



“Understanding the ‘Islamic Cold War’: How can the growing rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia and their behaviour in recent years best be explained using IR theory”

By Gustav Skjold Bang Dahl

Course “International Relations of the Middle East”

Taught by Professor Fawaz A. Gerges

Fall 2018

This paper has received the *Kuwait Program at Sciences Po Student Paper Award*

The copyright of this paper remains the property of its author. No part of the content may be reproduced, published, distributed, copied or stored for public or private use without written permission of the author. All authorisation requests should be sent to program.kuwait@sciencespo.fr

The International Relations of the Middle East

Professor Fawaz A. Gerges

Understanding ‘the Islamic Cold War’

Research question:

How can the growing regional rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia and their behaviour in recent years best be explained using IR theory?

Gustav Skjold Bang Dahl

Student number: 100184873

Table of content

1. Introduction and outline	1
2. Theoretical framework: Neoclassical realism	2
3. Analysis of the regional rivalry	3
<i>3.1 The systemic level – Relative power and the pursuit of hegemony</i>	3
3.1.1 Iran	4
3.1.1 KSA	5
<i>3.2 The state level – The mediating role of state and society</i>	6
3.2.1 State identity	7
3.2.2 Influential groups, popular support and internal pressure	7
<i>3.3 The individual level - Cognitive limitations and ideas within nations</i>	10
4. Implications of the American withdrawal from JCPOA	11
5. Conclusion	12
6. Literature	13

1. Introduction and outline

In recent years, the regional rivalry in the Middle East between Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Iran seems to have intensified. The inflammatory feud has exacerbated tensions in the region and while not directly fighting each other, KSA and Iran have engaged in a series of proxy conflicts around the region and are currently battling for influence in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen and beyond. The increased tensions between the two Gulf States have even been coined “a regional equivalent of the Cold War” (Marcus 2017). This essay seeks to explain the reasons behind the recent intensification of the conflict and the behaviour of the two states. Using neoclassical realism as the theoretical framework, I seek to identify the relevant systemic, domestic and cognitive variables affecting the foreign policy actions of the two states, which can explain the current rivalry. The essay is structured as follows. First, I will present the theoretical framework of the analysis and argue why neoclassical realism is a useful theory in this context. Following is an analysis of the empirics of the two countries foreign policy behaviour, in which I will identify key factors at the three levels of analysis (systemic, state and cognitive level). In conclusion, I will briefly discuss the potential implications of the American withdrawal from the JCPOA and the reintroduction of US sanctions against Iran for the future of the regional rivalry.

2. Theoretical framework: Neoclassical realism

Neoclassical realism is a newly developed branch of the realist theory coined by Gideon Rose in 1998, which combines neorealism with classical realist thought by taking into account internal state variables and cognitive elements (Rose 1998). The theory adds a greater explanatory richness to how states react to the international environment by identifying intervening variables, which can imbue the structuralism of realism (Kitchen 2010: 118). The starting point is the systemic level known from neorealism, which argues that the systemic pressure deriving from the anarchical international “self-help” system and a country’s relative material power capabilities constraint and limit how the state can act in the international system (Kitchen 2010: 117). Yet according to neoclassical realists, this systemic pressure is mediated through variables at both the state and individual level before being translated into foreign policy. First and second-image¹ variables such as the domestic decision-making process, ideology, and the perceptions and ideas of leaders - also known as ‘*innenpolitik*’ - may all affect the foreign policy of the state (Kitchen 2010:

¹ First image: the individual level. Second image: the state level. Third image: the systemic level. Deriving from Kenneth Waltz’ 3 three images of international relations (Waltz 1959):

118). This realist theory thereby leaves the neorealist assumption of the state as a “black box” and borrows conceptual elements from both constructivist and liberalist paradigms of IR theory. However it is important to note that neoclassical realism view the variables at the state and individual level as analytically subordinate to the systemic factors and the country’s relative position in the international system, which is seen as determining for the overall scope of possible action that the state is faced with (Rose 1998).

