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CAUSES OF THE DIVERGENT RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF
IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA DURING THE REIGN OF SALMAN BIN ABDULAZIZ
(2015-2020)

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the causes of **the divergence** between Iran and Saudi Arabia from **2015 to 2020**. Considering the situation in the Middle East and viewpoint of countries in this region to the conditions of their environment and the relationship between these two countries since the establishment of Saudi Arabia, the theory of aggressive realism as a theoretical framework and analytical descriptive method has been used in the study. After the theoretical framework, the relationship between the two countries before the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran and the conflicts between two countries from the victory of the Islamic Revolution till the beginning of King Salman government have been examined. then, the impact of King Salman reign on relationships between the two countries and their conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Bahrain, Yemen, Lebanon and Palestine will be studied below. The type and level of Saudi Arabia's relations with the United States and Israel during this period, and the impact of these relations on Iran-Saudi Arabia relations will be examined. Because the United States is a superpower and has an active presence in the Middle East, one of the main reasons for this issue is the rich resources of the Middle East. Iran and the United States define each other as enemies. So the United States, in cooperation with Saudi Arabia has worked to the detriment of Iran. Saudi Arabia and Israel have greatly expanded their cooperation, especially Information cooperation since the beginning of King Salman's government and the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. In addition, with the Crown Prince of bin Salman, who was against the royal family's law, the situation within this family has become so complicated. Saudi geopolitical bottlenecks have led to an attack on Yemen, which itself, along with declining oil prices and rising Saudi production to hit Iran, has led Saudi Arabia facing budget deficit. Bin Salman has repeatedly said he is trying to drag the war into Iran. Saudi Arabia has also sought to maintain its competitiveness by building a nuclear balance against Iran.

INTRODUCTION

Iran and Saudi Arabia are two inveterate rivals in the West Asian region. Both countries have energy resources, a special geopolitical position and a lot of influence in the Islamic world and West Asia. This increases their role and importance in regional and global exchanges. The two countries are regional rivals, and given that the security structure of West Asia is very complex and unpredictable, each seeks to increase its power and sphere of influence. Therefore, it seems that the best theory that can analyze the rivalry between the two countries is the theory of realism, and especially its aggressive branch, which will be mentioned below. Prior to the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Iran and Saudi Arabia had relations with each other. In the background, we examine the relations between the two countries before and after the 1979 revolution. The monarchy of Saudi Arabia was formed in 1932. (Weddington, Derika, 2017:1)

Mohammad Reza Shah often had good relations with the Saudi government, but sometimes for various reasons, conflicts arose between these two countries. In 1941, when Iranian pilgrims went to Saudi Arabia for the Hajj, one of the Iranian pilgrims, Abu Talib Yazdi, vomited during Tawaf and was arrested by Saudi forces and sentenced to death. This incident led to the severance of relations between these two countries.

Following the incident, the Iranian embassy in Egypt sent a letter of protest to the Saudi Foreign Ministry, demanding that Saudi Arabia be held accountable. "If there weren't for God's grace and prudent actions of the Saudi Arabian government, many Iranian pilgrims would have been killed as a result of their shameful behavior in the house of God," the Saudi Foreign Ministry said in a statement, considering this incident a legal one.

After this incident, relations between the two countries were severed for four years. In 1948, the Saudi king sent a letter requesting the resumption of relations and with the consent of the Shah of Iran, relations were restored. (Baqerul Uloom Research Institute, 2015) After this incident, there were other tensions in the relations between these two important and influential countries of West Asia, which caused conflicts in the relations between the two countries. In any case, relations between the two countries were relatively good during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah, and the two countries were the two pillars of the Nixon-Kissinger policy in West Asia. Disputes between the two countries intensified after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, and relations were generally intensive. These tensions intensified as King Salman became to power, and the two sides looked at each other with more distrust. Tensions have risen sharply with Crown Prince of Mohammed bin Salman, and its impact on the region was obvious. The presence in power and their strong opposition to Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action have brought Saudi Arabia closer to Israel. And the two countries have publicly disclosed their secret ties, according to documents and statements made by Saudi leaders, and have been working closely together since the beginning of the JCPOA to the detriment of it. The United States is also considered as a superpower and a one of the Saudi's friends in the region, and the presence of the United States affects the decisions of the region, so the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States was also important, which we will be discussed farther.

After years of fighting terrorism, Iran has been able to consolidate its presence and the forces it supports in Iraq and Syria. In Yemen, the situation is not in Saudi Arabia's favor at all, and Ansarullah is constantly turning parts of Yemen into its ally and putting a lot of pressure on Saudi Arabia with many attacks. Saudi Arabia has used oil as a weapon to hit Iran's economy over the years, and it has been suffering itself by doing so. In addition, the costs of the Yemeni war have put Saudi Arabia in dire financial straits.

1-Theoretical framework: aggressive realism

1-1. Iran and Saudi Arabia are two inveterate rivals in the West Asian region. Both countries have energy resources, a special geopolitical position and a lot of influence in the Islamic world and West Asia. This increases their role and importance in regional and global exchanges. The two countries are regional rivals, and given that the security structure of West Asia is very complex and unpredictable, each seeks to increase its power and sphere of influence.

Due to the political structure of the countries, the presence of other powers in the region and the fierce rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the Middle East is facing a security situation, and each country wants to be hegemonic. Therefore, in the Middle East, playing with the result of zero is true, meaning that each side considers the victory of the other side as its loss, so in this situation, any other country is defined as the enemy and countries are trying to secure their interests by harming the rival's interests. Therefore, it seems that the best theory that can analyze the rivalry between the two countries well is the theory of realism, and especially its aggressive branch, which will be mentioned below.

Today's scholars of political science attribute the beginning of science, the framework and structure of the school of realism to Morgenthau and the book of politics among his nations. Morgenthau describes six principles that anyone who accepts them is a realist. These principles include:

1. Political realism believes that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that are rooted in human nature.

2. The main sign that helps political realism in order to find its way through the international perspective is the concept of defined interests in terms of power.

3. Realism assumes that its basic concept of interests which is defined base on power is an objective and valid one, but does not impose this concept in a fixed sense and once for all the time.

4. Political realism is aware of the importance of political action.

5. Political realism refuses to identify the moral ideals of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the world.

6. Therefore, the difference between political realism and other schools of thought is real and profound. (Morgenta, 1949: 4-15)

In realist point of view, every country is thinking of accumulating power in order to ensure its security in the anarchic world. Regarding power, Hobbes says: "The right to nature is the right to freedom, which one uses his/her power of pleasure to preserve his/her nature" (Hobbes, Thomas, 1651: 79).

In this regard, David Arsi says: "In the realists' point of view, the rule of the government and its support is very important, also gaining power is an important goal, and power means having military capability." In realist point of view, the existence of a central power is so significant. The lack of central power creates chaos and instability (ORSI, DAVIDE, 2018: 123). Thomas Hobbes also talks about the necessity of the accumulation of power. Chaos is inherently unstable and requires international actors to accumulate power so as to guarantee its survival. Every state needs power to survive (Cox, M, 2016: 106)

Raymond Aron states that there is no government that can preserve itself without coercion. (Aron, Raymond, 1966: 591-600) Now that we have mentioned the important role of power in the point of view of some scientists, it is necessary to explain why countries seek to accumulate power. The reason for this issue is the anarchic atmosphere of the world community, in which we express the views of different scientists about anarchy.

