iraqi policies concerning the area created an additional cause of possible hazard for the security of the Arab Gulf nations. The chapter demonstrated that Iran was observed to make up a cause of risk to the stability and security of APC.

The chapter stressed the significant connections linking the change in the international system as well as its effect on the regional structure, and the change in the international policy of Saudi Arabia regarding the RoY. It illustrated the possible common ground linking them, in which the joint factor is Iran.

Although numerous aspects impacted several of the nuances regarding the stances of the Saudi Arabian policy regarding the RoY (as will be additionally conversed more specifically in chapter 8), its own anxieties regarding security made up the most significant deciding aspect. The aspirations, policies and pressures of Saudi Arabia towards the Gulf have additionally comprised one of the more significant aspects in general Gulf safety. This offered extra reinforcement to the conjecture of possible reciprocity linking the change in the international policy of Saudi Arabia, and the Saudi awareness of security.

In the prior chapters, impacts of the development within the global and regional structure regarding the international policies of Saudi Arabia have been outlined. It has illustrated the important effect on the resolution-creation of Saudi Arabia, whose extents of progress are connected immediately or indirectly with the progress in policies of Saudi Arabia, as well as to an interior extent.

The following chapter will explain this idea by illustrating the manner in which the SGS stance regarding the influence of Saudi Arabia raised the validity of the assertion that the safety of the Arab Gulf nations is connected to the Saudi Arabian discernment of security. The chapter highlights this assertion in using two methods. It will initially offer an appraisal of the historical progress within the Saudi Arabia –SGS policies, that were connected with their function in the security of the area. It will additionally illustrate the new advancements within the GCC nations

as well as its borders concerning their security and financial aptitude. These advancements formed the chief dynamics of the connections.

In addition, Saudi Arabia's rivalry with Iran impacts numerous other regional relationships, especially when we consider various proxy conflicts in Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere. It would therefore seem natural to consider this the axis around which the rest of the GCC foreign policy revolves. To some extent that is true, inasmuch as Saudi Arabia places the threat from Iran as its number one defence and security priority and enlists the support of its neighbours and other regional allies in protecting against that threat. However, the Saudi-Iranian rivalry does not create the same kind of policy debates and nuanced divisions within the GCC as the Saudi-Yemeni relationship does. The different AGC may have held differences in the nuances of their views on Iran, but they tended to move in lockstep at moments of opposition to Iran as well as moments of negotiation and compromise (Tabatabai, 2014).

We cannot easily explain changes within the GCC and the evolving relations among its members in terms of their individual or collective relationships with Iran, especially when their respective positions on Iran have remained rather consistent over the years. For all of the GCC states, they have experienced either raw competition with Iran (or in the case of Oman, quiet accommodation) in similar ways since the 1970s. We can understand the galvanising effect that threat perceptions of Iran have had, and continue to have, on the GCC states both individually and collectively.

## **7 : *Small Gulf States SGS Cooperation and Conflict with Saudi Arabia***

### **7.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter highlighted Iran's rivalry with Saudi Arabia, showing the correlation between Saudi Arabia's policy towards its main regional rival and the power structure of the entire Gulf region. Saudi Arabia is very sensitive to any alteration in the regional power balance, with a very high threat perception from any move Iran makes. It generally seeks to prevent any gain in Iran's regional influence and maintain its own position in the regional balance of power. This chapter will focus on the SGS' relations with Saudi Arabia, showing how the rivalries or divergences among APCs create challenges for Saudi Arabia and its pursuit of regional influence and Gulf security. It begins by examining the relations between Saudi Arabia and the SGS before WWII, emphasising how the SGS approaches to foreign policy were largely in support of their bigger neighbour. However, from the liberation of Kuwait onwards, we see a dramatic shift in intra-GCC dynamics, with each APC pursuing foreign policies that are more independent. In fact, it was as a consequence of the WWII that the SGS came to view Saudi Arabia as being unable to protect their own security and maintain a regional order, which led to intra-GCC conflicts and divergences following the WWII.

This chapter will outline the basis behind this dependence; chronicle the formation of the GCC and its aftermath; and demonstrate how changing Saudi-SGS relations paralleled developments at the regional and global level.

### **7.2 Saudi Arabia Relations with SGS Before WWII**

Between 1968 and 1971, the British gradually negotiated their military withdrawal from the Gulf, where they had largely regulated political and foreign affairs for the SGS since the late-19<sup>th</sup> century. During this transition period, Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE in particular were faced with the challenge of establishing fully-functioning legislatures and cabinet-level ministries for the first time. The U.S was meanwhile promoting the concept of Iran and Saudi Arabia as close partners in regional defence and security (the Nixon Administration's "Twin Pillars" strategy) which acknowledged Iran's demographic and military strength, while hoping to carve out a dignified role for America's close ally Saudi Arabia. The U.S sought to maintain the free flow of oil to

international markets, and boost American sales of defence equipment, although it largely ignored the long-held rivalry and deep-seated mistrust between Riyadh and Tehran. Successive the U.S Administrations more or less attempted to preserve this arrangement all the way up until the Iranian revolution in 1979, encouraging the two regional powers to arm themselves and channel their increasing oil revenues into the American economy.

The 1979 Iranian revolution stoked fears of very popular uprisings in the region, Islamic fundamentalism, and instability that could open the door to communist takeovers, leading both the U.S and the AGC to reassess their regional security priorities and plans. The hostage crisis prompted a failed the U.S rescue operation (“Operation Eagle Claw”) (S. Smith 1984, 13) that nonetheless created incentive for Washington to enter into serious discussions with the SGS on which to base rights and security cooperation agreements that went beyond the token the U.S Naval presence in Bahrain (Winkler 2013, 63). At the same time, Iran’s ability to push back Iraq’s 1980 offensive and even counterattack created the incentive for the AGC (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE) to enter into serious discussions with each other for the formation of a political and security alliance later known as the GCC. Economic proposals for a customs union and common currency had existed since the mid-1970s, but they had previously been shelved in favour of bilateral economic agreements between Saudi Arabia and each of its smaller neighbours.

Saudi interference in its neighbours’ affairs had been a potential threat for decades, but security concerns in 1981 were sufficient to entice the SGS to overcome their fears of Saudi hegemony and seek mutual defence and security ties. The new Islamic Republic of Iran’s avowed goal to export the revolution, and its sponsorship of an abortive coup in Bahrain in 1981, presented an existential threat to the SGS. Spill-over from the Iran-Iraq war also threatened the security and stability of the SGS, with Iraqi attacks on oil tankers transiting Kharg Island prompting Iran to escalate with attacks on vessels all along the Arabian coast (Peterson 1984, 21). Saudi Arabia deployed its aircraft, even using American-supplied F-15s to shoot down an Iranian fighter jet encroaching in Saudi waters, while the U.S assumed security responsibilities for the GCC states by re-flagging their tankers. In turn, the GCC agreed in 1984 to form a combined military force (“Peninsula Shield”) trained and garrisoned in Saudi Arabia, both as a deterrent and as a quick reaction force for rapid deployment as a frontline defence. Thus, regional threats from aggressive

regional military powers Iran and Iraq led the SGS to seek shelter under the security umbrella of Saudi Arabia and take on the perceived implicit security guarantees of Saudi Arabia's close ally the U.S.

### **7.3 Gulf Cooperation Council Members**

Despite the many commonalities of culture, religion, language and history for all of the GCC states, each has a different set of nuanced internal characteristics that create very different domestic realities for each of their respective governments. These domestic differences and the policy responses they engender can lead to friction between GCC governments, as not every GCC member state shares the same concerns. The choice by Qatar and the UAE to open up their economies to foreign investment generated an economic and security priority to accommodate the many cultures resident in the country, particularly with tourism, alcohol and public relations campaigns emphasising diversity. Saudi Arabia, which applies a more defensive stance towards protecting traditional values, has long banned tourist visas and alcohol, imposing strict regulations at the borders. As another example, each of the SGS have had boundary issues with Iran, including shared offshore oil or gas fields with Kuwait and Qatar, disputed maritime boundaries with the UAE, and irredentist claims to Bahrain. The efforts that any one of these countries makes to resolve a boundary issue or accommodate Iran could establish a precedent that other GCC states may wish to avoid. The following are some of the domestic concerns for each GCC state that could potentially impact the policies of other member states.

*Saudi Arabia*, making up 70% of the total GCC population and 88% of its entire landmass, Saudi Arabia dwarfs its smaller neighbours and provides strategic depth to smaller GCC states. Saudi Arabia can provide safety and protection, whether through its close alliance with the U.S, through its own military strength or at the very least by providing a safe-haven for governments and civilian populations. This would imply that Riyadh has a greater role to play in GCC security and defence decision-making, and any threat to Saudi Arabia is, by extension, a threat to the security of the SGS. Iran's stated goal of exporting the Revolution by providing inspiration and incitement to Shi'ite populations across the region in the 1980s posed a great threat to Saudi Arabia, with its own minority (8-10%) Shi'ite population. The 1980-1 Shi'ite protests in the Eastern Province and the riots at the Hajj in 1987 were the most visible moments in a series of

security incidents throughout the 1980s that were largely brought to an end with a government-brokered amnesty and accord in 1993.<sup>20</sup>None of the SGS witnessed the kind of domestic interference from Iran as Saudi Arabia did, although Iran supported proxies and terrorist cells elsewhere, particularly in Bahrain and Kuwait (Byman 2008, 171).

*Oman*, Oman's strategic location, sharing the Strait of Hormuz with Iran, gives it an important role in the security of the region. Ensuring the free flow of oil through the Gulf requires Oman to maintain positive working relations with Iran, even as it aligns itself politically with its GCC partners. Sultan Qaboos accepted Iranian military assistance in putting down the Dhofar rebellion in the 1970s and helped mediate talks to restore Saudi-Iranian diplomatic relations during the late 1980s. Oman rejected Saudi territorial claims over the Buraimi Oasis in the mid-1950s, only fully finalising its border in a 1990 agreement with Saudi Arabia. Oman has at times required some limited degree of Saudi assistance and investment, though less so than Bahrain, due to its lower levels of hydrocarbon production.

*Kuwait*, Kuwait has traditionally fostered a culture of political participation, with a succession of elected parliaments that carried significant legislative functions, which in many ways is unique to the GCC states. This has served as a model for restive populations in other GCC states, and therefore a challenge to other GCC governments seeking to maintain the status quo with highly centralised lines of authority. Moreover, parliamentary democracy has been a major challenge for the Kuwaiti government itself, as opposition politicians perennially stall the passage of legislation and engage in shameless grandstanding at the government's expense. The government has resorted to gerrymandering, bribery, and suspending the constitution (1976 and 1986) just to maintain its balance and control. One-quarter of Kuwaiti citizens are Shi'ite, and they have generally rewarded the Kuwaiti Royal Family with loyalty in return for the freedom and economic opportunity they enjoy, although transnational Shi'ite political movements in other GCC states have found shelter in the more liberal religious atmosphere in Kuwait. The Palestinian population, which was almost one-quarter of all residents in the 1980s, posed an even greater problem, especially after Yasser Arafat supported the Iraqi invasion in 1990. These domestic political challenges, along with

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<sup>20</sup> For more details on the event in 1993 see: (Majidiyar 2013)



disputed maritime boundaries with Iraq and Iran, have pushed Kuwait to rely more heavily on support from Saudi Arabia, especially with regards to oil production in their shared “Neutral Zone” (Al-Baharna 1968).

*Qatar*, Qatar has the smallest population of any GCC state, and that population is divided among about a dozen rather evenly-matched tribes, in terms of demographic size and historical claim to residency. This makes it hard to staff a civilian bureaucracy or military of any significant size, while any ruler almost inevitably has to accommodate the desires and demands of his peers. Decision-making is therefore rendered highly personalised and populist, as we see in Emir Hamad bin Khalifa’s decisions soon after seizing the throne in 1995 to invite American universities and the U.S CENTCOM to establish operations in country. Those moves created new educational opportunities for Qataris generated an incentive for the U.S to provide a security umbrella for a small country with few defences of its own, and simultaneously challenged Saudi Arabia as the leading partner of the U.S in the region. Qatar reached an agreement in 1965, settling the Khor Al-Udaid boundary dispute, although that agreement led to lingering tensions between Saudi Arabia and the UAE over the same strip of land and the possible hydrocarbon resources that lay beneath (Kostiner, 1998).

