SINEM CENGIZ

TURKISH SAUDI RELATIONS

COOPERATION AND COMPETITION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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Sinem Cengiz

Turkish-Saudi Relations

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Gerlach Press

First published 2020
by Gerlach Press
Berlin, Germany
www.gerlach-press.de

Cover Design: Frauke Schön, Hamburg
Set by Anne Jeschke, Gerlach Press
Printed and bound in Germany

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data.
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Bibliographic data available from Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
http://d-nb.info/1219522244

ISBN: 978-3-95994-134-1 (hardcover)
ISBN: 978-3-95994-135-8 (eBook)

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Acknowledgements

I didn't choose my area of study, but my area chose me. Born in Kuwait and having lived there for two decades, witnessing the two Gulf crises, was the strongest motivation for me to focus on this area and eventually write this book. No region fascinated me as much as the Gulf, which seemed a world apart.

Although the idea of this book emerged during my times as a young journalist covering stories in post-uprisings' countries in the Middle East, the work was particularly shaped during my academic studies. When I rolled up my sleeves for the fieldwork of this study, the Gulf wasn't an area of curiosity in both Turkish academia and media. Even in all the years that I lived in Turkey, I never heard of a comprehensive study about Saudi Arabia, its people, culture or politics, unfortunately.

A book of this scale, covering the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, could not have happened without the support of many individuals. I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of several academics, diplomats and journalists for providing valuable information regarding Saudi politics, in general, and Turkish-Saudi relations, in particular. I am thankful to all the interviewees who took the time out to share their experiences and thoughts with me during my fieldwork period in Saudi Arabia in 2014. My deep gratitude goes to the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce as they invited me to join the Jeddah Economic Forum 2014, which greatly expanded my research resources and gave me the opportunity to include several approaches to my study. I was also fortunate to have access to the library of Effat University in Jeddah for Arabic and English sources. I am indebted to all my Saudi friends for being so hospitable to me during my visits in 2014 and 2018.

The primary research for this manuscript started in Ankara and Jeddah, but developed in Athens and Kuwait. Its final preparations took place in Istanbul during the tough months when the world was challenged by the global pandemic, Covid-19. I, therefore, dedicate this book to all who had encouraged and supported me in the completion of this work during those depressing times. Particularly, I thank my mother for being a constant source of love and strength over the years.

Sinem Cengiz
Istanbul/Kuwait City
Autumn 2020

List of Abbreviations

AKP	Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)
ANAP	Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi)
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DSP	Democratic Left Party (Demokratik Sol Partisi)
DYP	True Path Party (Doğru Yol Partisi)
D-8	Developing Eight
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
GAP	Southeastern Anatolia Project (Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi)
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
G20	Group of Twenty
IPHRC	Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission
IPSA-2	Iraqi Pipeline in Saudi Arabia
IRCICA	Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture
ISAF	International Security and Assistance Force
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
JASTA	Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
MB	Muslim Brotherhood (al-Ikhwan al- Muslimun)
MBC	Middle East Broadcasting Centre
MbN	Mohammad bin Nayef al Saud
MbS	Mohammad bin Salman al Saud (Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia)
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi)
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries

OIC	Organization of Islamic Conference
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PYD	Democratic Union Party
RP	Welfare Party (Refah Partisi)
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
SHP	Social Democratic People's Party (Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Parti)
TAF	Turkish Armed Forces
TIKA	Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WTO	World Trade Organization
YPG	The People's Protection Units
9/11	September 11, 2001 Attacks

Introduction

The international relations of the states in the Middle East has become a crucial subject for analysis as the dynamics in the region have rapidly changed since the Arab uprisings that began in late 2010. The main purpose of this book is to examine the relationship between the Middle East's two prominent heavyweights, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, by taking into account the domestic, regional and international dynamics that have had an impact on their relations in the 1990s and the 2000s. Examining the course of Turkish-Saudi relations is significant due to the fact that these two countries are among the most – if not the most – influential actors in the region, and they thus play crucial roles in shaping the balance of power. The nature of their relationship, whether friends or foes, has region-wide repercussions, affecting the situation in the Middle East and the calculations of regional and global actors. Research into Turkish-Saudi relations raises a difficult question: Is the cooperation or competition between these two countries due to regional instability, or is it the result of such an instability? This book argues that if regional developments are related to balance of power, two countries find a common ground for cooperation. However, if the nature of the regional developments is about ideology, two countries engage in competition for influence based on their differing worldviews. Although domestic differences (ideological and nationalistic views) serve to analyze the competitive nature of two states' relationship, a comprehensive understanding cannot be grasped without taking into account the regional and international dynamics where the United States, Russia and China remain as the most powerful actors. Turkish-Saudi relations did not form in a vacuum, rather the regional and international dynamics played a crucial role in its evolution.

Hence, this book intends to familiarize the reader with the wholly new dynamics in the Middle East presented by the vigorous efforts of two of its most important local powers to establish dominance over the region through a nuanced, comprehensive viewpoint that includes the domestic factors in each country, and how these have interacted with regional and international factors. While examining these factors, the book particularly stresses that the nature of the dynamics is crucial in determining the approaches of the two countries toward each other. In this regard, the research question of this project should be seen as to identify which factors facilitated the relations and which factors limited them, and to determine to what extent these factors affected

Turkish-Saudi relations during the years of the 1990s and the 2000s. The book adopts a detailed examination of the state of relations between the two countries, in the light of this background information and of current developments. The book follows an approach analyzing the chronology of events and identifying important timelines to trace the relationship between two countries, focusing mainly on three crucial eras: the last decade of the twentieth century (1990s), pre-Arab uprisings (early 2000s) and post-Arab uprisings (2010s). The first two eras aim to provide a brief overview of the history of Turkish-Saudi relations in the hope that it will give the reader a better understanding of the dynamics shaping the region today. While the last era is particularly significant since it was when volatile changes took place in the region where Ankara and Riyadh adopted a more assertive foreign policy that mainly clashed, in the post-uprisings era, three developments are identified as the turning points in the relationship: the 2013 coup in Egypt, the 2017 Qatari crisis, and the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in 2018.

Turkish-Saudi relations cannot be better described than with the metaphor of a roller-coaster. Relations between Ankara and Riyadh have displayed numerous "ups" and "downs", particularly over the past five decades. While the 1970s and 1980s saw the ups in the relations with occasional fluctuations, the 1990s hit rock bottom. The 2000s again witnessed the ups, but 2010s had its downs. It is a matter of curiosity even for the author of this book to see the course of relations in the 2020s. In order to understand the roots of the developing relations between the two countries in the early 2000s, where we could see high-level mutual visits taking place between the two countries as well as increasing cooperation on regional issues, this book begins by covering the course of Turkish-Saudi relations during the 1990s. Turkey and Saudi Arabia had different (in some cases, opposing) perspectives with regards to regional issues since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. However, they were able to manage these differences through different tools of dialogue until the onset of the Arab uprisings which brought to the surface their conflicting policies. Arab uprisings happened to be a litmus test for Turkish-Saudi relations, and eventually, their relationship lost the momentum it had gained in early 2000s. The honeymoon that Ankara and Riyadh enjoyed during the 2000s has ended bitterly with the Arab uprisings that started at the end of 2010. This introductory section includes a brief literature review on the course of the Turkish-Saudi relationship, the impact of key historical developments on relations, the research design and the organization of the book.

Literature Review

The Republic of Turkey, which was established in 1923, was, during the period under consideration by this study, a parliamentary representative democracy where political

parties ran for elections to establish a government. Now, it is a Presidential Republic in which the president is both the chief of state and head of government. On the other side, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which was founded in 1932, is an absolute monarchy ruled by the al-Saud family. Since the establishment of the kingdom, the sons of the founder Abd al-Aziz bin Abd-al Rahman al Saud have ruled the country. If the king is incapacitated, the crown prince, who is also the deputy prime minister, becomes the acting ruler. The government of the country is headed by the king, who is also the prime minister as well as the commander in chief of the armed forces. While Turkey has adopted the multiparty system since 1946, there are no political parties in Saudi Arabia and the opposition is banned there. The Turkish constitution set out the principles and the rules of the management of the state and the responsibility of the state toward its citizens. Whereas the kingdom does not have a constitution and considers the Quran, the holy book of Islam, as the constitution of the country. Islamic law (Shariah) is implemented in the kingdom.

For a long time, the military was considered part of the broader political environment in Turkey. The military had a significant influence on Turkish domestic and foreign policy. The military considered itself as the protector of the principles of the republic and intervened in politics on several occasions when it felt that the secular values of the state were challenged. Turkey witnessed three military coups in 1960, 1971, and 1980, and in 1997 an unarmed military intervention, and in 2016 a failed coup attempt. In each case, after a period of interim military rule, the government was returned to the civilian politicians. Since 2002, the ruling party in the country has been the conservative Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* - AK Party or AKP), which came to power with a landslide victory in the elections of that year. The entire politico-military structure inside Turkey went into a significant transformation since then and the military's role in politics became limited. On the other side, the political and social environments of Saudi Arabia have been influenced by religious ideology. The legitimacy of the kingdom is based on the 1744 historic pact made between Muhammad ibn Saud, whose descendants are now the rulers of the kingdom, and founder of the Wahhabi doctrine, Muhammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab, whose descendants are now the country's leading clerical family known as al-Shaykh. So, the domestic actors having influence in Saudi internal and external politics include the royal family, the al-Shaykh family, ulama (the body of religious leaders) and other notables. The ulama serves a crucial role in preserving the tradition and social values of the country as well as playing a significant role in legitimizing the decisions of the Saudi regime. Throughout the years, from time to time, opposition to the religio-political alliance between al-Saud and al-Shaykh has arisen within the kingdom; however, it failed to make any change in the internal balance in the country. With the rise of the new crown prince to power, the influence of the religious actors in politics became limited.

Turkey is a NATO member and has the second largest army within the organization after the US. It is also a candidate country for membership in the European Union (EU), which initiated accession negotiations with Ankara in 2005. With its growing industrial economy and investment-friendly environment, Turkey is the 19th largest economy in the world. The total population of the country is approximately 82 million. Saudi Arabia is generally known for two main things: Islam and oil. It is the home to Islam's two holiest cities; Mecca and Medina, and the king also holds the official title of 'Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques' since 1986. The hosting of these two cities makes the kingdom one of the main players in the Arab and the Muslim world. It also enjoys a special importance in the world thanks to its rich oil reserves and strategic location. According to Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) figures, it is the world's dominant exporter of oil by virtue of its holding more than 18 percent of the world's known oil reserves. The total population of the country is approximately 34 million.

The independence of the countries founded on the former territories of the Ottoman Empire was recognized by the Republic of Turkey after the signing of the Lausanne Agreement in 1923, which defined the border of the new republic. In January 1926, when King Abdulaziz al-Saud was proclaimed as the King of Hijaz, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's Turkey became the first country to recognize the Kingdom of Hijaz as an independent country. In August 1929, Turkey inked a treaty of friendship with the Kingdom of Hijaz in Mecca.[1] When the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, after the kingdoms of Najd and Hijaz were unified, was founded in 1932, Atatürk was among the first statesmen to recognize the kingdom with its new name and congratulate the Saudi king. Turkey also signed a friendship agreement with the newly-established Arab country. However, since the establishment of relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, bilateral relations were limited. During the Republican era in Turkey, relations with the Arab world in general, and Saudi Arabia in particular, did not see much improvement. Turkey's ruling elite preferred to engage in efforts of nation-building with a Western orientation, remained distant from Middle East, pursued a policy of non-involvement in the conflicts and wars in its immediate neighborhood, and gave priority to the establishment of close ties with the Western world in order to preserve the secular state structure. The newly-formed republic's efforts to modernize the country led to the adoption of a Western-oriented foreign policy line. Turkey, with its secularist approach, was posing a challenge to Saudi Arabia's political system, which is based on religious Wahhabi ideology. As a result, Turkey was not considered by the kingdom as a potential partner to cooperate with in the region. Turkey's joining the NATO alliance in 1951 – two years after its formation – and having good relations with Israel since the establishment of the latter in 1948, led to further distanced relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. On the other side, for Turkey, the Arab world represented backwardness and a risky

quagmire to be avoided as far as possible. Therefore, due to the negative perceptions towards each other based on the prejudices of the past, differing political systems and ideological structures adopted by both countries, the relations between the two countries were limited. This cool atmosphere began to change in the 1970s and 1980s when Ankara expressed increasing sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians and lent support, although symbolically, to the Arab countries during the 1956, 1967, and 1973 wars with Israel. Turkey's participation in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which is based in Saudi Arabia, in 1969, and its efforts to initiate diplomatic relations with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) warmed Turkish-Saudi ties and this positive climate continued until the mid-90s. It was primarily due to both political and economic considerations that Turkey took steps to warm relations with the Arab world.

The changing of the international order as a result of the end of the Cold War and the impact of this international development on Turkish and Saudi foreign policy has drawn considerable academic attention. Some scholars have argued that the changing of the international order with the end of the Cold War and regional developments in the post-Cold War era had significant implications for Turkey's foreign policy. For Altunışık, "on the international level, the systemic change of 1989 has had a profound impact on Turkey and unveiled a new context to re-think Turkish foreign policy"[2] and Murinson says that this change was "responsible for a shift in general Turkish foreign policy."[3] One goal of this study is to uncover the impact of the end of the Cold War on Turkish and Saudi foreign policy. The change of the system led to the emergence of many factors that caused an impact on the foreign policy decisions of the two countries. The collapse of the Soviet threat forced both Ankara and Riyadh to redefine their foreign policy lines and reset their calculations. This study observes that the end of the Cold War enabled a closer engagement in bilateral relations between Turkey and the Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia.

However, the most significant development that took place following the fall of the Iron Curtain was the Gulf War of 1990-91, which, as Batu argues, pushed Turkey to deviate from its traditional approach toward the region.[4] This study views the Gulf War as a pivotal event in the early 1990s that forced Turkey to profoundly alter its foreign policy in the area and pursue a more active policy in regional affairs. There are several opinions among scholars about the impact of the Gulf War on Turkish foreign policy. Some scholars, such as Robins, Sayarı, Makovsky and Hale, point out that Turkish foreign policy toward the Middle East witnessed a significant change during the Gulf War, while some, such as Criss and Bilgin, argue that Turkish foreign policy did not deviate from its traditional approach and that it is debatable whether Turkey's participation in the anti-Iraq camp in the war represented a change in Turkey's foreign policy.[5] Sayarı describes Turkey's foreign policy during the Gulf War as a "major break from decades of established Turkish policy concerning non-involvement in Middle

Eastern conflicts."[6] In similar fashion, Makovsky says that "in joining the Gulf War coalition, Turkey broke several of its long-standing taboos."[7]

The second chapter of this study focuses on the special importance of the Gulf War as a regional development that played an important role in the improvement of the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Although Turkey's active support to the anti-Iraq camp received great appreciation from the Middle Eastern countries in general, and Saudi Arabia, the main player of the war, in particular, several issues, such as domestic political instabilities, security concerns related to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which intensified its attacks against Turkey from neighboring countries, and the water dispute with Syria and Iraq, limited Turkey's relations with the region in the succeeding years of the 1990s. Turkey's foreign policy in the 1990s was mostly military, and less diplomacy. In this decade, Turkey came to the brink of war with Syria and Greece, and even threatened military action against Iran, while it launched massive attacks against the PKK in northern Iraq. Thus, Turkey, in the 1990s, was described as "post-Cold War warrior."

As stated previously, there is an enormous literature on Turkish foreign policy toward the Middle East during the 1990s. Gören argues that in the 1990s, for Turkey, the Middle East was the major source of its security concerns.[8] Turkey's strained relations with Iran, Syria, Iraq and the PKK threat originating from these countries pushed Turkey to adopt a security-oriented approach in its internal and external policies during the 1990s, thus limiting its ability to pursue an active foreign policy toward the Middle East in general. Throughout the 1990s, growing Kurdish separatism, which posed a serious threat to Turkey's territorial integrity, security and status quo since the 1980s, was the most significant issue and Ankara's foreign policy toward the Middle East was mostly determined according to this threat. Altunışık has extensively studied the impact of Kurdish separatism on Turkish foreign policy, with particular attention to the Middle East. For instance, Altunışık elaborates Turkey's approach to the Middle East from the security perspective as follows: "Turkey felt threatened by developments in the region, notably in Iraq after the Gulf War as well as Syrian support for the PKK. Turkey chose to deal with these threats by adopting policies prioritizing military means and balancing threats with alliances. Thus throughout most of the 1990s, Turkey was seen largely irrelevant to debate in the Arab world and mutual perceptions of threat and distrust characterized the relations."[9] This study underlines that the security-based perspective of Ankara, and Saudi support for Syria's anti-Turkey campaign in the Arab world throughout the 1990s, could be considered as factors that limited Turkish-Saudi relations. Robins, who comprehensively covered Turkish foreign policy in his book 'Suits and Uniforms: Turkish Foreign Policy Since the Cold War', states that "the nature of threats, both as perceived from a state and as perceived by other states regarding the state, is a key variable in the development and evolution of foreign relations."[10] Turkey's strained relations with Syria due to the PKK

and water issues had an adverse impact on Turkey's approach toward the Middle East and accordingly to the Arab world, in which Saudi Arabia as a heavyweight played a significant role. Another source for Turkey's Middle East policy in the 1990s, Balcı underlines that due to the PKK threat, Turkey's policy-makers focused on preserving territorial integrity and secularism, and the military bureaucratic elite determined Turkey's relations with the Middle East only around security concerns.[11]

With respect to Turkey's internal situation during the 1990s, there are some opinions that base Turkey's limited relations with the Middle Eastern countries, including Saudi Arabia, on domestic instabilities. For instance, Ataman argues the political instability in Turkish domestic politics in the 1990s was reflected in the bilateral relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, and he says that "radical secularist understanding of the military-backed coalition government in Turkey reversed the route of bilateral relations and Ankara returned to its traditional approach of mistrust and neglect."[12] Robins and Taşpınar also evaluate the status of domestic politics in Turkey in the 1990s. Taşpınar refers to Turkey's experience in the 1990s as a "lost decade", which he describes as "a war with Kurdish separatists, polarization between secularists and Islamists, economic turmoil, and systemic corruption."[13] For Robins, periods of coalition government were characterized by competition among insecure leaders which led to "fragmentation and competition" in foreign policies.[14] He then goes on to underline the impact of instability and competition in domestic politics on foreign policy by stating that "Turkey had nine foreign ministers during July 1994-June 1997." In this study, several Saudi scholars are cited who share views similar to those mentioned above. However, this study argues that, although Turkish domestic politics witnessed several government changes throughout the 1990s, Turkey's foreign policy toward the Middle East was coherent and determined by its security concerns. The study emphasizes that in the 1990s the ultimate goal of Turkey was to eliminate the PKK threat and, in order to achieve this goal, a policy without concession toward regional countries, including Saudi Arabia, was inevitable.

Until the late 1990s, Turkey pursued a distant, cautious and security-based foreign policy toward the Middle East. Mutual threat perceptions and distrust dominated Turkish-Arab relations. The atmosphere began to change considerably after the signing of the Adana Accords with Syria in 1998. Particularly following the capture of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1999 and his announcement of putting an end to hostilities, Turkey's security concerns and threat perception of the PKK began to decrease. As many analysts argued, "resolving the Öcalan case was like the bursting of the bubble."[15]After the elimination of the PKK threat, Turkey's relations with regional countries started to develop. This study emphasizes that Turkey's normalization with its neighboring states started from 1999 onward, thanks to former foreign minister İsmail Cem's regionally-based foreign policy approach. It was during the tenure of Cem that the signing of the Adana agreement, the capture of Öcalan, a period of

trust-building in relations with the Middle Eastern countries occurred and Turkey's activism toward the Middle East took place.