Anarchy is central to international relations because sovereignty is fundamental to government-centered international relations (Brown, Chris, 2005: 116). Scott Burchill emphasizes the importance of anarchic understanding: "The connection between anarchy and selfishness and the necessities of the power of politics provide the nucleus of power" (Burchill, Scott, 2005, 30).

Kenneth Waltz, a theorist of defensive realism, says: "At the national level, force and government were used in the name of truth and justice, but what is being used internationally for superiority and protection of existence is the realm of domestic politics in the realm of authority, public administration and law. But the realm of international politics is the realm of power, conflict, and compromise. Every state, by force or otherwise, secures its own interests. The action of its rivals will be defined in accordance with the competing strategy of the year. In the international arena, force is the first and last solution. (WALTZ, KENNETH N, 1979: 111-114)"

1-2. So far, some of the general concepts of realist thought that underlie this discussion have been explained. Realist thinking has two defensive and offensive roots. The basis of the discussion is aggressive realism, which we will describe it with special attention to John Mearsheimer's point of view:

According to Mearsheimer, realism is based on three main beliefs:

1. Realism, like liberals, sees the state as a major actor in international politics.

2. The behavior of the great powers is more influenced by their internal environment than by the internal characteristics and coordinates of governments.

3. The calculations of power govern the point of view of the state and they compete with each other for power. (Mearsheimer, John J, 2001: 13-14)

1-3. Mearsheimer has made fundamental assumptions for his thought, which he calls aggressive realism, which has five parts:

1. The international system is anarchic.

2. The great powers have a military offensive capability that allows them to harm or destroy others.

3. Governments can never be sure of the intentions of other governments.

4. Survival is the primary goal of great powers.

5. Great powers are logical actors. (Mearsheimer. JohnJ, 2001: 25-26)

1-4. Considering that the primary goal of any country is survival and power guarantees the survival, we must now consider how power is gained:

1. War: Great Powers Can Use it to increase power. 60 percent of the states that started the war were the ultimate winners of the war. There are countries that use developed swords such as Prussian between 1862 and 1870. In addition, this victorious country captures the strategic lands of the defeated country or the occupying country completely.

2. Extortion: A government increases its power by threatening to use force, like Germany in the decade before World War I.

3. Predation and provocation: This means that a country will wage war between its two rivals, such as Russia's attempt to wage war between France and its allied Austrian forces.

4. Adding fuel to the flame is a better version of baiting and incitement and strives to prolong the conflict between competitors

5-1. Strategies for controlling attackers:

1. Balancing: A large country bears the responsibility of preventing an attacker from upsetting the balance of power.

2. Strategy of Transferring Responsibility: The main alternative for balancing is a power that is threatened, which in itself has the following conditions:

1. Good diplomatic relations with the attacker.

2. Referrals do not have a very warm relationship with the country to which they are responsible.

3. Powers mobilize additional resources to transfer responsibility.

4. Reflectors make it possible to increase or facilitate acceptor power. (Mearsheimer. JohnJ, 2001: 123-124)

3. Separation of Bahrain: In the case of Bahrain, Iran initially responded strongly to Saudi movements, and then Iranian Prime Minister Manouchehr Iqbal stated, "We will sever our political ties with any government that tries to make a pact with Bahrain forever." He also said that in this way, we consider these actions as hostile to ourselves and consider them as an aggression against our right to sovereignty, and we will fight them to the last drop of our blood" (Excerpt from Persian Gulf Documents, Vol. 3)

However, these words remained slogans and Saudi Arabia continued its relations with Bahrain. Finally, the Shah of Iran said, "The majority of the island's residents are Arabs and speak Arabic. The Bahraini archipelago is no longer economically important because its oil has run out and pearl fishing is not economically viable. It is strategically and militarily important." In terms of strategic and military importance, despite Iran's dominance of the Strait of Hormuz, those islands are not valuable. For

security reasons, the preservation of that land is costly and requires the deployment of one or two divisions there” (discussion with Iranian celebrities Mehdi Azar). Finally, the Iranian ambassador in the United Nations confirmed Bahrain's separation from Iran. (Alam, Assadollah, 237, 2018)

In general, Iran and Saudi Arabia had closer ties before the revolution. During the Shah's reign, both countries allied against Jamal Abdel Nasser in 1960. (RAND CORPORATION, wehry, Fredric, 2009:12)

The Saudis considered Nasser as a rival. Iran also had a problem with Nasser because he was a Pan-Arab. During the Shah's time, due to the presence of the Soviet Union, Iran and Saudi Arabia were US barriers to prevent the spread of communism. For this reason, the United States adopted the two-pillar policy of Nixon Kissinger, but in 1972 it abandoned the policy of balance, which increased Iran's power. (Alvandi, roham, DIPLOMACY HISTORY:338)

An important milestone in the history of relations between the two countries was Britain's decision to leave the Persian Gulf in the late 1960s, and after the time that India gained independence, the importance of the Persian Gulf to supply oil became more important (Weddington, Derika, 2017: 2). Also, relations between the two countries continued closely. These relations were maintained until the 1978 revolution. At the same time as the 2000 revolution, Saudi Arabia felt many concerns from Iran which was anti-imperialist and monarchical, especially as the eastern provinces of Saudi Arabia were Shiite (RAND CORPORATION wehry, Fredric, 2009: 13). Saudi Arabia is a Wahhabi country, and Wahhabi thought is a very fanatic thought of Islam. (Robert A. Harper, 2007: 60) Wahhabism considers Shiites as its main enemy, so given that Iran is Shiite, these two countries are completely opposite in this respect.

Saudi Arabia looked at the Iranian revolution with concern because of the feeling of great danger. After the revolution and the beginning of the war, this country helped Iraq to weaken Iran (Sadeghi, Hossein, 2010: 141). During the war, 450 Iranians were killed by Saudi forces in the 1987 Hajj when the Iranians went to Saudi Arabia, and the two countries eventually severed ties for three years. (RAND CORPORATION wehry, Fredric, 2009: 15) After the end of the war, Hashemi Rafsanjani was elected as the President of Iran. During his time, relations between these two countries improved. He took a more conciliatory stance toward Saudi Arabia. After Rafsanjani, Khatami took power. In 1997, Prince Abdullah came to Iran and he was the highest-ranking Saudi official to come to Iran since the revolution. Khatami also traveled to Saudi Arabia in 1999. Moreover, it was during Khatami's era that the United States invaded Iraq and Saudi Arabia feared Iranian influence in Iraq. (UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE, 2016)

After Khatami, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad came to power and tensions between the two countries were somehow controlled, and even in 2007 Qatar invited Iran to attend a meeting of the heads of the Gulf Cooperation Council (THE Gaurdian, Kinnimont, Jane, 2012). The Syrian crisis began during Ahmadinejad's time, and tensions between the two countries escalated. After Ahmadinejad, Hassan Rouhani came to power, which is discussed in general in this article.

