

Saudi Arabia, Iran and Middle East - A Dilemma



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Abstract

The Middle East encountering a time of dynamic change, testing the universal methodologies of each nearby states. New challenges, opportunities, and dimensions are emerging for the regional and extra-regional states which are driving their foreign policies and making new alliances regionally. Saudi-Iranian relations are one of the most significant competitions characterizing the vital scene of the MENA (the Middle East & North Africa) region. Both states have frequently carried on as genuine opponents, particularly in the Gulf. Saudi Arabia is a territorial business as usual power, while Iran frequently looks for progressive changes all through the Gulf and the more extensive Middle East with shifting notches of power. However, Saudi Arab has strong relations with US and European powers while Iran views the United State as a most hazardous adversary. This article would examine competition of both states through the content analyses and pragmatist approach, and it will develop analytical thinking about methodologies inside the setting of the contention.

Introduction

The Middle East is the epic center of world politics for centuries. It is the cradle of the world's ancient civilizations and the birthplace of Abrahamic religions. It has ancient trade routes for trade and was the centre of the world economy during Muslim rule. Saudi Arab and Iran are important powers in the Middle East and both view each other as an emerging hegemon of the region. The states normally accuse each other of interfering in the affairs of the Gulf. The Saudi-Iranian competition is a focal component of MENA's security dilemma which endeavors the Gulf locale and the Arab-Israeli theatre. Through this dilemma, we can understand the interests of the US in the political and economic affairs of the Middle East. On numerous occasions, Saudi resistance to Iran will serve U.S. interests, yet this won't happen under all conditions. Saudi Arabia stays a profoundly hostile to the progressive state, with qualities and needs that occasionally cover with those of Washington on issues of key intrigue, and frequently struggle over issues of change and vote based system for other Middle Eastern states. Furthermore, the Middle East local governmental issues don't comprise of inflexible alliances that can be seen as a scaled-down chilly war, even in situations where partisan contrasts proposals. The article will investigate the factors behind the political crisis of the Middle East and the future prospects. Moreover, how Middle Eastern crises are interpreted by Saudi Arab in the region?

Theory of Realism in International relation is one of the major doctrines which explains the power struggle among the sovereign states and how they behave to maximize their national interest and hegemony. According to Realists state are rational actors and they must be concerned about their security and maximization of self-interest. But being part of the International system they compromise on their interest to gain long term benefits and to prevent complex issues as sometimes cooperation leads to more benefits.

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In Realism sovereign states is an important revolutionary character on the screen of the world's political system. As on-screen characters, they are thought to be characteristically judicious and fundamentally worried about endurance and personal circumstance. The realist hypothesis with the entirety of its inadequacy has for quite a long time endure the ambush of opponent speculations and attestations of inconsequentiality in the post-Cold War condition. Indeed, from a considerable long time the Saudi-Iranian contention itself had all the reserves of being an exemplary case of study of Realist theory in International Relations and their rivalry could be well understood through a neo-realist point of view for a situation in which state inspiration is clear. The two states intended to increase territorial points of interest to the detriment of each other. They always try to enhance their power militarily and economically but their main focus is to gain more influence in the region. The weak states are a battlefield for their rivalry. According to Realist the power of sovereign states are quantifiable and it is directly related and impacted by the international political system. However, the rivalry between the two states can be explained by the Cold War phenomenon. The comparative analysis shows that the period of Shah and Khomeini administration proved the same in this regard, as the enmity of two states continued. The major factor behind this continued split is the perception and behavior of the respective states (Donnell, 2009). This research is engaging and investigative. It is subjective research and optional sources have been used. Secondary sources, for example, journals, books, newspapers, web and articles referred for information collection. The greater part of the media content is additionally gotten through the web.

The Historical Context of the Saudi-Iran Relationship

From the 1920s to the 1930s there are several states in the Middle East who got independence from France and Britain including Saudi Arab, Iran, Egypt, Turkey and Iraq while different nations got their autonomy somewhere in the range of 1944 and 1971. Iran and Saudi Arabia are two significant nations of this locale. They have a background marked by relationship now and again unpleasant and in some cases stable with the point of making an impact in the Middle East. Their contention of making an impact by these two states separated the entire area. The general connection between the two nations can be separated into different stages.

