

SUMMARY OF THE PH.D. THESIS

ON

**Evolution of Iran-Saudi Relations since
1979**

**UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW
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INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
The problem statements	3
Research tasks	3
The thesis's characteristic	4
Research questions	4
Hypotheses	4
Problems in the way of verifying the hypotheses	5
Methodological considerations	6
Theoretical tools	7
MIDDLE EAST AS A REGIONAL CONTEXT	9
The Middle East political position internationally	9
Main regional states	9
Conflict areas between KSA and Iran	10
Intervention in each other's internal affairs	12
THE HISTORICAL PERSPEKTIVE	12
Iran – Saudi relations after the 1979 revolution	12
Iran's and Saudi Arabia's geopolitical situations after the Cold War	13
POLITICAL RIVALRY	13
Proxy wars – the new dimension of rivalry in XXI century	14
An overall analysis of the political rivalry	14
ECONOMIC RIVALRY IRAN-KSA	15
Rivalry on the energy market and the importance of both countries	15
THE RELIGIOUS RIVALRY	16
CONCLUSION	16
Compromise contrary to the interests of the states	16
Ideology as a political tool	17
The Iranian 1979-Revolution as an important event	17
Possibility of a “win-win” option in Iran-Saudi relations	17

INTRODUCTION

The problem statements

The purpose of this study is to examine one of the major international disputes in one of the world's most sensitive areas. The relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia has been tied to a long-lasting conflict, both historically and politically. Revealing the nature of this conflict, its main causes and its important side factors can give a better understanding of the relationship between the two countries.

It is intent to dig into the depth of an ancient historical conflict that today appears in its own way. Today, there are two regimes not only attempting to resolve the conflict or reduce its flames, but, conversely, they try to exploit the conflict in their own interests, to manage their own internal problems and stabilize their regimes.

The priority of the Saudi state throughout its entire lifetime has been the continuation of survival, in any possible way. On the other hand, the founder of the Iranian present system of government, Ayatollah Khomeini, has repeatedly stated that the preserving the system is the most necessary duties. Is there a relationship between the hostility at this high level between these two states with their efforts to maintain their survival, or is there another reason for this hostility?

A hostile relationship between these two countries in the recent years has led to crucial political and security problems for both countries, and that it gradually has had similar effects on the political relations in other countries in the Middle East. Thus, it has had many negative consequences not only for the political life in both countries, but also for the region's other countries, which have been scene for this competition, and are used as means to either Iran or Saudi Arabia.

Kenneth Pollack from the Brookings Institution believes "all across the region, there is almost always a group being backed by the Iranians and a group backed by the Saudis".

Research tasks

The assignments can be divided into different main directions:

First, it is intended to provide a historical overview of cultural, religious and ethnic differences, as well as to describe these matters as far as possible.

It is intended to make clear to the reader about the background in which this conflict lies.

In the second step, an attempt is made to give a picture of conflict points as clear as possible, and which areas are most controversial.

The third direction will deal with the international and regional status of the two states, their possibilities, tools, strategies and behaviour.

The nature of the conflict is being sought to be highlighted as a necessary part of the study and the answer to the question of what the two states aim at.

The reader will be made aware of the consequences of the conflict and its continuation. "What can this relationship and states' behaviour end with?" is a question that the study aims at shedding light on.

Finally, dealing with question about there are some solutions to the problem.

The thesis's characteristic

The political character of the issue is highlighted by underlining the behavior of the regimes in Iran and Saudi Arabia. Both of them are trying to keep their legitimacy by relying on the religion of Islam. Therefore, dealing with the issue of the relationship between politics and ideology in the government structure of these two countries is one of the major axes in this research.

Furthermore, within the field of international relations, it is interesting and worth studying the contexts and factors of conflicts between states as much as studying the contexts of cooperation between states, the possibility of nations approaching each other and various treaties at the global, regional and bilateral levels. Therefore, the backgrounds and factors of conflict between the two countries of Iran and Saudi Arabia are also among the most important axes in this work.