With the AKP coming to power in Turkey in 2002, the relations with the Middle Eastern countries started to further deepen. Turkey's relationship with the Gulf has also become more visible in its foreign policy agenda. The new leadership advocated a maximally cooperative, pro-active, dynamic, and multidimensional foreign policy. Ahmet Davutoğlu, who served as the chief foreign policy advisor to the prime minister from 2002 to 2009, the foreign minister from 2009 to 2014, and finally, the prime minister until 2016, was the mastermind of the AKP's foreign policy philosophy. He emphasized the importance of the elimination of historical prejudices against the Middle East and acknowledgement of Turkey's Ottoman legacy. His doctrine, the "zero-problems-with-neighbors" policy, occupied an important place in the AKP's foreign policy orientation toward the Middle East. This study notes that the AKP leadership in Turkey found an opportunity to build its vision and policy regarding the Middle East upon the activism initiated in the previous era. Some scholars, such as Altunışık, underline that the AKP principles shared important similarities with previous attempts and that the new leadership had more opportunities to implement them in a more comprehensive way.[16] Cem also believed that Turkish foreign policy should not distance the state from its historical and cultural roots and should be aware of its rich identity and historical assets inherited from the Ottoman time.[17] It is important to note that there were significant attempts to open Turkey's doors for a multidimensional foreign policy before the AKP came to power. Altunışık also argues that domestic, regional and international developments provided opportunity for the AKP to increase its role in the region and implement the policies mentioned above. During the era of the AKP, Turkey started pursuing a more pro-active and multidimensional foreign policy toward regional countries, including Saudi Arabia, as regional and international developments paved the way to further engage with the region.

The domestic transformations that the two countries experienced in the early 2000s had a significant impact on the foreign policies of each country. Turkish-Saudi relations were further bolstered after King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud became the new king in 2005. The new monarch pursued a more active, multidimensional and pragmatic approach in his foreign policy and sought to strengthen Riyadh's relations with Ankara. It was the domestic transformation in the two countries and the understanding of the value of de-emphasizing differences that positively affected bilateral relations and the foreign policy orientations of the two states toward each other. Baç also underlines that changes in domestic politics in Turkey led to the reshuffling of foreign policy aims with an understanding of developing relations with the regional countries, particularly the neighboring ones.[18] Also, the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the resulting shift in the balance of power in the region brought

Ankara and Riyadh even closer together. The two states found common ground for cooperation in issues ranging from increasing Iranian influence in the region to the instability in Iraq, from Israeli-Palestinian conflict to chaos in Lebanon. As part of its pro-active foreign policy, Turkey strengthened its political and economic relations with Saudi Arabia by signing several agreements and cooperating on several issues regarding the region. The "new Turkey" with the rise of the AKP in Turkey was initially welcomed in Riyadh. Amid the growing Iranian influence in the post-2003 Middle East, Saudi Arabia considered Turkey as a potential "Sunni ally" that could enhance its regional interests and counter Iran.

However, the "marriage of convenience" between Ankara and Riyadh started to show its first cracks with the Arab uprisings that started at the end of 2010 and changed the balances in the region. Although Ankara and Riyadh enhanced their cooperation in the Syrian crisis, in which the two countries sought the fall of Syrian President Bashar al Assad, the ousting of Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi by a military coup in 2013, led to the straining of Turkish-Saudi relations. Morsi was the candidate of the Muslim Brotherhood (hereafter MB), a religio-political movement which originated in Egypt but swiftly established branches in several countries, and was Egypt's first democratically elected civilian president after the fall of Hosni Mubarak. Turkey and Saudi Arabia adopted differing stances in the Egyptian crisis -- with the former supporting the MB, and the latter backing military intervention. Riyadh's stance was very much related to its concern about popular appeal and the success of the MB in the region. For Riyadh, the Pan-Islamist group represents an ideological and political threat to its regime survival. So, the Turkish leadership's staunch support of the MB movement put the two countries at odds, while also putting at risk the political and economic investments the two countries had developed over the last decade.

The two countries have held different approaches and motivations toward the outcomes of the Arab uprisings since 2011 and have exerted their influence in the region through different tools. King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud's coming to power in 2015 and the rising role of his son Mohammed bin Salman, known colloquially as MbS, during his tenure, have all played a considerable role in evolution of Turkish-Saudi relations, in a mostly adverse way. The Gulf crisis that started in mid-2017 between Qatar and the Saudi-led quartet, once again, has brought to the surface the policy differences of these two countries. While Saudi Arabia led the campaign against the blockade of Qatar, Turkey stood by its long-time ally. Both states have stakes in the Gulf crisis that have significant implications for their regional policies. The underlying causes of the opposing stances of the two countries have deeper roots and three levels of analysis are needed to understand these dynamics fully. The last part of this book also emphasises how Turkish and Saudi regional and domestic concerns were entangled with a changing international environment. The increasing

rift between Saudi Arabia and the US during the Barack Obama era, and Turkey's straining of relations with the US during Donald Trump's tenure and how the change in the US presidency had impacted the regional calculations of Ankara and Riyadh will be analyzed accordingly. This section explains how subsequent events forced Turkey and Saudi Arabia into a complicated diplomatic relationship, the nature of which has become increasingly competitive. Turkey and Saudi Arabia are among the competing actors for regional dominance. According to Flames, a regional power is distinguished by four main criteria: the claim to leadership, control of powerful resources, successful employment of foreign policy tools, and acceptance of leadership by other actors in the region.[19] This study also exposes shortcomings and strengths of Turkish and Saudi policies to assume regional power status in a region where global powers such as the US, Russia and China as well as other regional actors such as Iran and Israel are very much present.

Research Design

Despite the growing relations between the two countries in the early 2000s, it is noticeable that there are no books currently available treating this subject directly. Although there are several books on Turkish foreign policy and Saudi foreign policy in particular, the literature on Turkish-Saudi relations is scarce. The scholarly studies on the subject are limited to either news analyses or articles of no more than a few pages. Consequently, the current volume strives to make a unique contribution to the literature on Turkish-Saudi relations as a primary source covering bilateral relations between these two countries on three levels; domestic, regional and international, offering a sound understanding of their respective foreign policies in the region.

Moreover, in addition to analysis of source material and related academic work, this book is also a product of the author's field work. Two methods of data collection method have been used in this book: examining the scholarly books and journals concerning the topic of study; and conducting in-depth interviews with people who had the knowledge, experience and insider information about the topic. Since there are limited scholarly sources on the subject, in order to enrich this study, interviews have been conducted with Saudi officials, academics and journalists during the field research period in Saudi Arabia. Interviews, which form a vital component of the exploration of the book's topic, were conducted with open-ended questions to the interviewees to obtain their thoughts and suggestions concerning Turkish-Saudi relations. Interviews with these people were helpful in the sense that they provided an insider view, helping the author in reaching final conclusions of this study. Some interviews were also done by email due to the interviewee's location. Throughout the project, the views of Saudi and Turkish academics are given at length.

Since this study is a first attempt to understand the general state of affairs between two key regional countries, the author acknowledges that there might be some aspects overlooked. The main limitation of this work is the author's lack of access to key officials in the decision-making process in the two countries. In order to compensate for this shortfall, the book has made extensive use of Saudi and Turkish secondary sources. Therefore, this is not only a product of interviews but also a secondary source analysis of related books, articles, newspapers and websites covering Turkish and Saudi foreign policies during the 1990s and the 2000s. The study also made use of the websites of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to obtain official information on the subject. Furthermore, the author also accessed the Turkish Official Gazette as it includes official documents in the form of agreements, Memoranda of Understanding (MoU), protocols and joint declarations between two countries. Many of these sources have been useful and are used as references in this project.

The author acknowledges that some parts of Chapter 9 were published as an article named "An Assessment of Turkish and Saudi Policy towards the Gulf Crisis: Three Levels of Analysis" in Contemporary Arab Affairs, Vol. 12 (2), 2019, and some parts of Chapter 10 were published as an article named "Saudi Foreign Policy Towards China in the Post-Arab Uprisings: A Neo-classical Realist Approach" in Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, Vol. 14 (1), 2020. The articles were written by the author and they reappear here with the publisher's permission.

The author recognises that it is not always easy to find the best term to describe places or events in the region. The description of the Gulf space is subject to an ongoing disagreement whether it should be called "Persian Gulf" or "Arabian Gulf." As the matter still remains contentious and is a matter supported by certain governments in national literature, in order to avoid taking sides in the dispute, this book uses the term "the Gulf." Also, the usage of "Arab uprisings" has been preferred in this book particularly because it is considered more neutral than the "Arab Spring" and others.

Organization of the Book

This book contains three parts in examining the dynamics of Turkish-Saudi relations. After providing introductory information, Part I analyses the bilateral relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the 1990s, the foreign policies of the two states and explains the domestic structure of each state. The part is divided into three chapters. These discuss the domestic political developments in the two countries during the 1990s and the influence of domestic politics on the foreign policy making process. The approaches of the two countries toward each other from the past to the 1990s are also examined. Next, the impact of regional factors, particularly the impact of the

First Gulf War, on bilateral ties between the two countries is scrutinized. Finally, the impact of international factors, mainly the effect of Post-Cold War era, on Turkish-Saudi relations is discussed.

Part II covers the domestic transformations in Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the 2000s, and takes a closer look at the impact of these transformations on bilateral relations between Ankara and Riyadh. This part consists of three chapters developing these themes, beginning with the change brought to Turkish foreign policy with the emergence of the AKP and the changes in Saudi foreign policy during the reign of King Abdullah. This is followed by a discussion of the impact of international developments, including 9/11. Next, regional developments are dealt with, such as the impact on the regional order of the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, the Iranian threat, and the fields of cooperation for Ankara and Riyadh for bilateral ties.

Part III consists of four chapters covering post-2010 developments, such as the Arab uprisings, and their impact on Turkish-Saudi policies, as well as the Turkish model in the Middle East, and the rise and demise of admiration for it. This part, most importantly, reviews the current conflicts between Saudi Arabia and Turkey and delves into the issues of competition between two countries through three main cases of study: the Gulf crisis, the Khashoggi case and the Kurdish issue. It also touches upon the international context influenced by the US presidency eras of both Obama and Trump. It looks at the multiple challenges confronting the two countries and the reasons behind the Turkish-Saudi responses to a series of regional issues. The conclusion provides a summary together with responses to the questions posed during the study, while also offering predictions regarding the future of the Turkish-Saudi relationship.

PART I:

OVERVIEW OF TURKISH-SAUDI RELATIONS DURING THE 1990S

"It is certainly important to look at history and for two reasons above all: history is necessary to explain why countries act as they do, and, equally, to provide a basis for analyzing how states, and their opponents, claim to use, select and falsify history to justify what they do."

Fred Halliday[20]

1

Domestic Context in Turkey and Saudi Arabia

In order to better understand Turkish-Saudi relations in the twenty-first century, it is essential to examine the previous era to expose the foundations of the current state of affairs. In this part of the book, the relations between the two countries will be placed under scrutiny starting with the domestic political climate during the 1990s. The aim is to respond to the following questions: During the last decade of the twentieth century, what was the status of domestic politics in Turkey and Saudi Arabia? From the past to the 2000s, particularly referring to the 1990s, what was the Saudi image in Turkey and the Turkish perception in Saudi Arabia? Which factors determined the foreign policies of the two countries toward each other, and how? In order to give a full picture, this section will touch upon the domestic, regional and international developments in the 1990s that affected the relations between the two countries. In this respect, two important developments are covered: The First Gulf War and the end of the Cold War.

Domestic politics play a significant role in shaping the foreign policy of a country. Since the founding of the republic, domestic politics has had an important impact on Turkey's foreign relations**.** Turkey's ruling elite, until the 1990s, preferred to remain distant from the Middle East, pursued a policy of non-involvement in the conflicts and wars in its immediate neighborhood and gave priority to the establishment of close ties with the Western world. Turkey's lack of interest in the region, in addition to historical prejudices, created a negative perception of Turkey among Arab states, which throughout the twentieth century avoided close ties with Turkey. However, the 1990s was a decade in which Turkey was dragged into the problems of the Middle East as a result of changes in the international system. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet threat, forced Turkey to leave the security and status quo orientated policies aside and to shift its attention to regional and international issues. Thus, the change of the international system led to the emergence of significant regional developments which pushed Turkey to play a more active role in the Middle East. Ankara's support for the US-led coalition against Iraq during the First Gulf

War (1990-1991) created a positive climate between Turkey and the Middle Eastern countries. Turkey's activist policy was particularly appreciated by Saudi Arabia, the main player in the war.

Although the Gulf War, as a regional development, had a positive impact on Turkey's relations with Middle Eastern countries, several issues, such as domestic political instabilities; security concerns related to the PKK, which intensified its attacks against Turkey from neighboring countries; and the water dispute with Syria and Iraq, limited Turkey's relations with the region throughout the 1990s. During that decade, Turkish foreign policy was focused on two basic questions: how to further strengthen relations with the West, including the US, and how to contain the terrorism threat originating from the neighboring countries of Syria, Iran and Iraq. Only after the signing of the Adana Accords with Syria in 1998, the capture of PKK leader Öcalan in 1999 and the announcement of a unilateral ceasefire following his capture, did Turkey's security concerns regarding the region start to decrease and a normalization process began between Turkey and the Middle Eastern countries.

Domestic Politics in Riyadh: Saudi Dilemmas

From the beginning of the 1990s, the political agenda in the Gulf states was increasingly dominated by political and economic issues for at least a decade. The First Gulf War (1990-1991) and its consequences exacerbated the domestic and economic situation in these countries. The combination of economic, social, and political pressures pushed the issue of political participation and economic reform to the forefront, paving the way for the Gulf countries to acknowledge these pressures and take steps toward greater openness.[21] Thus, domestic political pressure (the strength of the state apparatus), perceptions of regional and ideational threats on the part of policymakers, and economic concerns are key variables in maintaining domestic stability and security.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia experienced a period of turmoil during the 1990s both economically and politically. In the words of Kechichian, "Saudi Arabia was undergoing a political and military awakening."[22] The Gulf War was in particular very costly for Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Following the war, the Saudi economy faced a difficult test in recovering the costs. As a country that militarily, economically and politically supported the US-led war against Iraq, the kingdom wrestled with the uncertainties of politics and economics throughout the 1990s. Despite successfully fighting the war on the frontline, the falling of oil prices, the increasing unemployment among the educated youth, the stagnation of the economy and rising of debts in the aftermath of the war did little to boost the popularity of the royal family.[23] Domestic pressures were challenging the royal family to make genuine political, social, and economic reforms. The government was consistently targeted for misgoverning the

economy. Frustrated by the uncertainty in the country, Saudi youth made calls for political reforms and further participation in political life. Kechichian notes that by the mid-1991, there was an apparent political uncertainty in the kingdom, where "the middle ground, charted so carefully by King Faisal in the early 1960s was becoming harder to maintain."[24]

In order to maintain stability in economy and politics but at the same time avoiding the weakening of the Saudi leadership in the early 1990s, King Fahd (r. 1982-2005) introduced a package of political, administrative and economic reforms through a series of decrees. He was considered "to have injected some rationality into Saudi politics."[25] In 1992, he introduced a new Basic Law for the system of government, which identified the nature of the state, its aims and responsibilities and the relationship between the head of the state and the people, while highlighting the equality of all citizens before the law.[26] There were also continuous calls by Saudi youth, liberals and prominent members of the royal family for the restructure of the Majlis Al Shura (Consultative Council), a body that advises the king on internal and foreign affairs. In 1992, in response to those demands, Fahd restructured the Consultative Council, giving it a more formalized and effective mechanism. This was the centerpiece of Fahd's new program. He also introduced new bylaws for the Council of Ministers, as the highest legislative authority after the king himself, and the administration of the Saudi provinces in order to promote development and efficiency.[27]

Fahd also took steps over the military power of the kingdom. In the aftermath of the Gulf War, Saudi leaders were convinced that the kingdom needed to increase its military power to protect its territorial integrity.[28] During the 1990s, the kingdom increased its weapon purchases in order to prevent a similar vulnerable and weak position to the one faced in the 1990-91 Gulf War. Although Saudi Arabia was suffering financial problems, as part of postwar security measures, it adopted a more assertive approach towards the region, in which acquisition of massive new weapons was the central policy. An article published by the *New York Times* in 1993 stated that "despite its financial woes, Saudi Arabia remains the best foreign customer of American military contractors. Its arms contracts signed with the Pentagon since June 1990 total $30 billion, roughly equal to the amount spent by the American military on major weapons systems this year."[29] Fahd also vowed to increase the size of the kingdom's armed forces while the announcement of Saudi Arabia's military purchases from the US, Britain and France was made. Touching upon the challenge faced by the kingdom and the other Gulf states during the Gulf War, King Fahd reiterated the kingdom's decision to expand the armed forces in his speech on the eve of Eid al Fitr as follows:

> Regarding the building of the Armed Forces, the main lesson to be learned from the Gulf crisis and the experience of our forces, which did extremely well, and

> out of the reality in which we live today, we in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia have made a firm decision to immediately embark on expanding and strengthening our Armed Forces, providing them with the most effective and most advanced land, sea, and air weapons the world has produced as well as advanced military and technical equipment. We shall, God willing, improve the efficiency of our armed forces in all aspects and double recruitment activities to cater to the needs of protecting this precious country and safeguard its territory.[30]

As Lobell emphasises, 'leaders can act internationally for domestic reasons or domestically for international purposes.'[31] As the new regional order emerged, the Saudi leadership, in order to keep the domestic issues in low profile, engaged into several efforts in foreign policy. In regards to foreign policy decision-making, Fahd's decisions to engage into mediation efforts for the peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and participation in the Madrid peace conference in 1991 and Moscow peace talks in early 1992 is noteworthy. "We in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia look forward to achieving security and stability everywhere in the world"[32] said Fahd early in 1994; however, things were getting complicated in the kingdom with disquieting risks to its security and stability. Beside the economic and political turbulence, Saudi Arabia also faced a series of attacks against its military, economic infrastructure and the American presence in the country in the mid-1990s.[33] Fahd's decision to allow American troops to be based on Saudi soil in order to protect the kingdom from possible Iraqi attack during the Gulf War sparked harsh criticism from religious circles. The decision was one of the toughest reached by the Saudi leadership as it had serious long-term consequences. In the early 1990s, the first act of opposition that challenged the political dominance of the ruling family came from dissent movement known as "Sahwa" or "al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya", or Islamic Awakening. The Sahwa, which was composed of young Wahhabi scholars and religious figures, was the driving force behind the political discontent that pushed a series of reforms.[34] The Sahwa was heavily influenced by the MB movement, whose leaders and sympathizers migrated to the kingdom, and fused the ideology of the movement with the local Wahhabi tradition.[35] As noted by Matthiesen, "The Sahwa was a mix of Muslim Brotherhood ideology and organizational principles and the local Wahhabi clerical tradition."[36] Since political parties are banned in the kingdom, the MB network was operating clandestinely. The Sahwa harshly criticized the Saudi leadership over its alliance with the US and the deployment of American troops. This criticism came to a point that members of the Sahwa were considered as *persona non grata* who undermined unity and cohesion among the believers.[37] It is generally considered that Sahwa's stance during the early 1990s was a turning point in the relationship between the ruling family and the MB movement that explains former's critical approach toward the latter when the uprisings swept the region from late 2010. The people who were associated with

Sahwa supported the protests in the region and welcomed the rise of MB. They were also critical of the Saudi leadership's response to the uprisings. The third part of this book will probe the Saudi approach toward the Arab uprisings.