I have chosen neoclassical realism as the main theoretical framework for my analysis of the regional rivalry because it takes into account the complexities and multifarious factors of the issue at different levels of analysis. I consider neoclassical realism the most fitting IR-theory for this analysis², and I will argue that the behaviour of the two states cannot be adequately explained by limiting the scope of analysis to the structure of the international system, as done so by neorealists. Instead, one also needs to consider how the effects of the structure is interpreted through domestic factors and the perceptions of key leaders such as Mohammad bin Salman, Hassan Rouhani and Ayatollah Khamenei.

3. Analysis of the regional rivalry

In the following section, I will analyse the key factors at the systemic, state and cognitive levels that can explain the foreign policy behaviours of KSA and Iran in the recent years. By studying the complex interaction between the three levels - I expect to provide a nuanced analysis of the foreign policy decisions than. However with the limited number of pages in this essay, it’s impossible to provide a fully exhaustive analysis of the issue. As a consequence, there might be some omissions in essay, which ideally should be included in a more in-depth future study of the rivalry between the two countries.

3.1 The systemic level – Relative power and the pursuit of hegemony

As mentioned above the starting point for neoclassical realism is an understanding of the systemic pressures under which the state acts in the international system. The concepts of power balance, survival, security and material capabilities are key aspects in this context (Lobell et al. 2016). What determine the two countries initial room for manoeuvre are their relative material capabilities and their position in the anarchical international system.

² It should be noted that applying a different theoretical framework to the analysis of the conflict, such as constructivism, would result in an emphasis on different aspects of the conflict than highlighted by neoclassical realism. Even though neoclassical realism is already borrowing some conceptual tools from the constructivist paradigm, a more in-depth analysis of the change in cultural and political identities and official foreign-policy discourse in Iran and KSA using constructivist IR theory could be useful in a future study to provide an even more nuanced picture of the issue.

3.1.1 Iran

For many years, heavy economic sanctions and a fundamental threat from a neoconservative American super power restricted Iran's ability to extend its influence across the region. However, one key development at the systemic level over the last decade has changed this and has affected the regional rivalry between KSA and Iran: the relative retreat of U.S. in the region and an overall shift in the balance of power. Begun under the Obama-administration and continued under President Trump, we have witnessed a strategic reorientation of US foreign policy towards East Asia and away from the Middle East (Miller 2018). At the same time a shift in the overall balance of power in the international system has occurred. After the end of the Cold War, the international system was best characterised by American unipolarity and US regional hegemony (Gerges 1999). This was translated into an activist US foreign policy strategy in which the US was engaged in several military operations in the Middle East and beyond (Gerges 2018; Jackson & Sørensen 2013). Now it seems that American unipolarity is gradually declining, the Americans no longer have the power to impose a regional order on its own terms and US hegemony is increasingly challenged by other great powers, such as Russia and China. The US have withdrawn their troops from Iraq, drastically cut down their military presence in Afghanistan and have so far been reluctant of sending forces to the war in Syria (Miller 2018). At the same time, Russia – one of Iran's strategic allies – has assumed an increasingly proactive and assertive position in the Middle East following American hesitancy (ibid.). They have stepped up its presence in Syria and are attempting to challenge and undermine American influence in the region – something that the US so far has struggled to respond adequately to (ibid.).

Coinciding with the American retreat in the region came the signing of the JCPOA nuclear deal in 2015. Though initially worsening Iran's relative position in the international system by preventing them from gaining nuclear capabilities, the deal led to the lifting of sanctions, which had the potential to strengthen Iran's capabilities by attracting foreign investments and reintroducing the country into the global markets.³

Structural changes in the international system (i.e. the gradual decline of the US and the relative strengthening of Iran's position) coupled with Iran's strategic alliance with Russia

³ The reintroduction of American sanctions in May 2018 have however already hurt the Iranian currency substantially and has the potential to wreak even more havoc on the Iranian economy, which potentially would alter this analysis. This is discussed in the end of this essay.

enabled Iran to pursue a more ambitious foreign policy in the years following the JCPOA than compared to 10 years ago, when the threat of intervention by the US was more evident and Iran was considered part of the “Axis of Evil” (Bush 2002). Today, collapsing state orders in Iran’s neighbouring countries (Syria and Iraq) have created power vacuums in the region, which Iran has been able to successfully fill (Fathollah-Nejad 2017). Iran’s rising influence in the region now consists of – but is not excluded to – strong ties to Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Assad regime in Syria, Hamas in Palestine, the government in Iraq and the Houthi’s in Yemen (Cordesman 2018). Some argue that Iran’s overall strategy is to project its power even further, achieve control over a land corridor stretching through the Middle East from Iran to the Mediterranean Sea in Lebanon and ultimately gain regional hegemony (Lynch 2018).