Analysis:

Relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia have been intensive since the victory of the Islamic Revolution, as both countries have sought and continue to seek regional hegemony. The problems of these two countries affect issues in the regions such as Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Bahrain and Syria (Ghunaim, Ghadah, 2014: 59). The relationship between the two countries has been strained since King Salman came to power. The reason for this change is the developments in the region and the new attitude of the Saudis, especially Saudi Crown Prince bin Salman, who has officially threatened Iran over the years. The mentioned countries disagree on a variety of issues, each of which we will address separately.

2-1. Disputes over Syria: The Syrian civil war began in 2011. And a few months later, Bashar al-Assad officially announced that his country is facing domestic war. Syria is Iran's most important Arab ally, which is why Saudi Arabia did not have a good point of view toward Syria. Therefore, from the very beginning, with financial support and sending terrorists to Syria, it helped the opposite side. From the Saudi point of view, the events in Syria were a good opportunity to break the strategic alliance between Iran and Syria and inflict a severe blow on Iran's strategic goal of regional hegemony. (Shahram Nia, Seyed Amir Massoud, 2015: 33). In this regard, King Abdullah had said that the killings that are taking place in Syria are unacceptable. (Nejat, 637: 2014)

On the other hand, Saudi Arabia considers itself the flag bearer of Sunni and Iran considers itself in doing so for Shiite, so Saudi Arabia always considers itself as a rival for religious reasons in rivalry with Shiite Iran. (Nejalt, 639: 2014) Saudi Arabia also considers Syria as one of the main reasons for its defeat in areas such as Lebanon, Palestine, etc. (Sotoudeh Arani, Mohammad, 2015: 44)

Both Saudi Arabia and Iran are working to have a greater impact on the Syrian movements. That is why in 2012, Iran sent a large number of Basij forces and individuals from the Quds Forces to Syria to fight against Assad's opponents. (Ejaz, Atif, 2018: 50)

The Saudis also sent troops to Syria to fight against Assad. Saudi Arabia attached great importance to Syria, so it chose Bin Sultan port as Saudi Arabia's leader to overthrow Assad. He sent prisoners who were sentenced to death to Syria for the war (Ejaz, Atif, 2018: 56).

Saudi Arabia also had a problem with the type of regime in Syria. In addition, Saudi Arabia considers the Ba'athist ideology in Syria as conflicting, and was upset that power in Syria was in the hands of the Alawites, and regards power as a Sunni right. For this reason, it tried to bring the Sunnis to power by ousting Assad. (FOREIGN POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE, BENEDETTA BERTI, 2012)

In order to understand the importance of a country in a better way, in addition to the political structure, resources, culture, etc., we must also understand the geopolitical importance of that country. Syria is of great geopolitical importance and it is located between the three continents of Africa, Europe and Asia, as well as between Europe and Africa. Three factors have made Syria's geopolitics important including: 1. Having 186 kilometers of coastline with the Mediterranean Sea. 2. Being in the Middle East. 3. Neighboring with the occupied Palestine, Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon.

Syria could also be an important route for Iran's energy exports to Europe via the ports of Tartus and Bania. This issue reduces Iran's dependence on the route of Turkey, so any change in this country will change the geopolitics of the Middle East.(Nejat, Valadani, 35: 2013)

The religious dimension is very evident in the confrontation between Iran and Saudi Arabia in Syria. Iran considers itself as a Shiite and pro-Shiite country in the region, and Saudi Arabia considers itself as a major Sunni country, so this religious conflict has led more Shiites and Sunnis in the region to have different orientations in Syria and turn Syria into a region for contention. The Shiites of the region lined up behind Iran and the Sunnis did the same behind the Saudis, and practically the two Sunni-Shiite blocs in Syria are fighting each other (Qasemian, Ruhollah, 228-227: 2018).

Syria is also very important to Iran in terms of supporting Hezbollah and Hamas forces, because Iran will supply them with weapons through Syria, and if Syria was lost, the line of contact with the two would be destroyed (Nejat, Valadani, 2013: 38) and created a lot of security risks for Iran and its friends in the region and made this country available to Iran's enemies.

Therefore, preventing the influence of the United States and its allies in Syria is one of the most important concerns of Iran in Syria (Masoudnia, Ebrahimi, Hij, 133: 2018). Saudi Arabia made great efforts to overthrow the Assad government, but failed due to Iranian and Russian aid and the importance of Syria, and Iran has established its influence and presence in Syria. The majority of Syrians have been freed from the occupation of Saudi-backed terrorists and others, and Syrian government forces have been stabilized. Terrorists are still present in some areas, but due to the high ability of Iran and its allies in Syria, these areas will also be cleared of terrorists.

2-2 Lebanon:

Lebanon is one of the most competitive areas for the two eastern countries of the Mediterranean Sea. Shiites live in this area and have always had close relations with Iran. Hezbollah consists of Iran's allied forces in the region. Hezbollah has strengthened Iran's influence in West Asia (Hafeznia, Mohammad Reza and Romina, Ibrahim, 2017: 8,9)

Lebanon is the smallest country in the Middle East after Bahrain, a geopolitical country and in this regard, it is very important because of these issues:

1. Located between the three continents of Asia, Europe and Africa
2. The intersection of Asia and Europe and the two religions of Islam and Christianity
3. Becoming a refuge for religious minorities (Masoumi, Davood, 2014: 105)

Lebanon is a country that has a coast with the Mediterranean Sea, so it is possible for this country to trade by sea. It also shares a border with the Zionist regime, which adds to Lebanon's importance.

That is why Iran and Saudi Arabia are trying to gain influence in this country. Hezbollah has always been Iran's reliable ally in Lebanon (MIDDLE EAST EYE, Lina Khatib, 2019).

When Israel invaded Lebanon under the pretext that Hezbollah had captured two Israelis, it thought that Hezbollah could be destroyed, but Hezbollah's victory strengthened its presence in Lebanon and the Arab world considered Hezbollah's victory as its own victory; and this promoted Iran's position and influence in Lebanon. Saudi Arabia has been working for years to consolidate its presence in Lebanon. During Lebanese civil war, Saudi Arabia sought to spread Wahhabism in Lebanon, especially for Sunni's population. Saudi Arabia has always had a political presence in Lebanon, and since the signing of the Taif agreement, Saudi has a significant presence in Lebanese politics. (Rachel Grumet, Tali,2015:110-112)

There has always been a conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia in Lebanon, but it culminated in Hariri's resignation in Saudi Arabia. On November 4, 2017, Saad Hariri resigned while he was in Saudi Arabia, and he stated Hezbollah and Iran's interference as the reason for his resignation. (CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE, KARASIK, THEODORE,2017)

But it was said that bin Salman had forced Hariri to say such statements, and that bin Salman had taken Hariri hostage. So French President "Macron" forced Saudi's Crown Prince "bin Salman" to release Hariri. (BLOGS.LSE, Sleiman-Haidar, Ribale,2018)

At the 2019 Lebanese protests, Saudi Arabia sought to blame Iran for the current situation in Lebanon. Saudi Arabia and Israel are trying to put political and economic pressure on Hezbollah, thereby challenging Iran's influence in Lebanon. (RAND,Alireza Nader,2017). Skirmish continues in Lebanon between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and Saudi Arabia, along with some of its allies, the UAE in particular, is trying to resolve the situation in Lebanon in its favor, but has so far failed. The two countries played a significant role in creating and continuing the 2019 Lebanese protests, but they did not succeed. Lebanon will continue to experience tensions over the presence of Iran and Saudi Arabia. The current situation in Lebanon is stable and Iran's allied forces have a strong presence in Lebanon, and the current Lebanese government is closer to Hezbollah than ever before.