Fahd enlisted the support of the ulama to decrease tension among the religious Muslims who harshly criticized his decision. In order to garner religious legitimacy for his decision, he summoned religious leaders to a Muslim World League meeting in Makkah in September 1990.[38] The religious figures threw their support behind the royal decision; but added that the non-Muslim troops should leave Saudi soil once the threat was vanquished. However, the criticisms against the royal family became more articulated in the 1990s when American troops continued to remain on Saudi soil even after the Gulf War ended. The continued presence of the American troops was considered as a serious provocation by radicals, who regarded the US-Saudi alliance as wrong, and viewed America as an infidel power.[39] In 1995, a car bomb was detonated at the offices of the Saudi National Guard in Riyadh, and the 1996 attack on the Khobar Towers, close to the US airbase in Dhahran cost the lives of several Americans.[40] These terrorist attacks placed the Saudi government in an increasingly difficult situation. The criticism regarding the mismanagement of the country exposed the Saudi royal family to questions over its legitimacy. The situation in the country during the 1990s was linked to the Gulf War and to American military and diplomatic assistance, says Al-Rasheed, who goes on to explain the Saudi Arabia of the 1990s:

> The turmoil of the 1990s, both political and economic, led to unusual dissent in a country not used to political confrontations in public, criticism within the country and abroad of the leadership, and terrorist acts on its own soil.[41]

The situation became more complicated when Fahd's health deteriorated and the king became unable to rule the government. Although Fahd continued to remain as the head of state until his death in 2005, the daily duties of the government were carried out by the king's half-brother, Crown Prince Abdullah.[42] From time to time, Fahd intervened in state affairs or held meetings with foreign dignitaries, but it was Abdullah who was the undeclared ruler of the kingdom from the mid-1990s. However, the uncertainty in the country affected the decision-making process as Abdullah often clashed with other members of the royal family who preferred Fahd.[43] According to Al-Rasheed, due to these uncertainties, by the end of the 1990s, Saudi domestic politics reached a period of stalemate.[44]

The domestic political environment also had a significant influence on foreign policy outlook. In early 1992, Iran and Iraq appeared as the two main competitors in the region for Riyadh, despite the former's relative moderation in late 1991. This characterization was made by the senior royal family members who were concerned at the regime's survival and legitimacy. Regional status, Islam and identity have

always been the three main pillars of Saudi foreign policy that play a significant role in preserving the legitimacy of the kingdom. Since the Islamic revolution in Iran, Riyadh was concerned over an adverse impact of Iranian influence on its own Shiite population concentrated in the country's Eastern Province, particularly around Qatif and al-Ahsa, which makes up about 10-15% of the total population.[45] The prospect of Iranian influence on its own Shiite population was the strongest internal threat faced by the Saudi kingdom. The concern and suspicions that the Saudis felt after the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca on November 20, 1979, and the outbreak of Shiite uprisings in the Eastern Province in the final days of November 1979 and early February 1980 were still relevant.[46] At that time, the demonstrations were stopped only after the dispatch of the Saudi National Guard to the Eastern Province, which later became the region where the Saudi royal family kept special attention. Both incidents embarrassed the royal family and directly challenged its legitimacy. Saudi's Shiite population identifies itself with the Iranian revolution and had repeatedly revolted against the Saudi government and its policies; therefore, Saudi foreign policy motivations were mostly determined by the perceived need to counter Iranian influence in the kingdom and the region. In a nutshell, the Gulf War and the aftermath prove to be a double-edged sword for Riyadh in facing both domestic and foreign challenges in the 1990s.

Domestic Politics in Ankara: Internal Deadlock

During the 1990s, Turkish domestic politics was riddled with instabilities and uncertainties, and in the domestic sphere the country was polarized socially, culturally and politically.[47] In the aftermath of the Gulf War, the center-right True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi*-DYP) and the Social Democratic People's Party (*Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Parti*-SHP) garnered enough votes to form a coalition government which ruled the country from 1991 to 1994. While Turgut Özal, the president of the country during those years, advocated an active foreign policy toward the Middle East with further involvement in regional issues, the coalition government was not interested in pursuing such a policy.

In the 1995 elections, the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*-RP) increased its performance from 5 percent in 1985 to 21.4 percent and won 158 seats, for the first time, making it the biggest party in Parliament in Turkish history. The changes in the international system in the post-Cold War era and the resulting impact on Turkey's domestic politics played an important role in the increase in RP's votes,[48] and also in the rise of political Islam in Turkey. In 1996, the DYP led by Tansu Çiller formed a coalition government with the RP-led conservative leader Necmettin Erbakan. The most important aspect of this coalition government was that "for the first time,

the Turkish Republic had a prime minister whose political philosophy was based on Islam."[49] However, a lack of harmony in Turkish politics also existed during the coalition government Erbakan and Çiller.

During the Erbakan-Çiller coalition government, which only lasted for a year, there were divisions in conducting both domestic politics as well as foreign policy. This division was particularly seen in the foreign policy sphere. According to Gözen, "while the RP emphasized Islamic policies in domestic and foreign policy, the DYP tried to maintain secular and pro-Western ideas."[50] While the pro-Western Çiller was paying visits to European capitals to confirm Turkey's Europeanness, Erbakan was heading to Islamic countries such as Iran and Libya and was hosting the MB leader as his first foreign guest to confirm Turkey's Muslimness.[51] Erbakan's Islamic tendency was posing a significant challenge to the country's secular form of government.[52] It is significant here to note the statement of Robins on the challenge for foreign policy-making during Erbakan's era:

> The critical months between December 1995 and February 1997 proved to be a period when competing ideological visions of Kemalism and Islamism wrestled and at times battled with each other in the domain of foreign affairs.[53]

Erbakan's interest in building close relations with the Islamist governments and Islamic movements such as Hezbollah, the MB and Hamas was also reflected in his controversial foreign visits to Iran, Libya and Sudan – countries that were considered as radical by the West. Erbakan was also eager to cement ties with Islamic countries by signing cooperation deals. Relations with foreign governments, particularly with Saudi Arabia, Libya and Iraq, were improved, as Erbakan visited Saudi Arabia on 25 separate occasions once he assumed the premiership.[54] Erbakan's policy inclination caused concern within the military, which had a significant influence on politics, as well as in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which had adopted a pro-Western and pragmatic approach.[55] For instance, a defense cooperation deal between Ankara and Tehran was expected to be signed during Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's visit to Turkey; but that deal was blocked by the military and the coalition's partners, which strongly criticized Erbakan's move.[56] In order to strengthen Turkey's links with the Islamic countries, Erbakan established the Developing Eight (D-8), which included the eight countries of Turkey, Iran, Egypt, Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Nigeria, in 1997. Erbakan considered the formation of the D-8 as a significant achievement during his era. However, Erbakan's tenure ended with the 28 February 1997 unarmed military intervention that toppled the coalition government led by his Welfare Party. In the aftermath of the ousting of the RP-DYP coalition government, a transitional government led by Mesut Yılmaz's Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*-ANAP) governed the country from 1997 to 1999. In the 1999 elections, Bülent

Ecevit's Democratic Left Party (*Demokratik Sol Partisi*-DSP) became the largest party in Parliament; Devlet Bahçeli's Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*-MHP) became the second largest.

Turkish politics witnessed several government changes during the 1990s. Within this ten-year period there were ten coalitions, each of which was formed by opposing parties.[57] This constant change in the governments during that decade led to the shifting of several foreign ministers as well. During the 1990s, the average term of a foreign minister was not more than ten months.[58] Turkey had nine foreign ministers between July 1994 and June 1997.[59] Some academics argue that its domestic transformations had a considerable impact on Turkey's foreign policy and that Turkey, for the decade from 1990 to 2000, did not have stability in the political sphere. According to Linjawi, the uncertainty and instability in domestic politics limited Turkey's involvement in the Middle East. "It was one government overthrowing the other. In such a situation it was not easy for the Middle Eastern countries to consider Turkey as a partner to cooperate with."[60]

The changing of the international order with the end of the Cold War and regional developments in the post-Cold War era had significant implications for Turkey's domestic politics and foreign policy. With the end of the Cold War, Turkey adopted a more assertive foreign policy than at any previous time in the Republic's history.[61] This was nowhere more obvious than in Turkey's relations with the Middle Eastern countries. In contrast to the Saudi experience, although Turkish domestic politics witnessed several government changes throughout the 1990s, Turkey's foreign policy toward the Middle East was coherent and determined by national security and terrorism concerns. Keeping aside the diverse thoughts in the country with some calling for further Turkish-Israeli cooperation, and others arguing that Turkey was pursuing a one-sided policy toward the Middle East by neglecting the Arabs, Turkey's main problem during the 1990s was the PKK threat.[62] In 1992, Kurdish separatism was placed at the top of the list of threats confronting Turkey in a revision made to the "National Security Policy Document", which was the basic blueprint of Turkish security strategy.[63] In the revision, Russia and Greece were replaced by Syria, Iraq, and Iran, three countries from where the PKK threat was emanating. In order to eliminate this threat, a policy without concession toward Syria and other regional countries was inevitable. The decade of the 1990s witnessed the growing attacks of the PKK, which launched its attacks against the Turkish military and civilians in Turkey from the border between southeast Turkey and northern Iraq,[64] where a power vacuum emerged as a result of the Gulf War. The growing Kurdish separatism not only posed a serious threat to Turkey's territorial integrity, security and status quo from the 1980s, but also influenced Turkey's relations with the Middle Eastern countries. Turkey's relations with both Iran and Syria were negatively affected due to their support for the PKK with an aim to destabilize Turkey. The tension with two of its immediate

neighbors over the PKK issue further deepened Turkey's security problems. This was particularly the case with Syria, with whom Turkey had thorny relations until the late 1990s not only due to the PKK issue, but also because of claims over Hatay province and the water dispute.

Inasmuch as friction over water between the two countries was indexed to Turkey's security issue throughout the 1990s, it is important to begin with an explanation of what the water dispute was. The disagreement between Turkey and Syria over the appropriation of the downstream waters from the Euphrates and Tigris rivers erupted in the 1970s[65] when Turkey started to construct dams on these rivers to develop agriculture and industry in the southeast of the country. Turkey's filling of the Atatürk Dam in 1990 reduced the water flow of the Euphrates and led to water shortages in Syria and Iraq. Turkey's Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP), which includes the construction of dams on the Euphrates, deepened the dispute further between Turkey and Syria and triggered the latter to support the PKK.[66] As Jongerden puts it, "Although GAP started as an energy and irrigation project to utilize the potential of the rich water and land resources in the region, the project also turned into a key element in the Turkish state's tackling of the Kurdish issue."[67]

In the 1990s, the water issue and PKK were the two problems linked to each other in bilateral talks between Turkey and Syria. As a retaliatory response to Turkey's water policy, as Kütük argues, Syria used the PKK as leverage, permitting the organization and its leader Abdullah Öcalan to have shelter and to set up training camps on its soil and in Lebanon.[68] As the PKK insurgency escalated in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, high-ranking Turkish officials, having realized that a diplomatic settlement was required with Syria, launched initiatives to find a solution that would address Syria's concerns over water in return for an end to its support of the PKK. Prime Minister Turgut Özal, in 1987, decided to use water as a bargaining tool against Syria[69] and made an agreement with Damascus that guaranteed a minimum annual flow of 500 cubic meters per second from the Euphrates basin to Syria[70]; for its part, Damascus promised to cooperate with Turkey in security matters.[71] However, the attempt failed as Syria continued to support the PKK. The other two attempts, in 1992 and 1996, also backfired as Syria ignored Turkey's threats of retaliation for Damascus' sheltering of the PKK. After efforts to find a diplomatic solution to resolve the issue of Syria's support for the organization failed, in the late 1990s, Turkish officials hardened their rhetoric against Syria. A speech delivered by then Turkish Foreign Minister Deniz Baykal is worth recording here: "Syria, as a neighbor country, should stop being the headquarters of a terrorist organization. It can be thought that hands with the blood of terror could be washed with more 'water'. However, Turkey will never bargain the use of terror for war."[72] In 1996, frustrated by the attacks of the PKK, Ankara sent a note to Syria to hand over Öcalan to Turkey and following this note, Turkey signed a Military Training

Cooperation Agreement with Israel[73] – a development which caused fear and disturbance not only in Damascus but also in other Arab capitals. The Turkish-Israeli agreement came amid reports that Greece and Syria had gone ahead and reached a military deal on the wartime use of each other's air bases.[74]

The tension reached a peak in 1998 when Ankara and Damascus were on the brink of war after Turkey threatened to invade Syria if it continued to provide shelter for the PKK leader Öcalan, who was operating its organization's activities within Syrian borders, and Syria did not cease providing logistical support to the organization. On the same day, while Chief of Staff General Huseyin Kıvrıkoğlu stated that Turkey and Syria were in an "undeclared war"; President Süleyman Demirel in his inaugural speech in Parliament announced that Turkey was losing its patience and retained the right to retaliate against Syria.[75] In order to show its credibility, Ankara invited television crews to the Syrian border to illustrate the deployment of Turkish troops.[76] Concerned over Turkey's military power, Damascus had to deport Öcalan and close the camps of the organization. In order to restore bilateral relations, the two countries signed the Adana agreement in 1998, in which Syria recognized the PKK as a *terrorist organization* and pledged not to provide any kind of support – financial, logistic or military – to the organization on its soil.[77]

The reason behind Syria's expulsion of Öcalan was linked to Syria's concern over Turkish military capabilities in face of its own weakness. However, some years later, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad stated in an interview that "the deportation of Öcalan was not out of fear but because we preferred you. We would either be friends with the Turkish people or prefer the Kurds and lose you. Because our preference was with you, we sent Öcalan out."[78] The course of bilateral relations between Turkey and Syria after the inking of the Adana Accords will be covered presently.

Beside Syria, the PKK also used the power vacuum in northern Iraq as an opportunity to launch attacks against Turkey. In addition, continued attacks of PKK originating from the Iranian side damaged relations between Ankara and Tehran.

In brief, during the 1990s, for Turkey, the Middle East was the major source of its security concerns[79] and the Kurdish problem was the greatest domestic security issue. Turkey's strained ties with Iran, Syria and the security threat originating from these two countries and northern Iraq pushed Turkey to adopt a distant and security-orientated approach in its internal politics and external policy toward the Middle East until the late 1990s, thus limiting the pursuit of an active foreign policy toward the region. Ankara's principal drive in formulating its Middle East policy was to eliminate PKK separatism. Because the foreign policy was securitized, the military played an important role in influencing Turkey's foreign policy decisions. From the Saudi point of view, the presence of the military bureaucratic elite in Turkey was one of the main factors that limited Turkey's relations with the Middle East and Saudi Arabia.[80] However, Robins elaborates the reason behind the presence of the military in Turkish politics:

> The Turkish armed forces, as the guardians of Atatürk's ideological legacy, see themselves as the ultimate guarantors of the state and its orientation; the repeated nature of external and internal security challenges necessitates that the military remain strong, vigilant and prepared to step in whenever required.[81]

Beside the security threat emanating from neighbor countries, the domestic uncertainties did play a significant role in influencing Turkey's foreign policy toward the regional countries, including Saudi Arabia.

Riyadh's Skeptical Approach Toward Ankara

One of the most interesting archival records about early Turkish-Saudi relations is the first high level visit of the king's 27-years-old son, prince Faisal, to Turkey in 1932 as part of his extensive tour to the countries that had recognized the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.[82] He first visited Istanbul, and then moved to Ankara where he was received by Atatürk and his entourage with special treatment.[83] There are several anecdotes regarding this important visit; however, one of the most striking is Faisal's statement as follows:

> I am here as a representative of a foreign government; however, I come here as someone who feels the pain of separation and long for unity with the sibling country. Historical and political events that took place in the recent past have surely failed the sincerity and fellowship that our people feel for each other. Our two peoples are brothers and will remain so.[84]

Despite the positive atmosphere created at that visit, the bilateral relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia did not see much progress in the following years. Although relations had a good start, diplomatic relations between two countries did not go beyond the level of charge d'affaires between 1926 and 1942.[85] Despite all the good will, relations remained limited due to their perceptions based on the prejudices of the past and also due to the differing political regimes and ideological structures adopted by Ankara and Riyadh. As Ataman puts it, "While the kingdom employs the sharia/religious law, has a traditional social structure, and an autarchic economic system, Turkey has a strictly secular political system, a relatively Westernized social structure, and a liberal economic system."[86]

Turkey's perception of Saudi Arabia was mainly characterized by suspicion and the understanding that Saudis revolted several times against Ottoman rule during the critical years of the First World War and betrayed the Ottomans by cooperating with imperial powers. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia's understanding of Turkey was shaped by

the Ottoman legacy and its anti-Turkish prejudice arose from the fear that one-day Turkey might increase its influence in the former Ottoman lands again. Turkey, with its secularist approach, preferred to pursue a distant policy toward the Middle East by not entering into any close relationship with the regional countries, not taking sides in Middle Eastern conflicts or wars and by preserving the secular state structure. As a sign of the low-profile relations between the two countries, until the 1990s, no Saudi king visited Turkey with the exception of King Faisal (r. 1964-1975) who only visited for a couple of hours to participate in an international conference in 1966. Yet the visit was an important development in Turkish-Saudi relations. Faisal visited Turkey after a Turkish parliamentary delegation visited Saudi Arabia in April 1966.[87] Upon the invitation of Saudi king, in January 1968, Turkish president Cevdet Sunay, who was accompanied by Foreign Minister Ihsan Sabri Çağlayangil, visited Saudi Arabia, becoming the first Turkish president to step foot on the Gulf region after WWI.[88] Alorabi elaborates the reasons behind the Arab suspicion toward Turkey:

> Turkey, during the Kemalist era, was pursuing a policy of having closer relations with the West and turning its back to the Middle East. One of the main factors that limited the relations with Turkey was the security-oriented policy adopted by Ankara towards the Middle Eastern countries during this era. On the Saudi side, there was an understanding that since Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Turkey distanced itself from Arabs and this affected the relationships between Turkey and the Arab countries.[89]

In the mid-twentieth century, Turkey's relations with the Arab world followed zigzags. In face of the Soviet threat, in the 1950s, Turkey actively took part in the pro-Western efforts to prevent communist influence in the Middle East.[90] As part of these efforts, the Baghdad Pact, a pro-Western alliance that included Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan and the United Kingdom, was founded in 1955. Although Turkey's active policy in taking part in the Baghdad Pact resulted in the strengthening of her security against communist threats, it also kept her in a difficult situation with certain complications and dangers.[91] Turkey's role in the creation of the Baghdad Pact not only generated harsh reactions from the pro-Soviet Arab countries, such as Egypt, but also helped to deteriorate its relations with the Arab world generally. Egypt's President Gamal Abdel Nasser, who opposed the pact, expelled Turkey's Ambassador to Cairo, Hulusi Fuat Tugay, and publicly targeted Turkey's Middle East policy, describing it as "anti-Arab."[92] The Baghdad Pact was harshly criticized for alienating the Arabs, thus creating divisions among them, and causing the isolation of Turkey.[93] In addition to Egypt, Saudi Arabia was also strongly against the Baghdad Pact.[94] Arı notes that Turkey's participation in the Baghdad Pact deepened the political differences between Turkey and the Arab states and adds: "Although the Baghdad pact was an initiative formed by

the Adnan Menderes government to increase Turkey's influence in the Middle East, it further distanced Turkey from Middle Eastern countries. Due to Egypt's influence, other Arab countries also did not participate to the pact. In the later years, Adnan Menderes had also admitted that the pact was a mistake."[95] Turkey failed to take into account the "sense of discomfort or even threat which other, more radical or less Western-oriented Arab regimes would feel as the pact was expanded."[96] The Baghdad Pact could be added as an issue that strained the Turkish-Arab and Turkish-Saudi relations at that time. With the fall of the monarchy in Iraq in 1958 due to a military coup, the Baghdad Pact collapsed, making Turkish activist foreign policy short-lived.[97]

Secondly, Turkey's relations with the Arab world were determined by the dynamics of the Cold War which required Ankara to join the Western bloc due to its security interests. This was reflected in Turkey's approach toward the Middle East and its indifference to Arab concerns, particularly regarding Israel. Turkey's close relations with the western countries and its indifference to the Middle East were interpreted as an 'unfriendly' attitude by the Arab countries and as alienation from Islam.[98] For Arabs, another element of Turkish antipathy arose from the understanding that Turks are not good Muslims.[99] As Aykan notes, "the republic's Western and secular ways were disapproved of by conservative Arabs who regarded it as having abandoned Islam."[100] For example, even many years later, "in radio broadcasts Saudi Arabia denounced the secular Turkish Republic and labeled its founder, Ataturk, 'an enemy of Islam.'"[101]

Turkey's alienation from the Arab countries increased further after several developments that took place throughout the 1950s which adversely affected Arab perception towards Turkey. First was the Baghdad pact as mentioned above. Then Turkey's siding with the Western world and abstaining from the vote on Algeria's self-determination at the UN General Assembly in 1955, its pro-Western stance during the Suez crisis in 1956 and the Lebanese crisis in 1956, its deployment of troops along the Syrian border in 1957 when the communist party in Damascus seemed to take power[102] and its call for Western military intervention in Iraq in order to bring back the monarchy after its fall in 1958 further strengthened the anti-Turkish perception among Arabs, particularly Saudis, deteriorating relations with the Arab world. All these decisions and actions taken by Turkish policymakers toward the Middle Eastern issues was to make clear Turkey's place in the international system, that is the western world.