This is in line with the neoclassical realist theory, which predicts that states will attempt to alter the international system based on their own preferences, as they grow stronger. The more powerful the state gets, the more ambitious its foreign policy will be (Rose 1998). Hence, structural realist theory has great explanatory power when it comes to explaining Iran’s behaviour the last five years. However - as we shall see - factors at the different analytical levels have also played a significant part in Iran’s foreign policy and rivalry with KSA.

3.1.1 KSA

Iran’s relative rise in recent years has not gone unnoticed in KSA, where Mohammad bin Salman (MBS) has been actively trying to contain Iranian influence throughout the region. According to neorealist theory, states will always try to maximise their own power in order to gain security and protect national interests. However, as one country gains more power, others might feel less safe. As a result, increasing security for one country (i.e. Iran) will result in a relative loss of security for the other (i.e. KSA) thus leading to the so-called “security dilemma” (Mearsheimer 2001). Watching a strengthened Iran extend its influence in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen has put a growing security threat on KSA, who sees their relative distribution of power in the Gulf region diminishing vis-à-vis Iran.

The gradual retreat of US has at the same time furthermore increased the pressure on KSA. The Saudis has for decades been highly dependent on American protection. As a result of this, they have had no real incentive for building up their own military capabilities (Hinnebusch 2015: 131) and have been confined to a policy of ‘bandwagoning’ under the

American security umbrella (Hinnebusch 2015: 151). But since the Arab Spring, the faith in the Americans as a reliable security guarantor has diminished (Miller 2017). In Egypt the Saudis saw how president Obama suddenly called for their longstanding ally Hosni Mubarak to step down from power following only a few days of popular unrest in 2011, and in recent years the Saudis have observed a US unwilling to intervene in Syria and protect common interests (ibid.). Simultaneously with Iran's growing influence, these developments in the relationship with the US might have raised concerns even further⁴ and as a consequence, KSA felt a need to respond.

In recent years, the country has invested heavily in creating bigger and more modern military forces - in 2016 KSA spent close to \$64 billion on defence, five times more than Iran (Nasr 2018). 11.30 per cent of GDP was spent on military and security in 2017 and KSA have engaged in a series of offensive foreign policy measures: a military offensive in Yemen, supporting rebel militias in Syria, trying to force Lebanese prime minister Hariri into resignation and seeking to isolate Qatar from the GCC (Cordesman 2018). Now the KSA is even forging alliances with Israel of all countries in the battle against Iran (Marcus 2018). All these measures can be seen through the prism of trying to counterbalance Iranian influence in the region by strengthening the relative power of KSA. But so far, most of these measures have proven unavailing, inept and sometimes even counterproductive. So in order to fully understand the foreign policy behaviour by the KSA, we need to assess the variables at the state and individual level as well.

3.2 The state level – The mediating role of state and society

According to neoclassical realism, the structural factors - being the relative material capabilities and the systemic pressures that derive from it - are the most important factors in determining a country's possible scope of foreign policy behaviour in the international system and when analysing the behaviour of both Iran and KSA, the structural level do possess great explanatory power. But in order to grasp the full picture of the foreign policy behaviour of the two countries we need to assess the relevant variables at the state and cognitive level as well that mediate the effects of the structural factors. In the following, I've identified (1) state identity and (2) influential groups, popular support & internal pressure as intervening variables at the state level influencing the foreign policy of the states. There are certainly other factors influencing the decision making at the state level

⁴ However, it should be noted that the relations between KSA and the US seem to have bettered since the arrival of US president Trump.

but due to space constraints, I've focused on the aforementioned factors here, which I find the most important.