The historical backdrop of the Saudi-Iranian relationship can be followed back to the foundation of the Al-Saud government in 1928. From 1925 to 1930, rivalry stayed extreme between the rulers of the two states to declare authority. The relations got reinforced after the increase of King Faisal and both rulers began a progression of continuous conferences to organize provincial approaches (Furtig, 2007). This carried the two countries closer to one another. Notwithstanding this more extensive goal, there were some other regular intrigue likewise, for example, battling communist and radical-patriot impacts in the Gulf district, in guaranteeing a steady progression of oil and gas, and in expanding riches through fares, joined Iran and Saudi Arabia till the finish of the 1970s (Furtig, 2007). From 1971 to the Iranian Revolution of 1979, their relations stayed all occasions high not by the strict factor yet by the nearness of the same administration and government which was instrumental to carry the two countries closer to one another. "According to David Long, events of the [Iranian] upheaval, the essential political encounter in the Gulf was neither Sunni-Shiite nor Arab-Persian yet traditionalist radical. It shows that strict and social contrasts were not unfavorable elements for two countries to appreciate formal and cordial lovely relationships" (Furtig, 2007).

Saudi-Iranian Relations Post-Iranian Revolution

In 1979, massive changes happened when the Shah of Iran was thrown out of power after a successful revolution. Iran's Islamic message was resounding in the locale which was a risk for the Saudi government and it demonstrated a misfortune in the Saudi-Iran relationship. Saudi Arabia was alarmed on the successful revolution in Iran and was clearly upset with Iran's intentions to spread out the revolutionary ideology in the region (Joseph, 1999).

Pressures additionally raised when showdowns happened between Iranian explorers and Saudi Security powers that came about into the murdering of 400 individuals. The two states accused each other of the occurrence. In 1988 the relationship was along these lines taken off to the degree that the ambassadors were gotten back to by both of the nations from one another (Gwenn, 2003).

Soon after the revolution, war erupted between Iran and Iraq. To contain Iran Saudi Arabia supported Saddam Hussein (Reza, 2011). The Saudi upheld Iraq was on the grounds that they expected that Iran would keep sending its message of revolution in the Middle East. A new regional organization named Gulf Cooperation Council was formed by the major countries of the Gulf. The Gulf council announced sanctioned against Iran and it was stated that its essential goals are "to compelling coordination, mix, and interconnection between the Member States in all fields." (Furtig, 2007). Saudi Arabia utilized a few strategies like oil politics against Iran as extra weight. Iran's economy was relying on its oil and petroleum. In 1985 Oil prices were dropped very low in the International market because of the overproduction of oil from Saudi Arab. This was a great setback for Iran's economy and the relation between the two got worse (Okruhlik, 2003).

The War of Kuwait

Kuwait attack in 1990 led by Saddam Hussein helped to rebuild the relations among Iran and Saudi Arabia, although their relations were not re-established until March 19, 1991. The war united the Saudi Arab and Iran and the definite reason was that Iraq was viewed as a rival of both. Iran was at that point against Iraq due to its ongoing war and Saudis were presently considering Iraq to be a risk to itself considerably more noteworthy than Iran. Iran additionally considered Saudi's to be oil generation as a significant wellspring of its income to manufacture war-torn Iran (Furtig, 2007).

The standardization of relations with neighboring Persian Gulf States was high on the need of President of Iran Ayatollah Hashmi Rafsanjani's international strategy motivation. Reconstructing the Saudi-Iranian relationship was especially critical to Iran to improve its financial circumstances after the war because of Saudi Arabia's lion's share supply of world oil holds (Amiri et al, 2011). Therefore, Iran saw its association with Saudi Arabia as significant because of Saudi impact in the area and position in OPEC. The '90s can be barred as the timeframe in which relations between two of them got improved and it was a great deal. The attack on Kuwait by Iraq brought the two adversary states nearer.

Current Situation of Iran-Saudi Split

After the September 11 attack on the US started a new phase of invasion in the Middle East. The US invaded Iraq and Afghanistan consequently, which established new dimensions in the political arena of the Middle East. After the expulsion of Saddam Hussein, there was a power vacuum created as Iraq was considered a regional power under Saddam Hussein. A new race of regional harmony started after the Iraq invasion and this phenomenon gave Iran-Saudi's split a new dimension (Okruhlik, 2003). There was serious division created between Sunni and Shia creating after the fall of Saddam Hussein and two of start started viewing themselves as a regional power (Furtig, 2007). Post Saddam circumstance in Iraq, current Syrian circumstance and political unsteadiness in Egypt. As indicated by the history survey, Tehran stays a huge character to pick up impact in Iraq. It is featured due to the rapid ascent of United States military power and effect on the outskirts of Afghanistan and Iraq. These endeavors comprise of discretion reserve funds, mystery activity, and advancing Iranian customers inside the Iraqi political framework which likewise incorporate the authority of furnished civilian armies. This methodology has been effective somewhat and Iran had the option to turn into a significant power Iraqi governmental issue.