Thirdly, Saudi suspicion of Turkey increased significantly with Ankara's recognition of Israel in 1949 and establishing ties with it - a significant factor that deeply wounded relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia and caused further deterioration of Turkey's relations with the Arab world. Nasser criticized Turkey's relations with Israel and asserted that "Turkey, because of its Israeli policy, is disliked in the Arab world."[103] In an editorial of the MB's paper, al-Dawa, Turkey was labeled as a "second Israel" with an implication that it should be destroyed.[104] Küçükcan

argues that Turkey's relations with the Arab world were mostly shaped within the context of Turkish-Israeli relations, going on to explain: "Each step drawing Turkey and Israel closer brought with it a reaction from the Arab states, whereas each tension between Turkey and Israel created grounds for drawing closer to Arab countries."[105] Turkey and Israel inked a secret military pact in 1958 to contain Soviet influence and Arab nationalism in the Middle East.[106] This pact raised eyebrows in the Arab capitals. Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, supported Greece in the Cyprus issue rather than Turkey for half of the century, due to Ankara's ties with Israel and because of its Middle East policy. In order to pressure Turkey over its relations with Israel, the Arab states used several levers, such as the oil weapon, Islamic solidarity, the Palestinian cause, and the issue of Cyprus.[107] The Cyprus issue was the most influential card in the hands of Arabs against Turkey. Arabs voted in favor of Greece at the UN General Assembly throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. In 1965, Arab states voted for UN resolution 2077, which was in favor of the Greek side as it reaffirmed the Greeks' sovereignty and described any intervention in the island as illegal. In the following years, Greece achieved great support at the UN from the Arabs on the Cyprus issue. As Criss puts it, "the review of Turkish-Middle East relations was largely caused by Turkish displeasure with the attitude of its allies who failed to support Turkey on the Cyprus issue. The Middle East countries' support of the Greek Cypriots caused the Turks to come to terms with their cultural and historical bond."[108] Taşpınar notes that several developments forced Turkey to reassess its Middle East policy, and elaborates:

> An obvious source of discontent was the failure of the Arab countries and the PLO to support Turkey's Cyprus policy. Neither at the United Nations nor at the OIC had the Arab world recognized the Turkish Cypriots' demand for self-determination. Many Arab states enjoyed cordial relations with the Greek Cypriots and recognized the Greek government as the only legitimate administration on the island.[109]

Beside the Cyprus issue, the global oil crisis that occurred in mid-70s and its severe effects on the Turkish economy was the other triggering factor for Turkey's orientation toward the Middle East in general and Saudi Arabia in particular. The oil crisis and increase of its adverse impact with Iran's 1979 Revolution had affected Turkey severely. The economic pressure caused with this situation played an important role in shaping the principles of Turkish foreign policy toward the Middle East in the 1970s. Turkey's foreign policy agenda in those years was dominated with economic concerns that also determined its relations with Saudi Arabia. In order to increase its export revenues, Turkey was in need of a stable supply of oil.[110] Due to the 1974 diplomatic crisis between Turkey and the West over the Cyprus issue, an embargo was placed on Turkey

for five years. In order to compensate for the deteriorating relations with the West, break its isolation and turn the spotlight on the problems of the Turkish population in Bulgaria, Turkey focused on improving its relations with Middle Eastern countries in a multidimensional way.[111] These dynamics motived Ankara to adapt its policies in the direction of OIC and Arab concerns in the 1970s.[112] Turkey provided diplomatic support to the Arabs by siding with them in the Arab-Israeli wars of 1956, 1967, and 1973, supporting the Palestinian issue in the United Nations in 1975 and enhancing its position in the OIC. Turkey even recognized the PLO as the sole representative of Palestine and allowed it to open an office in Ankara in 1979.[113] When the military coup took place in Turkey in 1980, King Khalid was the first leader to send a greetings telegram to leader of the coup, Kenan Evren[114], who even visited the kingdom in February 1984 where he met with King Fahd.[115] Also, Evren's attendance at the 4th Islamic Summit in 1984, being the highest ranking Turkish official in an Islamic meeting ever, and his election as the chairman of the Conference's permanent economic and commercial cooperation committee were read in the Western media as the first sign of a foreign policy shift by Turkey at the expense of its relations with the West.[116] Although these attempts created a positive climate between Middle Eastern countries and Turkey in the 1970s and 1980s[117], it didn't play a large role in changing Turkish perception in the eyes of the Arabs. This was mainly because Turkey continued to keep its relations with the West and Israel close.

A positive climate developed between Turkey and the Arab countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, after Ankara took sides with the US-led coalition against Iraq in the Gulf War in the early 1990s. Sager elaborates this positive sign: "in the early 1990s, diplomatic relations between Ankara and Riyadh were elevated to Ambassador level (March 1992)."[118] There were efforts from the two sides to get rid of the historical prejudices and ideological differences and to emphasize the significance of common interests regarding the region. However, Turkey's signing of the Military Training Cooperation Agreement with Israel in 1996 dealt a blow to improving relations. Despite Turkish officials' remarks that the agreement was not against a particular third party, it caused a great disturbance in Arab public opinion and received harsh reactions from Arab states. The leaders of Saudi Arabia, along with those of Egypt and Syria, issued a joint statement expressing their concern and demanding that Turkey reconsider the agreement.[119] For some in the Arab world, the alignment was viewed as the second betrayal from the Turkish side against Arabs within 50 years – the first being the recognition of Israel by Turkey in 1949.[120] Arab countries, where alarm bells rang with this alignment, feared that the Turkish-Israeli alignment would endanger the Arab-Israeli peace process, by providing the upper hand to Israel and weakening the position of the Arab countries, thus also causing divisions within the Arab world.[121] Alorabi elaborates on the effect of the Turkish-Israeli alliance on Turkish-Arab relations in general, and Turkish-Saudi relations in particular:

> Turkey adopted a position against Arab causes particularly in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and the era before Turgut Özal. Turkey's maintaining of good relations with Israel, despite the discomfort of the whole Arab world, pushed Saudi Arabia to side with Greece on the debated issues between Ankara and Athens. Arabs also supported Syria rather than Turkey on the former's claims on water and the border. Ankara's stance during those decades affected Saudi perception of Turkey.[122]

Turkey's military agreement, which shocked the Arabs, caused further deterioration in Ankara's already poor relations with the Arab world and strengthened the idea among Arab countries that Turkey could not be "a friend of some Arabs and the enemy of others."[123] Due to Turkey's alignment with Israel, Arabs felt the necessity to unify against Turkey in Arab causes, thus adopting an anti-Turkey attitude in disputes between Turkey and Syria during the 1990s. Syria also used Turkey's military deal with Israel as an opportunity to gain the support of the Arab countries.[124] Damascus's policy of using the PKK card to pressure Turkey in the dispute over sharing of Euphrates water received maximum support from the other Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia. Altunışık elaborates how Syria used the support of Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, against Turkey:

> After the Persian Gulf War, Saudi Arabia, along with Egypt and Syria, banded together in hopes of creating a new Arab order. Damascus, no ally of Ankara at the time, was able to frame many of its narrow fights with Turkey as Pan-Arab concerns. Down the Euphrates from Turkey, for example, Syria was locked in constant argument with the Turkish government over how much water it would allow to flow downstream. Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Syria even launched a successful campaign to end World Bank funding for Turkey's dam projects until Ankara signed a water agreement with the states below it.[125]

Concerned over Turkey's water policy, Arab countries also supported Iraq and Syria, which held official contacts with European countries to prevent them from financing Turkish projects[126], in their call to foreign contractors not to cooperate with Turkey on the GAP project.[127] Turkey's indexing of the water issue to the PKK problem, led to Syria bringing the water dispute to the international sphere. In order to put pressure on Turkey on the international platform, Syria along with Egypt and the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), namely Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and United Arab Emirates (UAE), issued the "Damascus Declaration."[128] The Damascus Declaration called for a fair settlement of the distribution of the Euphrates waters and criticized Turkey's plan to construct a new dam (the Birecik Dam) on the Turkish-Syrian border, as part of the GAP project.[129] The importance of the

Damascus Declaration was that for the first time other Arab countries openly showed their support for Syria in its water dispute with Turkey. The governments of Syria and Iraq also called on the Arab League countries to cease financing Turkish projects and to boycott European companies that provided financial aid for the Birecik Dam.[130] In addition to the water issue, the PKK issue also played a significant role in causing further deterioration to the fragile relations between Turkey and the Arab countries. As mentioned above, the Arab countries supported Syria in its claims over water and its use of the PKK card as an effective bargaining tool against Turkey. Bal elaborates the adverse impact of the PKK on Turkish- Arab relations:

> There were already cool tendencies between Turks and Arabs towards each other due to the bad memories of the First World War and before. With the open support of some Arab countries, such as Syria, for the PKK, this cool tendency risked to worsening relations and turning into becoming hostilities. For instance, if Syria had not expelled Abdullah Öcalan, a Syrian-Turkish war or an Arab-Turkish war would very possibly break out. Therefore, the PKK formed a barrier between Turkish-Syrian relations, in particular, and Turkish Arab relations, in general.[131]

From the Saudi point of view, the main factors that limited the relations between Ankara and Riyadh, as Sager lists, were:

- Turkey's application in 1987 for full European Economic Community (EEC) membership confirmed its preference for a 'European identity' and caused Saudi decision-makers to see it as a non-Middle Eastern state by choice and desire, which limited the Saudi approach to Turkey as a regional state or a potential ally,
- Turkey's strong relations with Israel and the strategic partnership between the two countries was also a major issue for the Saudis,
- Turkey's strained relations with Syria, were another factor that adversely affected bilateral relations between Ankara and Riyadh,
- Besides, Turkey's close relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, especially the strong trade relationship during the 1980s and 1990s, were a factor which hindered the development of the Saudi-Turkey relationship.[132]

While from the Turkish point of view, the main factors that affected Turkey's relations with the Middle East in general were summarized by Müftüler as:

- Historical legacy,
- The Kurdish problem (which will be discussed in the following section),

- Security of access to oil,
- Water politics (which is related to Syria and Iraq in particular, but affected Turkish-Saudi relations as well),
- The Palestinian issue,
- Islam.[133]

Turkey's Security-Oriented Middle East Policy

Since the establishment of the republic, Turkey's general perception toward the Arab world was mostly shaped within the context of the Arabs' stance during the First World War (WWI). One of the legacies of WWI was the strong antipathy toward the East in general and the Arabs in particular. The Arab revolts against Ottoman rule during WWI - a revolt in which thousands of Ottoman soldiers were killed - left a bitter memory and played a significant role in creating a negative image of the Arabs. Turkey's perception toward the Arab world, for many years, was constructed by the thought that "Arabs stabbed the Turks in the back" during the war by taking sides with the British forces, and that they were traitors.[134] The legacy of 'betrayal' by Arabs against the Ottomans during the war has left a bitter taste in Turkey. While Arabs considered Turks as those who abandoned Islam, Turks, on the other hand, considered the Arabs "undisciplined, and unreliable", recalling "their poor military performance in service with the Ottoman army" and "looked down upon the backwardness of the Arabs."[135] While Turkey was proud of its advancement towards Western civilization[136], the dominant view among Turks regarding Arabs was of the "untrustworthy Arab and the uncivilized, backward Arab states governed by Shariat law."[137]

This thought had a considerable influence on Turkey's foreign policy toward the Middle East. Despite having common historical, cultural and religious links with the Middle Eastern countries, Turkey, in the republican era, preferred to distance itself from the region, particularly from the Arab world, in order to develop a secular state. The Sadabad pact, which was inked between Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan in 1937, is given as a good example of how the Turkey of the Kemalist era distanced itself from the Middle East, particularly from the Arab world.[138] According to Sayarı, "since the founding of the republic in 1924, the Turkish ruling elite, in keeping with the legacy of Kemal Ataturk, has sought to identify the country more with the West than the Middle East and the Islamic world."[139] Ankara's giving priority to relations with the Western world led to the alienation of Turkey from the Middle East for many years. The negative perspective toward Arabs was not only limited to politics. Turkish media, literature and education system also expressed the anti-Arab perspective. Turkish-Arab relations were defined within the context of negative historical memories reflected in school textbooks, newspapers and literature. One of

the well-known anti-Arab expressions "Ne Arab'ın Yüzü, Ne Şam'ın Şekeri" (neither face of Arab, nor candy of Damascus) serves as a good example to show the anger against Arabs in Turkish literature and culture. Another negative expression which is widely circulated in contemporary Turkish popular culture is "Arap Saçı" (like Arab's hair) which means a messy situation from which there is no exit. Historical prejudices and negative perceptions toward the Arab world through the twentieth century limited Turkish-Arab relations. Turkish approaches toward the Middle East were rooted in the traumatic experiences of the past. As Aras and Köni put it, "The Turkish establishment considered itself as the main successor state with negative memories of Arabs; in contrast the Arab states interpreted the demise of the Ottoman Empire as their emancipation from exploitation by an imperial power."[140] Beside the explanation that Arabs betrayed Turks in the past, the explanation that most of the Arab countries took sides with the Soviet bloc during the Cold War era also cemented the anti-Arab sentiment in Turkey.[141]

During the 1970s, it was difficult to find reports regarding the Arab countries in Turkish newspapers, with the exception of Saudi Arabia, which was covered with a positive tone in the Turkish media, in contrast to the rhetoric used toward other Arab countries. The positive coverage of the Saudi Kingdom was related to two factors: First was the constructive role played by Riyadh in the oil crisis. Second was Saudi Arabia's economic and political cooperation with Turkey.[142] However, in the early 1990s, the discourse and the perception toward the Arabs softened among the media and writers, who adopted a neutral or relatively positive attitude while depicting the Arabs. Here, Turkish domestic politics played an important role in changing the negative image of the Arabs. Turkey's further involvement in Middle Eastern issues, after many years, in contrast to its disengagement policy toward the region, created a positive climate in Turkey's relations with the Arab world. The negative image of Arabs considerably weakened in the Turkish media thanks to the increasing visits of journalists to Middle Eastern countries during the era of Turgut Özal, who was interested in creating a rapprochement between Turks and Arabs.

The positive climate created in the early 1990s did not last for long due to the ups and downs in Turkey's relations with the Middle East. Küçükcan argues that the coalition government of the conservative Welfare Party led by Erbakan, who wanted to establish close ties with the Islamic world, adversely affected the Arab image in Turkey both in terms of media and domestic politics. The negative image of Arab states in Turkish media with Erbakan's visit to Libya, whose leader Muammar al-Gaddafi severely criticized the Turkish government for mistreating its Kurdish population[143], is elaborated as follows:

> The media printed news under headlines such as "The Bedouin went too far", "The Arabs turn away from Turkey", heavily criticizing the Arab attitude.

> Especially criticized was the Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's visit to Libya. During the visit, Muammar al-Gaddafi is reported to have made disturbing comments on Turkey's domestic and foreign policies. The news about this visit was broadcast on national television over and over again and the government was accused of letting Bedouin insult Turkey's national honor.[144]

The negative image of Arab countries in the press was strengthened by the perception of threat in the 1990s. The threat perceived by the neighboring countries, namely Syria, Iraq and Iran, and the other Arab countries that support Syria, forced Turkey to formulate its foreign policy according to its threat perceptions. Turkey's strained relations with Syria due to the PKK and water issues had an adverse impact on Turkey's approach toward the Middle East and accordingly to the Arab world.[145] In order to understand Turkey's Middle East policy of that time, it is significant to quote from Robins, who claims that "the nature of threats, both as perceived from a state and as perceived by other states regarding the state, is a key variable in the development and evolution of foreign relations."[146] Altunışık elaborates Turkey's relations with the Middle East in the 1990s and the mutual perception between the two sides:

> Turkey felt threatened by developments in the region, notably in Iraq after the Gulf War as well as Syrian support for the PKK. Turkey chose to deal with these threats by adopting policies prioritizing military means and balancing threats with alliances. Thus throughout most of the 1990s, Turkey was seen as largely irrelevant to debate in the Arab world and mutual perceptions of threat and distrust characterized the relations. This atmosphere began to change considerably after 2003.

2

Regional Developments: Common Fears and Expectations

1990-91 Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait: Brother Against Brother

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, which is also known as the First Gulf War, caused a significant change in the regional balances, which had already been affected by the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran and the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War. On 2 August 1990, the troops of Saddam Hussein's Iraq occupied Kuwait, a development that caused great tension in the Gulf region. Baghdad based its move on claims that Kuwait was illegally drilling oil from the disputed Rumalia oilfield and that the tiny Gulf country was actually the 19th province of Iraq. According to Saddam, Kuwait was not an independent country, but was artificially carved off by the imperial powers. After occupying Kuwait, Iraqi troops started burning buildings and brutalizing civilians in the country; thus causing international outrage.[147] The adverse effect of the invasion on the stability of the oil market and the balances in the politically fragile region led the international community to take action against Iraq.[148] Several resolutions were passed by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for Iraq to end its invasion of Kuwait. On November 29, the UNSC passed Resolution No. 678, which called for the withdrawal of the Iraqi forces from Kuwait by January 15, 1991. When Baghdad refused to comply with the resolution, which allowed the use of force in case of a threat to international peace and security,[149] UN-authorized Coalition Forces involving 34 nations led by the US launched a war against Iraq. The Coalition's military offensive, dubbed "Operation Desert Storm", began on January 17 with an intensive air campaign targeting Iraqi forces and assets in Kuwait and Iraq.[150] Saddam's troops were defeated by a ground assault following the air attacks by the coalition forces, and after a seven-month long occupation, Kuwait was liberated.