3.2.1 State identity

The concept of state identity is important to understand the feud between KSA and Iran. Since the Islamic revolution in 1979, which overthrew the US-backed secular Shah and replaced him with a clerical regime (Panaite 2017), Shia Islam has been a great part of the Iranian identity. Following the revolution, Iran began condemning KSA's Sunni authorities for their alliance with the US. Even though the supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei has officially rejected the notion that Iran is seeking to export the Islamic revolution through political or military means (Khamenei 2010), many still argue that the Shia identity is a major driver in the shaping of Iran's foreign policy (El Berni 2017). On the other hand, KSA follows Wahhabism, an ultraconservative Sunni-Islamic doctrine, and has forged alliances with other Sunni Arab States of the Gulf region in the GCC, which has been portrayed as a Saudi led alliance to counter Iran's influence. Since the Iranian revolution, KSA's regional policy has been guided by the fear that Iran was trying to export its revolutionary ideas and mobilise Shiite forces in the Arab world, which would ultimately also include Shiites inside KSA itself (Steinberg 2014).

Therefore, the different sectarian Islamic identities of the two countries can be seen as a potential variable mediating the systemic pressure and explaining why both countries have created alliances with other countries that share their view of Islam (Erickson 2017). However it would be misguided to analyse the current rivalry as solely a religious struggle. The religious element plays into a broader geopolitical and economic struggle for the control of resources and dominance in a politically unstable region (ibid.).

3.2.2 Influential groups, popular support and internal pressure

Iran

Another important variable to consider, when analysing the foreign policy of Iran, is the domestic decision-making process in the country. Many consider Iran a *torn country* (Huntington 1993), which is split between conservative and reformist forces and where factional power struggles between the two groups have been inherent since the revolution in 1979. A group of hardliners surrounding the supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, on the one side are trying to pull the country in a more conservative and Islamic direction, while president Rouhani, pragmatists and reformists in government and parliament

represent a more modern and reformist branch of society (Hafezi 2018). Many hardliners including the Ayatollah were deeply sceptical of the JCPOA and has since the American resignation from the deal in May 2018 rejected the idea of re-entering diplomatic negotiations with the US over the deal (Bozorgmehr 2018). The Ayatollah can be seen as powerful domestic player, which can influence the decision making process and veto any foreign policy of the Iranian government. It can be argued, that the Ayatollah and the group of hardliners - in the years after the signing of the deal - exerted pressure on president Rouhani into asserting a more revisionist foreign policy than he would otherwise not have embarked on following the signing of the JCPOA⁵.

At the same the Iranian regime is under pressure from the population. While Iran is nominally classified as an autocracy, it's leaders cannot ignore the views of it's own people. The Arab Spring showed how leaders in autocratic systems could be brought down by popular uprisings, which undoubtedly created some anxiety among the ruling elite of Iran and the country has been under growing internal pressure from their own populations in recent years. In Iran's unconventional political structure, which best characterises as a theocracy with republican elements, the president is held accountable by the people and is up for is re-election every fourth year. Therefore the domestic audiences can prove important in the decision-making process because they have the ability to punish the president in the following election.

Leading up to the nuclear deal, popular dissatisfaction with the economy and a call by a majority of the people to end Iran's isolation and be relieved from crippling sanctions were by many seen as the main drivers behind Iran's decision to eventually sign the JCPOA in July 2015. Now three years after the signing of the deal, the Iranian people haven't experienced the thriving economic growth they were promised and there is discontent among many Iranians with the state of the economy (Hafezi 2018). With even heavier American sanctions looming in the near future, the pressure on Iran's political and religious authorities from the people can only be expected to mount further. Following the signing of the JCPOA, the Iranian leaders appeared to have enough leverage to engage in an activist foreign policy seeking regional dominance. But now the internal pressure deriving from public discontent might pressure the Iranian government to re-enter negotiations and dialogue with the US in order to avoid getting punished at the next

⁵ This aspect will be elaborated further in the coming section analysing the cognitive ideas of state leaders in Iran.

election or what is even worse: major popular unrest, which might threaten the very existence of the regime.