Research questions

The main question that remains to be answered will be whether **it is possible to have a “win- win” option in Iran-Saudi relations?**

The following questions may form sub-issues to better illustrate the study's key question:

What are the main causes of the conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia?

How did these two countries end up as the two main powers in the Middle East region?

What is the effect the sectarian problems played in creating a competitive relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia?

Are there really security threats from these two countries toward each other?

Why is the Iran – Saudi Arabia relationship so crucial from a regional perspective?

Hypotheses

The presented claims that are based on study backgrounds and assumptions, are categorized in two categories of main hypotheses and other hypotheses. They have been formulated as follows:

- Too much rivalry between Iran and KSA to enable cooperation between both countries.
- Multidimensional conflict of interests leads to destabilization of the region and creates persistent threat in this region.
- Except OPEC there are no common spaces for cooperation between these two countries.
- In analysed period there has been an intensification of competition, resulting in destabilization of the Middle East region.

Problems in the way of verifying the hypotheses

In fact, in relation to the hypothesis that the conduct of the investigative states has generally been conflict-creating in the last 40 years and not in the direction of reconciliation, it is not particularly difficult.

There are unbelievably many evidences for rivalry between the two countries than being cooperation and movement against normalization of the relationship.

After all, one cannot always be sure to predict the events, developments and the play result on the political scene. In situations, the development of events can be as fast as it once makes it difficult for analysts to follow. One can therefore imagine any unpredictable event in the relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Regarding conflict-packed areas spread throughout the region such as Iraq, Syria, Yemen, ... different analyses can be found for the actual causes of the conflicts. In this study, it can be perceived that the cause of all existing conflicts stems from the two rival states. Nevertheless, if presented as a hypothesis, it cannot be verified. The more correct claim may be that many conflicts in the Middle East may have other causes than the interference of the two states, but that Iran and Saudi Arabia exploit the situation and act very quickly as influential actors and effective factors in the development of events. Therefore, one of the problems in relation to the hypotheses can be in the form of a two-sided impression of the cause of many conflicts in the region and the question whether the two rival countries have created them or if there are other reasons.

In relation to the membership of the two countries in OPEC, there is a very complex relationship between them because of the organization's implementation of strategies, tactics and policies. The organization apparently acts independently and beyond of the influence of a single country but on the basis of the interests of all members.

Nevertheless, the organization operates in situations such as the battlefield for economic and political confrontation between the two countries. Therefore, it can be said that the presence of the two countries in OPEC can in special circumstances form a triangular relationship that makes it difficult to achieve a realistic analysis of the situation.

Methodological considerations

Through this study, starting with some assumptions and thus presented hypotheses, which are compared to the empirical data, there will be attempted to obtain the expected result. Therefore, there is talk about a method that can be called as hypothetical-deductive method.

There exist many different literatures and researches in general on the Middle Eastern politics, and specifically on the Iran - Saudi relationship made in the media. Therefore, using a deductive study by being guided by theoretical assumptions seems necessary to broaden the understanding of the problem area.

Content analysis – Through the study it is attempted that content analysis is used to draw conclusions based on the empirical data presented in the study. The analysis is not specified and bounded in a separate section, but that is tried to be present almost throughout the entire study. However, in Chapter Four, concerning the "political rivalry", a section is devoted to an overall analysis, which is in fact a political analysis based on a summation of this chapter.

The discipline that is used in the content analysis, is of the qualitative manner. The study's level of abstraction can be varying from one theme to another, but in any case, it may be debatable, since the analysis is primarily more interpretation oriented than being based on quantitative content.

Through use of more historical data it is attempted to enhance the credibility of the content, as well as being tried to that data collection is well designed and as far as possible to be described carefully.

Discourse analysis – Discourses are understood as mindset or articulated understanding of phenomena, concepts or events. Within the social sciences "discourse analysis" under the influence of the linguistic science's new methods and methodically developed terms from the French historian of ideas Michel Foucault since the 1980s has been discussed.

The core of this debate is that the languages, people in social contexts apply, are controlled by patterns associated with phenomena, which in turn are bound by time and place.