2-3. Iraq:

Iraq is a very important country in the Middle East. Iraq is at the center of Middle East. (STRATFOR WORLDVIEW, 2018) Iraq is one of Iran's neighbors, so its security is important to Iran. The developments in Iraq are important for Saudi Arabia for the following reasons: 1. Because it borders Iraq, it is concerned about the transfer of Iraqi's unrest to its country. 2. It is worried about the rise of Shiites and Kurds because it will increase Iran's influence. 3. Worried about imitating the Iraqi political developments by its own people. (Akbarzadeh, Fereydoun, 1397: 99) Iraq is also very important from a geopolitical point of view. The reasons for the importance of Iraqi geopolitics are:

1. Iraq is a country with huge oil and gas resources and is also a key member of OPEC.

2. The Kurds are part of Iraq. An important part of Iraq's resources is in the Kurdish areas.

3. Iraq is a Shiite-majority country and this is one of the reasons why Iraq is so important to Iran (Persian Gulf Studies Center, Akraminia, Mohammad)

After the fall of Saddam Hussein, Iran began its efforts to infiltrate Iraq according to the context of its population and achieved some successes. With the fall of Saddam Hussein, Saudi Arabia considered a different identity for Iraq. Saudi Arabia assumed Iraq's Arab identity lost. (Moradi Klardeh, Sajjad, 1396: 210). Then ISIS was formed, and after sometime in June 2014, ISIS captured the Iraqi city of Mosul. An important part of al-Baghdadi's forces were members of the former Iraqi army and its intelligence services. ISIS is also a religious difference between Iran and Saudi Arabia. (Rachel, Grumet, Tali, 2015: 135 138)

Iraq saw the need for the help of others to fight ISIS, so Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi came to Iran to officially invite Iran to fight ISIS in Iraq (Fararo, 2014). At the invitation of the Iraqi Prime Minister, the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps of Iran entered Iraq and provided advisory and military assistance to Iraq and used the capacity of the Iraqi forces with the fatwa of Ayatollah Ali Sistani, the supreme authority of the Iraqi Shiites, in order to eliminate ISIS in Iraq; Finally, in 2017, in a letter to the Supreme Leader of Iran, Martyr Soleimani announced the end of ISIS in this way "Despicable as a soldier required by His Excellency in this field, with the completion of the operation to liberate Abu Kamal, the last stronghold of ISIS, by lowering the flag of this American-Zionist group and raising the Syrian flag, the end of the dominance of this vicious family is announced." (KHAMENEL.IR,2017) In general, after the end of Saddam's regime, many thinkers believe that Iran's position in the region and the Islamic world has increased (Darabi, Ali, 1397: 71). With the announcement of the end of ISIS, Hashd Al-Shabaabi forces, which are Iran's allies in Iraq, still have a legal presence and guarantee Iran's influence in Iraq, and Saudi Arabia has accepted Iran's influence in Iraq.

2-4. Bahrain:

After the Islamic Revolution of Iran, due to the fact that Iran is Shiite, Bahrain felt threatened by Iran and attributed its internal conspiracies to Iran. In 1981, a coup took place in this country Bahrain accuses Iran of involvement in coup (MIDDLE EAST POLICY COUNCIL, Mabon, Simon).

Bahrain is of great importance to Saudi Arabia due to its proximity to the eastern provinces of Saudi Arabia. The people of Bahrain and eastern Saudi Arabia have close relations with each other due to kinship and cultural commonalities. (Khezri, Ehsan, 2015: 189) One of the main reasons for the competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia in Bahrain is its geopolitical position (Czornik, Katarzyna, 2017: 178) Given the religious and cultural commonalities between Iran and Bahrain, and given the importance of Bahrain, Iran tends to expand its revolutionary idea in Bahrain (Downs, Kevin, 2012: 211).

Shortly after the protests in Bahrain began, the Persian Gulf shield forces went to Bahrain to suppress the protesters, In the meantime, efforts were made to preserve the Al Khalifa regime with Shiite and Sunni

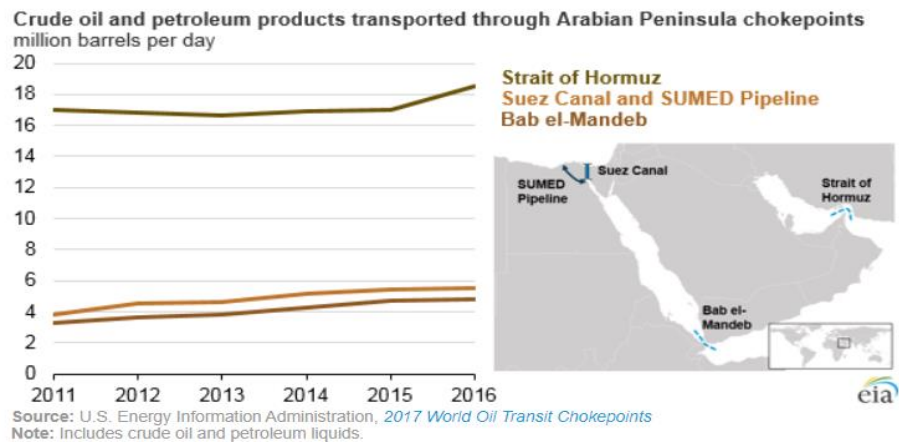
sectarianism (Rachel Grumet, Tali, 2015: 121). Saudi Arabia sent the most forces to Bahrain, because Bahrain relies heavily on Saudi Arabia economically and security, and the originality of Al Khalifa goes back to Najd, Saudi Arabia (Dehshiri, Mohammad Reza, 2015: 125).

During the protests, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain accused Iran of being involved in the protests, but the Iranian leader replied: "We are involved in anti-Israel activities ... we are not afraid to say that ... it is a lie to say that Iran is interfering in Bahrain's internal affairs. If we had intervened, the situation would have been different." (AL MONITOR, Qaidaari, Abbas2015)

What has made Al Saud very sensitive about Bahrain is Bahrain's proximity to the eastern provinces of Saudi Arabia, which is Shiite, and Saudi Arabia fears that Bahrain's events will reach this part of Saudi Arabia (Rachel Grumet, Tali, 2015: 120-123). That is why Saudi Arabia has provided a lot of assistance to Al Khalifa in Bahrain in order to suppress the Bahraini revolutionaries and protect Al Khalifa. The conflict between Al Khalifa and the Bahraini revolutionaries continues, and tensions between Iran and Bahrain are very high.