Therefore, some other challenges were there for Saudi Arabia as a major exporter of oil and the leader of the Muslim world. It is one of the major oil suppliers to the US and serving US interest in the Middle East as well. To maintain oil prices in the international market could be a major challenge for Saudi Arab if it starts a direct war with Iran (Okruhlik, 2003). Be that as it may, bit by bit with the progression of time and

the destabilization of Iraq, these two nations were not in agreement. The Iraq war with the US and the fall of Saddam provided an opportunity for Iran to establish good relations with Iraq. It was easy for Iran to influence 65 percent Shia population of Iraq which strengthened the relations of both governments. Consequently, Iraq proved another battlefield for the Iran-Saudi dilemma as both were trying to enhance their influence in Iraq.

As a result of all these efforts, other states of the Middle East were also badly affected like Syria. Palestine. Lebanon. Yemen also turned battlefields for their rivalry. The existed situation in respective states turning worst because of interference by both states.

In an ongoing RAND report, which examined the specific factor of Sunni-Shiite partition into the analytics of the administration clarified that partisan fracture isn't the fundamental driver of breaking down the Saudi-Iranian relationship (Wehrey, et al, 2009).

Arab Spring

It was 2011 when the uprising named Arab Spring started. Which introduced new political interests and the beginning of new relations concerning Saudi Arabia and Iran both, taking account of their regional interests. Egypt, Libya and Tunisia had a dictatorship system that created a fuss, resulting in deviation in the balance of power in the region of the Middle East. Unlike the Iraqi liberation of 2003, a movement started by the United States, Arab Spring 2011 was an inside uprising starting from these three states. It was natives that motivated the Arabian mechanism, which waited for political reforms. This particular Saudi sensitivity was supported, as Michael Doran (2011) described that this wave was basically for domestic demands, jobs and having representation politically.

Saudi Arab and Iran both are criticized too and were supposed to address such issues otherwise this insurgency will take place in their states as well. Many political observers observed that Arab Spring was an opportunity for Iraq to make political alliances with states whose former dictators had worst relations with Iraq. Another opinion was, Tehran had the greatest impact because of authoritarianism, exploited Arab rulers' illegitimacy. As they all were dependent on the United States and had issues regarding Pan-Arabism. The newly designed democracies of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya by eliminated Arab rulers did not assure that will they come under Iranian camp or not?

Such factors effected the foreign policy objectives of Iran. Economic concerns and targets of Iran to impact the Middle East. Both were important yet difficult for Iran to cope at one time. Egypt is the main concern for Saudia, as President Hosni Mubarak was an important player in opposition to the developmental programs of Iran in the region. Yet, Egypt and Iran during Mubarak's era, never re-established political relations. Egyptian revolution made Saudi Arab unhappy after Mubarak felt as isolated regarding the political game to curtail Iran's influence. Saudi Arab was not happy with all the situations and called it "Fitna" for Muslims (Arab News, 2011).

A time came when Saudi Arab calculated that Hosni Mubarak will be exiled, they played a trick by cooling down their stance and made a peaceful settlement among government and opposition. After Mubarak, it was a chance for Saudia to play its best political role in the region and re-gain alliances even with more strength, which is lost during Hosni's era. Like Saudia, Qatar (a Gulf Arab state) stood up to help Egypt economically (loans and grants). Although Qatar has more good relations with Iran as compared to Saudi Arab, still both would be more concerned when if Egypt went towards Tehran quickly for even better relations. Taking Arab Spring into account, few Gulf Arab states with the small area along with Saudia are focused on overthrew monarchic government if any in the region. In Saudi Arab, it was difficult to imagine the density of protests and the rate of mobilization of Arab Spring, as compared to other regional countries experiencing the Arab Spring. Suggesting an even higher rate of trends of Arab Spring as external factors contradicting Saudi society and Islam generally. Moreover, the reason for Saudia to act as an investing party in mobilization was because of oil rents, having its gears ready for disposal. So much happening at the same time, substantial reforms were openly demanded by Saudi groups. But nothing was made practical except

in Eastern province having Shia majority. Of the many reasons for not happening of large mobilization in Saudi Arab, the basic reason is the structure of the Saudi state, lacking major economic complaints and two general factors, conservatism and kingdom's negative attitude for not accepting such uprisings. Despite all this, small protests in Shia majority area lasted for the year 2011. And to handle them the government had three strategies, first, a minimal tolerance policy. Second, based on economic policy to support programs. Third, to reform efforts carried out timely. For instance, women were granted representation and voice in the Consultative Council.