*Bahrain*, Bahrain’s population is at least 50% Shi’ite, although the Sunni Royal Family of Bahrain has managed relations with the Shi’ite poorly over the decades, engaging in exclusionary practices that discriminated against the Shi’ite in terms of basic services and employment opportunities (Downs 2012, 215). Government reactions to popular unrest have often been repressive, repeatedly accusing Iran of fomenting rebellion and failing to distinguish between more peaceful forms of political protest, such as in 1974-76, and more violent forms of militancy, such as in 1981 (A. H. Cordesman 2008, 88). Bahrain was the first APC to develop its hydrocarbon reserves and the first one to run out of oil, leaving the government in arrears and dependent on Saudi assistance, for both economic and security support, in order to maintain the government’s stability. A bitter rivalry between Qatar and Bahrain extends back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century when a section of the Bahraini Royal Family sought refuge in Qatar and intermarried with the Qatari Royal Family. This rivalry played out in the 1990s with the territorial dispute over the Hawar Islands, which was resolved by arbitration at the International Court of Justice. The Shah of Iran previously

stressed his irredentist claims to Bahrain, though Ayatollah Khomeini relinquished all such territorial claims.

*UAE*, The constitution of the UAE created a federal structure with a thin set of central ministries largely responsible for defence and foreign affairs, significant states' rights over domestic policy, and an overarching Supreme Council, where all seven rulers of the individual emirates make decisions by consensus. Abu Dhabi, with its dominant share of the country's oil wealth, has over the years managed to win a great degree of authority and control over the central government, in return for taking greater financial responsibility for the economic well-being of the smaller northern emirates. These internal frictions have however created tense moments for the Emirates and for its neighbours. On the eve of the British withdrawal from the Gulf, when the UAE was not yet established as an independent nation, after the British had pulled out most of their military forces, Iran seized three islands belonging to Sharjah and Ras Al-Khaimah. Sharjah and Ras Al-Khaimah, as separate emirates with sovereign rights, proceeded to separately negotiate access to the islands with Iran, while Abu Dhabi was ill-prepared to exert authority and deal with the crisis. Abu Dhabi has since relied on diplomatic support from its GCC neighbours to attempt to pressure Iran into a settlement (Aneja 2013).

Each of the SGS has its own set of unique characteristics that, in turn, create a unique set of policy priorities for each government, both in terms of how they deal with domestic policy concerns and with how they interact with one another. As a result, the GCC has commonly been viewed as nothing more than a fig leaf, providing a nominal level of deterrence against external security threats while doing little to mask the inherent competition and rivalry existing between member states (Legrenzi 2011). Academic studies of GCC attempts to forge a monetary union, encourage the free movement of labour, foster cross-border trade and investment, etc., conclude that while such economic cooperation could in theory help lead towards political union, the reality is that the member states have little incentive to do so (Ibrahim, 2007 pp. 135–139) (Ibrahim, 2007 pp. 135–139). According to Article 4 of the GCC Charter, the organisation's fundamental aims are: "To implement collaboration, integration, and inter-connection amid participant countries in all areas so as to attain unity amid them"(GCCSG 2012). Indeed, cross-border trade and investment has increased since the GCC's inception in 1981, if only as a result of measures to improve the ease of human and capital movement. However, the first experiments in joint Arab Gulf

investments of the 1970s (Gulf Air, the United Arab Shipping Company, Gulf International Bank) have largely been superseded. Additionally, the combined Peninsula Shield forces, the 1987 and 1996 defence and security agreements, and the GCC Secretariat's joint military command remained largely unrealised, and only really began functioning in the last few years since the start of the Arab Spring.

Iraq's annexation of Kuwait in 1990, however, revealed that Saudi Arabia could not even safeguard itself, let alone its GCC allies. Ever since, the SGS, in particular the UAE and Qatar have been ready to pursue their own independent defence and foreign policies. For the UAE, this shift has meant forging close bilateral defence and security partnerships all around the world with like-minded allies, while developing an Emirati defence industrial complex. For Qatar, it has meant engaging in peace mediations around the world, which has helped establish trust and friendship with countries on either side of the conflict lines in numerous places, thereby obviating the need for a local defence establishment.

#### **7.4 Saudi-SGS Relations: Theoretical View**

As Buzan and Wæver observe, "states with limited capabilities largely limited their security interests and activities to their near neighbours"(Buzan and Wæver, 2003 p. 46) (Buzan and Wæver, 2003 p. 46). This forms security interdependence among regional actors. Possession of regional power thus tends to push the weaker states to become locked in RSC trends. Usually, regional powers will seek to influence regional states. The RSC exists in a region where there is a sufficient degree of security reliance between among actors, which distinguishes them from others' security around them (Buzan, 2007a p. 26; Buzan and Wæver, 2003 pp. 47–48).

Remarkably enough, that security cooperation or collaboration may be regarded as a favourable political association connecting two or more countries intending to meet their requirements through relations with others who have corresponding security interests and concerns, cultural, geographic, or historical boundaries. This is the principle behind the formation of multilateral organisations, including those based on common socioeconomic interests and those based on other territorial or functionally based mutual interests. States may compromise some practices and principles as they adapt their conduct to real or expected preferences of others by

means of policy synchronisation. Collaboration creates a web of relationships that collectively form the international system, and shape the convictions, regulations and norms that constitute the context for imminent action (Buzan and Wæver, 2003 p. 72).

However, Robert Keohane stresses that hegemonic powers may endeavour to make the most of their influence to persuade other states to collaborate, which requires that they work to preserve a stable and consistent global system. This implies that in the absence of such circumstances, in a situation where hegemonic powers failed to uphold widely accepted norms and principles, other countries might be unwilling to collaborate. On the other hand, by compelling other countries to compromise and collaborate within the international order, stronger states can exert their influence over weaker ones not only to uphold international norms, but moreover to enhance stronger states' authority and capabilities. Hegemonic powers therefore exist in a self-perpetuating cycle of achieving their own objectives by persuading other states to forego their own, and accept agreements which are more to the advantage of stronger states (Keohane 2005).

Thus, as collaboration carries a utilitarian function and does not necessarily bear with it ethical acceptance or philosophical accord, it may not therefore be classified as an association, which is generally characterised by equivalent benefits for the interests of all member states. Rather, collaboration is merely the result of perceived or apparent necessity, prompted or provoked by the coercive presence of a hegemonic power. Pfaltzgraff and Dougherty state, "Of key significance for a concept of collaboration is the level to which the motivations for, or advantages from, collaboration may be observed to prevail over the motivations to function individually" (Pfaltzgraff and Daugherty 1997). In other words, states may not generally be eager to work together, as doing so may necessitate compromising their interests, although such hesitation might be overcome on the basis of a cost-benefit analysis and incentives (Keohane 2005). Moreover, belligerence or war does not necessarily cut off these utilitarian ties of collaboration. For example, following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, the GCC severed nearly all ties with it and denounced Iraq's infringement of the territorial sovereignty of Kuwait, although several GCC members quietly continued to sustain indirect or discreet lines of communication (Bunton and Cleveland 2008). As members of international organisations like the UN, OPEC and the Arab League, belligerent states are often unable to completely break off lines

of communication with one another, if only due to the co-location of their diplomatic missions abroad.

Simply because states have similar foreign policy agendas or threat perceptions regarding any particular matter, it does not therefore follow from this that they will collaborate with one another. In fact, members of a multilateral organisation can compete with one another on a short term spot basis, while collaborating in terms of long-term goals, as we often see among members of OPEC, who cheat on their stated production quotas. In this sense, collaboration has to be perceived as an active type of exchange or compromise; sometimes even a negotiation between two or more parties. States may not always adhere to cooperative accord if such cooperation does not serve their direct concerns, and thus may informally or discreetly refuse to collaborate for limited periods of time (Pfaltzgraff and Daugherty 1997). While states come together in multilateral organisations by virtue of their shared principles or long-term ideals, they still pursue their own interests in a narrow sense, which can run counter to multilateral cooperation in the short term (Mercer 1995). A similar effect occurred during the Cold War, when powers such as the U.S or the USSR attempted to sustain and extend their associated spheres of influence, with their alliances offering them extensive tactical, ideological, geopolitical and political tools for countering the influence of their opponent. Hegemonic powers may discreetly endeavour to coerce small states as a means of reinforcing international norms that favour their hegemonic objectives. However, from another angle, where their security is perceived to be under threat, small states may feel they have no real alternative than to seek the protection of a stronger ally, possibly on a conditional basis. Small states may even use their support for a hegemonic power as tactically beneficial to their security concerns, in order to deter threats from other regional rivals; they might view these relationships with superpowers as less threatening in comparison with the alternative security conditions, which they encounter locally.

Waltz explains that one of the chief dangers of bandwagoning is that it necessitates minor states to obtain substantial assurances from the potentially dangerous hegemonic power that they take the side of. Aside from any concessions such an alliance may involve, small states' limited capabilities mean they do not have sufficient resources to play an effective role in such an alliance, and they therefore run the risk of conceding both decision-making authority and sovereignty to some extent (Waltz 2000). These cuts both ways, however, in those small states with limited

military capabilities can politically ally with a hegemonic power in order to pre-empt a military threat from that same power. It could be argued that many Eastern European states pursued alliances with the USSR after WWII for precisely this reason. According to Waltz, states also attempt to preserve power equilibrium by balancing, whereby “countries join coalitions to safeguard themselves from countries or alliances whose greater resources could present a hazard.” This can be carried out by setting up inter-state alliances, which aim to mutually oppose a possible threat posed by a more powerful state; or an alliance of nations by means of combining resources (Waltz 2000).

The GCC’s roots reach back to an era when the rulers of these originally tribal communities were suddenly forced to consult each other and establish some form of cooperation while facing an uncertain future. When the British Labour government announced its decision in 1968 to withdraw British military and diplomatic protection from the Gulf, Bahrain, Qatar, the seven Trucial States and Oman emerged reluctantly from their status of semi-dependence on Britain into full statehood. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait had a reason to be apprehensive of the power vacuum in the Gulf after the British withdrawal in 1971. The predominant threat facing them at the time was the animosity of the majority of Arab governments, which – being socialist and anti-west – endeavoured to undermine several of the conservative regimes of the Gulf. In President Gamal Abdul Nasser’s Cairo, public opinion was mobilised against these ‘stooges of colonialism’, and Baghdad proliferated revolutionary cells and anti-regime organisations in Bahrain, Oman, the PFLOAG and others elsewhere in the region, while PFLOAG had a revolution for the entire Gulf written on its banner.

Saudi interference in its neighbour’s affairs had been a potential threat for decades, however security concerns in 1981 were sufficient to entice the SGS to overcome their fears of Saudi hegemony and seek mutual defence and security ties. The new Islamic Republic of Iran’s avowed goal to export the revolution, and its sponsorship of an abortive coup in Bahrain in 1981, presented an existential threat to the SGS. Spill-over from the Iran-Iraq war also threatened the security and stability of the SGS, with Iraqi attacks on oil tankers transiting Kharg Island prompting Iran to escalate, with attacks on vessels all along the Arabian coast (Peterson 1984, 21). Saudi Arabia deployed its own aircraft, even using American-supplied F-15s to shoot down an Iranian fighter jet encroaching in Saudi waters, while the U.S assumed security responsibilities for

the GCC states by re-flagging their tankers. In turn, the GCC agreed in 1984 to form a combined military force (“Peninsula Shield”) trained and garrisoned in Saudi Arabia, both as a deterrent and as a quick reaction force for rapid deployment as a frontline defence. Thus, regional threats from aggressive regional military powers Iran and Iraq led the SGS to seek shelter under the security umbrella of Saudi Arabia and take on the perceived implicit security guarantees of Saudi Arabia’s close ally, the U.S.

Bandwagoning and balancing provide a lens through which a researcher could appraise the logic underlying the establishment of coalitions, bearing in mind that

## 7.5 Conclusion

This chapter with chapters 5 and 4 provided analyses of the effects of the three systems structures, which supports the hypotheses of this thesis and scrutinises the connections and dynamics of the incorporation of the RoY into the GCC in 2001, as well as the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the RoY. It asserts that there is a mutual association between them. The progress of the Saudi-RoY association is additionally influenced by the security anxieties of Saudi Arabia, which are a result of global, regional and inter-state rivalry for authority in the Gulf area.

The Saudi-RoY policy underwent general shifts from a “policy of coordination” (1970s), over a “policy of contamination” (from 1990 to 2000), to a policy advancing cooperation between “support, including it partially in the GCC Council and initiative” in Iraq (after 2005).

It was vitally important before examining the Saudi Arabia relationships with the RoY to highlight those three levels of the system that influence the security of Saudi Arabia. In addition, in searching for theoretical explanations for the shifts in Saudi Arabia’s RoY policy, it is necessary to look at what actually characterised the Saudi-RoY policy, and how it is related to the structural changes in the Saudi state’s environment, or in the Saudi role- and self-conception.

Thus, based on what this chapter has demonstrated, Saudi Arabia’s key strategic and tactical partner is not Bahrain, which Iran has claimed as its own; nor is it Kuwait, with a 35% Iranian population; nor is it the UAE, with all its demographic intricacies; nor is it Oman or Qatar, both of whom can regularly be found pursuing their own interests and in opposition to Saudi Arabia. It is, instead, the only other state in the Arab Peninsula possessed of oil, people, and tactical location; albeit, it chronically lacks stability and command: namely, the RoY.