2-5. Yemen:

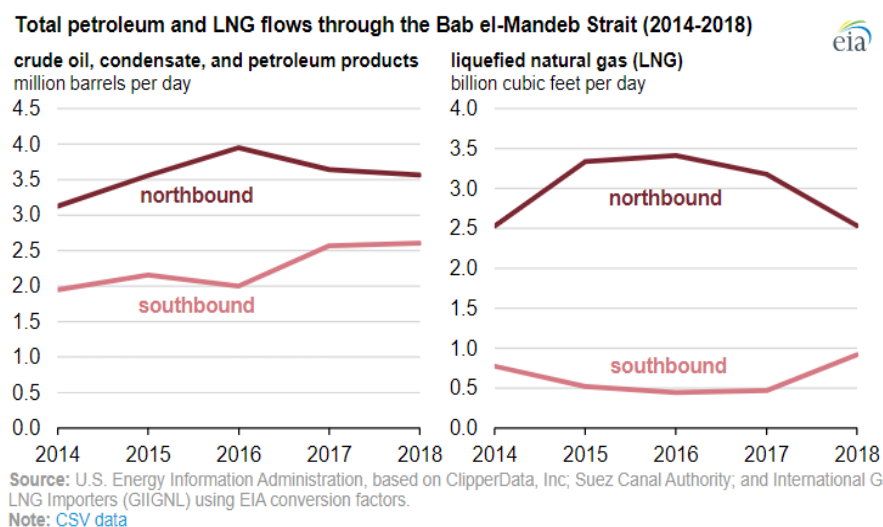
Yemen is a country that has become a place for competition between the two countries, especially since Shah Salman took office. And this war has continued so far, and given the Yemeni geopolitical situation, it is very important for the two countries, especially Saudi Arabia, which has geopolitical bottlenecks. Ansarullah uprising in Yemen has 3 cultural aspects: 1- Being a Shiite and having these principles in their thinking. 2. Protest against the Yemeni government in order to pave the way for the intervention of Saudi-backed Wahhabis as well as US intervention. 3- Promoting Imam Khomeini's thoughts and the principles of the Islamic Revolution regarding the struggle against the United States and Israel (Sotoudeh Arani, Mohammad, 1397: 48) Saudi Arabia is strongly opposed to all three aspects, so it decided to start a war. The Yemeni war began under Barack Obama, and it was he who expanded America's role in the Yemeni war (FOREIGN POLICY AT BROOKINGS, 2018). Yemen is the poorest country in the world that has been in various crises for a long time. One of Yemen's main problems is that there is no effective government in the country (Ahmad Yousefpour, 2017: 257). Former Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh was ousted in 2011 after 33 years in power, and was replaced by Abdur Mansour Hadi. The dispute between the Houthis and Mansour Hadi intensified, and in January 2015, the Houthis seized the presidential palace (Samiei Isfahani, Alireza, 2015: 12). Shortly after the capture of Sanaa, Saudi Arabia, along with 10 other countries, launched airstrikes on Yemen. Saudi Arabia invaded Yemen in 2015. Yemen plays an important role in world oil because it has the strategic Bab al-Mandeb Strait (Dr. D. Firdausi S. Fazal, 2017: 20-21)



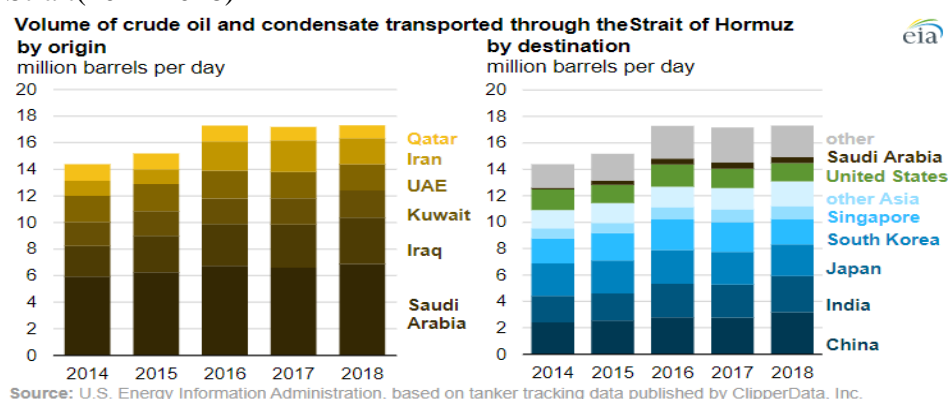
Crude oil petroleum products transported through Arabian Peninsula chokepoints

In the above chart, it is clear what volume of oil and its derivatives is flowing through the two Bab al-Mandeb and Hormuz straits and the Suez Canal. One of the main goals of Saudi Arabia in attacking Yemen is to prevent the Houthis from reaching their Iranian allies (Karasik, Theodore, 2019: 11).

Another danger of the Yemeni revolution for Saudi Arabia is that the three oil-rich provinces of Yemen, which have a population of more than one million, have anti-Wahhabi sentiments that are dangerous for Saudi Arabia (Al-Sayed Ghafoor, Sayyid, 2015: 163) This population is the Shiites of Yemen and is afraid of the transfer of the Yemeni movement to its eastern areas, which are Shiite. (Al-Sayyid Ghafoor, Sayyid Mohsen, 2015: 156) The war between Iran and Saudi Arabia also has intellectual roots. The proxy war between the two is the war between Shiite Iran and Wahhabi Saudi Arabia (Al-Sayyid Ghafoor, Sayyid, 1394: 163). But in addition to Saudi Arabia's intellectual problems, it has economic and geopolitical reasons for attacking Yemen. Saudi Arabia has geopolitical bottlenecks. Saudi Arabia exports its oil through the Strait of Hormuz and the Al-Mandeb Strait. The Strait of Hormuz, which is owned by Iran and Saudi Arabia does not feel safe, so it tried to replace Bab al-Mandeb, which Ansarullah prevented it.



Total petroleum and LNG flows through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait(2014-2018)



Volume of crude oil and condensate transported through the Strait of Hormuz

According to the United Nations, the Yemeni crisis is one of the biggest humanitarian crises in the world. The United States and Trump provide full support to Saudi Arabia in this war. Former US President Barack Obama has said he will provide logistical support to Saudi Arabia (Christopher M. Blanchard, 2019: 24-25).

Also, during Obama's administration, he accompanied Saudi Arabia with military and intelligence forces in the war (COUNCIL FOREIGN RELATIONS, U.S.-Saudi Arabia Relations, 2018).

But the culmination of the war was the attacks on Saudi oil facilities in September 2019, which intensified the dispute between Tehran and Riyadh (ATLANTIC COUNCIL, Keynoush Banafsheh, 2020).

In these attacks it was said that the missiles and drones were fired from Iran, but the Houthi leader said Yemen was the source of all attacks on Saudi Arabia (Christopher M. Blanchard, 2019: 39).