It is a process that limits people's thoughts and actions. Discourse analysis intends primarily to reveal our truisms through historical analyzes.

One can discuss about the discourses on two different levels; the one may be a discussion in relation to the investigation's discursive bid itself, and the question of which discourse, the study is characterized by. The second level may be concerned with the study's analysis and interpretation, based on the study's data.

Data collection – The primary data collection is mainly based on the existing literature in the field with special focus on political and diplomatic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia as well as analyzing texts from selected newspapers, journals, and internet-based magazines and websites through a focus on the case. It will be done with an even more focus on the various aspects of the rivalry between the two states.

These will be considered using every possible investigative work that is relevant in connection to the central research questions. So, the empirical evidence can be found in books, articles, reports, texts, summaries and the like around Iran and Saudi Arabia's political relationship as well as their foreign policies towards each other from widely varying sources, these are then analyzed and illustrated to find answers to questions relating to the central problem.

The study's validity is ensured by using multiple sources, which form the basis for a credible analysis. There are not all those sources that are reflected in the study, but all the sources are used either as the most basic information or as supportive source materials to could analyze the issue.

When the materials are used from various research literatures and from different and possibly conflicting sources there may be considered that the materials are reliable. It requires periodic examination of which sources can be safely used and which sources cannot be used to build on study. In addition, when the investigation is about political and diplomatic relations between two countries, it may be difficult task directly from the national political authorities to get information. Especially in countries with authoritarian regimes, where much information can be understood in a context of the security issue, it will probably be difficult to obtain information to be used regarding a research study.

Theoretical tools

Since the realist and liberal theories are often used as two theoretical options for international relations events, they have also been used in this research as two basic theoretical tools to explain the questions presented in this work. Certainly, other theories are also used in this area as tools for analyzing various issues. Nevertheless, the two theories mentioned above, like two dominants, but opposing views, try to draw each one a picture of the facts based on its own thought structure. In this study, there has also tried to take the theoretical starting point in these two contrasting views and then to go to other theories. After a review of the realist-liberalist debate and their views on the subject of the study, it is used theories of Constructivism and Securitization. It has been believed that these two theories could help us to explain the conflicts between the two states of Iran and Saudi Arabia.

This because the subject is multi-dimensional and has its own complexities. Therefore, there is a need for more theoretical tools to as broadly as possible provide an overview of the subject's dissemination and important elements.

Constructivist Theory is a theoretical perspective which may explain some parts of the conflict between the two states of Iran and Saudi Arabia. The author believes that this theory also cannot enlighten all of the dimensions of the conflict. However, since a large part of the body of the ideological supporters of these two regimes judge by their perceptions and imaginations of the "enemy", one can use the Constructivist Theory to better understand at least a part of the dimensions of the conflict between the two states.

In relation to securitization studies, it is important that securitization actors are identified, discover which interests there should be preserved and protected, and finally, how is the relationship between actors and the audience.

The main drivers behind the scene of securitization in a theocratic political system like those in Iran or Saudi Arabia's ruling logically are religious leaders and clerics, regardless of all these, they are at the head of political affairs.

When a regime is in a lot of problems, it can find ways to create foreign enemies. The regime can in this way essentially accomplish two goals. One is to create an enmity relationship with a foreign enemy which can create an internal unity. The other is that the dominant ruler with reference to the external enemy gets the opportunity to suppress their internal enemies. Creating an enemy can be an effective way whereby the dominant regime can draw public support to itself, while all internal problems under the created situation will be in the shadow of the attention gathered from the supposed external enemy crisis.

Overall, the application of the theories in this study is for the purpose of, with theoretical glasses, to look at the backgrounds of the conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia, as well as to

distinguish between different elements of the causes of the conflict, and thus to find theoretical explanations for the states' behaviour.

MIDDLE EAST AS A REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Middle East political position internationally

Between the two world wars and especially after the Second World War, the Western states' economic and political interests in some way have been linked to the Middle East.

Therefore, this region has been one of the subsystems of the cycle of international politics that since the end of the Second World War has experienced the highest volatility and violence.