The chapter has also set out how the GCC has been incapable of agreeing on the character and intensity of the threats presented by the RoY, Iraq and Iran: rendering it almost impossible to implement a regional stance on these issues. Each member state has been included within the U.S security umbrella, with Kuwait and Bahrain also elected as key non-NATO allies in 2002 and 2004 respectively. This state of affairs is not likely to change in the foreseeable future and will undermine any endeavours towards regional security collaboration as is also highlighted by the



present level(Johnson 2015, 1) of reduced interoperability among GCC states' sea, land and air militaries.

The chapter concludes that Saudi Arabia should maintain its command of the GCC but make significant changes to its tactical plans. Given the GCC's scant progress over a period of more than 30 years, it is small wonder that it is so often labelled as toothless; thus, Saudi Arabia should instead seek to collaborate and synchronise with alternative regional states, which can enhance its global role. Working with Egypt, Sudan and the RoY, rather than the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain, would provide vital tactical depth; and its real commercial markets are surely contained more within its own rapidly increasing population other than elsewhere in the Gulf.

Continued inconsistency within the GCC over how to respond to the Arab Spring – and in particular, the ongoing crises in Iraq and Syria – only further bear this conclusion out: The Council has proven wholly unable to stop the two neighbouring states from falling into chaos and carnage; and Iran continues to lurk in the background, opposed openly only by Saudi Arabia. Thus, those chapters confirm the validity of the study hypothesis that asserts there is a mutual association between them. The progress of the Saudi-RoY association is additionally influenced by the security anxieties of the Saudi Arabia: these are a result of global, regional and inter-state rivalry for authority within the Gulf area.

Thus, what has been declared previously states that the tactical partner of Saudi Arabia is not Bahrain, which Iran has claimed as its own; it is not Kuwait, with a population comprising 50% Iranians; is not AUE, which comprises demographic intricacies and has taken over islands and is neither Oman nor Qatar. It is the sole nation within the Arab Peninsula in possession of everything including oil, people, and tactical location although there is an absence of command. Nonetheless, Saudi Arabia has had to extend its associations with nations that could be of tactical significance, like the RoY, Sudan, Egypt and Iran too.

This chapter additionally illustrates that six participant GCC countries have been incapable of concurring on the character and intensity of the threats presented by Yemen, Iraq and Iran, thus rendering it nearly impossible to implement a regional stance on these matters. Additionally, every participant nation has been included within the U.S security umbrella on a mutual foundation, with

Kuwait and Bahrain also being elected as key non-NATO allies within 2002 and 2004 correspondingly. This tactical actuality is not likely to alter in the predictable future and destabilises any endeavours in the direction of regional security collaboration. It is also mirrored in the present condition of reduced interoperability amid GCC participant nations' sea, land and air military.

This chapter outlines the association between Saudi Arabia and the minor GCC nations and then concludes by stating that Saudi Arabia should maintain a grasp on command of the GCC, in addition to reconsidering making drastic alterations to its tactical plans. Over 30 years with no advancement is sufficient, and the GCC has been labelled as a toothless institution. Thus, the suitable option is to collaborate and synchronise with alternative regional strong nations that enhance its functioning in the global sphere. In economic and political extents, nations such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Sudan and the RoY provide tactical depth, as opposed to UAE, Qatar and Bahrain. Additionally, if Saudi Arabia desires marketing of output, then the real markets are within its dense population.

In brief, the domestic politics of Arab Gulf nations find means of resisting and exporting rebellion and protest, while raising domestic status. Within the GCC nations, there are various approaches concerning Iran; some nations are more violent, and the rest are cautious of violence. The association with Iran, or the readiness of a Gulf Arab nation to openly oppose Iran, has caused some variation concerning the backing for the insurgents in Syria and the governing administration in Bahrain, for instance. The UAE is considerably more careful than Qatar and Saudi Arabia in its public disagreement with Iranian concerns, although this policy is also faced by local political limitations, federal allegiances and arguments.

The next chapter will focus on the nature of Saudi-Yemeni relations, and illustrate those factors – internal, regional and international -, which resulted in the RoY finding itself isolated.

## **8 : *International and Regional Determinants of Political Stability in the RoY***

### **8.1 Introduction**

As a result of the local aspects impacts on the RoY political stability, which I established in the last chapter; it is also possible to make a link between this chapter and the whole argument. The first step in answering my research question; why Saudi Arabia shifts its policy towards the RoY in 2001? It was to present the factors that hinder the stability in the RoY. In the last chapter I will illustrate local variable. In this chapter, I will highlight the regional and international variables. Then, I will move to Saudi Arabia-RoY relation in light of the previous variables in both chapters.

Subsequently, I will begin by examining the international factors that have significant impacts on the RoY security, and then move to seeing how these were applied. First of all, I will explain my orientation to the research process, chasing the critical events related to those factors and their impacts on the RoY-Saudis relations. This will be followed by explaining the methodology that I used in the research, arguing that RSC was the most suitable approach to provide answers to the question of this thesis.

### **8.2 International Determinants of Political Stability in the RoY**

#### **8.2.1 The End of the Cold War and Political Stability in the RoY**

The end of the Cold War meant that the structure of the international system changed from one of bipolarity to unipolar control. The international system is one of the main determinants affecting relations between major powers and smaller countries: freedom of movement enjoyed by small states depends upon them, or the nature of relations prevailing at the top. This effect extends to the relationship between forces and political parties within the international unit itself (Mqald 2007, 109).

A unipolar system is controlled by a single state with power and influence, in a manner that renders its international unit superior in all measures to the remaining international units from which the system (Waltz 1964, 887) is made up. In the early 1990s, as the U.S took full control, Arab regimes found themselves particularly vulnerable at both regional and structural levels.

The developments brought about by the end of the Cold War, and the changing structure of the international system, provided many opportunities but also many problems, which affected stability in the RoY. For the RoY, it meant the end of the conflict between its two parts (Boucek and Ottaway 2010). The U.S administration's strategic interests meant that Washington strongly supported Yemeni unity; because its absence would mean a continuation of the conflict and create instability in the southern Arabian Peninsula. The U.S support for Yemeni unity continued after the elections in 1993, and during the war in summer 1994: despite both the RoY's position during the Gulf crisis, and the support of Washington's allies in the region for secession (Peterson, 2009 pp. 503–504).

Indeed, in effect, two wills collided: the international will represented by the U.S and the regional will's representative of all Gulf States except Qatar, which supported the continuation of unity. The U.S warned the Gulf States to recognise Yemeni unity, and prevented Egypt from sending ships loaded with weapons to Aden (Almasdar 2009).

Yet the RoY, as with any Third World country plagued by weakness and lack of resources, had suffered from limited choices and limited freedom of movement available under the previous bipolar system. Effective states in the international system, particularly the U.S and EU, dealt with the democratic transition, human rights issues, and liberties on the basis of their interests, and according to their relationship with ruling regimes. Such powerful states compel some states to apply democracy, the protection of liberties and human rights, while turning a blind eye to systems, which suit their interests. This can be seen today: Western countries support Arab revolutions and transitions to democracy in countries not associated with their strategic interests; while turning a blind eye to key allies such as Israel, which occupies Palestinian territories (Ignatieff 2009).

American support for democracy in the RoY is not characterised by attendance but is subject to developments that affect the U.S interests. Washington's support for democracy faded after 1998, as terrorism began to plague the RoY, and all but vanished after the events of September 11: which led it to pay far closer attention to security aspects and the war on terrorism rather than democracy (Carapico and Rone 1994; Walad Beh 2004).

After the second Gulf crisis, the U.S and its allies exerted a great deal of economic and political pressure on the RoY: which found itself with little choice, due to the absence of international geopolitical balance (Waltz 2010). Saudi Arabia, key ally of Washington, aimed to subjugate the RoY and accomplish a fait accompli on the border dispute. Other Arab states found themselves similarly weakened by the new unipolar system (Samuel 1993).

The Yemeni authorities placed its sea and land ports under the U.S control: military drones began to fly continually over Yemeni skies. The new strategic ties between Washington and Sana'a reached their peak under President George W. Bush: with the RoY now a theatre, in which the U.S fought terrorism under the pretext of a threat to its national security. But this only resulted in growing internal unrest; and even the effective failure of the Yemeni state itself (*Interview with Ali Abdullah Saleh with Al Arabiya ( Political Memory) 2013*).

### **8.2.2 The Global 'War on Terrorism' and its Impacts on Yemeni-Saudi Relations:**

As, historically, the RoY has been a major destination for all creeds, religions, and religious movements because of its geographical or social properties – the latter, characterised by tribalism; the former, by harsh terrain – the RoY has been one of the countries most affected by international terrorism in recent years. Its geographical location, bordering Saudi Arabia, made it a key hotbed for Al-Qaeda and its affiliates (Al-ashmla 2006). Osama bin Laden, indeed, was of Yemeni origin. Al-Qaeda used the RoY as a stronghold in its war against foreign presence in the region: causing great harm to the security and stability of the RoY. The poverty and illiteracy which the RoY suffers from enabled Al-Qaeda to penetrate local communities and gain a base for itself from which to carry out attacks (Boucek and Ottaway 2010).

Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, expelled Al-Qaeda from its territory; and the western powers began to fight it hard within the RoY, with further appalling consequences for the RoY's security and stability (Gómez and Miguel, 2010) (Gómez and Miguel, 2010).

The RoY is located in a critical strategic area: vital for American access to oil resources, as well as the freedom of commercial and military navigation in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. The U.S wants to secure these interests, and the safety of its regional allies (most notably, Israel) (Alserfy 2010; Turabi 2014). The nascent unified Yemeni state found itself with little choice other

than to accept stringent conditions laid out by Washington and the GCC, which encompassed economic reform, the adoption of a free market system, and to at least maintain an appearance of democracy (Baylis 2000). Militarily, the RoY provided its facilities in Aden for American use during Operation Restore Hope in Somalia; and subsequently expanded security and military cooperation as civil war broke out in Somalia in 1994 (Perl and O'Rourke, 2001).

Yet, such was the RoY's increasingly close relationship with the U.S; this only helped foster Al-Qaeda's growth within it. Moreover, for long periods, the RoY authorities turned a blind eye to Al-Qaeda atrocities: as long as these targeted its political opponent, Saudi Arabia (A. H. Cordesman and Obaid 2005). As Al-Qaeda became party to the political conflict during the transitional period (Albawab 2008), the authorities effectively used it to help resolve this conflict and both threaten and blackmail foreign adversaries. Party political officials were mysteriously assassinated; it may be that Al-Qaeda was responsible. Between 1992 and 2002, Al-Qaeda focused mainly on pursuing its interests and targeting foreign nationals: which confirms that terrorism is often initially linked to ideological conflicts (Al-Faqih 2011).

This period also oversaw tensions in relations between the RoY and the U.S; and Gulf States, led by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The U.S froze its aid and assistance to the RoY due to the latter's stance during the Gulf crisis; but following the bombing of the *U.S.S. Cole*, and that of the French *Limburg* oil ship, as well as September 11 itself, the RoY enjoyed relative calm between 2003 and 2006. September 11 left the RoY authorities terrified of antagonising the U.S in any way. Yet, Al-Qaeda recommenced its operations during the re-election campaign of President Saleh, who was supported strongly by the U.S, on September 16, 2006 (Albawab 2008).

The factors contained in the external environment determine the course of international politics. The impact of this on political decision-makers cannot be ignored, and differs from one country to the next depending on the ability of states to react to such variables (Sharhan 2006). Against this backdrop, crises, which occur, whether at regional or international level, can result in either stability or instability.

In the case of the international war on terrorism, its consequences were to effectively disable mechanisms designed to ensure peaceful transitions of power. The war on terror became

the sole priority for the U.S, the West and their allies in the region, especially Saudi Arabia; with conflict intensifying between governments and their opponents and helping incubate terrorism in consequence. In the RoY, the physical presence of Al-Qaeda during internal political conflict over the last 20 years meant that the U.S shied away from supporting popular demands to bring down the Saleh regime. Washington's perspective was that if the Yemeni government fell, Al-Qaeda may be able to take control, and provide an even greater threat to American and regional interests and security.

### **8.3 Regional Determinants Political of Political Stability in the RoY**

#### **8.3.1 The Crisis of the U.S Occupation of Iraq**

Following the incursion into Iraq led by the U.S in March 2003, international and regional discussion on Iraq has been subject to evaluation of its tactical and geopolitical consequences to the balance of power in the area (Ted and Innocent 2007; Lowe and Spencer 2006). President Bush was cautioned as early as February 2003 that he would be addressing one issue and causing five more if he removed Saddam Hussein forcefully by Saud Al-Faisal, Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister (Nawaf 2006). The toppling of the Baathist administration had the key, if unintentional, effect of empowering the Shiite majority in Iraq and increasing the involvement of Iran in Iraqi matters as perceived by analysts and officials within the Gulf. The outcome of this has comprised great suspicion of the promotion of extensive connections with non-state as well as state players in Iraq which has given Tehran tactical depth and caused considerable discomfort in the GCC (Ted and Innocent 2007).