The international community has also denied the allegations. Despite numerous accusations, the United Nations has stated that, it cannot yet confirm that the attack on Aramco was the effort of Iran (Bloomberg, Wainer, David, 2019).

The attack on Aramco caused panic among Saudi leaders, and the attack caused the biggest shock to the oil market since 1972. (ALJAZEERA, Kozhanov, Nikolay, 2019)

The attack reduced Saudi Arabia's oil production by about 5.7 million barrels per day (Reuters, 2019).

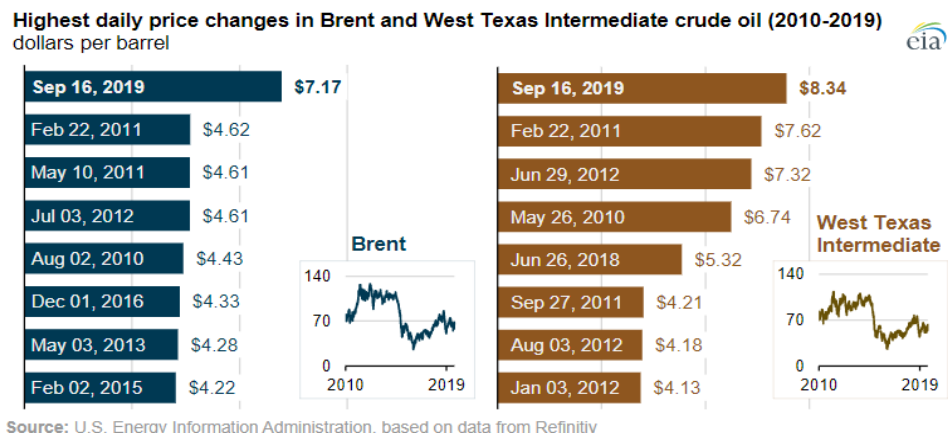
The war in Yemen continues, and the Saudis are repeatedly bombing civilian areas on a daily basis. As of 2019, about 17,500 people have been killed in Saudi airstrikes, more than 25 percent of them women and children. About 20 million people in Yemen are food insecure and about 10 million are at risk of starvation. (WORLD REPORT, 2020) Lack of food, health and persistent insecurity have left Yemenis facing many problems, to the point that every day they just try to survive. And this has caused a large number of Yemeni people to emigrate. This devastating war, in addition to the brutal killing of the Yemeni people, has also weakened the country's weak economy (Heidari, Mojtaba, 2015-85: 2016)

Another reason that caused Saudi Arabia to attack Yemen was the fear of the democracy formation in Yemen. Saudi Arabia is a country where

democracy has no place and is governed entirely by dictatorship, so the royal family seeks to maintain its position and power, and establishing any democracy in Yemen that has close cultural and historical ties with Saudi Arabia could be a potential danger for Saudi Arabia. (Fars News Agency, 2017)

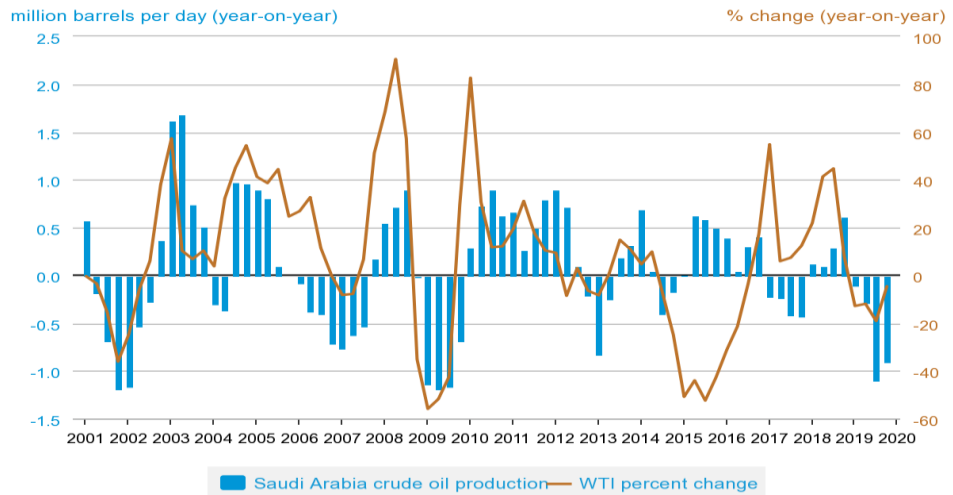
In general, the war with Yemen is important to Saudi Arabia, even without victory, for internal reasons. Saudi Arabia considers Iran as a rival and does not accept it as a regional integration. And it is trying to keep prices low to the detriment of Iran's economy and to be collaborate with United States in this issue. Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has been trying to keep telling the United States since 2015 that Iran is a threat. (LSE, Al-Rasheed Madawi, 2018) As shown in the diagrams below, Saudi Arabia has tried to lower oil prices to the detriment of Iran's economy. The following tables clearly show the effect of the increase in Saudi oil production on oil prices, which shows a sharp decline in prices due to increased production. The declined oil prices led to a drop in Saudi oil revenues, but to keep up pressure on Iran, oil prices continued to fall.

Saudi Arabia crude oil production outage affects global crude oil and gasoline prices



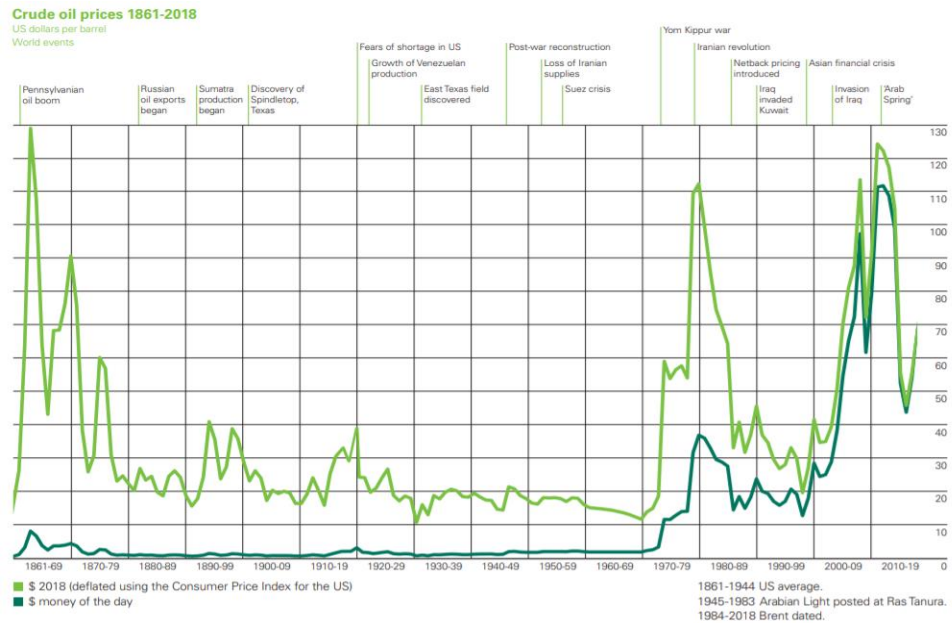
Saudi Arabia crude oil production outage affects global crude oil and gasoline prices

Changes in Saudi Arabia crude oil production and WTI crude oil prices



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Refinitiv

Change in Saudi Arabia crude oil production and WTI crude oil prices



BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2019

Crude oil prices 1861-2018

The table above shows well the changes in oil prices, which have fallen sharply due to the increase in Saudi oil production. The Yemeni war after the end of ISIS is the most important point of confrontation between Iran and Saudi Arabia in the region. At the beginning of the war, Bin Salman promised to defeat the Houthis in a few weeks and defeat Iran in

Yemen. So that Yemen can play the role of Saudi Arabia's backyard again, but years after the Yemeni war, it has not been successful.