It is not excessive if we say that the Middle East since the end of the First World War has always been exposed to conflicts and confrontations. It's difficult to find a source that can point to a time of this era in the Middle East when the region experienced peace and tranquillity.

One of the major causes of political complexity in the Middle East may be due to unfounded and stochastic borders, which artificially have been created by the major powers especially after the First World War. It has obviously created a problematic overlap pattern in the Middle Eastern region so that the peoples' loyalties to their respective states face their loyalties to sub-states' identities.

An arming race in the region was also in the direction of the Western countries' interest in general, and specifically in the interest of the Americans who wished to keep status quo in a region by arming all sides and keeping all actors in similar military condition. It could be considered as a part of the U.S strategy that no country in the region should get a dominated position in relation to the other countries and thus to ensure the region's stability is not threatened.

The discovery of oil also has been a decisive factor in the region's conflicts and both military and political confrontations. A major part of the oil came from the Middle East to the rest of the world. These could necessitate conditions and use of political methods mainly from the Western world which were dependent on Middle Eastern oil. Conditions were set in motion to verify and ensure the flow of oil from that part of the world to the western countries. Establishment and maintenance of such control could be almost impossible without political and economic influence, which again could not be gained without trying to bend the political and economic conditions in the region's different countries.

Main regional states

It is obvious that the 8-year long war between Iran and Iraq (1980 – 1988) made both countries weak, while Turkey gradually became a great regional power in the Middle East. A weak Iraq in the 90s after the long war with Iran and furthermore in the wake of Iraq's attack on Kuwait and the subsequent US-led attack on that country practically took the state out of the picture. The collapse of Iraq led to Iran's strength while Saudi Arabia gradually rose to be a significant player in the region in the 80s and 90s. As a result, since the 1990s, the rivalry over domination in the region has been a special issue between Iran and Saudi Arabia". In this way, both states intensified their "regional struggle for influence".

Political changes due to the end of the Cold War also led to dramatic changes in the Middle East's political pattern. Overall the end of the competition between East and West led to fundamental upheaval in World Politics so that it influenced many regional and international relations.

Conflict areas between KSA and Iran

An almost four decade -long conflict between two Middle Eastern countries raises the question of what the conflicting relationship between the states ends up with. The question of whether they finally go for a war and direct hard confrontation or if they change politics and give up on continuing past behaviours towards each other.

Besides, it is the problem of the region's security, which appears to be one of the key issues of relations between the two countries.

Everything indicates that the two countries confront each other in all important international arenas. This hypothesis can be strengthened when we observe that each of the two states in every controversial point in the Middle East faces the other state. The region has for the last several decades experienced that as soon as a conflict arises, the one state is behind one part of the conflict and the other state behind the other part.

Nevertheless, the bulk of the survival of both countries is dependent on oil revenues. If we are looking for an area where the two states can be closer than other areas, it may be OPEC. After all, controversies and disagreements in their presence in OPEC have been far more than cooperating and agreeing cases.

Conflict areas between the two states have not only been so many and varied but have also become deeper and intensified over the last 4 decades.

Both states have laid their foundations of legitimacies based on the ideology of Islam and each of them introduces itself as the main base, advocate and sponsor of the Muslim world.

They not only direct their actions against each other, but also their overseas activities can have an effect on their relationship and can even be considered as "indirect involvement".

In addition to the ideological struggle for influence, there are also geographical/geopolitical areas, as well as economic, political, military, institutional, and diplomatic zones, where either the first or the latter state has the upper hand in the region.

Persian Gulf – One of the most important geopolitical zones that may be the subject of the conflict between the two states is the Persian Gulf area. So, besides being different countries in the Middle East, both states use all their attempts to have influence in the Persian Gulf and the countries around it.

One cannot talk about the relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia without talking about the Persian Gulf as one of the main geographical contexts of this relationship. There are actually many analysts that consider the Persian Gulf was "the first front of the rivalry". In addition to the fact that the bay is a common area between the two neighbours, it can be considered as the main venue for the both countries' economies such as the so-called single-product economies are highly dependent on the navigation flow in these important waters.