Therefore, Iraq is still a professed origin of instability and anxiety for the GCC. The maintained absence of human progress and human instability indices in Iraq are the source of new regional stability hazards, like the 2.3 million internally displaced individuals and raised levels of unemployment and poverty. As long as they are not settled, these elements will still cause instability. The development of illegal economy and transnational terrorism systems have already appeared in the international drug market as Iraq progressed into a profitable channel. From 2003,

weak border controls have enabled smugglers to move synthetic drugs, opiates and cannabis to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait for transportation to Europe through Iran from Afghanistan<sup>21</sup>.

The Middle East and the Arab world in particular was the centre of international and regional interactions and conflicts in the period after the events of September 11, where the Islamic world, especially the Arab world was considered the second party in this conflict. The occupation of Iraq by the U.S forces was the most important of these events and formed the axis of international and regional interaction and response. The occupation had severe consequences and implications for stability in the RoY, changing the balance of power in the region, and intensifying conflict between regional powers (Stansfield 2008) because of the vacuum caused by Iraq's effective removal from the regional geopolitical equation (Stansfield 2008).

The Iraqi crisis represented a turning point in terms of how key issues in the Middle East interlink. The presence of the foreign troops in the region only serves to undermine local security and stability and benefit Iran: which seeks to take advantage in pursuit of regional hegemony in the name of protecting its interests, nuclear project, and national security (Al-Kaabi 2012). Since the beginning of the crisis, the change in the traditional power structure of Iraq and its policies led to a sharp decline in the power of the Sunni minority, and the rise of its Shiite majority. In turn, this influenced the developments in the political security of the region: increasing the importance of the Shia and Kurds in the new Iraq, and helping Iran increase its influence too. Neighbouring countries (most notably, Saudi Arabia) have responded with a new strategy, essentially amounting to a regional geopolitical battle under the cloaks of religion (Bhalla 2011).

Iran was able to exploit weaknesses in Arab relations, and the absence of any coordinated strategy for Arab national security, in harnessing sectarianism and extending its influence across the Arab region. It supported armed movements in Lebanon and Palestine ( Hamas and Hezbollah) against Israel; and expanded its influence into the RoY by encouraging and supporting the Zaidi Shia in the northern Sa'dah region.

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<sup>21</sup> Iraq Emerging as Key Route in Global Drugs Trade," Agence France Presse, July 5, 2008



## **8.4 Sectarian Conflicts in the RoY**

### **8.4.1 The RoY -Iranian Relations**

The announcement of Yemeni unity drew the attention of political decision-makers in Tehran: suffering at the time from pressure from the surrounding region: in particular, from its great rival, Saudi Arabia (Quandt 1981a). The relationship between Iran and the Gulf States, as well as the very tense one between it and the U.S placed it under great stress and prompted it to form a network of ties and regional alliances in the political and geographical sphere: with a view to help promote its regional position, protect its strategic interests, and confront possible threats. As part of this strategy, Iran was the first state to announce its support for Yemeni unity, and went on to cultivate political, trade, and cultural relations with the RoY. The immediate period following Yemen unification oversaw a substantial number of visits by Iranian officials to the RoY; the interests of the two countries were converging considerably.

The strategic geographical location of the RoY rendered it an important support for Iran in the event of the latter being attacked by any of its regional enemies. The two countries had common security interests: especially given the developing policies of the U.S and its allies in the region. Following the end of the Kuwait war in February 1991, Washington renewed its efforts to isolate Iran: containing it and placing political, military and economic ring around it. This same approach was adopted by the Gulf States with regard to the RoY: prompting the two countries to forge increasingly close economic and security ties (Alzerqi 2005).

When conflict broke out between political parties in the RoY, Iran took strong steps in support of Yemeni unity: then President Rafsanjani stated in June 1994 ‘that, ‘Iran believes that the RoY should be unified, and it is opposed to the division of the RoY’. The Gulf States responded by supporting the U.S position,’ under the pretext that Iran was supporting one of the parties in the Yemeni war (Alzerqi 2005).

In both its support for Yemeni unity, then for the RoY in the war of secession, Iran accurately read both the political landscape of the RoY and the impact on its relationship with regional neighbours who opposed the unified RoY. Alone among the Gulf States, Qatar supported

both Yemeni unification and the RoY in the war of secession because of its desire to create a balance in the region and challenge Saudi Arabia.

Later, though, with the onset of the war on terrorism, Saudi Arabia was able to resume its internal influence in the RoY. The Yemeni regime considered that, given the intensification of internal political conflict it was experiencing, an effective alliance with Saudi Arabia would be essential. This requirement – especially given the need for Saudi economic aid – trumped any need for a close relationship with Iran, not least given that the increasingly close security links between Sana'a and Washington effectively passed through Riyadh.

Thus in 2004, the RoY foreign policy became increasingly hostile towards Iran: lessening its support for Arab resistance in Palestine and Lebanon, at a time when the Shia in Sa'dah began to rise up against the Saleh government.

After the 2003 RoY elections, Saleh and his ruling party began reducing the role of the opposition, particularly that of the Muslim Brotherhood (the RoY Congregation for Reform Party), prompting mass opposition across the political spectrum under one umbrella (joint Meeting Parties). This conglomerate unanimously agreed on the need for one individual to represent it at the presidential elections in 2006. In late October 2009, the RoY officials reported to local media regarding the interception of a vessel loaded with weapons from Iran, and the arrest of five Iranian “mentors”, on their way to assist Houthi rebels (Awadi 2009). Some reports revealed an Iranian strategic aim to bring the Red Sea under its sphere of influence: whereby Eritrea would provide a bridge for Iranian weapons with its boats (Awadi 2009; Haidar 2009). Bashir Ishaq, Chairman of the Department of Eritrean Foreign Democratic Relations, accused the political regime in Asmara of undermining security and political stability in the region, and working to destabilise the regimes in both Saudi Arabia and the RoY. He also spoke of a training camp for Iranian Revolutionary Guards (Basij) existing in Eritrean territory and along the coasts, especially in the port of Assab (Nashwan 2009).

The President of the Yemeni National Security Agency and the Director of the Office of the President (Ali Mohammed Al-Ansi) confirmed Iran's support for the Houthi rebels: stating that

his authorities had detained two ships coming from Iran in 2009; and that Tehran was believed to have precisely such a relationship with Eritrea (Al-jabali 2010).

Given the mounting danger of increased Iranian interference in the RoY affairs, and the rising intensity of official RoY statements, Mottaki called on Qatar to help resolve the crisis. But Iranian clerics and lawmakers declared the need to support the Shia in the RoY (i.e. the Houthi rebels) (Al-Watan 2009): with the commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, Mohammad Ali Jafari, stated that it would step up its presence in the Gulf of Aden for reasons of defensive necessity. Observers viewed this change in policy as a potential threat to the security of the RoY and Saudi Arabia (Al-Watan 2009): in particular, posing a danger of Iran taking control of Yemeni islands in the Red Sea, and turning them into Houthi training camps.

Relations between the RoY and Iran have been increasingly strained by such statements emanating from Iranian officials, its media, and the clergy; which occurred at the same time as the need grew for full alignment with Saudi Arabia, in order to face down internal Yemeni opponents. The RoY government refused to receive the Iranian Foreign Minister as head of a delegation to the RoY, in response to the escalation of Iranian interference (IslamToday 2009). Moreover, tensions continued to increase between the Yemeni authorities on the one hand, and the Houthis and Saudi Arabia on the other: pushing the Saudi Arabia into direct military intervention in the sixth war in 2009 (Al-jabali 2010).

Although there is no categorical, definitive evidence proving the existence of Iranian interference or direct support for the Houthis in the RoY, the likelihood of it clearly remains: especially when we consider Iranian policy in, for example, southern Lebanon or the Gaza Strip. The common factor is its support for revolutionary Shia groups; yet in the case of the RoY, Iran's interference is critically predicated on its rivalry with Saudi Arabia.

#### **8.4.2 Iran Supporting Shi'ite Houthis**

Within the last ten years, Lebanon, Iraq, the occupied Palestine, Yemen, and Afghanistan have played the role of a chessboard in the strategic plotting of Iran and Saudi Arabia. However, the rapid growth of Iran's influence in the region, and expanding nuclear ambitions are starting to heighten an already deepening rift in the Saudi-Iran relations.

The association between the regime in Iran and Houthi movement is clear for anyone to see even though in public the Houthis deny its existence. Hasan Al-Sa'adi, a senior leader of Houthis is quoted by Bloomberg News as saying that they respect Iranian resistance and the movement of Ayatollah Khomeini, even though they do not agree with everything that Teheran says. Practically, there is a lot of proof available that Iran provides aid to the Houthis. For instance, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 2013, the coastguard in Yemen seized an Iranian vessel, the Jihan one, carrying weapons, explosives, and a host of other military equipment from the Revolutionary Guards Corps destined for the Houthis.

In an interview with Saudi official, he gives reasons for Iran involvement in the RoY: “there are several reasons why Iran would want to lend support to the Houthis. For instance, having an agitated armed Shia group in control of border areas adjacent to Saudi Arabia is a needed tool for putting pressure on the authorities in Riyadh”<sup>22</sup>. In addition, Yemen owns a substantial portion of the Red Sea coast, which Iran wants to have control of so that it meets its wider control of the sea routes emanating from the Arab Gulf.

When Houthi rebels seized power in Sana'a, officials from the AGC, and commentators in the West made claims that this was part of the objective of Iran to spread its revolutionary ideas and subsequently create a Shia empire right across the Middle East (Mamouri 2015)<sup>23</sup>. The takeover of the Yemen capital by the Houthi militias happened at an important time for the region: Iran was involved in discussions around the resolution of the nuclear programme. This would result in a deal that gave Tehran relief from sanctions and removed some of the blockades to the reintegration of Iran into the rest of the international community. This was also a relief to some Gulf Arab states that had become tired of the tension between Iran and the West.

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<sup>22</sup> Personal interview with Saudi official in Riyadh, on October 18, 2014.

<sup>23</sup> Ali Mamouri, Al-Monitor the Pulse of the Middle East, 2015-06-26, Available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/fr/contents/articles/originals/2015/06/gulf-fears-shiite-expansion-wikileaks-saudi-arabia-iran.html>

Saudi officials found themselves in an uncomfortable position when they observed the Houthis advance on their own backyard and the government of Yemen being taken out of the picture. Subsequent to overstated reports of Iranian backing to the Houthis, the strikes by the Saudi led coalition against Yemen, were sold as a proxy war involving the regions two rivals, in which the involvement of both was equal (Clawson 2015)<sup>24</sup>. Currently, this is the prevailing view among Gulf Arab nations, whose dread of the revival of Persian Empire has a huge bearing on the way events unfold in Yemen (Ottaway 2015)<sup>25</sup>.

For Riyadh, Yemen is an important area of influence and hence of priority (Emma 2016)<sup>26</sup>. For years, Saudi Arabia has involved itself in the affairs of Yemen. Even though, Yemen would not offer Saudi Arabia much in terms of resources, it is still important for the House of Saudi with regards to its legitimacy and prestige. Coming from a position of weakness, the Saudis see the role of Iran in Yemen as one driven purely by a power play, accompanied by a requirement to surround strategically while also posing a threat to the existence of the Arab Gulf state (Sebenius, 1992 pp. 18–23).

However, the reality of the situation is that Iran's involvement in Yemen has been muted and limited, as Yemen is not a priority in the eyes of Tehran. Unlike the strategy of Iran in Syria and Iraq, its policy on Yemen is patchily and devoid of an end goal. Even though, Tehran would be willing to offer support to the Houthis, it is unlikely to go so far as putting its elite forces on the ground in Yemen, as was the case in Syria and Iraq. Actually, even with the sustained air campaign in Yemen after Saudi Arabia cut its diplomatic ties with Iran, in January of 2016, after the sacking of Saudi ambassador and his staff from Tehran after that execution of the Shia cleric Nimr Al-

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<sup>24</sup> Clawson, Yemen Crisis: Independent, 1 May 2015, Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/yemen-crisis-terrified-citizens-caught-between-saudi-arabia-and-iran-as-air-strikes-and-blockade-10220087.html>

<sup>25</sup> Ottaway, The National Interest, May 11, 2015, Available at: <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/saudi-arabias-yemen-war-unravels-12853>.