Saudi-Iranian Relationship in Gulf

Saudi Arab and Iran, both want to create their hold over the Middle East region and to have positive relations with all Gulf States of the region. Yet both are rivals to one another. If seen according to the perspective of game of influence over the region among both, Saudi Arab has more points than Iran. Because of its more political hold over small states of the region than Iran. It is a result of efforts of Riyadh for having concrete ties with other regional monarchies, especially with Yemen by supporting its supremacy. Six of the Gulf monarchies, who established the GCC in 1981 for enhancing their common interests at times of security or political upheaval in the region (Doran, 2011).

Since its inception, the GCC played a vital role in issues concerning regional peace and security and conservative behavior of states towards such situations. In Yemen, Saudi Arab was most influential of all because it had its commitment to Yemeni President as an ally. The same goes for the state of Kuwait too, consisting of 30 to 40% of the Shi'ite population and sectarian issues between government and Shi'ite population. During the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), when government-supported Iraqi struggle against Iran, these people stood up against this step, which was upset for Kuwait's government (Wehrey et al, 2011). These conditions made the Iranian circumstance convoluted in its international strategy destinations. Meanwhile, Iran is confronting residential issues on numerous fronts particularly the financial concerns and then again the desire of Iran to impact in the Middle East. Saudi Arab was very concerned about the uprising against Hosni Mubarak as Egypt many times contained Iran to serve Saudi interest. Iran and Egypt never restored political relations during the time of the Mubarak administration. After Hosni Mubarak, they believed that after the removal of Hosni Mubarak there are increasingly confined endeavors to contain Iranian impact (Saudi Gazette, 2011).

After analyzing the situation of Egypt it was very clear to the Saudi administration that Hosni Mubarak cannot stay in Egypt anymore. They immediately changed their policy and took a neutral stance. They made a call of peace and ask the government to tackle the situation peacefully. Hosni Mubarak served as a strong ally of the Saudi Arab and the US and was very disappointed with this response. Initially, they tried to save Mubarak's government but could not succeed in their efforts as people of Egypt were not ready to accept Mubarak anymore. After Saudi Arab its other allies in the Gulf also came out for Egypt to help like Bahrain, UAE and Qatar showed their support towards the Mubarak regime. Later, the relations between Qatar and Iran got better and Qatar decided to stay neutral about Egypt. During Arab uprising, Saudi Arab and other Gulf states were clearly upset with the removal of monarchies and dictators by the people. They came together in order to save their rules and made a call for Arab unity and asked Morocco and Jordan to join them as well (Arab News, 2011).

The extent of fights and preparation of Arab Spring seen in other Middle Eastern nations was difficult to envision in Saudi Arabia. Thus, the system can depict more extensive Arab Spring patterns as outer actualities, in spite of the supposed request of Saudi Arabian culture and Islam as a rule. Further, oil rents enable the Saudi government to put resources into turning away the activated difference. For containing or stifling political dispute, Saudi Arabia's administration has a parcel of devices available to its. Simultaneously some Saudi gatherings straightforwardly required generous changes. Nonetheless, nothing of such sort has emerged with the exception of in Eastern territory in Shi'a dominant part zone. There are numerous purposes behind the nonappearance of expansive preparation. Some undeniable clarification is the design

of Saudi urban areas, and the absence of major financial grumblings and the for the most part preservationist and the realm's low degree of resistance for open question (Saudi Gazette, 2011).

However, Small fights detonate in the nation's eastern Shi'a populace district in February 2011 and proceeded consistently, the Saudi system has utilized three techniques to deal with mass assembly. The first is a negligible resistance approach. The second requirement of monetary help projects and the third procedure is to change endeavors did every once in a while. For instance, ladies were permitted to serve in the Consultative Council (Kuwait Times, 2011).

Syrian-Iranian Relationship in the Context of Saudi Arab

Syria and Iran being nearest partners, the present distress in Syria is a genuine worry for Iran to compute that to what degree the Assad government is uncovered. For the present, his legislature has indicated incredible opposition against aggressor bunches in Syria. The Alawite organization grasps of Syrian administration. Assad system is known to be a severe government being in control for 40 years.