The diplomatic areas – In the political and diplomatic areas, Saudi Arabia stands stronger in relation to Iran. Both countries are governed by regimes that can be regarded as theocratic. Sharia legislation will fill a large part of legislative relations in these two countries, while both states support Islamism each on its own way. Nevertheless, within various international political and diplomatic zones, Saudi Arabia has more possibilities and a more potential cooperative relationship with other countries than Iran has.

OIC / Arab League – The relationships in the Organization of the Islamic Countries (OIC) and the "Arab League" are more unequal in favour of Saudi Arabia compared to Iran. In the OIC, the Saudis have always had more influence because of the absence of Iran in the Arab League, they have absolute power in this organization.

The Arab League in repeated times has condemned the Iranian state's behaviours and anyone can guess that the Arab League's political stance towards Iran is under the influence of Saudi Arabia.

Arms race – The military strength and the arms race between those two countries is also an important factor derived from their competitive relationship with each other. It is interesting

to know that both countries accuse each other of arms race, weapon purchasing in a high degree and dependence on the great arms dealer states and companies. The Iranians accuse Saudi Arabia of wasting its people's economic resources through weapon purchase in large quantities from the American big arms dealer factories while it also does the same thing and more dependent on the "Great Satan". In return, the Saudis accuse the Iranian state to be a provocateur and crisis creator in the region while its people suffer from poverty, unemployment, and social problems.

A nuclear Iran – At the beginning of 2003, Iran worked on ways of getting fuel to its nuclear power plants. Three years after, the government declared that it had succeeded in enriching uranium. From that time, the disputes between Iran and international institutions such as the UN Security Council started. The Islamic Republic had at many times declared that the great powers' "obstacles" against Iran's nuclear program were inconclusive and that Iran will continue its nuclear targets.

Intensified Iran's nuclear program had a great impact on the already tense relationship between the two countries of Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Since the discovery of the Iranians' nuclear program, the Saudis' fear of Iran's threat increased dramatically. For the Saudis, an advance full-threatening Iran lacks only possession of nuclear weapons for it to be a perfect dominant threat, not only to Saudi Arabia but also to the whole of the Middle East region. This Saudis' view on the Iranians' threat is partly based on the Islamic Republic's earlier firm intentions to export its Shiite revolution.

Intervention in each other's internal affairs

The interventions of these two states in some areas of each other's countries can be mentioned as the priorities of these two states.

Saudi Arabia's fear of Iran's provocation of the Shiite minorities in the oil-rich areas in the Saudi territories around the Persian Gulf especially since Iranian 1979-revolution has been a crucial factor to their lack of direct approach to two countries.

At the same time, Iran fears Saudis supports of the Sunnites terror actions in the Sunnite majority areas in Iran and thus the involvement of the Sunnites movements in those areas.

THE HISTORICAL PERSPEKTIVE

Iran – Saudi relations after the 1979 revolution

After the revolution, the relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia changed dramatically in such a way that they could be considered as two enemies." Neither the Iranian revolutionaries nor the Saudis had an optimistic view in relation to each other. The Iranians had from the beginning, a dismissive and even attacking stance in the relationship with the Saudis so that in Saudi leaders' eyes the fall of the Shah regime and Khomeini's power takeover were "a veritable earthquake". Even some researchers believe that tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia do not have an ideological (Sunni-Shia), historic or nationalistic (Arab-Persian) cause, but that it comes from the 1979 revolution. The Saudis regarded the Iranian revolution not only as an external regional threat to their security but also as a threat to their domestic security and stability.

The Iranian revolutionary leaders' claim on "exporting the revolution" from the beginning of the revolution led to serious tensions between Iran on the one hand and Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries on the other.

Iran's and Saudi Arabia's geopolitical situations after the Cold War

One of the consequences of the end of the Cold War between East and West was a trend toward regionalism which theoretically affected international relations. The Cold War did not allow the emergence of a large part of the potential disputes that existed among Third World countries. Maybe it's because in a polarizing world between two great powers, less computational errors occur, while political speculations take place with a higher degree of certainty. In a bipolar system, limited decision-making centres to exclaim war exists, while a multi-polar system is much more fluid and has many such dyads, whereby war is more likely.