<sup>26</sup> Emma, The Independent, Sunday 10 January 2016, Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/msf-hospital-bombing-saudi-led-airstrikes-yemen-outrage-worrying-pattern-attacks-essential-medical-a6804796.html>

Nimr by Saudi Arabia, there was no reaction from Iran (Gladstone and Sanger 2015)<sup>27</sup>. This is important because if the conflict in the Middle East is to be resolved, Saudi Arabia and Iran will have to find common ground or a Zone of Possible Agreement where the negotiated outcomes will satisfy both the parties (Staff 2016)<sup>28</sup>. Even though, Iran has finally been allowed to sit at the table where a resolution to the Syrian conflict is being negotiated, the discussion is still tense and the gap between the two sides is still big. Iran has since stopped making threats that it will leave the negotiations, and both the sides have made it clear that the severing of diplomatic relations with each other will have no effect on their willingness to sit on the same table seeking a resolution of the Syrian crisis. Yemen remains the area of overlap; for Riyadh, it is a high priority issue and for Tehran, a low priority one. Hence, Iran has the capacity and will to compromise on Yemen. This should form the point of departure in working towards the stabilisation of a region that sits on the precipice of collapse.

May 1990, can be seen as the point where the history of modern Yemen starts. This is when the northern and southern parts of the country united to form the RoY, led by President Ali Abdullah Saleh. The capital of the united Yemen became Sana'a, which had formerly acted as the capital of YAR. Aden, the former capital of the South became the country's economic capital. Currently, the divisions between the former north and South regions are still clear.

Added to the divisions, the Yemen situation is complicated further by a number of other elements. At the centre of the issue lies identity politics even though these are not confined to sectarian issues. Although, the Shia-Sunni divide is evident in Yemen, the country's politics are also shaped by the ethnic, linguistic and tribal affiliations<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> Rick Gladstone and David E. Sanger,, Nov. 2, 2015, Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/03/world/middleeast/iran-says-it-may-quit-talks-on-syria-over-saudis-role.html>

<sup>28</sup> Staff, Sun Jan 10 2016, Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-group/saudi-arabia-iran-say-dispute-wont-affect-syria-talks-idUSKCN0UO0AJ20160110>

<sup>29</sup> The World Factbook — Central Intelligence Agency, Nov 2015, Available at:

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ym.html>.

Zaydism is a Shia group that can only be found in Yemen and some parts of Saudi Arabia. They form a significant part of the population in Yemen, even though the majority of their leaders have converted to Sunni Islam to gain support and the blessings of Saudi authorities. The political party, Al-Haq, was formed by another faction of the Zaydis, and the Houthis form the youth-oriented wing of this party. Within the decade following the formation of the party, the youth group has developed into a well-organised militia (Salisbury 2015, 2). The Houthis have in these years turned into the symbol of the Shia forces in Yemen, which is in opposition to the government in power in Sana'a. Southern Sunni tribes and militias support the ousted government. They formed what is now known as the Popular Resistance Committees, (BBC 2017)<sup>30</sup>. These indigenous movements are founded on "the tribal tradition of collective responsibility." (Al-Dawsari 2014)<sup>31</sup>.

Even though, the Houthis subscribe to the Shia school of thought, they still reject particular Shia beliefs important to Iranian Shi'ism, which brings them closer to Sunni Islam. In actual fact, others within the Gulf Arab states and Iran refuse to perceive them as Shia at all. Also, Iran is conscious of the fact that its influence within this group is limited. Through calling the Houthis Shias and people working on behalf of Iran, Saudi Arabia and President Saleh pushed the group into the willing hands of Tehran. In one way, Hadi, Saleh and the government of Saudi Arabia have created an impression that the Houthis are not indigenous, and they are a product of Iran, which has sent them to Yemen to torment the original owners of the country. This is a narrative that has been gaining ground across countries in the Arab Gulf region where many now see the Houthis as an agent of Iran. However, the real truth is that the Houthis are a native group that has more to share with the rest of the Peninsula than they do with Iran. Even though, Iran would enjoy using the Houthis to irritate Riyadh, there is no indication that the country may want to develop deeper ties with the group even if it could.

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<sup>30</sup> BBC News, 2017-03-28, Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29319423>

<sup>31</sup> Al-Dawsari, Middle East Institutem, Mar 5, 2014, Available at: <http://www.mei.edu/content/popular-committees-abyan-yemen-necessary-evil-or-opportunity-security-reform>

The grievances of the Yemen rebels are not only legitimate, they are real and local (Barakat 2015)<sup>32</sup>. Among their grievances are issues related to proportional representation, the general protection of Shia minorities, the proliferation of Salafism and an end to corruption. Their ultimate goal is that Yemen should be free from any meddling of foreign governments, including Iran, in its affairs. This is despite the relationship the Houthis have had with Iran since the founder of the movement and brother to the current leader Abdul-Malik Al-Houthi, Hussein Badreddin Al-Houthi journeyed to Tehran in 1986. The Houthis' fear of being labelled a puppet of Iran is what makes this movement want to maintain a comfortable distance between itself and Tehran. This is the reason why they have maintained Zaydism and tribal principles in their governance despite their acceptance of assistance from Iran. As an important factor in Yemen politics, the Houthis cannot be wished away.

Within their various groups, the nearly 26 million Yemenis, compete for the limited resources that their country can provide. Central to these resource challenges is the shortage of water. This has become a source of conflict and a challenge going into the future. Others have predicted that Sana'a will become the first capital in the whole world to have its supply of viable water collapse (IRIN 2012)<sup>33</sup>. The shortage of water has led to an escalation in water-borne diseases. This lack of water is responsible for half of the deaths of parents and their infants in the country (Ward 2014, 21:138). In addition, almost 90 percent of all available water in Yemen is used by small-scale farming even though the agricultural sector contributes only six percent to the country's GDP. Partially, the problem is exacerbated by the fact that about half of the water available for agriculture is used for the cultivation of Qat, which is a narcotic plant that many people in Yemen enjoy chewing (IRIN 2012)<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> Barakat, March 31, 2015, Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2015/03/31/saudi-arabias-war-in-yemen-the-moral-questions/>

<sup>33</sup> Time Running Out for Solution to Water Crisis, IRIN, 2012-08-13, Available at: <http://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2012/08/13/time-running-out-solution-water-crisis>

<sup>34</sup> Time Running Out for Solution to Water Crisis, IRIN, 2012-08-13, Available at:



The economic problems in Yemen are not just confined to a scarce supply of water; this is a low-income country that disproportionately depends on an oil price that is dwindling. Oil revenues account for 25 percent of the country's GDP. The oil pipelines frequently are targeted by terrorists. High unemployment and a shortage of food is also a big problem in Yemen. For a country with a population with a growth rate of 2.5 percent, (IRIN 2012)<sup>35</sup> the rate of youth unemployment sits at around 34 percent (“The World Factbook — Central Intelligence Agency” 2015)<sup>36</sup>. These economic challenges are further made worse by corruption, ineffective governance, and the general instability in the country. Statistics also show that Yemen ranks second in the world with regards to gun ownership (Chalabi 2012)<sup>37</sup>. This is a major problem for a country, which is so unstable and lacking strong central authority. Together, these factors make Yemen unstable and insecure, providing a breeding ground for radical ideologies.

Since the RoY, in its modern form, was established in 1990, the country has faced a number of significant crises: insurgency, separatism, and terrorism. Apart from the clashes the government has been involved in with the insurgency groups, the country also became the home of AQAP, and the target of the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria. The spread of AQAP happened in Yemen mostly starting in 2006, and coming to a peak in the years 2011-12, owing to Yemen ascending into chaos and getting more divided (Wright 2015)<sup>38</sup>. In the beginning, the Al-Qaeda cells in the Arabian Peninsula operated as separate groups. Later, they agreed to unite and form a single

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<http://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2012/08/13/time-running-out-solution-water-crisis>.

<sup>35</sup> Time Running Out for Solution to Water Crisis, IRIN, 2012-08-13, Available at:

<http://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2012/08/13/time-running-out-solution-water-crisis>.

<sup>36</sup> The World Factbook — Central Intelligence Agency, Nov 2015, Available at:

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ym.html>.

<sup>37</sup> Chalabi, The Guardian, 2012-07-22, Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2012/jul/22/gun-homicides-ownership-world-list>

<sup>38</sup> Wright, Mar 27, 2015, Available at: <https://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2015/03/27/why-military-intervention-wont-end-yemens-crisis/>

group: AQAP. The U.S policy on Yemen was influenced by two major events: the bombing on Christmas day and the attack on the U.S.S. Cole. This resulted in a policy focused on counterterrorism, and the drone programme.

The pro-democracy protests in 2011, which were known as the Arab Spring, led many to hope for a better future in Yemen. However, unhappiness persisted. After the elections in 2012, the GCC attempted to stabilise the situation in the country using a peaceful transfer of power from Saleh to Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi. Success was mixed, as the transition seemed shaky. The Houthis still felt that their demands were being overlooked. Hence, 2011 did not end with the democratisation of Yemen, as many would have wanted. Otherwise, it resulted in a more powerful Houthi movement, and the ability of AQAP to institute itself in the country.

Even though, Iran had advised to the contrary, the Houthis seized power in Sana'a, in September 2014. Tehran predicted that this would lead to an undesirable escalation of tension. The country was also conscious that this is a situation that would overstretch its resources, considering that it was already involved in Iraq and Syria. It did not want to be dragged into the situation, particularly considering that the Houthis did not consult it and had sprung surprises on it before. Part of the reasons why the Houthis had decided to take over power is that the government had ignored it in the decision-making process. In the face of protests, the Houthis and government attempted to use the National Dialogue process (held from March 2013 until January 2014), to arrive at a solution (Ghobari 2014)<sup>39</sup>. The intervention of the United Nations helped broker a deal, which would lead to a government of national unity, provided the Houthis were willing to withdraw from some of the cities it occupied. By January 2015, the parties had drafted a new constitution. The Houthis rejected the constitution which led them seize power in Sana'a. After denouncing this coup, the Hadi government tendered its resignation.

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<sup>39</sup> Ghobari,, Reuters, Fri Aug 22/ 2014, Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-protests/tens-of-thousands-of-yemeni-houthis-protest-against-govt-in-capital-idUSKBN0GM12C20140822?feedType=RSS>

The ten-year-long Saudi-Houthi battle is particular to Yemen. It is an indication of the fear in the hearts of the authorities in Saudi Arabia that they had lost their grip on what had been their most significant hinterland for almost 100 years. They also feared that this should be repeated across the region. These fears were made worse by reports that Iran was involved. A target of Shia mosques in Sana'a by ISIS led to the death of 137 people at the same time when a coalition of forces led by Saudi Arabia, started striking Houthi targets. For its part, Iran denounced the tenation coalition, even though it did not make a move.

### **8.4.3 Saudi Arabia Supporting Sunni Salafi in the RoY**

Salafism is label whose definition is contested. Even though it emerged in public debate in the West following the attacks in the U.S of September 11, 2001, the political Islam branch that it represents can be traced a long time back. For some time now, modern Salafism has not been properly defined. Nonetheless, it can be defined as an endeavour which seeks to transform Sunni Islam, basing this reform on the ideas of Taqi Al-Din Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328), Muhammad bin 'Abd Al-Wahhab (1703-92), and Muhammad Al-Shawkani (1759-1834). One common thing among all these scholars is that they wanted to eradicate from Islam, various innovations, which they perceived as undesirable (*bid'a*) so that it can come back to the ideals of the reverent ancestors (Al-Salaf Al-salih): the first three Muslim generations. Modern Salafi ways of thinking were made formal during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, mostly as a result of Muhammad Al-Albani (d. 1999) and 'Abd Al-Aziz bin Baz's (d. 1999) influence. These two emanated from Syria and Saudi Arabia respectively. They facilitated the reformist project and directed attention to matters of worship ('*Ibada*) and creed ('*Aqida*) as opposed to Islamic law and jurisprudence (*Fiqh*).

Within the last 20 years, Salafism has become more prominent in the Middle East. This is especially the case in such countries as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, which have witnessed an emergence of a political form of Salafism often referred to as *Sahwa*; turning itself into a major social movement (Al-Rasheed 2006). However, in RoY, the central Salafist trend is generally a political. The development of this trend is mostly attributed to Muqbil bin Hadi Al-Wadi'i. Al-Wadi'i was a cleric, who received his education between the 1960s and 1970s at different religious institutions in Saudi Arabia of which one of them is the acclaimed Islamic University of Medina. Until he died in July of 2001, Al-Wadi'i was famous for his suspicious links with the religious and

political elite (Bonney, 2008 pp. 245–262). The institute where he promoted his beliefs from, known as the Dar Al-Hadith institute situated in a small town called Dammaj located in the Sa'dah province, would later see a rapid expansion that attracted thousands of students coming from both within and outside RoY. It also inspired the establishment of other similar institutions in other countries.

At a theoretic level, the primary element of Al-Wadi'i's version of Salafism encompasses claims of allegiance to the political ruler (King, Amir, or President) irrespective of the conduct of that ruler. It also operates from a desire to rise above local and national perspectives and convey a common message founded solely on the hadith and the Qur'an. It is the desire of the Salafists in RoY to preserve the Muslim faith by ensuring that it does not end up involved in politics, taking part in elections, revolutions, and demonstrations. However, it is their belief that they can still influence the policies of the state through the advice they give to the ruler in private.