The First Gulf War was the most significant development in the early 1990s that pushed Turkey to pursue a more active foreign policy in the region's affairs. Ankara's approach during the war was in line with the anti-Iraq coalition forces led by the US. Turkey's active support for the US-led coalition and its key role in supporting

the UN sanctions imposed on the Saddam regime received great appreciation from Middle Eastern countries in general, and Saudi Arabia, the main player of the war, in particular. The war had also played an important role in the improvement of Turkey's relations with Saudi Arabia as the relations entered a new stage during the war. During "Operation Desert Storm", Turkey took the decision to allow American troops to use its bases to strike Iraq. NATO bases at İncirlik and other places such as Batman and Muş were opened for the multinational forces for offensive purposes in the strikes against Iraq.[151] Turkey also deployed troops to its border with Iraq. Turkey became the first country to comply with the economic sanctions that the UN imposed on Iraq. The Turkish President at that time, Turgut Özal, shut off the two pipelines used to transport Iraqi oil through Turkey to the Mediterranean Sea.[152] The Kirkuk–Yumurtalık oil pipeline was closed despite the risks of high economic cost and Iraqi military action against Turkey. Following Turkey's closure of the pipelines; Saudi Arabia also decided to shut off the Iraqi Pipeline in Saudi Arabia (IPSA-2) - a line from Iraq to the Red Sea terminal of Yanbu. According to Robins, without Özal's "swift and unequivocal" decision to close the pipelines, Riyadh would most probably have acted cautiously over the shutting off the pipeline.[153] Turkey's decision to shut off the two pipelines came at a time when Saudi Arabia hesitated to close its own pipelines and this decision was of great importance to Washington, which was in search of an ally in the region.[154]

Turkey's allowing its territory to be used as a front in the war against Iraq caused considerable criticism within the country. Despite criticism by his opponents due to fears that Iraq might retaliate against Turkey given its support of coalition forces, Turgut Özal said in an interview that his decisions in the crisis were not a gamble, but rather a calculated risk, saying: "There is no profit without risk."[155] While key figures in the decision-making process such as Prime Minister Yıldırım Akbulut, Foreign Minister Ali Bozer and Chief of General Staff Necip Torumtay argued for pursuing a cautious foreign policy, Özal believed in pursuing an active foreign policy in order to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the war.[156] Özal saw the invasion as a golden opportunity to reap strategic gains. In order to determine Turkey's role in the war, Özal was in close contact with the American President Bush and often had phone conversations with him. Özal's siding with the US-led coalition was a clear intention by the Turkish president to increase Turkey's international role while the region was going through a crucial period. Özal's move was surprising as Turkey had for a long time pursued a policy of non-involvement in the conflicts and wars in its immediate neighborhood. In joining the anti-Iraqi coalition, Turkey broke several of its long-standing taboos and proved that it could take sides in a Middle Eastern dispute.[157] In the aftermath of the war, the Turkish president declared that Turkey "should leave its former passive and hesitant policies and engage in an active foreign policy."[158] One of the main reasons driving Özal to push Turkey to play a central role in the Gulf War

was the belief that the show of loyalty to its allies would bolster Turkey's strategic importance for the US and Western Europe.[159] Özal was convinced that by joining the war, Turkey would gain an opportunity to attain several significant objectives, which Sayarı lists as:

> Expanding Turkey's political role and influence in regional affairs; gaining leverage with Washington regarding bilateral defense and trade issues and with Brussels regarding its goal of becoming a full member of the European Union (EU); and increasing its trade and business opportunities in the Middle East, particularly in the Gulf.[160]

According to one view, the reason behind Turkey's stance in the Gulf War was the fear that Iraq might become a hegemonic power in the region following its invasion of Kuwait and would seek to solve all its disputes with the region's countries by force.[161] While one significant outcome of the war for Turkish foreign policy was that Ankara put aside the policy of non-interference in Middle Eastern issues, another was that it created a serious conflict in the decision-making process in the country. Özal's policy of consulting a small group of close advisers rather than the institutional hierarchies of the security establishment - in particular, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF), led to resignations in key posts. Foreign Minister Ali Bozer, Defense Minister Safa Giray and Chief of General Staff Necip Torumtay resigned in order to protest Özal's stance. [162] Also the decision to close the pipelines, as Gözen argues, was taken by Özal and the people close to him, while the prime minister and the foreign minister were not consulted about the decision.[163] During a secret meeting between Özal and Bush while the former was on a US visit to discuss the Gulf war, although the American foreign minister attended, Bozer was excluded from the meeting.[164] Critics argued that the resignation of the key figures was the result of Özal's intention to take decisions by himself behind closed doors, and their dissatisfaction with Özal's "adventurist" Gulf policy. While Bozer resigned from his post in protest of his exclusion from the meeting, Torumtay quit his position to protest Özal's approach.[165]It was the resignation of Torumtay, who advocated pursuing a moderate policy, that shocked the country.[166] Specifically, Torumtay's resignation came after Özal's decision to send troops to Saudi Arabia.[167] However, taking into account domestic constraints over the sending of the Turkish troops, Özal, who was able to confront ministers and generals, also knew when to avoid going too far; therefore, Turkish troops were not deployed in the Gulf. However, in not sending the troops, Turkey had put itself at risk, argues Robins, who elaborates as follows:

> Consequently, Turkey did not send even a symbolic contingent of soldiers to join the international coalition, even though, ironically, it

> did subsequently put itself at much greater risk by allowing the US to use the joint air bases in the south-east of the country to fly multiple sorties against targets in Iraq once the bombardment had begun on 17 January 1991. The prejudices and past traumas of the Turkish public therefore prevented Turkey from taking full advantage of the political opportunities provided by the crisis, even though few countries in the region actually took the security risks that Ankara did.[168]

Torumtay, in the books that he wrote after he retired, described Özal's idea of "a gamble, an adventure" that threatened to drag Turkey into the Middle East quagmire and "lure the country into the Middle East's bottomless problems and drain our nation's blood and re-sources."[169] For some critics, Turkey's participation in the war was considered as a "single-handed" decision made by Özal despite overwhelming opposition from the public[170], and it failed to achieve the goals expected by Özal. The negative part of the participation was that the war dealt a severe blow to Turkey's economy. A subsequent Turkish President, Süleyman Demirel, noted that "the war and embargo had cost Turkey $15 billion to $20 billion, of which it had been compensated "three or four billion" by "our friends in the Gulf."[171] As a sign of improving relations, Saudi Arabia compensated Turkey's economic losses by giving $1.2 billion to the Turkish government, plus another $1 billion to the Turkish defense fund.[172] In total, Kuwait, the UAE and Saudi Arabia gave $4.2 billion to the Turkish defense fund.[173] However, the amounts above have no meaning when taking into consideration that after a decade of the embargo against Iraq, Turkey's economic loss reached $100 billion.[174]

Beside the economic cost, the political cost of the Gulf War was the mass flight of Iraqi Kurds, who rebelled against the Saddam regime, to Turkey and other neighboring countries and the escalation of the Kurdish problem with the rising influence of the PKK, which established camps in northern Iraq from where it launched attacks into Turkey. Following the war, Turkey had three fears over the Gulf War's legacy in northern Iraq: 1) The emergence of a separate Kurdish entity in northern Iraq that might encourage Turkey's Kurds to seek independence, 2) the emergence of a power vacuum in northern Iraq that the PKK could use as a springboard to attack Turkey and 3) the refugee flow to Turkey.[175] The most negative impact of the Gulf War for Turkey was that the status of the Kurdish issue changed from regional to international. In order to find a solution to the Kurdish issue, the then Foreign Minister Kurtcebe Alptemoçin paid visits to Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia in 1991.[176]

On the Saudi side, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the decision by the monarchy to permit the presence of American troops on Saudi soil were important historical turning points for Riyadh.[177] The invasion raised great concerns regarding the fate of the kingdom in particular, and the Gulf region in general. When King Fahd was not given an assurance on Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait during his meeting with 'Izzat

Ibrahim, the Vice-President of Iraq's Revolutionary Command Council, on August 3[178], alarm bells started ringing in the Saudi capital. Concerned with the stability of the region, Saudi Arabia served as the first front in the war against Iraq. The kingdom regarded both its own defense and the liberation of Kuwait as imperatives.[179] When Iraq invaded Kuwait, Riyadh declared that US troops would temporarily be stationed in the northeastern part of the country.

Unlike Turkey, the Saudi public was not against the participation of their country in the war, although the basing of American troops on Saudi soil caused unrest among the public. According to some religious Muslims, the Iraqi threat should be eliminated; however, the presence of non-Muslims on Saudi soil, which they considered to be holy land, was unacceptable. At that time, a prominent religious scholar stated that Saudi Arabia's enemy was not Iraq but America, "an evil greater than Saddam, that is the USA" and the West, as he wrote in a letter to the head of the Council of Higher Ulama and the Institution of Ifta' and Scholarly Research.[180] The Saudi ruler's approval for the US military presence on Saudi soil during the war in order to protect the kingdom from Iraq increased tensions among radicals led by Osama bin Laden against the Saudi royal family and the US.[181]

Despite harsh criticism from various circles in Saudi Arabia, King Fahd agreed to allow US military troops to maintain a presence on his country's soil and, in order to make the decision legitimate in the eyes of the religious Muslims, he obtained a fatwa (religious approval) from the Ulama, which plays an important role in giving the royal family its legitimacy among religious figures. Abdul Aziz Bin Baz, who had played a leading role in coaxing the Ulama to support the monarchy, argued "The Americans have come to protect, not to seize the Haramain [holy places]. They have come to repel the aggression and to remove injustice."[182] The presence of the American troops in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf war was not for the first time; the US had an air base at Dhahran, which was closed in 1962. The use of Dhahran by the US military became a problem for Saudi Arabia not only due to internal opposition but also in inter-Arab relations.[183] At the end of the war, the Saudi government organized 'the *jihad* (holy war) festival' as an Islamic celebration for the victory against Iraq.[184] According to Wynbrandt, it was difficult to clearly determine how much the war had cost the kingdom; but it is likely to be in the realm of $60 billion, a sum which is in addition to the $25 billion it contributed to Iraq during its war against Iran in the years of 1980–88.[185] Besides its own losses, Saudi Arabia also compensated the losses of some other countries that joined the war against Iraq. The burden of the war on Saudi Arabia was of several kinds, including the Scud missile attacks and the Iraqi attack on the Saudi town of al-Khafji, close to the Kuwaiti border, on 29 January 1991.[186]

As Sager puts it, the 1990s opened on a positive note in relations between Ankara and Riyadh when Turkey allowed the US-led coalition against Iraq to launch air strikes from Turkish bases as part of the Kuwait liberation war in which Saudi

Arabia was a main player.[187] Özal's strong stance against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait has been a determinative factor in warming the ties between Ankara and Riyadh in the early 1990s. During the war, Turkey and Saudi pursed a common policy in preventing Iraq to advance in its aggressive move. From the first day of the crisis, Turkey entered into contacts with Saudi Arabia, which it considered as a significant actor in the crisis. For both Ankara and Riyadh, the stability of the region was the top concern. As Mohammed Ameen Wali puts it, "during the invasion of Kuwait, Ankara and Riyadh saw eye to eye and cooperated closely in all the fields. At that time, the concerns over the stability and the security of the region pushed the two countries to take part in the same alliance."[188] As an ambassador who served during those years, Wali noted that King Fahd pursued a consistent policy to keep the Saudi ties close with Turkey.

Turkish-Saudi Relations Amid Regional Instability

With the end of the Gulf war, Turkey was in search of its own position in international politics, and particularly in the Middle East region. Since the beginning of the 1990s, Turkey had been determined to carve out a new role in the region. During the era of Özal, Turkey adopted an active foreign policy line toward its immediate neighborhood, the Middle East, which had been neglected by Ankara for a long time. Significant political and economic developments took place in Turkey's relations with the Middle Eastern countries in general, and Saudi Arabia in particular, during his era. The foreign policy adopted by Özal paved the way for the bolstering of economic and diplomatic ties with the Gulf region. As part of the warming of relations, Turkey actively initiated a process of broad economic and political restructuring. Özal's activism in foreign policy, which was appreciated by the Middle Eastern countries, was also reflected in Turkey's relations with Saudi Arabia; especially when Ankara made the specific determination to cement ties with Riyadh. Özal's Turkey improved its relations with the Muslim countries and attached a particular importance to its relations with Saudi Arabia, which was considered by Ankara as a significant country for potential commercial ties. Özal's positive approach toward Saudi Arabia was motivated by the export-oriented policy and concerns over the security and stability of the oil market. As Alorabi puts it, "the period of Turgut Özal was a milestone in relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia."[189] During the Gulf War, Özal was motivated by the hope that Ankara's support for the anti-Iraq coalition would produce economic gains for Turkey. Both Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were grateful for Turkey's role in the war and they promised to lend financial support to Turkey, in order to cover her loss originating from the embargo against Iraq. Turkey was among the countries to which the Saudi king issued debt notes to assemble them against a possible war

with Iraq.[190] Yet, Özal's policy of pushing Turkey to engage in regional affairs in the early 1990s, despite the economic costs of the war, did not result in much political or economic gain in the aftermath. In fact, some Turkish business interests won contracts for construction projects in the Gulf region[191] and Turkish companies started to invest in diverse fields in the area. Nevertheless, the Turkish economy was severely harmed by the consequences of the Gulf War. The UN sanctions against Iraq, which had been an important market for Turkey prior to the war, and Turkey's closing down its Kerkük-Yumurtalık oil pipeline, also dealt a blow to Turkish business, particularly in the southeastern cities, causing high economic losses. Before 1990, first Iraq, and then Iran had been the main markets for Turkish exports.

The war not only cost Turkey the loss of a major export market but had adversely affected foreign investments and the tourism sector, since the country was a neighbor to war-torn Iraq.[192] Another negative impact of the war was that the Turkish Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita declined from about $2,900 to $2,100 and the Turkish lira lost 69 percent of its value.[193] According to Sayarı, Ankara's support of the UN sanctions imposed on Iraq cost Turkey nearly $20 billion between 1990 and 1994.[194] By the end of 1996, the government stated that the loss had increased to approximately $30 billion.[195] The war caused a reduction of Turkish exports to the Middle East region from 23 percent of overall exports in 1989 to 16 percent in 1994.[196] Süleyman Demirel stated in 1994 that with the closure of the pipelines, "Turkey had lost the $600 million or $700 million a year that it collected for the use of the pipeline".[197] However, after an economic recession in 1991, with the beginning of 1992, Turkey gradually increased the level of its exports to the Gulf countries.[198] Trade with the Gulf countries seemed to be the most significant aspect of the overall relations with the region in early 1995.[199]

After several decades of state-led import substitution policies, during Özal's period an economic policy of domestic and external liberalization triggered an era of growth.[200] It was also the era when the engagement with the Gulf region was cemented with investments in the private sector. Özal, who gave priority to economics in international affairs, believed that greater involvement in the regional environment and increased trade with Turkey's neighbors would pave the way for economic progress.[201] Özal's economic policy facilitated Saudi capital flow to Turkey, while also increasing Turkish investments in the kingdom. Making trade with Turkey was also benefiting Saudi Arabia because the kingdom entered the decade of the 1990s with a weak financial position due to the economic burden of the Gulf War.[202] The need of each for the other had pushed the two countries to find a common ground in economic relations. For its part, Saudi Arabia needed Turkey's huge construction sector to build its modern cities, while Turkey needed oil. The mutual dependency of the two countries was also reflected in their trade relations. The trade relations seemed to be at the highest level in the first half of the 1990s.

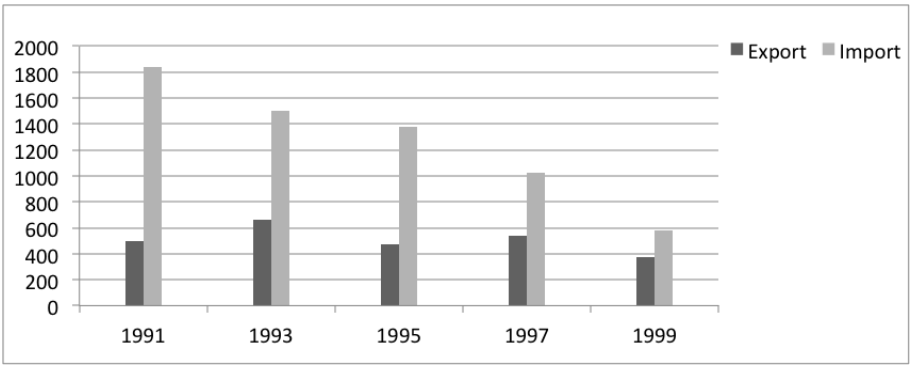

Figure 1: Foreign Trade between Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the 1990s[203]

The end of the Cold War has also enabled Turkey to further engage in trade with regional countries and to open a new period in Turkish-Saudi relations. According to Ziad Bassam al-Bassam, the Turkish businessman İbrahim Cevahir went to Saudi Arabia in the 1970s to invest in the construction sector and his company was the builder of most of the tunnels in Mecca.[204] Wali explains the achievements of Özal's era as follows:

> The most important era in Turkish-Saudi relations was the Turgut Özal era. Özal worked very hard with King Fahd to enhance the ties between two countries. During his era, many Turks have come to Saudi Arabia to work in different fields. They built tunnels, roads and buildings. Those structures do still exist in Mecca today. Who ever visits Saudi Arabia, asks "who built these projects?[205]

Improving economic ties were further cemented with the bilateral visits that took place between officials of the two countries. Until 1984, no high level official visit took place between Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Thanks to Özal's increasingly activist policy toward the Gulf countries, President Evren and Özal, prime minister at that time, visited Riyadh in 1984 and 1985 respectively; the Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz came to Turkey in 1984. As part of the growing bilateral ties with Saudi Arabia during his premiership, Özal paid an official visit to the kingdom three times, as well as once more during his presidency. In April 1986, Özal met with King Fahd, in Saudi Arabia. Özal was again in the kingdom in 1988, but this time to perform hajj. In this occasion he came together with Fahd again. During the 1980s, military officials of two countries were also making reciprocal visits, which enhanced the defense cooperation between them. After the Gulf War, as a sign of strengthening of relations, Süleyman Demirel, then the prime minister, paid a visit to Saudi Arabia in 1993. This was the only official visit between Turkey and Saudi Arabia between 1990 and 2005. Wali says the close friendship between Fahd and Özal had a positive impact on bilateral ties, and elaborates:

> They used to talk by phone every week for about an hour. Since the Gulf War, every six months, the political committees of the two governments used to meet regularly. During Özal's era, senior Turkish officials, including president, prime minister and foreign minister, and many other Arab diplomats used to have dinners at the Saudi ambassador's residence.[206]

However, the death of Özal in 1993 led to a stalemate in bilateral relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. There were zigzags in Turkish-Saudi relations in the 1990s due to the inconsistency in Turkish domestic politics, but mainly due to Turkey's strained relations with Syria, and Turkish-Israeli cooperation. Only during the short reign of Erbakan in the mid-1990s did relations seemed to improve, at least in rhetoric. Erbakan's policy was to have strong relations with the Islamic world, while opposing close ties with the Western countries. Before taking office, he promised that the military deal inked with Israel would be scrapped and that he would reshape Turkish foreign policy with more focus on the Islamic countries. However; he had to make a U-turn in this policy toward Israel. During his era, domestic politics not only prevented him from scrapping the agreement with Israel, but also pushed him to sign an additional one in 1996, worth $600 million, to upgrade Turkish F-4 fighter jets, as well as to ratify another agreement regarding free trade with Israel and extend the presence of Operation Provide Comfort for another six months.[207] While Erbakan's steps to some extent relieved the Turkish political circle and military, it caused distaste among conservative Arab capitals, including Riyadh, which was particularly not comfortable with Erbakan's efforts to turn Turkey into a leading regional power that would set the future agenda of the Muslim Middle East.[208] Saudis praised Turkey's policies during the era of Özal as compared to Erbakan's as they believed that that the latter attached importance to the Islamic world but neglected the Arab world.[209]

> Erbakan wanted to take the flag of the Muslim world from the hands of Saudi Arabia. In light of this aim, he went into alliance with Iran, Pakistan and some other Muslim countries to form D-8 while excluding Saudi Arabia, the most important country in the Islamic world. This was considered as an offensive action by Riyadh at that time.[210]

The positive climate between Turkey and Saudi Arabia created during the Özal era lost its previous dynamic during Erbakan's period; however, the presence of the military bureaucratic elite in Turkish politics further disaffected the political climate. With the presence of the military bureaucratic elite, which adopted a distant policy toward Middle Eastern countries and oriented Turkey's foreign policy according to external threats, bilateral relations between Ankara and Riyadh returned to the

pre-1990 era, when mistrust and negligence dominated the policies between the two countries. Sager summarizes bilateral relations between the two countries during the 1990s as follows:

> Yet, relations between the two states were limited during the leadership tenures of Tansu Ciller, Mesut Yılmaz and Bülent Ecevit. On the Saudi side, King Fahd bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (1982-2005) did not see the necessity to develop relations with Turkey or accord it high priority. The King's long illness (until his death in November 2005) produced a power and leadership vacuum and the country's foreign relations remained inactive.[211]

3

International Environment: Post-Cold War Era

Turkey and Saudi Arabia: Carving Out New Roles

In the aftermath of World War II, the international system was transformed into a 'bipolar' system with the US on one pole and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) on the opposing one. The rivalry between these two powers, which had opposing ideologies, caused the emergence of the Cold War international system, where other countries were obliged to take sides in one of the two camps; American or Soviet. During the Cold War international system, the countries' capabilities to make room for maneuver were limited.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, which had been an era of constant tension between the US and the Soviet Union, changed the balances in the Middle East and caused a vacuum of power. During the Cold War era, it was not difficult for countries to define their foreign policies, due to the bipolar international system. In that system, the countries in the region were either pro-Soviet or pro-American; however, the end of the bipolar world pushed the states to make a choice for either pro-American or anti-American. Throughout the bipolarity of the international system, Turkish and Saudi foreign policies were characterized by their close alliance with the US and their positions were determined in the American camp. The two countries were concerned by the threat of communism. During the Cold War era, the key elements of Saudi foreign policy were to challenge the penetration of communism into the Arabian Peninsula, defend the rights of Arabs and Muslims, and promote solidarity among Muslim nations.[212] The collapse of the Soviet threat forced both Ankara and Riyadh to redefine their foreign policy lines, reset their calculations and carve out new roles for themselves in the regional system.