KSA

In KSA, the domestic population might also have played an important role in the foreign policy of the state. KSA has long been considered a 'rentier state' that finances its expenses predominately through oil revenues rather than taxes (Hinnebusch 2015). The abundance of oil resources has for long made the ruling al Saud-family autonomous from public demands because they did not need to rely on domestic taxation and therefore people have been less like to demand representation from their government (Anderson 1987). At the same time the Saudi people have enjoyed a long period of tax-free livelihoods while the Saudi regime has maintained its domestic legitimacy through the oil rents (Hinnebusch 2015). But in 2017 this changed, when oil prices plummeted, and KSA imposed a series of austerity measures including a 5% levy on certain goods, a halt of several major building projects and a wage freeze on civil servants in response to a record budget deficit of \$97 billion (The Guardian 2017). As the Saudi people begin experiencing a worsening of their living conditions, the risk of popular unrest rises and the legitimacy of the Saudi Kingdom might be put into question. MBS faces a great challenge in reducing the welfare state without turning the public against him. In light of this, the activist foreign policy of KSA can be seen as an attempt to create a supportive popular base while at the same time consolidating power and the coalition's intervention in the civil war in Yemen is an example of this. MBS assumed that the intervention would resolve in a quick victory, which would mobilize support at home but reality has proven otherwise (Lynch 2018).

At the same time, the foreign policy of KSA is highly influenced by the Wahhabist clerics. The Saudi leadership regularly seeks approval by the *ulama* before important foreign policy decisions (Gause 2002), and the Wahhabist clerics have often proven successful in exerting domestic pressure on the Saudi leadership and provoke certain foreign policy action. This was the case in Syria, when the Saudis eventually decided to step up in support of Sunni militias after the *ulama* had called for an overthrow of the Syrian president. The Wahhabist clerics do exert – just as the religious hardliners in Iran – an important influence on the foreign policy and has helped fuel the sectarian divide between Iran and KSA by seeking to promote Wahhabism in the region as an alternative to the Shiite faith.

As just shown, variables at the state level such as the internal pressure from the population, influential groups and state identity are important to consider when analysing the foreign policy of the two states. Finally, I'll address the cognitive level of the leaders in the two countries.

3.3 The individual level - Cognitive limitations and ideas within nations

Neo-classical realists believe that the behaviour of states in international system must be understood through the perceptions and misperceptions of the systemic pressures by state leaders. Therefore we need to understand how the leaders of both Iran and KSA perceive and interpret the systemic pressures and subsequently act upon it. Because of lack of clarity in the signals or misperceptions of the systemic pressure, state leaders may not always choose the most rational or appropriate foreign policy response to systemic circumstance (Lobell et al. 2016).

This is an important aspect when assessing the foreign policy of KSA. The young Mohammed bin Salman, who was appointed Saudi crown prince in 2015 and now de facto runs the external policies of KSA, has concentrated a tremendous amount of power into his own hands. However he has already chosen a string of foreign policy measures which many have deemed ineffective and a picture of his personal recklessness. The KSA/UAE coalition offensive in Yemen, the failed attempt to oust prime minister Hariri of Lebanon and the GCC-blockade crisis with Qatar demonstrate incidents in which the foreign policy behaviour of KSA can be classified as being unavailing or even somewhat counterproductive. While his perception of the systemic threat of Iranian expansionism in the region might be grounded in reality, some argue that his responses have been far out of proportion to actual Iranian power and against Saudi interests (Lynch 2018). In Yemen, the coalition's campaign has transformed what was initially only an insignificant Iranian foothold into a sturdier strategic alliance with the Houthis and led to greater dispersion of Iranian-backed proxies (ibid.). And the peculiar attempt to force Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri into resignation provoked a political crisis in Lebanon, which ultimately came to weaken the pro-Saudi Sunni coalition in the national parliament of Lebanon (ibid.). These measures can all be seen as a direct result of MBS's recklessness and his perception of the Iranian threat. These examples show how influential the ideas and perceptions of state leaders are in determining the foreign policy of a state and it is somewhat unlikely that the KSA would have engaged in the same foreign policies under any other Saudi leader.