The way of thinking detailed above, is what separated the Salafists in RoY from the other Islamist trends and individuals such as those linked to organisations like the Muslim Brotherhood like Abd Al-Majid Al-Zindani (Johnsen, 2008 pp. 3–5). Who believe in participating in the elections and who are also viewed by the followers of Al-Wadi'i as the sources of corruption and division. The Salafists, who do not involve themselves in politics, generally condemn any terrorist's activities, which target innocent civilians. Their leader, Al-Wadi'i was extremely opposed to the global jihadist strategy and also that inside RoY as from the early 1990s. His opposition was indicated by accusing Osama bin Laden, who during this period was making attempts to start wars in Afghanistan, of being more willing to invest resources in buying weapons than he was in building mosques. It is also reported that he even sabotaged some of the operations that bin Laden had planned against South RoY's socialist elites (Lia 2007, 4).

#### **8.4.4 RoY's Salafists as Allies of Government?**

After 9/11 and after the death of Al-Wadi'i and faced with an environment that was risky, the RoY Salafists movement reasoned that condemning violence would be a good way to legitimise its position. Even though, this condemnation was not new, it became more explicit at this time when state repression started to look more probable. Sources from Saudi Arabia who were close to the

official religious establishment, criticising terrorism started gaining popularity within RoY. Mostly these writings, penned by clerics, were critical of Islamic groups that took part in politics such as the political Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood and blamed them for the violence. They also viewed Al-Qaida as a problem.

Within this context described above, the broad range of Salafists in RoY was at pains to act in a manner, which indicated that it, was not willing to approve any strategies which involved violence targeted at the state and those that supported it. The leader of the breakaway Salafist fringe Abu'l-Hasan Al-Ma'ribi who was also the author of the anti-terrorism manifesto, together with his opponent, Yahya Al-Hajuri, indicated their support for the President of RoY, Ali Abdullah Saleh and his election to power in the ballot of 2006. A few years earlier, Muhammad Al-Imam, possibly the most compelling successor of the Al-Wadi'i's ideology, had made a speech during a conference held in 2003 where he indirectly criticised the Iraq Jihadi against the occupation led by the U.S. In the same speech, he made the claim that the Jihadi had to get the endorsement of the authorities in RoY if it was to be legitimate. The U.S was a new friend of RoY when it comes to the “global war on terrorism” and so the RoY government would obviously not legitimise such a Jihadi. This way of thinking essentially saw Yemenis leaving to fight in Iraq as fighters who were illegitimate.

Through the above actions, the Salafists in RoY transformed themselves into supporters of the government in the same manner as the religious authorities in Saudi Arabia had the power to approve of the policies of the state and its decisions in all contexts. Even though, they operated from a conservative stance that interpreted Islamic jurisprudence in a radical manner, the Salafists fashioned themselves as the promoters of allegiance or even restraint and also as the actors with the capacity to make violent strategies illegitimate using arguments of a theological nature.

#### **8.4.4.1 The Remaining Potential for Violence**

The image depicted above is however incomplete, as it overlooks a number of pragmatic contradictions within the Yemeni Salafist movement. Actions, at times, have the capacity to oppose the apolitical and peaceful doctrine. Even as they condemn violence, some Salafist individuals have been observed to offer support to actions aimed against different other religious and political formations (Bonney 2009, 12).

Another incident which proves that the Salafists are allies of the government, was the vicious revolt, in 2004, in Sa`dah between a group of Zaydi revivalists and the national army which had Husayn Al-Huthi as its leader. This revolt also brought to the fore the potential of the Salafists for violence. The Salafists have also been observed to take part in actions that stigmatise the Zaydi identity. They often use propaganda which links Zaydism with Iran and the international Shia plot is aimed at distracting the Muslim world (Bonney 2009, 14). Two foreign students belonging to the Dar Al-Hadith's core Salafist centre in Dammaj were murdered, allegedly in a battle with the Zaydi groups within a broader structure of the battle with the "Houthis" (Horton 2016, 9). These killings provide evidence that the RoY army, during the war was receiving assistance from the Yemeni army.

Even though, the attacks on America on 9/11 and other terrorist operations were perceived as being illegitimate since they lead to further loss of life and war within the Muslim world, condemning violence targeted at western interests has not been organised. Actually, in principle, the confrontation between the West and the Muslim world is something, which is generally supported and recognised. Even with this being said, in the view of those Salafists who are opposed to political involvement; the use of violence is generally considered as something counterproductive. This lobby, opposed to violence, reasons that Muslims are not in a state where they are ready to fight as they are currently too divided and weak and the governments in Muslim capitals have not endorsed jihad, so any fighting will only result in turmoil. Hence, within such a way of thinking, while the general aim of targeting the West is something that needs to be supported, the reasoning is that it is something that will be achieved in the long run. All attempts being made at the moment, they reason, will fail and should be avoided (Qadhi 2014)<sup>40</sup>.

Upon the return of Sheikh Mokbel Al-Wadi'i to his hometown of Dammaj, Sa`dah province at the beginning of the 1980s, Dar Al-Hadith, from which all Salafist groups emerged in the RoY (Al-Bakri 2011), was established: enabling Saudi Arabia to exert its influence in religious

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<sup>40</sup> Qadhi, On Salafi Islam, April 22, 2014, Available at: <https://muslimmatters.org/2014/04/22/on-salafi-islam-dr-yasir-qadhi/>

aspects, and respond effectively to the Shia tide coming from Iran (Al-Jondi 1980). The Saudi Arabia contributed to financing the Salafi movement through the Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Abdul Aziz bin Baz, who helped establish Dar-Al-Hadith; and the Al-Haramain Foundation, which helped finance Salafist associations which had split from Mokbel Al-Wadi'I (Al Ahmadi 2006).

It is important to note that the Saudi authorities did not directly support Salafi movements in the RoY. Instead, the RoY expatriates living in Saudi Arabia, the majority from Sunni areas in central and southern the RoY, contributed significant finance; as did the Zaidi sect (Al Ahmadi 2006; Al-Masoudi 2008).

Official relations between the two countries impacted upon the ability of these groups to expand and spread, especially after the Second Gulf War and the expulsion of Yemeni expatriates from Saudi territory; but developments in regional policy on the one hand, and the Yemeni internal political arena on the other hand, led these religious movements to play a key role in regional conflicts following the fall of Iraq: which had hitherto been a buffer against Shia influence. The prospect of sectarian regional conflict began to loom large; with the Shia escalating their uprising in Sa'dah via armed confrontations with the RoY government: which began in 2004, and encompassed fully six wars, the last of which took place in 2009, and featured a direct combat role on the part of Saudi Arabia (Al-Masoudi 2008).

The sectarian dimension, however, was not the key factor in relations between the Saudi Arabia and RoY. For one thing, the Zaidi, forming around 34% of the RoY population, did not harbour expansive ambitions. They have been unable to control all areas of the RoY at any point in history; and the influence of Zaidi imams is only limited. For another, the Shia constitutes a minority in both countries: largely unable to influence the majority. In fact, moves of the Zaidi towards Saudi Arabia were not because of internal political motives; but instead, a result of foreign policy, and the need for the Saudis to intervene against the Iranian-backed Houthi.

Historically, the relationship between the two countries – always one of Saudi Arabia enjoying more influence than any other neighbouring state on the RoY – has been characterised by sensitivity towards Saudi Arabia: particularly in terms of religious dimensions. Religious perspectives still predominate in much of Saudi foreign policy today.

When the RoY was governed by a religious regime, which claimed to govern by divine right and limited the succession, relations between the two countries took on particularly overt religious dimensions, with Saudi Arabia seeking to extend its influence in the RoY and contain the Zaidi sect. This chapter now turns to examine in more detail the history of Saudi influence and its impact on the RoY political stability.

#### **8.4.5 Iran and Saudi Arabia**

All the three branches of Salafism have special links with Saudi Arabia, making the situation in this country even more complicated. The Salafists who support jihad and who would later become Al-Qaida, got support, in the 1980s, from the monarchy in Saudi Arabia and also from some other powers in the West, during their war with the USSR army in Afghanistan (Fishman et al. 2008, 5). They later turned against the Saudi monarch. Osama bin Laden, a citizen of Saudi Arabia with RoY ancestry, in the 1990s called the Royal Family in Saudi Arabia the biggest enemy of Al-Qaida. Bin Laden saw his own home country as the best example of how corrupt Arab regimes are (Bergen and Cruickshank, 2012 pp. 1–3).

The quietists Salafists, who believe in allegiance to the Muslim ruling elite and disapproving of both the jihadis and the Muslim Brotherhood, have been portrayed as exports from Saudi Arabia in various contexts. Over the years, they have benefited from substantial financial support via networks of patronage from prominent Saudi clerics such as Muhammad Al-Uthaymin, Salih Al-Fawzan and Abd Al-Aziz bin Baz (Bonney 2013, 2). This branch of Salafism has the Islamic University of Medina as its major centre of transfer of knowledge. Rabi Al-Madkhali, an affiliate of the Islamic University up to around 2000, has arisen as the most powerful and uncompromising representative of the quietist Salafism. Even though, he does not sit at the centre of the Saudi religious mechanisms, he has been able to amass massive following globally, even in some parts of the West. This religious creed has benefited a lot from the internet which has spread it outside Saudi Arabia (Meijer 2009, 49).

However, the character of the relationship between the different branches of the quietist Salafism and the state of Saudi Arabia has not always been easy to describe. For instance, the movement in RoY, which started around the 1980s led by Muqbil Al-Wadi'i (d. 2001), had started



initially as one opposed to the government of Saudi Arabia, even though it was getting financial support from a number of clerics based in that country. The movement became popular for its criticism of Saudi policies and also, it is questioning of the legitimacy of the Al Saud. This is partly the reason why it became very popular. However, the death of Al-Wadi'i would lead to a rethinking of the RoY Salafi strategy, which led to the group favouring a policy of being closer to the clerics in Saudi Arabia. The RoY situation is an indication that historical descent or even funding does not automatically lead to the religious movements being loyal to the government of Saudi Arabia. The competence of the methods used to export doctrines of a religious nature cannot be said to be self-evident. The local actors who are beneficiaries of financial support have the capacity to rethink and embrace practices and doctrines, which best meet their interests and contexts. What this means is that Saudi's capacity to determine outcomes through the exercise of "soft power" using Salafism cannot be treated as a foregone conclusion (Al-Wadi'i, 2005 pp. 45–55).

The rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia was greatly affected by the change in regional structures that occurred in 2003. The fall of the regime led by Saddam Hussein, which was then followed by an almost ten-year presence of the Americans in the country, turned the situation into a two-horse race within the region as a former powerhouse, Iraq, was left severely weakened (Hamming 2014, 20). Even though, these changes made the situation look simpler, the two powerhouses, Iran and Saudi Arabia, were now left facing each other. Both the countries had their own weaknesses: for Iran, the economic sanctions had severely affected the country even though it has a strong military, while Saudi Arabia, which is economically strong, has a military that is itself not so strong. For these reasons, it can be considered that competition between these two can be analysed from the perspective of "soft power" owing to the legitimising significance of religion in both Iran and Saudi Arabia and also the core role played by sectarianism. This led to a situation, which one can consider as the dilemma of soft power supremacy.

Noticing the advantaged position of the Saudi government when it comes to institutions of soft power, Iran has turned its attention to the Lebanese currently resident in the African continent as a way of countering this advantage (Leichtman 2010, 273). However, both Iran and Saudi Arabia are conscious of the fact that soft power alone will not suffice. Therefore, both the countries use funding as a form of harder currency. With regards to RoY, Bonnefoy has indicated the significance of funding by the Saudis in the development of the Yemeni Salafism (Bonnefoy 2008,

151). This kind of funding is usually dispensed in the form of scholarships to study in either Iran or Saudi Arabia, the building of Islamic schools and mosques, and arranging conferences. As this analysis will show successful, diffusion relies a lot on funding. Iran's recent efforts have suffered because of lack of funding.

The refusal to involve in politics by the quietist Salafists and the actions of the Saudi religious establishment are the two primary factors responsible for the development of activist Salafism. The Gulf War in 1990-91 gave the Sahwa Islamiyya (Islamic Awakening) movement in Saudi Arabia a certain level of prominence. By the end of the war, it had become one of the most widely known opponents of the monarchy. It called for reforms on the political front and an enforcement of Islamic norms that was more systematic. The purpose of the movement has been changed by the co-option of some of its leaders like Salman Al-Awda by the Saudi authorities since the 2000s. A close look at the movement now shows an outfit, which is more modern. It is shedding its character as a traditional religious establishment and is getting itself connected through a number of media organisations at the international front. This new status of the activist Salafis is an indication of the changes which have been taking place within the Saudi society while at the same time also bringing to the fore the tensions beneath the surface of the Royal Family.