The change of the system led to the emergence of many factors that caused an impact on the foreign policy decisions of the two countries. With the fall of the Iron Curtain, they followed a similar path; that is, while both continuing to ally themselves with the West, they also began to expand their foreign policy approaches. During the

post-Cold War era, both Turkey and Saudi Arabia gained in strategic importance in the eyes of Washington. The most important global development for both Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the post-Cold War era was the emergence of the globalization process in the international system during the 1990s. Linjawi links the post-Cold War era with the emergence of globalization in international politics, and says:

> Globalization emerged particularly after the victory of the US over Iraq in the Gulf War and then Bush-the-father declared the new world order. The changing of the international system impacted the relations between two countries, and this new world order pushed the two countries to find each other in the same camp.[213]

Thus, the end of the Cold War enabled a closer Turkish-Gulf relationship in several respects. The Gulf War, which brought Turkey and Saudi Arabia closer, broke out at a time when the regional countries realized the effect of the changes in international affairs and were reconsidering their foreign policies. Turkey's foreign policy, until the 1990s, was defined with two main principles; that is, to sustain security and maintain the country's independence against Soviet ideological and territorial expansionism, and to secure the modernist, secularist and national regime of the country.[214] Until the Gulf War, Turkey's traditional foreign policy toward the Middle East was characterized by the following elements: avoid involvement in inter-Arab conflicts; maintain a distant stance toward the Arab-Israeli conflict; maintain equal and not very close ties with the Arab states, Israel and Iran; avoid intervention in the internal issues of any Middle Eastern country; preserve ties with the Western World; and define Middle East policy on the basis of a Western orientation.

However, the Gulf War pushed Turkey to deviate from its traditional approach toward the region.[215] More importantly, the end of the Cold War led to the emergence of new challenges in the international order. These challenges pushed Turkey to reevaluate its foreign policy in order to preserve its geopolitical significance.[216] Needless to say, Kuwait's invasion by Iraq posed a new challenge to the Turkish foreign policy orientation toward the Middle East. Also, according to Altunışık, the changes in the international system with the fall of the Iron Curtain led to the rethinking of Turkish foreign policy. Referring to the impact of the change of the international system on Turkey's position, Altunışık explains:

> The end of the Cold War with its new sources of uncertainties and also opportunities challenged the traditional paradigm of Turkish foreign policy and led to the surfacing of strong alternative viewpoints. The emergence of new possible areas of influence around Turkey also led to the re-emergence of a

> historical/cultural dimension in Turkish foreign policy and freed the country from the shackles of the Cold War.[217]

Unlike the pre-1990s, when Turkey's relations with the Middle East had always taken a back seat to its NATO membership; in the post-Cold War era, the region occupied an important place in Turkish foreign policy.[218] Turkey's rapprochement toward the Middle East didn't mean that the close ties with the western alliance during the Cold War were brought to an end. Özal, Sayarı says, "believed that Turkey could continue to be a valued ally of the West only by expanding its regional role and influence."[219] Similarly, with the end of Cold War, Saudi Arabia also heaved a sigh of relief, as the common foe, the Communist Soviet bloc, had collapsed and a new international system had emerged. As it had during the bipolar world, Saudi Arabia continued to maintain its close ties with the Western world, especially with the US, in the post-Cold war era. According to Freeman, there was a simple bargain between the US and Saudi Arabia, that "in return for preferred access to Saudi oil, the US undertook to protect the kingdom against foreign threats."[220] Throughout the post-Cold War era, the traditional relationship between Riyadh and Washington based on security of the flow of oil to international markets in return of the protection of the status quo of the Gulf region from threats remained strong. Batarfi likens the Turkish-US-Saudi alliance to the "Twin Pillar" policy of Washington and elaborates as follows:

> Before the Iranian revolution, the US pursued a Twin Pillar policy in the Middle East. One pillar was Saudi Arabia and the other Iran. But after the Cold War, Turkey filled the vacancy of Iran, which became anti-US after the revolution in 1979. Both Saudi Arabia and Turkey emerged as important allies of the US.[221]

With the end of the Cold War, Turkey and Saudi Arabia started to play a more active regional role by supporting the resolution of the problematic issues in the Middle East. In the early 1990s, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was one of the issues that the two countries cooperated on, supporting the search for a peaceful solution. The Oslo Accords signed between the PLO and the government of Israel in 1993 created a positive climate in the region. The Oslo process aimed at achieving a peace treaty and bringing an end to the violence between the two sides. Showing its strong support for the discussions between the conflicting sides, Saudi Arabia pledged $100 million annually for the newly established Palestinian Authority.[222] Turkey also welcomed the discussions and made efforts toward the accomplishment of a successful process.[223] As part of its efforts, Turkey provided $2 million in aid and pledged a $50 million credit to the Palestinians.[224] With the commitment of the Israeli government to the discussions, Turkey softened its foreign policy toward the Jewish state. The softening of the policy was first reflected in official visits between Turkey and Israel. The first

high-level visits by Turkish officials since the establishment of Israel in 1949 began with that of Foreign Minister Hikmet Çetin, who paid a visit in 1993, followed by Prime Minister Tansu Ciller in 1994, and President Süleyman Demirel in 1996. Israeli officials, including the president, prime minister and foreign minister, reciprocated these visits.[225] Turkey also improved its relations with other Middle Eastern countries, such as Egypt and Jordan, and took an active role in some issues regarding the region in the early 1990s. However, Kirişçi argues that despite these developments, due to the uncertainties in Middle East politics, Turkey's engagement with the region was limited, elaborating as follows:

> The enthusiasm over economic cooperation was disappointing and Turkey's participation at the Amman and Cairo economic summits was more subdued. Similarly, Turkey had not yet delivered the pledged $50 million in credits to the Palestinians. In spite of Yasir Arafat's personal request to President Demirel, to provide 60 election monitors for the Palestinian elections in January 1996, only 4 were sent. In December the Palestinian envoy in Turkey, Fuad Yaseen, complained that there was not greater Turkish involvement in support of the peace process.[226]

In summary, until the late 1990s, Turkey pursued a distant, cautious and security-based foreign policy toward the Middle East. This, unlike the pre-1990s, was not simply a choice, but a necessity. Although regional developments such as the Gulf War played a significant role in creating a positive climate between Turkey and the Arab states, the increasing attacks of the PKK in the aftermath of the war pushed Turkey to deal with these threats by balancing them with alliances. Throughout the 1990s, the alliance with Israel caused a disturbance in the Arab capitals, and led to adoption of an anti-Turkish stance. Mutual threat perceptions and distrust dominated Turkish-Arab relations until the late 1990s. The atmosphere began to change considerably after the signing of the Adana Accords with Syria in 1998. Particularly following the extradition of Öcalan in 1999 and his announcement of putting an end to hostilities, Turkey's security concerns and threat perception of the PKK began to decrease. As many analysts argue, "resolving the Öcalan case was like the bursting of the bubble."[227]

Once the threat to its national security originating from Syria was eliminated, bilateral relations between Ankara and Damascus began to develop considerably. In a gesture to normalize relations, in June 2000, then Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer surprised Syrians by visiting Damascus for the funeral ceremony of Hafez al-Assad. By visiting Damascus, Sezer became the first Turkish president to visit the Syrian capital since the foundation of the country in 1946.[228] The other significance of the visit was that despite several objections, it was to Damascus that Sezer paid his first official visit abroad.[229] The high-level attendance at the funeral ceremony from the

Turkish side was of symbolic importance. After a short period of time, in September, the two countries signed a security cooperation agreement and in November, Syrian Vice President Abd al-Halim Khaddam visited Ankara and pledged to 'turn over a new leaf' in bilateral relations.[230] Ankara also welcomed Bashar al-Assad's taking office in the aftermath of his father's death. Turkey's concerns were particularly reduced when the son Bashar assumed the presidency rather than Hafez's brother Rıfat, who had close personal ties with the PKK.[231] Finally, in August 1999, Turkey signed a security cooperation agreement with Iran as well.

These developments contributed to further improvement in Turkey's relations with Middle Eastern neighbors. Moreover, this prevailing positive atmosphere also had reflections on Turkey's relations with other regional countries, in particular with Saudi Arabia. Since Syria was the mastermind of the Arab opposition against Turkey, normalization of Turkish-Syrian ties led to the breaking of ice between Turkey and the Middle Eastern countries. It is significant to note that compared to the 1990s, Turkey's regional position was more relaxed as it entered to the 2000s.

PART II:

EVOLUTION OF TURKISH-SAUDI RELATIONS IN EARLY 2000S

"Turkey does not have the luxury of abandoning the region to other actors with interests of their own. At the same time, however, there is no sign on the horizon of a new overall strategy to guide Turkey's inescapable involvement in the Middle East. Despite their very different outlooks, each of the regimes since Özal's has failed to formulate such a strategy. Until a leadership emerges that is capable and willing to do so, therefore, Turkey's regional policies will continue to be ambivalent, ad hoc, and reactive."

Malik Mufti[232]

4

Domestic Drivers: Revealing Underpinnings of Closeness

As stated in the previous chapter, the change in Turkish foreign policy toward the Middle East started after the Adana Accords signed between Turkey and Syria. Particularly following the extradition of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, the threat toward Turkey's domestic security began to decrease and normalization with the neighboring states started from 1999 onwards thanks to the former foreign minister İsmail Cem's regionally-based foreign policy approach. It is significant to note that important changes began during the term of Cem (1997-2002)[233], as he played a crucial role in improving Turkey's relations with the Middle Eastern countries. By the time the AKP came to power in Turkey in 2002, most of the problematic issues that had limited Turkey's activism in the Middle East had already faded away. After a period of trust-building in relations with Middle Eastern countries, relations started to further deepen upon the AKP's coming to power.

The new leadership in Turkey found an opportunity to build its vision and policy regarding the Middle East upon the activism initiated in the previous era. It simply worked to expand the already existing relations Turkey had. Moreover, regional and international developments paved the way for the AKP to further engage with Middle Eastern countries. During the era of the AKP, Turkey started pursuing a more pro-active foreign policy toward the regional countries, including Saudi Arabia. As part of its multidimensional foreign policy, Turkey strengthened its political and economic relations with the Gulf countries, which designated Turkey as a strategic partner in 2008. In the early 2000s, not only Turkey, but also Saudi Arabia experienced a change on the domestic level. King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud became the new king in 2005. With King Abdullah coming to power, Turkish-Saudi relations were further bolstered. The new monarch pursued a more active, multidimensional and pragmatic approach in his foreign policy and sought to strengthen Riyadh's relations with the regional countries. The domestic transformations in both the countries in the early 2000s had a significant impact on the foreign policies of the two countries.

Regional and international developments, such as the 9/11 attacks, the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, the rise of Iranian influence in the region, the escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Lebanese crisis had significant impact on Turkish-Saudi relations, by pushing the two countries toward cooperation. This chapter aims to respond to the following questions: How did the domestic transformations in Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the early 2000s influence the foreign policies of the two states? What were the common fields of cooperation for Ankara and Riyadh? What were the regional and international developments that paved the way for the boosting of ties between the two countries while also serving as a limitation on relations in the 2000s? In this respect, three important developments are covered: 1) new leaderships in Turkey and Saudi Arabia, 2) the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, 2) the 9/11 attacks.

Emergence of AKP: New Middle East Discourse

With the AKP, under the leadership of then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, taking office, not only did domestic and foreign policy begin a transformation but also Turkey's foreign policy toward the Middle East gained activism. In this respect, for Aras, Turkey's rearranging its domestic and foreign policy created self-confidence in regional policy, and as a consequence, Turkish policymakers decided to pursue an active diplomacy intended to minimizing disputes with neighbors.[234] With the new understanding in foreign policy, Turkey sought to create economic and political alliances in the region, focused on playing an active role in regional disputes, engaged in dialogue with several parties in the region and looked for cooperation with neighbors. As part of its normalization efforts with Syria -- which had been initiated by the previous Turkish government – land mines along the Turkish-Syrian border were cleared and border restrictions were eased by 2002.[235] As part of the rapprochement, a free trade agreement and a military deal were inked and visa requirements were lifted between two countries. At the same time, relations with Iraq and Iran were also developing.

During its rule, the AKP also managed to demilitarize the domestic and foreign politics of the country. Turkey's de-securitization of its Middle East policy was also linked to the AKP's efforts to create a positive perception of itself in domestic sphere. In order to consolidate its position at the expense of the military, it engaged into efforts to advance its relations with the EU, also aligning itself with the liberals, Kurdish actors and Middle Eastern countries. During the 1990s, as some argue, one of the main obstacles to Turkey's engagement with the Middle East was the presence of the military bureaucratic elite, which pursued a secular and security-oriented policy toward the region. According to some, security threats made it necessary for Turkey to pursue a policy prioritizing military means, an unavoidable consequence of which was

that relations with the Middle Eastern countries remained limited. In the 1990s the situation required Turkey to pursue a distant and cautious policy toward the region. However, during the Republican era, it was more a choice of the ruling elite to remain distant from the Middle East. During the Republican era, Turkey pursued a foreign policy characterized by a Western orientation and was engaged in efforts of nation-building.[236] During this era, Turkey's involvement in regional issues was not considered as advantageous. According to Yeşilyurt and Akdevelioğlu, there is a dominant view by some ideological circles which argues that the removal of the Kemalist ideology in foreign policy enabled Turkey's (AKP's) activism in the Middle East.[237] However, according to others, the transformation that provided the basis for activism in Turkey's foreign policy toward the Middle East was started in the previous era of Bülent Ecevit, and the AKP was only a successor in the continuation of that process.[238]

As stated previously, the government before the AKP played a significant role in the change in foreign policy toward the Middle East. However, with the new vision and policy of the AKP, Turkey-Middle East relations entered a new phase. Ankara's focus on the Middle East particularly increased during the second term (2007-2011) of the AKP. As Bank and Karadağ put it, "the Middle East is the region in which [Ahmet] Davutoğlu's doctrine, particularly in the AKP's second term (2007–2011), has been most comprehensively enacted, thereby leading to Turkey's rise as a regional power."[239] Davutoğlu was the mastermind of the AKP's foreign policy philosophy. According to him, in the twentieth century, Turkish governments were not aware of being the successor to the Ottoman heritage and failed to understand Turkey's potential historical and geopolitical depth.[240]

When Davutoğlu was Turkey's foreign minister from 2009 to 2014, he often came together with journalists and academics to share his new vision of Turkish foreign policy. As a diplomatic correspondent in Ankara from 2012 to 2014, I attended some meetings of Davutoğlu who loved to speak for hours on his views on history, geopolitics, and international relations, emphasizing Turkey's central role in the international arena. For Davutoğlu, getting rid of the historical prejudices against the Middle East, cooperating with the region economically and culturally and acknowledging its Ottoman legacy was not a choice but a must for Turkey. The importance of the Ottoman legacy underlined by Davutoğlu also took its place in the literature with the name "neo-Ottomanism", an approach which was one of the conceptual tools used by Turkey in its relations with the Middle East. With the "Strategic Depth"[241] doctrine of Davutoğlu, Turkey reassessed its own position toward regional issues. As part of this doctrine, the "zero-problems-with-neighbors" policy occupied an important place in the AKP's foreign policy orientation toward the Middle East. Rather than adopting a security-oriented foreign policy based on a cautious and suspicious approach toward the Middle East, the AKP advocated maximum cooperation and a pro-active, dynamic, and multidimensional foreign policy.

One of the characteristics of the AKP's foreign policy understanding was the diversification of alliances outside the Western world.[242] Also, one of the main strategies used by top Turkish officials toward the Middle East was to promote the Turkish model. In 2010, the Office of Public Diplomacy was founded by the Prime Ministry in order to 'tell Turkey's new story' of transformation of foreign and domestic politics to the world.[243] The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), the Turkish version of USAID, was also established as means of soft power to reach the Muslim world through aid programs. As part of its pro-active role in the Middle East, Turkey inked several political, economic and cultural deals with Arab countries, enhanced its position in the OIC and joined the Arab League with observer status.[244] In order to boost its links with the Gulf, in 2004, Turkey was instrumental in launching a NATO initiative, known as the Istanbul Initiative, which aimed to develop cooperation in the field of security with the Middle East. Among those invited to join the initiative was also Saudi Arabia.

Turkey also became a strategic partner of the GCC, led by Saudi Arabia, in 2008 after signing a MoU with the regional bloc, becoming the first non-Gulf country acquiring the status of strategic partner within the GCC.[245] This partnership was relatively little-noticed; however, when taking into account that the GCC countries are the most prosperous in the Middle East, and Turkey is one of the strongest industrial economies in the region, this partnership was a very significant one both economically and politically, as well as militarily. The geo-economic motive was the key driver of Turkey's engagement with the GCC, as trade and investment were the crucial components of Turkey's new regional strategy. Trade and investment enabled Turkey to deploy its soft power potentialities effectively in the Gulf region. Thanks to their rich oil reserves and massive financial capital, the Gulf region was considered a significant address for Turkey's regional agenda. This new foreign policy approach of the AKP was also reflected in Turkey's perspective toward the Gulf region and in its bilateral relations with the Gulf countries. As a result of the shift in the foreign policy paradigm, Turkey's relations with Saudi Arabia also developed rapidly. Turkish-Saudi relations, which did not see much improvement during the twentieth century, entered into a new stage with the AKP taking office in Turkey with a new approach toward the Middle East. Turkey's pro-active approach toward the region, particularly toward the Gulf, was welcomed by Riyadh. On the Saudi side, according to Wali, the bilateral relations that were boosted in Özal's era gained momentum in the 2000s particularly with the new leaderships in Ankara and Riyadh.[246]

The top-official visits that took place between Ankara and Riyadh were clear signals of the developing relations between the two countries. As a sign of opening a new page in relations, Abdullah, a year after assuming power, paid a three-day historic visit to Ankara and Istanbul in 2006 when Sezer was the Turkish president. It was the first official visit by a Saudi monarch to Turkey after four decades and was regarded as

a landmark in Turkish-Saudi relations. As a clear indication of Riyadh's intention to deepen economic and political ties with Turkey, he came with seven planes and a large Saudi delegation, which included hundreds of ministers, businessmen, bureaucrats, and family members. Several agreements inked between the two governments during this important visit allowed Turkey to significantly improve its economic situation. At Ankara's Esenboğa airport, he was received by then foreign minister Abdullah Gül, who accompanied him in the same limousine on the way to the Çankaya Presidential Palace. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal stated that the visit opened "a new chapter" in relations between the two countries.[247]

For Ankara, the visit was of great significance as it was considered a turning point in Turkey's relations with the Arab world. A year later, in 2007, Abdullah paid his second official visit to Turkey in order to congratulate Gül when he became the new Turkish president. The Turkish president welcomed the Saudi delegation, which came with nine planes to Ankara, at the airport. During this visit, the Saudi monarch presented Gül with the King Abdulaziz Medal of the First Degree, while in return, the Turkish president awarded the monarch with the State Medal of Honor at a ceremony held at the Presidential Palace in Çankaya, becoming the eighth foreign statesperson to receive it.[248] The second visit also occupied a great place in the media after Gül visited the Saudi monarch at Ankara's Swiss Hotel, where the latter and his delegation were staying during the visit, rather than at the presidential palace, where the Turkish president is expected to receive his guests according to diplomatic custom. Gül was heavily criticized by the media and the opposition for violating the protocol rules, as during the era of the previous presidents all the foreign dignitaries were received in the presidential palace and the deals were signed there.[249] Turkey's main newspaper printed strong headlines such as "Protocol rules broken for the king", and "President was summoned."[250] Meeting a foreign guest at the hotel was something unprecedented in presidential protocol. At that time, there was speculation that a secret deal was signed between the two sides during that meeting at the hotel.[251] The Turkish Foreign Ministry defended Gül, saying that the gestures that newspapers had said violated protocol rules were indicative of Turkey's desire to improve dialogue with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Saudi side also emphasized the close friendship between Abdullah and Gül, saying that such a friendship does not require protocol. According to Wali, Abdullah and Gül were very close friends in personal relations and that this friendship had paved the way for closer political and economic relations between the two states.[252]