According to Kitchen (2010), “ideas within nations” serve as an intervening variable for how the systemic pressure is being translated into foreign policy. Particularly cognitive ideas among key decision makers can act as a power resource for implementing foreign policy (Kitchen 2010: 130). As already noted above, president Rouhani and Ayatollah Khamenei hold two different ideas about how Iranian foreign policy should be conducted. It is important to understand this duality in the decision-making process of Iran’s foreign policy and how the different ideas of the two main decision makers play against each other. Rouhani is largely seen as the pragmatist reformist emphasising the idea of a dialogue-oriented foreign policy (at least to some extent), while the supreme leader Khamenei traditionally has maintained a more hostile discourse and an openly anti-American agenda juxtaposing Islam and the West. Khamenei has openly threatened Saudi rulers that they would face a “certain downfall” for aligning themselves with the United States (Reuters 2017), and has pushed for a more aggressive foreign policy and renewed nuclear ambitions. A combination of Khamenei’s position as the ultimate commander-in-chief and his ideas of standing up to the United States and KSA have tied Rouhani’s hands regarding the foreign policy. Rouhani’s idea of returning Iran to international respectability and attracting foreign investment has been suppressed by the Ayatollah’s vision of an independent and strong Iran. From a realist perspective, it can be questioned whether or not this aggressive regional foreign policy has been rational and beneficial for Iran and in accordance with the systemic pressure. Many argue that the current economic troubles are a direct result of the aggressive foreign policy and the consequences of this in the long run might end up worsening Iran's position in the international system more than if they had asserted a more defensive and pragmatic foreign policy agenda as proposed by Rouhani. To sum up, the revisionist ideas held by Ayatollah Khamenei have led to policy responses that might have been at odds with systemic imperatives and non-beneficial for Iran in the long run (Lobell et al. 2016). This is a great example showing that the ideas held by key decision makers might result in foreign policy, which is not necessarily fully rational given the systemic pressure.

4. Implications of the American withdrawal from JCPOA

With continued fighting in Yemen, Syria and elsewhere, there seems to be no end to the regional rivalry between Iran and KSA, which is set to continue in the following years. However we are yet to see what consequences the American withdrawal from the JCPOA and the reintroduction of sanctions against Iran might resolve in. The policies under

President Trump have already caused the Iranian economy a great deal of pain and led to the sudden economic plunge of the Iranian rial, who has lost half of its value since April. Can the Iranians overcome the pressure of increased sanctions and convince European companies to stay in Iran or will the country once again be plunged into international isolation? In the latter scenario, the question is whether Iran will back down and return to the negotiating table or whether they will instead maintain its geopolitical aspirations in the pursuit of regional hegemony and risk turning the “Islamic Cold War“ into a hot one.

5. Conclusion

Drawing on neoclassical realism as the theoretical framework, this essay has sought to explain the reasons behind the foreign policy behaviour of Iran and KSA and the current regional rivalry that plays out between them. It was argued that while the systemic pressure deriving from the structure of the international system had great explanatory power in explaining Iran’s revisionist foreign policy and KSA’s attempt to counterbalance Iran’s growing influence, factors such as the state identity and perceptions and ideas among state leaders played an important role as well in explaining the two countries foreign policy behaviour.

Neoclassical realism proved a fitting framework for this analysis as it helped thoroughly dissect the relevant variables in both Iran and KSA, which could explain their behaviour. The strength of the theory lies in its explanatory richness and descriptive accuracy but as a theory it can be criticised for lacking predictive power and giving up generality. Therefore it is not necessarily useful for predicting the future of the regional rivalry.

6. Literature

Anderson, Lisa. 1987. "The State in the Middle East and North Africa". In *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 20, No. 1. 1-18.

Bozorgmehr, Najmeh. 2018. "Iran's Khamenei says negotiating with US not possible 'at any level'". *Financial Times*. Located 25 September 2018 at <https://www.ft.com/content/5309993e-ab90-11e8-94bd-cba20d67390c>

Bush, George. 2002. "State of the Union Address". Miller Center. Located September 11 2018 at: <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/speech-4540>

Cordesman, Anthony. 2018. "Military Spending: The Other Side of Saudi Security". Center for Strategic and International Studies. Located 22 September 2018 at https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fspublic/publication/180311_Saudi_Military_Spending.pdf?ZiUodawliCwU76RaQH_sAygDb_xL3FjB