After the termination of the Cold War the competitive relation between Iran and Saudi Arabia intensified so that each of them tried to overtake the competition in different fields.

In any case, in the last Three decades, regional hegemonies changed in such a way that individual states independent of East or West play a more significant regional role. It led to the situation where Iran and Saudi Arabia were not only free of the influence of the East and West disputes "but were now able to expand the geographic area of their rivalry".

POLITICAL RIVALRY

After the Saddam's fall – A strong Iraq as a potential hegemony of power in the region could always act as an indirect hindering factor for an Iran-Saudi confrontational relationship and thus keep a balance between those two countries, but Iraq's exit from regional competitions removed this factor. Already after Iraq's defeat in the American led operation against Iraq in

1990, Iraq "was expelled from the race for hegemony in the Gulf region." In addition, a strong Iraq in the continuing confrontation with Iran could act as a hindering factor in Iran's ability to strengthen its influence in the countries around the Persian Gulf. Therefore, when the war ended, Saudi Arabia might well feel that it lost a hindering fence between itself and Iran.

The fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003 caused a radical change in the Middle Eastern "balance of power." Saddam's fall led to that and both Iran and Saudi Arabia strived to increase their military strength.

Proxy wars – the new dimension of rivalry in XXI century

Both countries, by using their ideological agents have been trying to gain influence in Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen and other countries.

Moreover, both countries try to isolate each other on the international scene. Saudi Arabia especially uses its economic strength and oil to attempt to eliminate the Iranians efforts. The Saudi rulers have at several times expressed their will to compensate for energy loss and support countries that eventually lose in a situation of a war against Iran.

An overall analysis of the political rivalry

A theoretical analysis – We can say that the two states' behaviours can be derived from their perceptions toward each other. However, it is difficult to say that these two states' perceptions and imaginations are purely based on their feelings of "threat". This argumentation is on the basis of the fact that their "threat feeling" is not only on the ground of security issues but that the two states' perceptions and imaginations about each other contain aggressive impulses and offensive ambitions besides security concerns and defensive intentions.

Much of the behaviours of these two states are interwoven with subjective perceptions and impressions based on narratives, exaggerations, engineered creations and indoctrinators, which are very different than what exists in the real world. Maybe the political nature of these two states is shaped in such a way that in situations they find themselves, they are not able to evaluate each other in a different way except with a pessimist view and caution.

The role of the Islamic leaders in Iran and Saudi Arabia, and thus their perceptions regarding the preservation of religious values and consequently threats to these values can be laid as the basis of the two countries' leaders' perceptions of their own security against one another.

Whether these perceptions are justified and legitimate or whether they are the result of creating artificial discourses, it's a whole other discussion, but one can, in any case, say that the

ideological leaders' claims on ideological threats in both countries are so indivisibly combined with security charges from the political leaders of the two countries against each other.

ECONOMIC RIVALRY IRAN-KSA

This kind of states is obvious examples of rentier states. It means that the income of that type of states come mainly from the sale of their natural resources. In countries like Iran and Saudi Arabia, "taxation" does not have a great role in the country's financial strength. Therefore, ordinary people have not easy access to political decision-making processes. Economy and availability to the economy resources are one of the main fundamentals to achieving and maintaining political power. Thus, when the state has the monopoly over the sale of natural resources to get the incomes, and naturally, the final say on how those incomes should be used, the ordinary people have not special influence on decisions related to management of the different aspects of the society's economic, political, and social lives.

The taxation system is very unsystematic, limited, traditional, random, and tribute-like, in which the rich people, mainly the top business companies and self-employed businessmen are forced to pay tax.

Rivalry on the energy market and the importance of both countries

In a rivalry relationship between two states, "economic means" can be used as effective pressure leverage against a rival. Indeed, "economics" plays a decisive role within "the nature of the geopolitical environment." Regarding the two states' rivalry, three important areas, seen from the angle of economy examination will be focused on. These three areas are:

"Natural resources, the role of OPEC, and the provision of financial support to proselytizing agendas."