The visit of the Saudi King was reciprocated by top Turkish officials. As a sign of deepening bilateral ties, Erdoğan paid several visits to Saudi Arabia, once in 2004, 2005, 2007, and 2009, and twice in 2006 and 2010 at the invitation of Abdullah. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal visited Turkey in April 2004. Before the 31st Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in Istanbul, Gül visited

Jeddah in May 2004 with Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, who was nominated as candidate by Turkey for office of secretary general of OIC, and met with the Saudi foreign minister and crown prince respectively. Turkish Minister of Internal Affairs Abdülkadir Aksu also visited Saudi Arabia in February 2005, at the invitation of his Saudi counterpart. During the visit, an agreement on security cooperation was also signed. But the most significant visit from the Turkish side came in 2009, when Gül paid an official visit to Riyadh, where he was received in a rare gesture by the monarch at the airport as a sign of reciprocal respect. During his visit to Riyadh, as the first foreign Muslim president, Gül addressed the Majlis Al Shura (Consultative Council), where he made it clear that Turkey would side with the Arab initiative in the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Gül's visit came at a time when Turkey's strong stance toward Israel created a positive perception in the Arab world, particularly in Saudi Arabia. Sager's remarks about the Saudi perception of Turkey after the AKP came to power are worth recording here:

> The major factor during the 2000s was the political change inside Turkey. The 2002 election which brought the Islamist-based AKP to power in a landslide victory was a factor in the Saudi calculus. The leadership of Gül and Erdoğan opened a new page in Turkey's regional relations, and in particular Turkey-Arab relations. The Islamist pro-Arab stance of the Turkish Republic became more visible and was seen as a genuine policy, not a temporary maneuver. The initiative to improve Turkey-Saudi relations initially came from the new leadership in Ankara and was taken seriously by the new leadership in Riyadh (King Abdullah). Under the leadership of Mr. Erdoğan, Turkey's relations with Israel gradually deteriorated, which was noted by Riyadh long before the 2008–09 Gaza War and the 2010 Gaza flotilla raid when Turkey took a strong stand against Israeli actions.[253]

The relations between Ankara and Riyadh continued to develop politically, economically and culturally in the following years. The most important event in Turkish-Saudi relations was when Erdoğan received the King Faisal International Prize for Service to Islam. In 2010, during his second visit in the same year, Erdoğan was honored by the Saudi monarch with this award, which is given every year for those who make contributions to Islam and humanity. It was considered as Riyadh's support of Turkey's efforts to strengthen ties with the Arab world. The award was also considered as the Arab world's appreciation of Erdoğan's stance toward Israel during the Davos meeting in 2009. Erdoğan's popularity was boosted dramatically both in Turkey and in the Arab world after his heated debate with Israeli President Shimon Peres in 2009 at the Davos Economic Forum, where he walked out of the panel and pledged to never return. He was given a hero's welcome when he visited Saudi Arabia

to attend the Jeddah Economic Forum, where he spoke at the session on "Global Leaders", in 2011.[254] Alorabi explains the factors that played a role in the Turkish-Saudi rapprochement:

> First of all, Turkey itself changed its policy towards the Middle East with Davutoğlu's doctrine. It opened gates to the Arab world and Turkic countries, the Balkans and Caucasia. That paved the way for the Saudis and the Arabs to look at Turkey as a "friendly" state. Secondly, the Islamic tendency of Erdoğan and his party and his stance against Israel led the Saudi government and society to adopt a positive approach towards Turks and the Turkish government.[255]

King Abdullah's Era: Change in Policies

Following the death of Fahd in 2005, Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud took power in the kingdom. Ankara made a gesture to the kingdom by sending its foreign minister to attend the funeral of Fahd on behalf of Turkey and Erdoğan then went to Jeddah to express his condolences and extend good wishes to new Saudi king. Abdullah, born in 1924, served in the position of the mayor of Mecca, deputy defense minister, the second deputy prime minister, and acting ruler during Fahd's reign.[256] Abdullah had also served as the head of the Saudi Arabia National Guard since 1962.[257] With Abdullah coming to power, Saudi Arabia's domestic and foreign policy underwent a significant transformation. The new monarch was determined to carry out a more active, pragmatic, and rational foreign policy with a multilayered understanding toward regional issues. Riyadh considerably increased its efforts to integrate with the international community, by taking part in international organizations and approving international agreements. In his first year in office, Abdullah, who is described by Lacey as 'an old man in a hurry'[258], undertook steps to reshape the country's domestic and foreign policy. In this respect, despite his advanced age, the Saudi monarch paid several visits to foreign countries with large numbers of businessmen accompanying him, and hosted many important multilateral meetings. Also, the significant rise in the number of foreign dignitaries visiting the kingdom was an indication of Riyadh's increasing efforts to engage with the international community. Saudi Arabia, under the rule of Abdullah, turned from a "closed country" to a more open country that sought to take an active role in international platforms and to pursue a multidimensional foreign policy. The new king's foreign policy orientation had two targets: to lessen the dependency on one actor (the US) and one source (oil); and to turn Saudi Arabia into a country that could play efficient role on multilateral and international platforms. Saudi Arabia's attempts to pursue a more independent policy in its foreign relations found its expression in Saudi Crown Prince Sultan Bin Abdulaziz's words:

> Diversifying the sources of our weapons is a policy that Saudi Arabia pursues. It is one of the strategies involved in building up and arming the Saudi armed forces. This strategy is based on three foundations. First: We do not wish to rely on one source to arm ourselves. Second: We always seek to acquire the most sophisticated weapons that are suitable for our armed forces. Third: We need to acquire certain technologies and adapt them for domestic uses. Purchasing weapons from different sources allows us to do that.[259]

Abdullah gave priority to securing a respected position for his country in the Arab and the Muslim world. For Riyadh, the maintenance of the status quo and the survival of the regime have been the primary target of the country's domestic and foreign policy.[260] The foreign policy of Saudi Arabia was built on an understanding that the kingdom would be positioned as a safe guardian of security and stability of the region and the protector of the Muslim and the Arab world. Kamrava elaborated the Saudi calculations in defining the security and stability of the region:

1) Supporting regional actors whose strategic objectives are aligned with those of the kingdom and its Western allies;
2) Protecting the seemingly vulnerable security of the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf from internal and external threats without too much overreliance on America military protection;
3) Countering Iranian influence and ambitions in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and closer to home in Bahrain and the rest of the Gulf; and;
4) Ensuring minimal inter-Arab conflicts and friction.[261]

When Abdullah acceded to the throne, he had to shoulder serious social and economic problems in the country inherited from the rule of Fahd.[262] Abdullah, who was known as a liberal and reformist leader, undertook important reforms in the kingdom. Both internal calls for reform and external pressure since 9/11 pushed the Saudi government to make reforms on judicial, social, economic and political issues. One of the most important of these was the municipal elections held in 2005, for the first time since the 1960s. In these elections, Shiite representatives won a majority of seats in the municipality of Qatif in the Eastern Province. Also, Saudi women going to the ballot in the elections of the Chamber of Commerce of the Eastern Province in February 2006, for the first time, was considered as a positive step in helping the kingdom move toward democracy.[263] In 2011, Abdullah announced that women would have the right to vote, run in municipal elections and join in the Majlis al-Shura (Consultative Council) – crucial progress for women's rights in the kingdom.[264] The kingdom's membership of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2005 after 12 years of talks was a significant economic reform and an essential factor in the plans for future development.[265]

In 2007, Abdullah issued a royal decree to make changes in the judicial system. The same year, Abdullah issued an order banning the religious police from arresting suspects after growing criticism of violent treatment after deaths in detention. In 2009, Abdullah discharged the head of the religious police, a senior judge and the head of the central bank in a unique reshuffle. The same year, he also appointed a woman minister, previously unprecedented in the history of the country. In a country where women were banned from driving, the appointment of a woman minister was considered as a significant development and a reformist step by the king. The Saudi press interpreted the reshuffle as a courageous reform.

In order to avoid a succession crisis among the next generation of the royal family after the death of a king, in 2006, Abdullah issued a decree for the establishment of the Allegiance Council to guide the future succession process. Since the establishment of the kingdom, the sons of the first king have ruled the country. The task of the council is to form a mechanism to change the king and the crown prince if they fail to carry out their duties. With the formation of the council, Abdullah aimed to specify the royal succession and assure a peaceful transfer of power. In order to form a platform to promote national discussion on social issues, Abdullah, while he was crown prince, created the King AbdulAziz Center for National Dialogue in 2003. While implementing reforms, Abdullah also tried to maintain a balance between political authority and the religious establishments. Abdullah generally was faced with the 'king's dilemma'[266] situation during implementation of reforms in such a conservative country. Regarding the reformist approach of Abdullah, a section from Lacey's book is worth recording here:

> One outspoken writer and thinker – a member of the Shura Council – was worried to be summoned to the royal presence after he wrote an article that criticized the slow pace of reform. There were too many obstacles to modernization, he complained – lazy bureaucrats, *wasta* (elite influence, meaning royal and business corruption), and also the religious establishment: the sheikhs were getting in the way. 'A good article,' Abdullah informed him [the writer] approvingly. 'You should write more like that.'[267]

Under the rule of Abdullah, Saudi Arabia continued to bolster its relations with other regional countries and to support Islamic causes. In order to gain prestige and increase its international legitimacy, Abdullah's rule sought to play the role of mediator between the conflicting parties in the region. Mediation was an influential tool for Saudi foreign policy to become more actively involved in regional issues. During the rule of Abdullah, Saudi Arabia was involved in several mediation efforts among different sides in Lebanon, in Iraq, in Palestine between Hamas and Fatah, and in Afghanistan.[268] The main factors behind the Saudi mediation efforts were to boost

the international legitimacy of the royal family and to preserve the security of the kingdom.[269] Saudi Arabia's new understanding of foreign policy pushed Riyadh to search for new partners with which it could cooperate politically and economically. Turkey, which also made a change in its foreign policy orientation after the AKP came to power, emerged as a potential partner for the Gulf country.

Turkey: A Potential Ally for the Kingdom?

As a consequence of the domestic developments in the two countries, Ankara and Riyadh adjusted their foreign and regional policies in the 2000s. Regional and international developments further paved the way for the improvement of relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. From the Turkish side, the change the AKP had brought to the country's foreign policy pushed Turkey to actively engage with the Arab countries. Important developments played a role in changing of Arab world's perception toward Turkey in a positive manner; such as AKP's accession to power, the Turkish Parliament's motion against the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, Turkey's stance toward the war in Gaza, and Davos in 2009. From the Saudi side, regional and international developments such as the 9/11 attacks in 2001, the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the rise of Iranian influence in the region, and the escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli crisis, played significant roles in changing Riyadh's perception toward Turkey. The 9/11 attacks in particular, which adversely affected Riyadh's relations with the West, especially the US, the longtime protector of the kingdom, and the fall of Saddam's Sunni regime in Iraq, pushed Riyadh to look for a regional partner to cooperate with.

Turkey, with its growing economy and rising political image in the region, emerged as a potential partner to cooperate with on political and economic matters. In order to secure stability at home and in the region, and lessen its dependence on the US, the kingdom decided to cooperate with Turkey, a rising regional country, against the regional threats. For the Gulf, unlike Iran, Turkey was a country that did not pose any threat to the regional countries' territorial integrity, sovereignty and sectarian sensitivities. Despite having different political structures, having prejudices of the past and adopting different interpretations of Sunni Islam -- Turkey represents a moderate Sunni version while Saudi Arabia expresses the more conservative Wahhabi Sunni vision -- the two regional countries shared the same general concerns and sought to maintain the stability and the security of the region. The two countries collaborated on regional issues, including the Palestinian dispute, the Lebanese crisis, Iran's regional influence, and instability in Iraq. Ankara and Riyadh sought a regional policy that did not alienate the other in the region as Ataman explains:

> Saudi leaders thought that if Turkey was marginalized because of its increased regional initiatives, Ankara could get closer to Israel and the West and turn its back on regional countries, which would be contrary to the interests of Arab peoples. The Saudi Administration feared the re-establishment of a new Turkish-Israeli alliance in the region. Throughout the Kemalist leadership period, the more Turkey improved its relations with Israel and the West, the more it turned its back on the Arab peoples. Therefore, Saudi Arabia preferred to improve its cooperation with Turkey under Erdoğan's leadership and to pursue similar policies towards the region.[270]

For many decades, the security of Saudi Arabia had been sustained by several American deals since the 1940s.[271] Following the September 11 attacks, Riyadh was determined to decrease its dependence on the US, particularly in the field of weaponry. Although it continued to stay largely dependent on US weaponry, Riyadh sought to benefit from Turkey's military expertise and power. In 2009, top Saudi officials, including the Saudi Chief of the Naval Forces Admiral Fahd bin Abdullah Mohammed al-Saud and the head of the Shura Council Abdullah Bin Mohammed Bin Ibrahim al-Sheikh, paid official visits to Turkey. In 2009, along with their families, the head of the Saudi Arabian Security Council Prince Bender Bin Sultan Bin Abdul-Aziz al-Saud and Prince Abdulaziz Bin Mohammed Bin Fahd al-Saud spent their holiday in Turkey. The military and political relations between the countries were strengthened with military agreements signed in recent years. In 2010, the two countries inked a deal on military cooperation which aimed at training, scientific and technical cooperation in the military field.[272] The deal was signed between Turkey's Chief of General Staff Gen. İlker Başbuğ and Saudi Arabia's Deputy Defense Minister Khalid bin Sultan in Ankara. The two countries also signed an agreement for the modernization of hundreds of United Defense-made M113 armored vehicles (APCs) by the Turkish company FNSS for over $200 million in 2007.[273] In 2012, the two countries signed a deal to cooperate on military education – an agreement which would give an opportunity for Saudi soldiers to attend Turkish military schools.[274] As a sign of the strengthening of military cooperation, the same year, Turkey's Chief of General Staff Gen. Necdet Özel paid the first visit to Saudi Arabia by a head of the General Staff in 20 years.[275] Also in 2012, the Turkish parliament approved an agreement with Riyadh for the training of military personnel.

Since 2013, Turkish-Saudi relations have gained a military dimension, according to which military personnel of the Saudi Arabian Air Force could be trained in Turkey. Military cooperation between the two countries was further enhanced with an agreement in the defense industry. In 2013, President Gül and Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud agreed to cooperate in the defense sector and inked a defense industry deal.[276]

The agreement was to stay in force for five years and to be extended automatically for successive one-year periods.[277] The common concerns of Turkey and the GCC countries came to the surface with the Arab uprisings. The common denominators in defining the relationship between Turkey and the GCC could be listed in the early 2010s as: 1) the establishment of a new order in Syria after the overthrow of the Assad regime, 2) the preservation of the territorial integrity of Syria and Iraq, 3) maintenance of stability and security in Egypt, 4) the counterbalancing of Iran's growing influence in the region, 5) the development of a common agenda for the creation of a Middle Eastern nuclear weapons-free zone and 6) closer collaboration for the solution to the Palestinian issue.

In sum, significant domestic, regional and international developments forced Riyadh to take Turkey into account as a regional partner to fill the power vacuum in the region and to counter Iran's expansionist policies.

Role of Economy in Bilateral Relations

Turkey's pro-active foreign policy toward the Middle East had also paved the way for the development of its economic ties with the Gulf countries. With its growing industrial economy and investment-friendly environment, Turkey became the commercial hub of the Middle East. For Turkey, the Gulf countries, with their rich energy resources and capital, offered opportunities to expand its economy.[278] In the past, due to its economic weakness, Turkey's economic engagement with the Gulf was restrained. However, with the changes in the domestic political-economic situation in the country, it started to develop an active economic policy toward the region. The Turkish market turned into an attractive center for Gulf investments, particularly after a legal regulation passed in 2003 regarding the entrance of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)s into the country.[279] The Gulf countries started to pay more attention to investing in Turkey as the legislation on FDI provided equal treatment for local and foreign investors. One important development in the economic sphere was the start of discussions on Free Trade Agreement (FTA)s between Turkey and the Gulf monarchies in 2005, although talks have not reached a concrete conclusion so far.

With regard to Turkey's relations with Saudi Arabia, economic considerations played an important role. In recent years, both Turkey and Saudi Arabia became centers for foreign investment thanks to the expansion of economic reforms. Saudi Arabia became the major trading partner of Turkey among the Gulf countries as the two sides inked several agreements to boost economic relations and to encourage trade and investments. During the visit of the Saudi monarch to Turkey in 2007, Gül and Abdullah inked a MoU for the cementing of political and economic cooperation between the countries. In order to give a boost to economic relations, Ankara and Riyadh

signed several agreements, including the 'Double Taxation Prevention Treatment' in 2007 and the 'Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement' in 2006.[280] During the 2000s, the revival in economic relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia was apparent. The Turkish-Saudi Arabian Business Council was also founded in 2003 and an investment fund in 2005 was established to bolster business sectors in the two countries. The fund, which aimed to encourage the kingdom to direct its investments to Turkey, was coordinated by the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce and the Jeddah Chamber of Trade and Commerce.[281] Mutual investments increased after businessmen and entrepreneurs of the two countries inked several deals and engaged in searching for potential fields of investment. Malki explains the economic aspect of the improving ties between Turkey and Saudi Arabia as follows:

> The tremendous growth of the Turkish economy and at the same time the weakness of the European economy, had led Saudi businessmen to consider Turkey, which had a stable economic environment, as a reliable trading partner in the region.[282]

Turkey soon became a hub for Saudi public and governmental investments. From 2004 to 2011, the total Gulf investment to Turkey amounted to $6.5 billion, of which $1.3 billion belonged to Saudi Arabia, according to the National Commercial Bank of Saudi Arabia, as reported by Oxford Business Groups.[283] While Saudi Arabia imported industrial goods, and agricultural and textile products, in return it exported petrochemical products and oil to Turkey.[284] Turkish companies were mainly focused on investing in infrastructure projects in Saudi Arabia, while the Saudis on the real estate, communications, bank and agriculture sectors in Turkey. Especially after the passing of the law that allowed foreigners to acquire property in Turkey, investments in the real estate sector increased. As Bassem puts it, "after the new law that allowed the Gulf nations to have their own properties in Turkey, Saudi people invested in real estate. Now many Saudis have a second home in Turkey."[285]

An example of the increasing cooperation of the private sectors between the two countries was the approval of the sale of the Türkiye Finans Katılım Bankası to Saudi Arabia's leading bank, the National Commercial Bank, which paid $1.08 billion for 60 percent of the Turkish bank, in 2008. Türkiye Finans was a privately owned bank belonging to the Ülker and Boydak groups.[286] Moreover, Ziraat Bank, one of Turkey's largest banks, acquired approval to open branches in Saudi Arabia in 2008 and declared that it would open several other branches in the kingdom. Erdoğan attended the inauguration ceremony of the branch in Jeddah, where he stated that "the bank would serve as bridge of finance between two countries."[287]

The Saudis also made investments in the media sector in Turkey. The Saudi-based private investment company, Kingdom Holding Company (KHC), has a

presence in media sectors in the Fox TV channel through News Corporation and in financial sectors through Citigroup, including in AKBANK through Citigroup.[288] The same company, owned by Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, who is considered as the richest businessmen in Saudi Arabia with an estimated worth of $21.4 billion, also has investments in the hotels sector, and it manages eight hotels in Turkey, such as Four Seasons Hotel Bosphorus, Four Seasons Hotel Sultanahmet, Movenpick Hotel Istanbul, Movenpick Hotel Izmir, Movenpick Hotel Bodrum, Swissotel Istanbul, Swissotel Ankara and Swissotel Grand Efes Izmir.[289] Alwaleed bin Talal held several meetings with top Turkish officials to discuss the investment plans of his company in Turkey. One of those meetings was held in 2012 with Erdoğan during the Prince's visit to Bursa. The other one was in 2009, when Gül hosted a luncheon in honor of the Prince at the Presidential Palace. Erdoğan and the Prince also came together to discuss investment opportunities in 2005 and 2007 in the kingdom. In February 2007, Erdoğan visited Saudi Arabia with the purpose of attending the 8th Economic Forum of Jeddah and also held a meeting with the Saudi king.