Throughout the last ten years, the Saudi Sahwa individuals have exerted a higher level of influence across the Arab world. The result of this has been the politicisation of different Salafi movement in countries like RoY, Egypt, Kuwait, and Jordan. This politicisation has also been increased by the "Arab Spring". Salafism in a number of countries is now forming into political parties, such as the Al-Rashad in RoY and Al-Nur in Egypt, which are now taking part in elections. This is a process, which leaves the quietist Salafis isolated. This isolation is exacerbated by the fact that they have also been seen as the last supporters of the dictatorial Arab regimes. Leaders of the quietist Salafist movement denounce the revolutionary uprisings and even go as far as to label them as conspiracies coordinated by those who are opposed to Islam.

The new environment, which has resulted from the events, which took place in the Arab world in 2011, has led to a proliferation of debate among Salafis. It can be observed that the vitality of the Salafi movements in countries like Tunisia, Egypt, and RoY has surpassed that in Saudi Arabia, where the environment is very different and there are still barriers to freedom of speech.

The particular revolutionary background in those countries, which have seen successful mobilisations, is creating a situation that is of interest to observers, also leading to the emergence of new figures. This is the reason why those movements based in Saudi Arabia are likely to be perceived as less attractive.

The RoY Salafi movement is currently experiencing a fast transformation. The reason behind this is partly the war, which is creating fresh sources of patronage. At the moment, it is not yet clear what direction the relationship between the different Salafi groups and AQAP will develop going into the future. In addition, apart from defeating the Houthis, it is not clear what other political ambitions these groups have. However, the fact that they have become a central player in the war elevates them to a position where they will be required to play a more active role in finding any political resolution to the conflict. This is the case especially if they are to be considered as an alternative by religious conservatives, to IS and AQAP. Currently, as the Salafi militias grow in stature, the AQAP portrayal of a Sunni defence against Houthi takeover is also gaining traction. It is also helping AQAP in its desire to make the lines between ASS, its local insurgency wing, and the Salafi formations in those areas where they are fighting among one another, blurred.

The Salafi movement is further illustration of the significance of the structure or context of strategy and ideology. Even though it may want to sell itself as a quietist and reverential of the power of the state, the situation on the ground shows something different. It is not difficult, when observing the actions of the Salafis, that the group is ambiguous when called upon to actually show its support to the state and its policies, whether one is looking inside RoY or outside the country, most particularly in Saudi Arabia (Bonney, 2008). When compared to other religious and political formations in RoY, it does not look as if the Salafis have paid the same heavy price as a consequence of the acceptance of the Yemeni government of a struggle against radical Islamic formations (Bonney 2008). Even though in international fora, the Salafis have been called criminals, owing to their doctrinal inflexibility and their position, which is unclear, they have not been victims of explicit repression. For this reason, they have been happy to collaborate with the state, criticising its opponents, and making those who perpetrate violence against it look illegitimate.

#### **8.4.6 Salafi Militias**

Owing to the particular history of Saudi Arabia, exporting ideologies of a religious nature has always been looked at as an important tool of exerting “soft power”. Saudi Arabia has used a variety of institutions, some of which are not even linked to Wahhabism or even Islam. However, the interfaces between the country and the rest of the world are not only diverse, they are complicated too.

Even though, the headlines are dominated by IS and AQAP, an array of Salafi militias are playing an active part in the Sunni militant scene. A variety of Salafi groups have for a long time seen Yemen as home. Ahead of the war, the majority of them were neither involved in violence nor politics. Others, such as the Al-Rashad party, adopted a political stance and found themselves being allies of Islah. The southward expansion of the Houthis led some to take up arms against them. This was initially observed around 2013 when the Houthis waged a battle against the Salafis emanating from the religious institute at Dar Al-Hadith. Even though, the Houthis won this fight in January 2014, the fighters would regroup and be joined by those from another religious institute in Kitaf, Sa’dah. They are currently fighting the Houthis on a number of fronts.

One of the factors that have propelled the Salafis to a level of prominence is the opportunistic alliances which the coalition led by the Saudi government has been willing to enter. In Aden, they are receiving support from the government of the UAEs, where they work as irregular security forces. When the fighting in that city reached a climax in July 2015, the UAE went into an alliance with Hashem Al-Syed, a former student of Dar Al-Hadith who agreed to lead the fighters in the city. Once the Houthi forces had been forced out of the city, Bassam Al-Mehdhar, another Salafi who was not very well known would become the major beneficiary of the UAE. In the year 2015, in the districts of Mansoura and Sheikh Othman, the Al-Mehdhar Brigade, took the role of the security force. It would, in 2016, come together with other RoY forces supported by Saudi Arabia in a push across the Saudi-RoY border in an attempt to conquer the Houthi strongholds of Sa’dah.

## 8.5 Conclusion

The relationship between RoY and its neighbours in the rest of the Gulf has taken a number of forms. Apart from following the traditional form, they have also followed economic corporation as managed by bilateral trade agreements, and corporation of a political nature. It has also witnessed diplomats overlooking the rules founded in international decorum, and the embargos imposed by other countries in the Arab region, whether formally or not. However, a close observation shows that this relationship has never been extended to the level of strategy even during times when the need for this was apparent. For instance, one can think about those circumstances when regional security is at stake.

One of the realities that is difficult to dispute, is that the relationship between the countries which form the GCC and their neighbour RoY, is a major area of concern to both the decisions makers within this region and also the people concerned about it for various reasons. From the GCC point of view, the goal is to preserve the achievements it has scored in the last few decades, which the negative developments in RoY threaten to undo.

From a bilateral and collective point of view, the Gulf States have generally indicated their willingness to forge a strong relationship with RoY. From the side of RoY, it has also shown a strong willingness to forge cordial relationships with its neighbours, especially if one considers that it relies on its neighbours in the region in matters of the economy, security and politics. Even though, a good relationship has always been of mutual benefit to all the countries in the Gulf region. This has become even more immediate and observable in the recent years owing to the deteriorating situation in RoY. However, even though the issues are only coming to the surface now, these political issues established themselves in RoY much earlier.

At a national level, the ascension of RoY to the GCC is of some significance. It also holds some significance to the members of the GCC. For intellectual elites, it is their task to do some methodological and objective studies on this matter. The aim of these studies should be to find ways to strengthen the relationship between these countries. Apart from this, these studies would aim to portray that differences should seem more as a source of strength as opposed to an evil and weakness.

Since the uniting of the two parts of RoY in 1990, the role of the country on the political map doubled. Hence, the need for serious thought and planning to arrive at a strategic vision is introduced by the need for the country's ascension to the GCC. This has become a serious topic of discussion. Notwithstanding the fact that the predictions that may be contained here may not be exact, the process of analysis and discussion is still one that is called for, adopted, and even considered as required for the requirements of intellectual academic and development.

The process of RoY's assent to the Cooperation Council for the AGC is one that is possible. In addition, it should not be seen as something that is to be used for just promotional and emotional experience. It requires a serious effort, which is also ongoing and continuous, founded on a curriculum that incorporates realism while also taking into account the needs of the people who have the capacity to be consistent with integration, unity, and working together.

The act of becoming part of another country or regional block is no longer everything that needs to be considered. What needs to be deliberated on is how the integration of a state to a regional block whether near her geographic borders or far from them while sharing the same values and interests, political and economic conditions, culture, and technology, can be managed in such a way that all the other sides of the interests can be achieved.

An example of how regional integration can be managed is seen in the European Union, and how its membership has been increasing over the years to reach a total of twenty-seven countries. The economic conditions and technological ties between these countries are not the same. For instance, members such as France and Spain are different from each other. However, the Europeans did not dwell on these differences; they concentrated on shared interests and critical issues of all concerned. What this is evidence of is that the countries were aware of their future.

The Gulf countries need to learn from this view and not see the accession of RoY to the regional block using an out-dated traditional perspective. They need to see that including RoY in the Gulf Council could come with certain benefits to all the member states. It could also be used to deal with future challenges. These countries need to see this move as a way through which they can mitigate internal and external risks and major threats. For RoY, this type of integration could be of assistance to RoY as it rebuilds and extracts itself from a cycle of instability, and

underdevelopment owing to some of the problems it inherited from some of the countries in the region.

The RoY situation could be seen as result of a number of issues: the war of the 1990s, occupation of Iraq by the U.S in 2003, the dispute regarding the RoY border with Saudi Arabia, the proliferation of weapons in the country, security disturbances in the South of the country, six different wars in the Sa'dah province, the growing reality of Al-Qaida rule, and issues of piracy in the Red Sea.

In the relationship between RoY and the Gulf, there are a number of common influential factors that have an effect on developments happening on each of the sides. RoY's strategic control of the Strait of Bab Al-Mandab has significant consequences for the country's control of the trade of Gulf oil destined for America and Europe as it makes its way through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea. This is the reason why wealthy countries in the Gulf regions should be using their financial surplus to assist RoY and finance its development projects.

RoY's relationship as an independent country with the other states in the Gulf started quite early with Saudi Arabia. With the other states, it started with Kuwait in the 1960s and with the rest of the other countries in the Council in the early 1970s. Since then cooperation has characterised the relationship between the two sides. The Gulf States made aid available to RoY while the role played by RoY in the development programmes through making labour available is also obvious. However, the relationship between RoY and its neighbours has not been without its own challenges. The most notable one being the support of the RoY regime of Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, an incident that led the Gulf to freeze relations with RoY and also led to the drying up of economic aid to RoY.

The issue of RoY's ascension to the GCC remains a born of contention particularly for those who are opposed to the move. They note the deteriorating economic situation and the country's response to challenges of a political nature. These critics refer to the lack of trust between the political opposition and the regime coupled with a weak institutional and administrative framework in the country. This situation is further exacerbated by the fact that the country's political system is different from the others in the region. The critics refer to problems associated

with the legal amendment to the Statute of the Council as well as the difference in development indicators in such as areas as education and health between the two sides.

However, even with the problem as noted above, certain features, which indicate the reasons why RoY is important to the Gulf States and thus should be allowed to join the GCC, cannot be over-clouded by talk related to the difference between the country and others in the region or the legal statute of the Cooperation Council. The issues of the difference between traditional ownership in RoY and that of the other Gulf countries should not be an obstacle; neither should the Republican presidential system in the country. The countries in the Gulf should learn from the European Union, an economic bloc that has succeeded even though they have different political systems. They have still continued to integrate and cooperate at various levels. The legal issues should also not be used as the reason why RoY cannot be included as the leaders of the Gulf States who devised and adopted the Statute of the Council have the authority to modify it and allow other members to join.

The GCC made the decision to include RoY in some of its committees: four in 2001 and another four in 2008. However, inclusion in these committees remains far from a true integration of RoY within the GCC and granting it full membership. However, this partial inclusion has allowed RoY to make some decisions in the Council that can help the country to lift the living standards of its people to the level of the others within the Gulf region. However, the development of the relationship between RoY and its neighbours in the region remains stuck in the committees and resolutions. Hence, there has been no substantial change noted. However, the close link between the security of the region and that of RoY will lead to an additional hypothesis, which is founded on the idea that if RoY continues to be outside the GCC it will remain a source of threat to the region. Hence, time remains of the essence and as the Gulf States continue to take their time to integrate it into the GCC, the economic and political problems in RoY will continue to increase and affect the rest of the region.

When one looks at the vague positions that the Salafi clerics in RoY express, it becomes clear that the only difference between the Jihadi groups and apolitical Salafists lies in matters of strategy. Accordingly, apolitical Salafism represented by the one founded by Al-Wadi'i and those that took after him, would, based on this argument, be perceived as terrorism's antechamber if not



its ideological foundation. Even though not wrong at systematic levels, this is still a subjective assessment. The reason why one would make an argument of this nature is that such a view is a misrepresentation of the profile of the majority of RoY's jihadist militants as in most cases, they do not have a strong religious inclination. Hence, they do not believe that their actions should find legitimacy from the apolitical Salafist clerics(Bonnefoy 2009, 17). Hence, using the lineage of violence found in the writings of Salafist clerics is therefore not adequate in doing an analysis since it has a tendency to ignore the environment where these ideas are either born or given meaning. For example, the Salafists seem to be only able to bear the case of loyalty if violence, indistinct criminalisation, and authoritarianism are not directed at them.

It can then be concluded that repression by the state, coupled with torture is probably the most effective inspiration for violence than any particular doctrine. This is represented in the views of a fugitive accused of attacks on the U.S Embassy on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2008 and others when he says, "The operations that are happening in RoY are reactions from young people tyrannised by torture in the prisons." Even though this statement should be approached with care, it still shows the fundamental role that the general political context plays. This is the context that will have a huge bearing on whether the Salafis, whose point of departure is the apolitical point of view, will eventually embrace violence or they will continue to offer allegiance to the state or even start involving themselves in politics in a more explicit manner.