Regional differences between Iran and Saudi Arabia are not limited to these countries, and other elements such as Saudi or US relations with Israel have exacerbated differences between these two countries. The United States is a superpower, so its supports for Saudi Arabia are very important to the movements of the region, especially if we consider that Iran and the United States are enemies of each other. Therefore, paying attention to the type and level of Saudi relations with the United States is part of the equation of power in the region, which is also considered a heavy weight.

In general, relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia cannot be analyzed without considering Saudi Arabia's relations with the United States, because the United States has a great influence on Saudi behavior in the region. Israel must also be considered, given the vast wealth of Jews in the world and its widespread influence in the United States and advanced weapons. Saudi Arabia considers Iran as a rival and an enemy, and so do Israel, so any common enemy, and cooperation between these two in dealing with Iran, can make them to have more effective actions. Saudi Arabia and Israel have become increasingly closer after JCPOA, both due to a common fear of a nuclear Iran. Also, the Saudi side has acknowledged this relationship, although it could damage the Saudi patriarchal status among Sunni Arabs. Therefore, we analyze these relationships below.

2-6. Relations of Saudi Arabia with the United States and Israel:

What has affected Saudi Arabia, the United States and Israel in the past few years is the Iran-P5 + 1 nuclear deal, which has brought them closer together, especially Saudi Arabia and Israel. JCPOA was signed on July 14, 2015 between Iran and the P5 + 1. (KESLEY DEVENPORT, ARMS CONTROL ASSOCIATION, 2018)

Saudi Arabia initially said that if there were good goals, the agreement could be the first step towards a comprehensive solution to Iran's nuclear program (RAND, Dassa Kaye, Dalia, Martini, Jeffrey, 2014). However, the mutual distrust that has always existed in the Middle East and Saudi Arabia's suspense caused by Iran, has made Saudi Arabia to pay attention to the nuclear deal and they were also concerned about legalizing Iran's nuclear program (THE RAND BLOG, 2015: 11). Due to the importance of relations with the United States for Saudi Arabia, this created another fear for Saudi Arabia based on JCPOA. Another Saudi concern about JCPOA was that nuclear deal would turn Iran into a strategic partner for the United States. (Demmelhuber, Thomas, 2019: 115)

Relations with Saudi Arabia are very important to the United States. Saudi Arabia and the United States have strong economic ties. Saudi Arabia is one of America's largest partners in the Middle East. (U.S Department of State, 2019) That's why the United States has tried to cooperate more with Saudi Arabia.

The United States invited the Saudi king to the United States in 2015 to allay concerns. After meeting of King Salman and Obama, the Saudi foreign minister stated that Obama's explanation had satisfied the king and that he now believed that "this agreement will create stability and

security in the region and prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon." But shortly afterwards, the Saudis repeatedly expressed concern. Saudi Arabia fears that Iran will gain access to nuclear weapons because it would allow Iran to spread the shadow of fear over Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia could pursue a policy of nuclear balance with Iran. In order to balance with Iran, Saudi Arabia can pursue its nuclear program in order to have equal positions with Iran in this regard (Parmly, Christopher, 2015: 103).

In 2017, the Saudi cabinet approved the construction of small and large nuclear power plants. According to this plan, Saudi Arabia will build 16 nuclear power plants till 2040, which will supply 15 to 20 percent of the country's electricity. Saudi Arabia has signed these agreements with several countries (Christopher M. Blanchard, 2019: 24-15).

During these years, Saudi Arabia has tried to establish nuclear facilities for itself, which the contracts of these facilities include:

Table 2. Select Nuclear Cooperation Developments Involving Saudi Arabia

March 2015	Argentine-Saudi joint nuclear R&D venture agreed. Saudi-South Korean mutual nuclear cooperation agreements signed, including an MOU on building two small reactors for Saudi water desalination.
June 2015	KA CARE officials sign a nuclear energy cooperation agreement with Russia's Rosatom. Agreements signed with France on cooperation, including EPR reactor feasibility studies.
January 2016	Saudi Arabia and China memorandum of understanding signed regarding cooperation in the possible future construction of a high-temperature gas-cooled reactor (HTGR) in the kingdom.
October 2016	Saudi Arabia and Kazakhstan sign a nuclear cooperation agreement focused on nuclear fuel.
March 2017	Agreement signed for Chinese-Saudi feasibility study of HTGR construction in Saudi Arabia.
March-August 2017	KA CARE officials visit China to begin HTGR study implementation planning. China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC) and the Saudi Geological Survey sign agreements on uranium exploration cooperation.
December 2017	Russia's Rosatom and KA CARE sign implementing agreement related to small and medium reactors, personnel and fuel management.
March 2019	Saudi trainees begin uranium exploration and mining training in Jordan.

Select Nuclear Cooperation Developments Involving Saudi Arabia

Iran has always denied these allegations, and Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has always denied them and stated that: " the production of nuclear weapons is prohibited under Islamic teachings" (Parmly, Christopher, 2015: 104-115)

In addition to Saudi Arabia, Israel was concerned about the nuclear deal. Saudi Arabia and Israel are the countries which are concerned about Iran's nuclear deal more than others (THE RAND BLOG, 2015: 1) because the Israelis regard the deal as allowing Iran to continue enrichment (THE RAND BLOG, 2015: 3)

Saudi Arabia feared Iran's movements in the Persian Gulf, and Israel's main fear was the Iranian army's use of nuclear weapons (CNN, Sokolsky, Richard, David, Aaron, 2019).

This dissatisfaction of Saudi Arabia and Israel about JCPOA caused these two countries to become closer. Both Saudi Arabia and Israel were upset with Obama, and therefore Obama played a key role in establishing relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia. Benjamin Netanyahu likened JCPOA to the Munich Agreement, signed in 1938, and said, "We have

common interests with Saudi Arabia, and that is about Iran" (THE GUARDIAN, 2019).

The joint Saudi-Israeli enmity with Iran has led the two countries to move toward diplomatic, intelligence and economic channels (HonestReporting, KOTLER TYLER, 2019). The two countries are experiencing much closer relations than in the past, and this relationship is the result of the two countries' common fear of Iran, which has brought their officials closer together.