OPEC organization as an influential economic organization is among the competition areas that both countries attempt to dominate. This organization can be considered as one of the decisive influence zones that neither of the two states could stabilize itself as the dominant actor. Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia has until now put the most desired agendas for the organization than Iran has done. For several reasons, among other things, the lower population, lower public spending, higher oil resources, more modernized oil production opportunities and thus, a higher income, the Saudis compared to the Iranians have more space for scheming. It can give them more power when it comes to pricing or decision-making regarding oil production ceiling for OPEC members.

The Saudi Royal Family uses oil revenues as an effective means to protect itself from external security threats. The Saudi behaviour that mainly consists of increasing the oil production, and thus a price reduction on the international oil markets, may be at the expense of economic and social impacts for the country. Even so, the Saudis consider this way of self-protect as "dropping the bomb on a rival", when the Saudis are trying to pressure Iran.

THE RELIGIOUS RIVALRY

The ideological conflict in the Islamic world can rather be considered as the religious leaders' competition than to be ordinary people's conflict. Against this background, one can find a mixture of religion and politics as the driving force to the religious conflicts.

The Shiia or Sunni minorities in each of these two countries can work as a potential influence to each other in the country. The Sunni minority in Iran live generally under a lower status in relation to the majority, as well as Shiia people in Saudi Arabia have a second-grade social status.

Basically, since the Shiite ideology constitutes the fundamental of legitimacy of the Islamic Republic regime, the best way of interfering and penetrating the Iranian regime in other countries is either establishing links with the Shiites in those countries or strengthening the Shiism in those areas and in the mildest case, create Shiite organizations.

In any case, both sides have a merging of religion and politics in their power structures. Therefore, since the foundations of both regimes are linked to religious legitimacy, it is not unexpected that each of them will use Shiite and Sunni differences as a tool against each other.

CONCLUSION

Compromise contrary to the interests of the states

In terms of the relationship between the two states presently, it does not seem like the ruling elites in the two countries have a real interest in improving their relationship with each other. For countries such as Iran or Saudi Arabia, one of their main priorities is security, preservation and stabilization of the dominant power. Everything else is going to be under other priorities, which is also somehow going to be related to the dominant power's survival, security and stability.

It can be argued that in many situations, a conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia can be considered to be more ideal to the purposes of the two states than that of an approximation. A conflict can be more of their interest than reconciliation, regardless of whether a normal

relationship is appropriate for their economic dynamism, political development, social changes or cultural improvements.

Ideology as a political tool

One of the obvious hallmarks in the process of forty years of relationship between the two countries is that “ideology” has been used and continues to be used as a political tool. No matter how we take into account the ups and downs or fluctuations in this regard; the definite fact that remains is the ideological application in the realm of government.

Sectarianism and ideology are the most appropriate tool in the hands of these two states to maintain the internal political power, internal coherence, and "state survival" and they are desirable or undesirable used also as an external tool. Although the main reason for the connection between "the political power" and "ideology" is internal legitimacy, the ideology is also used to construct external security issues.

The Iranian 1979-Revolution as an important event

The Iranian foreign policy orientation after the 1979 revolution has in many cases created conflicts between its ideals and those international laws and practices which has led to serious problems for the country.

The evolution of Iran's relationship with the outside world began essentially with the outbreak of the 1979 revolution with such a spirit and perspectives, and with approaches related to these views, Saudi Arabia was one of the first countries to be targeted by hostile and aggressive rhetoric.

Possibility of a “win-win” option in Iran-Saudi relations

It can be concluded that a cooperative relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia can include both countries’ permanent national interest. Even if these two states choose an appropriate way in the direction of their survival and interests, it can be imagined that they come towards each other in peace and reconciliation, and by this action, bring reconciliation and calm to the whole region.

Despite all, the radical groups in both countries are opposed to rapprochement between the two countries, and therefore they increase the hostility flame.

One can calmly conclude that if this relationship leads to war, there will never be any victorious party.