## **9 The Conclusion**

### **9.1 Regionalism and Securitisation**

This thesis began with the premise that the GCC stands within a sub-RSC known as the Arabian Peninsula, which is situated within the broader Gulf region, which is itself situated in what might possibly be termed a super-region of the Middle East. This was predicated on the idea that geography matters in the foreign relations of any country. Moreover, it was based on a belief that securitisation is defined by local actors (politicians, civic leaders, clerics, etc.) in response to their immediate neighbouring environment. That led to an examination of the cultural factors that contribute to identity formation, and thereby influence local politics and local decision-making. Power transitions within states become critical moments when political systems can be debated and revised, and threats from neighbouring states become particularly acute. Declining powers must react and adjust to rising powers that threaten to upend the status quo, while other nearby states must calculate their costs and benefits in relation to the perceived transition. In the discussion of Saudi Arabia's relations with Yemen and its smaller Arab Gulf neighbours, we can see a hierarchy of power relations and how they shift over time in response to power transitions in the Gulf.

#### **9.1.1 Defining the GCC**

The GCC, like other attempts at institutionalised cooperation, has made achievements and faced failures on many occasions, and some scholars have given contrasting explanations for the GCC's existence. Legrenzi defined it as "a military alliance as well as, a regional organisation that is aimed at fostering political and economic integration" (Legrenzi, 2002, p. 7). Shafiq, however, viewed the GCC as a regional organisation according to the standards of the UN Charter, claiming that the GCC is not a political or a military alliance aimed against an enemy, but rather its goal of cooperation for the region is for peacekeeping (Shafiq, 1989, pp. 113-114). Alsayari stated that, "The GCC is a regional organisation which, in its composition and powers, is closer to contracting states or a confederation but with the existence of a particularity which characterises the GCC member states in defined cooperative action" (Alsayari 1986). And taking into consideration each member state's conditions when a decision is taken leads to a fundamental change which may affect a member's sovereignty or affairs" (Alsayari 1986).

### 9.1.2 Contrasting Iran and Yemen

In realist terms, it is hard to define this multilateral organisation that has rarely employed its combined military forces (save for the 1990 defence against Saddam, the 2011 intervention in Bahrain and the 2015 war in Yemen) or ratified joint economic reform (save for limited steps towards a custom's union and VAT tax). Nevertheless, from a geographic, cultural and demographic perspective, these six states have much in common. More than that, they have more or less adopted similar positions regarding their security against Iran. Iran, whose geography, culture and demographics are significantly different from the rest of the AGC fulfils a function within GCC security debates as the security priority that all six GCC members can find agreement on. There may be nuances of style and substance, on when to engage with Iran and how far to pursue dialogue, but the AGC have traditionally reached consensus on the direction of their combined policy.

The same cannot entirely be said for Yemen. Saudi Arabia and the UAE pushed hard to support southern independence during the 1994 civil war and Qatar attempted to mediate peace between the Yemeni government and the Houthis in 2007-8. Kuwait maintained an office for official overseas development projects in the 1970s while Saudi Arabia was handing out quiet subventions to tribal leaders, and Oman signed a border agreement in the early 1990s at a time when Saudi Arabia was still pressing its claims to parts of Al-Jawf and Mareb. The GCC states have witnessed periods of convergence and divergence over their policies on Yemen. Yemen stands much closer to the GCC in terms of its geographic position, the religious composition of its population and the historical connections between tribes, making it a much more complicated issue than Iran for the GCC states to deal with. Hard security issues, such as the Yemeni government's support for Saddam Hussein in 1990-91, provoked consensus from the GCC in terms of its opprobrium. However, issues that were more political in nature, like the Houthi insurgency in the mid-2000s or the attempts by President Hamdi to support decentralisation in the 1970s, found no such consensus within the GCC.

## 9.2 Saudi-Yemeni Relations

The power dynamics between the strongest actor on the Arabian Peninsula – Saudi Arabia – and the weakest actor both economically and militarily (given the close nature of the U.S-GCC relations) – Yemen – has in some ways shaped the security of the rest of the GCC. David Holden characterised Saudi policy in the 1970s in much the same way others have described it since: “It sought to bring the government in Sana’a under a modicum of control,” and Saudi officials sought to undermine Yemen, “through their connections with the powerful tribes in the mountainous north which continued to receive subventions” (Holden and Johns, 1981, p. 304). The same cannot be said for the other AGC, who do not face the same pressures as Saudi Arabia from an incredibly long and insecure border, overlapping tribes and familial connections among populations who do not by and large ascribe to Salafism, and a history of repeated armed incursions by non-state or parastatal actors. Yet some of Saudi Arabia’s actions have required GCC debate and combined support, such as deciding whether to accept Yemen into the GCC and on what terms.

Saudi Arabia’s ability to gain GCC acceptance for its policies depended to some extent on events that were happening far away from the Arabian Peninsula. In 1990-91, as Saudi Arabia was relying on the U.S to expel Saddam Hussein from Kuwait and the U.S was looking to engage the SGS more directly on regional security and diplomacy, we can witness a period of divergence within the GCC on Yemen policy. It is in this period from 1990-95 that Oman concludes its own border agreement, and Saudi Arabia and the UAE join forces to support PDRY’s bid for independence. Centripetal forces within the GCC were having a similar effect on the AGC’s ability to reach consensus on Yemen. Events at the regional and global levels were penetrating into the sub-regional level of the Arabian Peninsula. In a comparable way, Saudi Arabia’s decision to go to war with Yemen in 2015 had a direct impact on decision-making within the GCC and knock-on effects on the global level. After three years of Riyadh’s proxies in Yemen proving themselves unable to defend the central government against an armed Houthi takeover of the capital, Riyadh chose to directly intervene. In doing so, Saudi Arabia sought international support, first by garnering military contributions from its GCC neighbours and then converting that combined strength into demands for material and intelligence assistance from other western allies.

### 9.3 Power Transitions

Summarising the discussion in chapter two above, power transitions involve dominant states maximising their ability to penetrate society and mobilise resources within it. We have seen how Saudi Arabia has attempted to accomplish this over the decades in Yemen, a state that is independent of Saudi Arabia yet intimately tied to it, by means of financial subventions to state officials and non-state actors. We have also seen at times how Riyadh failed to mobilise its partners in Yemen to effectively counter perceived threats to Saudi Arabia, including Yemeni unification and the Houthis. Riyadh's ability or inability to affect its desired outcomes in Yemen has signalled strength or weakness to other regional states and actors. Riyadh's successes and failures in Yemen have consequently led it readjust its relationships elsewhere so that, for example, failure to achieve PDRY's secession in 1994 and Oman's successful conclusion of an independent border agreement forced Riyadh to finally come to terms and settle its own outstanding border dispute in a series of negotiations that concluded in 2000.

Additionally, in power transitions, dominant states take successful policies at home and seek to convince other states overseas to adopt those policies, for the sake of legitimacy at home and abroad. Over the course of the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s, Saudi Arabia has increasingly engaged in direct intervention in internal Yemeni affairs, in ways that the SGS had never before engaged in, and Riyadh has increasingly sought to bring the other GCC capitals into line with its policies. While Saudi Arabia responded with force in 2009 to Houthi attacks along the border, it rallied the other GCC states in a diplomatic consensus to approve the GCC Initiative that side-lined former President Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2011, and it finally brought the SGS into the military coalition that began aerial operations in March 2015. Qatar's policy towards Yemen alone witnessed a complete reversal from its attempts to mediate peace in 2008 to contributing to war in 2015 – a clear success for Saudi Arabia's ability to influence in neighbours in favour of Saudi policy.

There is an element of prestige and pride involved in all of these interactions. Saudi Arabia's successful rallying of a coalition of regional and international partners lends legitimacy to its policies and presents the image of international acceptance for the country as a great power in the region. By contrast, Saudi support for the Yemeni government while the Qataris offer to mediate with a Houthi force that is violently opposed to the kingdom presents the image of an

embattled nation at odds with its neighbours. Being able to demonstrate successful leadership is a key element in great power relations – showing that the great power can effectively manage its sphere of responsibility. These qualities of Saudi-GCC relations are not strictly a part of realism in the sense of material power, but rather they are qualities that result from culture and society. At the same time, we can still view Saudi-Yemen relations in terms of realism and the result does not have to be mutually exclusive from Constructivism. For example, Saudi policy on Yemen provides the kingdom with a fertile ground for experimenting and testing out its policies in ways that project strength to the region, when it would be hard to engage in successful wars (or proxy wars) with Iran.

#### **9.4 Unipolarity, Bipolarity, Multipolarity**

If unipolarity is relatively stable and multipolarity highly unstable, what does Saudi Arabia represent? Within the Arabian Peninsula sub-region, Saudi Arabia is clearly a unipolar hegemon, capable of influencing its Arab Gulf neighbours at times and securing tangible benefits from its nearby relations. However, Yemen is one neighbour that Saudi Arabia appears to have little control over, and the SGS are clearly able to pursue their own policies depending on the issue and the timing. That is because while Saudi Arabia may be the leader of a unipolar Arabian Peninsula, it is only one leader of bipolar Gulf region, and the regional level impinges on the sub-regional level at times. In that regard, we might view Saudi Arabia's attempts to bring the SGS in line with its policies on Yemen as attempts to exert its strength within the Gulf region and demonstrate to Iran that it has more influence and prestige. During earlier periods, in the 1980s for instance, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran formed three competitors in a multipolar Gulf region, and the Iran-Iraq war was therefore a result of the instability inherent in a multipolar system – rising powers compete for resources and attention, but other regional participants are constantly rebalancing according to the state of play at any given moment.

Having a clear set of choices and a stable leadership at the head of a unipolar or bipolar system encourages stability. Saudi Arabia is a status quo power in that regard, seeking to establish its clear and unambiguous leadership of the Arabian Peninsula, if not the entire Gulf region. At moments where the SGS achieved more independence, such as in the late 1990s with expanding trade and security partnerships with America, Saudi Arabia feared the growth of multipolarity and

diminishing power. However, Saudi Arabia successfully readjusted, consolidated, and extended its authority by focusing its energies on areas where it could take a decisive leadership role, particularly with regards to counterterrorism cooperation with the U.S. In that way we can view Saudi relations with Yemen as an opportunity that Saudi Arabia seized upon in the late 2000s to reinforce its position within the region as a leader.

### **9.5 Politics, Ideology and Power**

Policy-makers are heavily influenced not just by material concerns and the balance of power, but also by social, cultural and religious identities formed at home. In turn, they design policies that they believe will benefit their domestic constituencies, and domestic policy comes to mirror foreign policy to some extent. Saudi perceptions of its rightful place as the leading power in the Gulf help inform foreign policy decision-making as much as foreign policy decision-making helps to bolster and reinforce domestic perceptions of the government. This last line of argument, however, is harder to analyse because it requires that we enter into the mind-sets of the protagonists and attempt to understand their personal biases and preconceptions about society and culture.

If we choose to go this route, then we have to ask how do Saudis (particularly elites in Riyadh) view Yemenis and how do they identify themselves in opposition to Yemenis? There is certainly a preconception in many parts of Saudi Arabia that the porous border with Yemen welcomes in countless illegal workers who bring with them crime and drugs. With the current war, there are feelings that Shi'ite in the southern Saudi provinces might possibly represent a fifth column in sympathy with the Houthis on the other side. These feelings are understandable when we consider the wide gap between a wealthy Saudi society and a vastly impoverished Yemeni one, and the fears that might result from a Saudi demographic living in relative comfort next to a desperately poor Yemeni society of about the same population size.

With that in mind, we can imagine Saudi policy-makers adopting policies towards Yemen that seek to reinforce Saudi dominance, in ways that reassure well-to-do Saudi citizens that their country really is dominant, safe and secure from all the crime, drugs and poverty that lies just South of them. Opposing policies adopted by Iran are hardly a problem for Saudi Arabia, since the opposition of such an implacable foe can naturally be expected and explained as yet another

conspiracy designed to undermine Saudi greatness. Divergent attitudes by the SGS are less easy to account for, given common GCC societal norms and practices in so many other areas of culture and faith. It is not enough to convince yourself that you are right; you must also have the recognition of your peers.

## **9.6 Avenues for Further Research**

This thesis has attempted to address the issue of the centrality of Saudi-Yemen relations within the GCC by exploring the changing relationships among these countries of the Arabian Peninsula in the context of RSC theory, Constructivism and Power Transition Theory. It has attempted to fill a gap in the literature on the GCC, which is more often focused on Iran and its relations with the AGC. Future studies might seek to understand Red Sea security as a contributing factor to Saudi-Yemeni tensions. Alternatively, future studies might seek to understand Saudi-Yemeni tensions in terms of economics, which might shed additional light on small Gulf States' involvement (or lack of involvement) in Yemen. Hopefully, future studies will help to develop lines of research that can help contribute to peace between the countries of the Arabian Peninsula, highlighting their shared cultural values and aspirations rather than their divisions and rivalries. Yemen's accession into the GCC now seems like a long way off, given the protracted war and seemingly little prospect for resolution in the near-term. However, with so many long-term incentives for an integrated labour market and the potential for so much human capital in Yemen, we cannot totally abandon the idea of eventual integration of Yemen into the GCC. Some form of integration might ultimately be the only way that Yemen can break out of its cycle of war and poverty.



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