As on July 22, 2016, Anwar Eshghi, a Saudi military official, discussed about their common interests with Dori Gold, a former Israeli ambassador (Adam, Ali, 1397: 193). Given Saudi Arabia's special role in the Arab world, which in a way considers itself the big brother of the Arab world, the country has tried to keep its relations with Israel secret so as not to damage its image in the Arab world, to continue to be an enemy of Israel and to show that it is the defender of Palestine and the proponent of the freedom of the Palestinian territories.

But what has been happening since King Salman came to power is that the Saudis are not reluctant to make their relations with Israel public. In 2016, Turki al-Faisal, a Saudi official, and Yakov Amidrov, Netanyahu's advisers had a discussion. The conversation was broadcast live, which confirms the revelation of the two countries' relations. (Adami, Ali, 197-196: 2017) JCPOA became a turning point in announcing and having closer relations between these two countries, and as mentioned below, this closeness continued after the abolition of JCPOA due to common fears.

When Donald Trump took office, he called JCPOA as one of the "worst and most one-sided deals" (CRISIS GROUP, 2018) and finally said on May 8, 2018, that the United States would withdraw from JCPOA (THE NEW YORK TIMES, Landler Mark, 2018). Trump's goal in withdrawing from JCPOA was to create a campaign of maximum pressure against Iran, and Trump administration officials believe that maximum pressure is appropriate and expect full support from Saudi Arabia. (CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE, FAROUK, YASMINE, 2019)

Saudi Arabia and Israel have fully supported the US withdrawal of JCPOA. After JCPOA, the closeness of these two countries continued. In an interview with Atlantic in 2018, Mohammed bin Salman said, "Saudi Arabia and Israel have common interests. If there is peace, there are many benefits between Israel and the Gulf Cooperation Council member states." And in 2019, Netanyahu released a film in which the foreign ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council supported Israel's right to self-defense, saying that confronting Iran takes precedence over the Palestinian issue. If relations between Israel and the Arabs become normal, this will be a very important issue for Donald Trump, especially if it is done before the 2020 elections. (CONSORTIUM NEWS, Cafiero, Giorgio, 2019)

The differences between Iran and Saudi Arabia over the past few years have other reasons that will be mentioned.

A similar rape of two Iranian teenagers at Jeddah airport that provoked strong protests from Iran.

Also, in the Tamta Hajj in 2015, hundreds of Iranians were trampled underfoot because of the Saudi recklessness and were martyred. And the

Saudis said they would not return the bodies to Iran. In response to the Saudis' statement, the Supreme Leader of Iran stated that, "If our country and our nation want to react to the annoying and insidious elements, their situation would not be appropriate. We have had continence so far. We have had continence in several cases. The abilities of Islamic Iran are more than many and our facilities have the same situation; They know that if they want to have rivalry with the Islamic Republic, they will not oppose in any scene.

We have preserved the Islamic etiquette and also the sanctity of brotherhood in the Islamic Ummah; Should we decide to show any reaction, our reaction will be tough and harsh" (KHAMENEI.IR, 2015)

Saudi Arabia also killed Sheikh Nimr because it feared Shiite movements in the east of the country and also considered Iran behind the scenes of these movements. (VOX, Fisher, Max, 2016)

CONCLUSION

From the beginning of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, Iran and Saudi Arabia did not have a good relationship; because Iran was considered as a Shiite, anti-monarchy and imperialism country, which was dangerous for them. Especially since the east of Saudi Arabia is Shiite, and the spread of the Islamic Revolution in Iran could lead to the end of the Al-Saud regime. At the same time, considering Iran's potential, it could infiltrate different regions, which is dangerous for Saudi power in the region because it considers itself to have patriarchal status in the region. With the start of the Iran-Iraq war, Saudi Arabia provided significant assistance to Iraq so that it could control Iran through Iraq. At the end of the war and Rafsanjani's rise to power, relations improved a little. The same goes for Khatami; But it didn't last. When Shah Salman came to power, the conflicts between Iran and Saudi Arabia intensified. With extensive aid to terrorist forces in Syria and Iraq, Saudi Arabia sought to seize power more than ever before. However, with the consciousness of the Supreme Leader of Iran and the command of martyr General Soleimani, their plans in the region failed and Iran has the upper hand in Syria and Iraq. Both countries are competing in Lebanon, and the competition continues.

In Palestine, both Saudi Arabia and Iran have influence; But since King Salman came to power, Saudi-Israeli relations have improved dramatically. The reason for this improvement in relations is the common enmity between the two countries and Iran, which has weakened Saudi Arabia's reputation. Saudi-Israeli relations have been made public in some cases, and Saudi Crown Prince bin Salman has not hesitated to do so. The most important country where Iran and Saudi Arabia are still in conflict is Yemen. Yemen is a country of great geopolitical importance that Saudi Arabia has always coveted. With the Yemeni revolution and the occupation of Sanaa by the Saudi revolutionaries, it has invaded Yemen under the pretext of supporting the resigned Yemeni government; Saudi Arabia has killed tens of thousands of people, including thousands of women and children. Iran supports the Yemeni revolutionaries in this war and wants peace and tranquility in Yemen because millions of people in Yemen need food and medicine, but Saudi Arabia continues to bombard Yemen. In addition to regional disputes, the two countries have witnessed other incidents since the coming to power of Shah Salman, such as the rape of

two Iranian teenagers in Saudi Arabia and the killing of hundreds of Iranians in two crane accidents and the Mena tragedy and also, the martyrdom of Sheikh Nimr, a Saudi Shiite cleric, by Saudi forces, which are other cases that have caused conflicts between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The Saudis and bin Salman himself, have repeatedly stated that they will try to bring the war into Iran. The country has also established several Persian-language media to continue its media warfare, along with other attacks on Iran's situation. Given the wide-spreading conflicts between these two countries in the West Asian region, the extensive intellectual conflicts between Iran and Saudi Arabia, as well as the coming to power of King Salman, there is no good future for relations between them. In the following, we will briefly state the achievements of this article. The Middle East is rich in fossil resources, and the United States, as a superpower, is trying to influence the process of extracting and transferring these resources.

Saudi Arabia and the United States have cooperated together to the detriment of Iran, their common enemy. This cooperation has been done in different ways and with the coming to power of Shah Salman, this cooperation has intensified. With the King Salman's come to power and the nuclear deal, Saudi Arabia and Israel have also expanded their cooperation in various fields, including intelligence cooperation, in order to the detriment of Iran. The situation inside Saudi Arabia is also complicated. Conflicts within the royal family have intensified with Crown Prince bin Salman, and a kind of power struggle has arisen within the family, which is one of the reasons for the Yemeni war. The war in Yemen and low oil prices have also increased financial pressure on Saudi Arabia. bin Salman had different goals in creating the Yemeni war, one of which was to harm Iran's interests. Moreover, he threatened to take the war into Iran. Also, like the situation in Bahrain, where the majority of the population is Shiites, Saudi Arabia fears that the Yemeni movement will relocate to its eastern Shiite areas. In the nuclear dimension, Saudi Arabia is very afraid of a nuclear Iran and has tried to increase its nuclear capability to strike a balance with Iran under various agreements.

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