Erickson, Amanda. 2017. "What's behind the feud between Saudi Arabia and Iran? Power." *The Washington Post*. Located 22 September 2018 at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/12/20/whats-behind-the-feud-between-saudi-arabia-and-iran-power/?utm_term=.f2aa6be89c52

El Berni, Hazal Muslu. 2017. "Iran's Security Dilemma in The Middle East: A Neorealist Approach to Iran's Foreign Policy in Syria". *İran Çalışmaları Dergisi* 1: 115-139

Fathollah-Nejad, Ali. 2017. "The Iranian–Saudi Hegemonic Rivalry", *Iran Matters*. Located on: <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/iranian-saudi-hegemonic-rivalry>

Gerges, Fawas A. 1999. "America and political Islam: clash of cultures or clash of interests?". Cambridge University Press.

Gerges, Fawas A. 2018. "Making the Arab World: Nasser, Qutb, and the clash that shaped the Middle East". Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.

Hafezi, Parisa. 2018. "Iran's rulers face discontent as U.S. pressure mounts". *Reuters*. Located September 26 2018 at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-politics-protests-analysis/irans-rulers-face-discontent-as-u-s-pressure-mounts-idUSKBN1JP20H>

- Hinnebusch, Raymond A. 2015. "The international politics of the Middle East".
- Huntington, Samuel P. 1993. "The Clash of Civilizations?". *Foreign Affairs*. vol. 72, no. 3, Summer 1993, pp. 22–49
- Jackson, Robert & Sørensen, Georg. 2016. "Realism" I: Robert Jackson & Georg Sørensen, *Introduction to International Relations*, (6. ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Khamenei, Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Hosseini. 2010. "What does exporting the Islamic revolution mean in Ayatollah Khamenei's view?". Khamenei.ir. Located September 22 2018 at <http://english.khamenei.ir/news/5413/What-does-exporting-the-Islamic-revolution-mean-in-Ayatollah>
- Kitchen, Nicholas. 2010. "Systemic pressures and domestic ideas: a neoclassical realist model of grand strategy formation". *Review of international studies*. 36(1): 117-143.
- Lobell, S. E., N. M. Ripsman, and J. W. Taliafeoor. 2009. "Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy". Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Lynch, Rory. 2018. "The New Arab Order". *Foreign Affairs*. Located 26 September 2018 at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2018-08-13/new-arab-order>
- Marcus, Jonathan. 2017. "Why Saudi Arabia and Iran are bitter rivals". BBC News. Located 28 September at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42008809>
- Marcus, Jonathan. 2018. "Israel and Saudi Arabia: The relationship emerging into the open". BBC News. Located 28 September at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-43632905>
- Mearsheimer, J. 2001. "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics". New York: Norton.
- Miller, Rory. 2017. "Saudi Arabia's Security Alliances". *Foreign Affairs*. Located September 20 2018 at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/saudi-arabia/2017-10-23/saudi-arabias-security-alliances>

Miller, Rory. 2018. "International Actors and the New Balance of Power in the Gulf". Al Jazeera. Located September 20 2018 at

<http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2018/03/international-actors-balance-power-gulf-180319102303575.html>

Nasr, Vali. 2018. "Iran Among the Ruins". Foreign Affairs. Located September 23 at

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2018-02-13/iran-among-ruins>

Panaite, Atena. 2017. "Cold War in the Middle East: Iran and Saudi Arabia". University of Miami, Scholarly Repository. Located September 22 2018 at

https://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1717&context=oa_theses

Reuters. 2017. "Iran's Khamenei says Saudis will fall, Rouhani calls for better ties".

Reuters. Located 28 September at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-gulf-iran-qatar/irans-khamenei-says-saudis-will-fall-rouhani-calls-for-better-ties-idUSKBN18NoRN>

Rose, Gideon. 1998. "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy", *World Politics*, 51:1.

Steinberg, Guido. 2014. "Leading the Counter-revolution: Saudi Arabia and the Arab Spring". *SWP Research paper*, 7. German Institute for International and Security Affairs.

Waltz, Kenneth N. 1959. "Man, the state, and war: a theoretical analysis". New York: Columbia University Press.