In the event that taking Saudi Arab and Syrian relations into account, Saudia has been deceitful accomplice towards Syria for numerous years. It is a result of Pan-Arabism that stops Saudia to coordinate less with Syria, in spite of the fact that they have attempted a lot. An assessment of a great many people, Alawites are taken as sub-gathering of Shi'ite Muslims, who are the main ones in Syria alluding to the Assad family. Which is an explanation of cold relations from the two sides. For example, the Gulf War (1990), during which Syria sent its weaponized soldiers to Saudia for investment in the universally shaped military relationship against Saddam Hussain's attack in Kuwait. On the fourteenth of February 2005, a critical move in Saudi-Syrian relations occurred, when death, of previous Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri notwithstanding his helpers, happened in a bomb assault in his vehicle at Beirut's seafront street. As a result, Saudi Arab favored United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559, convincing Syria to separate its military soldiers from Lebanon. Saudia additionally supported the United States' endeavors to evacuate Syrian activists strategically and insight administrations from Lebanon (Hodieb & Hassan, 2011).

In the aftereffect of the assault, Riyadh upheld United Nations Security Council Resolution no. 1559, which requested that Syria haul out its powers from Lebanon. Saudi Arabia additionally upheld USA strategic undertakings to clear the Syrian military and knowledge administrations from Lebanon. These occasions provoked the removal of Syrian powers from Lebanon, where they had been situated since the 1970s. The weakening relations got some lift on the issue of Lebanon when in January 2010, Prince Saud communicated that, if the condition scopes to the level of separation or division of Lebanon, this would mean the finish of Lebanon as a model of serene concurrence between religions, ethnicities and various gatherings. He depicted this outcome as "a loss for the Arab country" (Hodieb & Hassan, 2011).

Syrian rebellion forces ultimately got support from Saudi Arab and other Arab states which presented the Saudi point of view. According to a statement by King of Saudia, he stated that "to end the killing machine and the bloodshed that the Syrian regime had unleashed against its population" (Arab News, 2011). By keeping in view all the situation the other Gulf States also withdraw their diplomats from Syria (New York Times, 2011). Additionally, Riyadh would surely not vision Post Assad circumstance in Syria as a definite Saudi victory (Daily Star, 2011). From the very beginning of issues, Iran along with Russia showed up as a solid supporter of President Bashar al Assad and contemplate his government legitimate. Moreover, Iran is expected to be giving strong financial and military support as well as lines of credit and oil transfers (BBC News, 2015). At present, Russia and Iran unions assuming a significant role in the Syrian war which demonstrates the incredible help of President Bashar Assad. Russia propelled airstrikes against rebels, which enabled the Syrian Forces to push back the rebels from main areas. In the meantime, rebels are getting the military and monetary help from the Gulf States alongside western forces like the US, UK and France. This Proxy war prompting an extraordinary number of immigrants moving to Europe. It is appearing as an incredible human catastrophe of this century.

Conclusion

Presently the Middle East is considered the center of world politics. It is one of the regions in the world where no state exists without a rival. This describes the dilemma that shaped the Iran-Saudi rivalry for almost a century. The Arab world is experiencing a series of protest which lead to toppling down many powerful regimes like Libya, Tunisia and Egypt. The phase of the Arab Spring is very important and the future relations of both states depend on the outcomes of the recent developments. As historical evidence has presented, that Saudi Arabia and Iran can work together but there are many factors such as the Iranian revolution, Iran's call for the end of patrimonial monarchy in Saudi Arabia and the rise of anti-status quo leading to soaring the relation between these two. While the two nations are making progress toward territorial predominance, Iranian reliance on Saudi Arabia for monetary reasons and Saudi Arabia's dread of Iranian atomic potential may strike a decent power structure in the district, as each gathering demonstrates reluctant to stand up to the next straightforwardly. The aftereffect of their relations will importantly affect the security of the Gulf area. The Saudi-Iran contention is a focal component in the Middle Eastern security scene that ventures into both the Gulf and the Arab-Israeli Theatre. Most of the analysts think that it is not an easy task to strengthen the relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia because of the geo-strategic goals and sectarianism. In fact, their mutual relations are not spoiled due to differences in their geostrategic or sectarianism but due to their responses to the regional events. This is the main reason that the Middle East is in crisis. It is in a manner would serve the interests of the United States. Saudi Arabia stays a profoundly hostile to the progressive state, with qualities and needs that occasionally cover with those of Washington on issues of key intrigue, and frequently strife over issues of change and vote based system for other Middle Eastern states. Moreover, Middle East territorial governmental issues don't comprise of unbending alliances that can be seen as a smaller than normal war.

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