Saudi Arabia, due to the lack of water and cultivated areas, is dependent on imported agricultural products. Thanks to its geographical conditions and location, Turkey appeared as the dominant player in the agricultural sector and has become the major supplier of agricultural products to Saudi Arabia. As part of the effort to fill this need, Saudi Arabia made significant investments in the food and pharmaceutical sectors in Turkey. The Saudi-based Savola Company, which controls 60 percent of the Saudi edible oil market, acquired 100 percent of edible oil firm Yudum Foods of Turkey in 2007 for 200 million Saudi riyals ($53.3 million). The Saudi company stated that with the acquisition, the Savola Company would control 25 percent of the Turkish edible oil market.[290] The same company also showed its interest in the privatization tender process for 25 sugar factories, including Türkiye Şeker Fabrikalar.[291] Turkey's prominent pharmaceutical company, Abdi İbrahim, signed a license agreement with the Saudi Arabian pharmaceutical distribution firm, Banaja Holding, in late 2014, in order to acquire a market share of $55 million within five years in the kingdom, conforming to its vision to expand into the global market.[292]

In order to improve its water infrastructure, in 2008 Saudi Arabia awarded a $383 million contract to one of the leading Turkish companies, Yüksel Consortium, for a water transportation tender and the same year, Turkey-based Yüksel Construction LLC was also awarded a $372 million contract for the Saudi Arabia Eastern Region Water Pipeline Project tender.[293] In 2011, Saudi Arabia announced that it planned to invest $600 billion in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors in Turkey in the next 20 years.[294] One of the most significant investments of the Saudi-Turkish partnership was the setting up of a polypropylene manufacturing site near Turkey's Adana-Iskenderun region for $1 billion in 2012 by the Saudi Company Advanced Petrochemical Company and the Turkish Bayegan Group.[295] There were 304 Saudi

companies operating in Turkey by 2012 and the total FDI from Saudi Arabia to Turkey amounted to $1.6 billion during the years 2002-2012, while total Turkish investments in the kingdom reached around $2 million by 2014.[296]

In the first half of 2012, Turkish companies operating in Saudi Arabia were awarded significant projects worth $12.1 billion.[297] Up until the first half of 2013, Turkish companies had 193 projects in the kingdom that were worth $12.4 billion.[298] One of the most important projects carried out in Saudi Arabia was the construction of the Medina and Jeddah airports by TAV, a prominent construction company. TAV Airports' other consortium partners for the project, which was the first airport privatization in the kingdom, were GACA, the Civil Aviation Authority of Saudi Arabia, together with Al Rajhi and Saudi Oger.[299] TAV is to operate the airports for 25 years from their opening. According to Bassem, in the last ten years, there was a very marked growth in the Turkish economy which pushed Saudi investors to prefer Turkey as a trading partner, and he elaborates as follows:

> Turkish companies are interested in having businesses especially in Mecca and Medina in industrial and construction sectors. Most of the tunnels and roads in Mecca and Medina were built by Turkish companies a long time ago. Turkish Company İSTAÇ [company owned by the İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality] acts as a consulting company for the Mecca and Medina municipalities. On the Saudi side, among the first businessmen to invest in Turkey was Saleh Kamel, the head of Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry, He is the owner of Al-Baraka Bank in Turkey and has a significant share in Ülker [a leading Turkish food firm], which also has manufactures in Saudi Arabia. Saudi businessmen have always been interested in privatization in Turkey. During the privatization of İDO [İstanbul Ferry Lines], Saudis made a good bid; however they were not successful.[300]

Beside mutual investments, culture and tourism were among the most important drivers of relations between the two countries. With airline companies offering regular flights between the two countries, tourism has grown significantly. Turkish Airlines operates services to nine Saudi cities, making it the second largest company in terms of number of destinations after Fly Dubai.[301] Turks travel to Saudi Arabia mainly for religious or business purposes. The number of Saudi tourists arriving in Turkey sharply increased compared to a decade ago. The number of Saudi tourists visiting Turkey was more than 84,000 in 2010 and increased to 250,000 in 2013, while more than 500,000 Turks visit the kingdom each year to perform annual Hajj or Umrah duties.[302] In 2001 the number of Turks who visited the kingdom for Umrah was almost 10,000; in 2006 it reached 45,000-50,000 and in 2011 it increased to 450,000.[303] Beside tourist purposes, Saudi Arabia is the Gulf country that has the largest number of Turkish

residents. As of 2014, there were more than 100,000 Turks living in Saudi who mainly worked in the construction, food and furniture sectors.[304] Although Turkey and Saudi Arabia, two important countries in the region having a total population of more than 100 million, are trading partners, the trade volume between the two countries is still below its potential.

Table 1: Trade volume between Turkey and Saudi Arabia from 2001 to 2018[305]

Years	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017	2018
$ billion	1.2	1.7	2.8	3.9	3.4	4.7	5.2	5.5	4.8	4.9

During several meetings between Turkish and Saudi officials, the two sides pledged to increase the trade volume. In 2008, then Turkish Finance Minister Kemal Unakıtan stated that Ankara had formulated a five-year objective to boost its trade volume with Riyadh to $15 billion.[306] Also, speaking at a gathering in the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 2010, Turkey's Industry and Trade Minister Nihat Ergun called Saudi businessmen to invest in Turkey and boost the trade volume.[307] In 2013, Ankara and Riyadh signed the 'Mixed Economy Commission Protocol' to enhance the trade volume between two countries. During the signing of the protocol, Turkey's Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdağ stated that Turkey's target was to increase the trade volume between the two countries to $20 billion in the next five years.

Turkish Soap Operas: Soft Power Tool

One of the most influential factors that have played a significant role in changing Turkey's perception in the Arab world and boosting Arab awareness of the country has been popular Turkish soap operas. The famous Turkish soap opera, Gümüş, or *Noor* in Arabic, - the first Turkish TV series broadcast on the Saudi-owned Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC) - in 2008, became a hit in the Arab world with more than 85 million viewers.[308] In Saudi Arabia alone, three to four million viewers were glued to the TV to watch 'Noor', according to the MBC channel.[309] In the 2000s, the number of tourists from the Middle East increased to more than 1 million – a figure which is important when compared to the 1990s. In order to attract Arab tourists, the house where the series had been shot was rented by tour agents and opened for the visitors. Thanks to these TV series, the number of Saudi tourists visiting Turkey for holidays in recent years has increased rapidly[310], doubling the number seen in previous years. In 2011, Turkey received the sixth-highest number of

tourists from foreign countries.[311] Akeel explains the factors that increased Turkey's popularity with the Arab public:

> Turkish series played a big role in how people get to know about Turkey. It was the introduction that made people more aware of Turkey. Saudis used to go to Europe and US for vacations; however, after 9/11, it became difficult. Turkey appeared as a new destination and people just loved visiting that country. Turkey appealed to both conservatives and liberals in Saudi Arabia because it was both European and a conservative country.[312]

The other positive impact of the soap operas was to increase the cultural interaction between Turks and Arabs and contribute to Turkey's prestige in the Middle East. For many years, Arabs considered Turkey as a secular state that distanced itself from the Arab world, and they maintained a negative perception of it. However, Turkish soap operas not only increased curiosity about Turkey but also created a positive view of Turkish culture and values and showed how Turkey balanced modernity and Islam. Turkish soap operas' extraordinary success bolstered Turkey's soft power in the region. The success of the soap operas not only led to the revival of the tourism sector but also drew more interest in the Turkish language.[313] As a result of the interest in language, student exchange programs between Turkey and the Gulf countries started. Turkish soap operas have also opened the doors of the Gulf to the Turkish textile industry. The increased interest of Arabs in the Turkish made brands displayed in the soap operas paved the way for a great number of Turkish designers to win contracts and to open branches in the Gulf capitals.[314]

The rising popularity of the Turkish television series also attracted the attention of the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, which engaged in talks with popular Turkish actresses and the MBC for a tourism campaign in 2009. MBC, the largest media group in the Arab world owned by Al Waleed Al Ibrahim, the brother-in-law of former Saudi King Fahd, broadcast several Turkish soap operas, particularly Gümüş in 2006, dubbed in Arabic dialect, not classical Arabic – which helped the Arabs understand easily. Approximately 20 soap operas have been broadcast on the MBC channel, while others have been telecast on Arabic satellite channels such as Abu Dhabi TV and Dubai TV.[315] Malki elaborates the role of the Turkish soap operas in changing the perception of the Arabs towards Turks:

> The important thing that should be kept in mind is that media have played a significant role, especially the Turkish soap operas, in bringing the people of the two sides closer. The soap operas were very effective in changing Arab public perception towards Turkey. It was a soft power tool used by Turkey. For instance, the soap opera named 'Magnificent Century' or 'Harem of Sultan

> Suleiman the Magnificent' in the Arabic version made the Arabs think about the Ottoman era.[316]

Turkey has earned approximately $200 million from the 15,000 hours of soap operas that have been sold over a recent two-year period to 75 countries, while it earned only $1 million in 2007; the country is expected to earn $1 billion in 2023.[317] *Time* magazine has also described the export of soap operas as the "secret of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan."[318]

In order to emphasize the political impact of the soap operas, Gül stated that they were the main topic of discussions with officials from the Gulf countries.[319] The soap operas swept the Arab streets at a time when the two leading centers for Arab TV dramas, namely Egypt and Syria, went through difficult days due to the uprisings in the Arab world. However, the Saudis' addiction to soap operas received harsh reactions from conservative circles in Saudi Arabia that called for the TV channels to stop broadcasting them.[320] Saudi Arabia's chief cleric even issued a fatwa saying that it was 'sinful' to follow those series. The religious authority in Saudi Arabia found the series harmful to Saudi family tradition, after several couples in the country divorced as a result of the series. Saudi Arabia has also threatened to fine those keeping pictures of Turkish actors in their car windows.[321] But despite those reactions, the popularity of the series continued to increase. In sum, Turkish soap operas played a very important role in enhancing Turkey's popularity in the Arab world and creating an increased awareness of the country's culture and values. However, the recent tension between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, which will be discussed in Part III in depth, also showed its impact on the soap operas.

Ottoman Heritage in Saudi Arabia

Despite the improvement in Turkish-Saudi relations, the #Ottoman-era monuments, known to be established under the reign of Sultan Selim II and his son Sultan Murat, within the Masjid al-Haram (Grand Mosque that surrounds Holy Kabaa) in Mecca became an issue of disagreement between Turkey and Saudi Arabia in 2012. After news reports indicating that the Saudi government had started to bulldoze the porticos around the Masjid al-Haram built in the Ottoman period in order to expand the area for the increasing number of pilgrims, the fate of the 17-century Ottoman structures became a matter of concern for Ankara. Turkish authorities raised their concerns over the historic architecture, considered a significant part of the Islamic legacy, and requested from the Saudi authorities that the porticos, the only remains of the Ottoman heritage in Mecca, not be harmed. Following a meeting held between the Saudi monarch and Erdoğan, in 2012, Abdullah ordered the preservation

of the porticos belonging to the Ottoman period and the removal of the porticos that were constructed recently.[322] However, after several reports showing pictures of the demolished Ottoman-era porticos, the issue became a source of contention in 2013 when Turkish opposition parties accused Riyadh of being insensitive regarding protection of the Ottoman heritage in the city. The Turkish government requested that the removed porticos be sent to Turkey, but the Saudi authorities remained silent on this request. Following Turkey's pressure, Saudi authorities chose a Turkish firm, the Gürsoy Group, to inspect the Ottoman-era porticos within the mosque.[323] Following the research finalized by the company, the Ottoman-era porticos were removed and carried to an area near Mount Arafat in order to restore the historic monuments without harming their original form. After the finalization of the restoration work, the porticos are planned to be repositioned a few metres away from their original position.[324] I had the opportunity to see some parts of the porticos in 2014.

The expansion project, with costs estimated at about $21 billion, consists of two stages. The first stage requires the demolition of the building around the Grand Mosque, while the second stage focuses on the expansion of the area. Saudi authorities plan to treble the current size of the prayer area, to create a larger area for the rising number of the pilgrims, which is estimated to reach 17 million by 2025.[325] The Saudi monarch assigned the imam of the Grand Mosque, Abdul Rahman al-Sudais, to supervise the project, the contract for which was won by the Saudi Binladin Group.[326] The UK-based Islamic Heritage Research Foundation has stated that more than 98 percent of the historical and religious monuments in Saudi Arabia have been demolished in the last 30 years.[327] The executive director of the foundation, Irfan Al Alawi, has described the expansion project of the Saudi authorities as "cultural vandalism."[328]

The dismantling of several monuments considered to be holy by Muslims is in some ways related to Saudi Wahhabism, an interpretation of Islam that is strongly opposed to the encouragement of Muslims to engage in idol worship.[329] In September 2014, the president of Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs, Mehmet Görmez, harshly criticized Saudi authorities over the expansion project in the Grand Mosque and accused Saudi Arabia of destroying history.[330] "History is being destroyed on the Holy Land each day. I wish we were not experiencing a problem of de-historification in these lands. I wish we were able to protect history," Görmez stated.[331] A decade ago, Saudi Arabia had met with a similar Turkish reaction, when Riyadh ordered the destruction of the Al Ajyad Fortress in Mecca, an 18th century Ottoman monument, in order to build a hotel complex for pilgrims. Istemihan Talay, Turkey's Minister of Culture at that time, accused the Saudis of an "act of barbarism", stating: "It has once again become clear that the source of the Taliban mentality is Saudi Arabia. Just as the Taliban destroyed the Buddha statues (in Afghanistan), the Saudis are seeking to eradicate all traces of our heritage."[332] Furthermore, Talay stated that Turkey would raise the issue in the UN and lobby against the Saudi move.[333] Turkish Parliament

Speaker Murat Sökmenoğlu also condemned the Saudi move as "sinful behaviour in breach of the moral values of Islam, religious brotherhood and common sense."[334] While Turkey stated that Saudi Arabia's destruction of the historic heritage was sinful behavior, the Saudis rejected Turkey's reaction. Islamic Affairs Minister of Saudi Arabia, Saleh al-Shaikh, stated that his country was exercising its sovereignty and no one had the right to interfere, claiming that a reconstruction of the fortress would be included as part of the site redevelopment.[335] At that time, Turkish Foreign Minister İsmail Cem had also criticized Saudi Arabia for disregarding Turkish concerns. The heated debate between the two countries occupied a great deal of space in the press. In one issue, Turkey's Hürriyet newspaper printed a headline on the front-page stating that "King Fahd is erasing Turkish footprints."[336] As a response to Turkish accusations, Saudi newspaper Okaz criticized Turkey's 'alleged' abolition of its own heritage and identity as an Islamic state, saying that Turkey was the last country to talk about protecting the Islamic legacy.[337]

An interview with Sami Angawi, a prominent Saudi architect and the founder of the Hajj Research Center in 1975, on the Ottoman heritage issue between Turkey and Saudi Arabia is worth recording here:

> The heritage issue is one of the most problematic issues in the bilateral relations. This is an issue that every leadership in Turkey as well as in Saudi Arabia was aware of; however, two countries, to secure their economic interests, prefer to "agree to disagree" on this matter. It would be too late if both sides fail to agree on the preservation of the historical and religious sites in the kingdom. Otherwise, this issue could be a matter of contention between two sides again in the future.[338]

It seemed that the Turkish government was limiting its actions to rhetoric over the issue in order to preserve its economic interests with the Gulf country. Beside the economic concerns, it seemed as though the Turkish stance was the political choice of the AKP government. Opposition parties in Turkey several times criticized the Turkish government for not showing the necessary awareness over the matter, and called on the government to take urgent steps in order to protect the Ottoman historical monuments, which reflect the Turkish nation's moral value.[339]

5

International Environment: Unfortunate Start to the Century

9/11: Opening Pandora's Box

The September 11, 2001 (9/11) attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City became the first major international development in the early 2000s that affected Washington's relations with Middle Eastern countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, and affected the politics in the region. Following the attack, the Saudi-American strategic alliance, which was based on close political, economic and military interests since the establishment of relations between the two countries, deteriorated when fifteen out of the nineteen hijackers who carried out the attack were discovered to be Saudi nationals. The attack, which was considered as a turning point for Middle Eastern countries, constituted the greatest challenge to the US-Saudi relationship since the two countries became close allies. For the first time in the history of the American-Saudi alliance, Saudi Arabia, its political system, its Wahhabi ideology and its educational system began to be questioned. Because the majority of the attackers were Saudis, the Saudi regime was harshly accused and criticized by several circles such as the media, the administration and the public, in the US.[340] The Wahhabi ideology adopted by Saudi Arabia was defined as a threat to US national interests.[341] Hethlain points out the emergence of the mutual mistrust and negative perception among the public and the administrative circles of the two countries in the following sentences: "The attacks on US targets on 9/11 drove a wedge between the US and Saudi Arabia and that following the attacks, mutual accusations and suspicions arose publicly, as the two allies found themselves for the first time on a collision course."[342] The accusations were particularly directed at the Saudi monarchy, which was accused of indirectly supporting terrorism.[343] A lawsuit was even filed against royal family members based on accusations of their having abetted the September 11 attacks.[344] Saudi Arabia's image in the West, particularly in the US, was severely harmed after the attacks. Soon after the incident, some 600 Saudi nationals, some belonging to the royal family and to prominent business families, left the US[345] and the visas of Saudi students and

tourists were withheld, even those requested for medical reasons.[346] The attacks shook the status quo of the Saudi regime and led to the questioning of the legitimacy of the American-Saudi alliance.[347] In 2003, the Saudi government's dependence on the military presence of the US started weakening. In April 2003, American troops ended their operations and withdrew from the kingdom in accordance with an agreement reached between the Saudi and American governments.[348]

The maintenance of the Saudi-American alliance was of great importance to Saudi Arabia. For Riyadh, the partnership meant the protection of its territorial integrity against regional threats and the enhancement of its prestige in the international arena, while for the US, it meant secure access to Saudi oil resources and maintenance of American influence in the region. However, the attacks forced the two sides, Washington and Riyadh, to revise their relations. Saudi Arabia was both externally and internally pressured for change after the attacks.[349] America, in particular, pressed the kingdom to make democratic reforms. Subsequent terror attacks against Saudi and Western targets further increased the need for change. In order to repair its bad image in the Western world, the Saudi government accelerated its efforts to reform its controversial educational system, carried out a fight against terrorism and engaged in relations with regional countries.

Following 9/11, the attacks of al Qaeda against the kingdom pushed the Saudi government to cooperate with Turkey against the regional transnational threat. After the American withdrawal from the country and the deterioration of Saudi-American relations due to the 9/11 attacks, Ankara and Riyadh realized that while the region was going through a critical period, cooperation between the two countries was essential for the solution of regional issues and the maintenance of stability in the region. The two countries, while enhancing bilateral ties, started to give preference to regional dynamics instead of the priorities of the big powers. Hence, the aftermath of 9/11 led to the creation of a cooperative climate for the two countries to establish further ties. Linjawi explains the impact of the September 11 attacks on Turkish-Saudi ties as follows:

> It was an incident which pushed Saudi Arabia to review its policies towards the US and the region. Turkey, a NATO member and an American ally, enjoyed good relations with Washington. In order to reduce the US pressure on the fight against terrorism, Saudi Arabia considered developing relations with Turkey, a country which had good experience in combatting terrorism and on how to deal with the issue.[350]

As a country which had been carrying out a fight against terrorism for decades, Turkey immediately condemned the September 11 attacks against the US and declared its full support for the American war on terror. As part of its support, Turkey sent troops to

Afghanistan and took part in coalition operations against al Qaeda in that country. Ankara's standing with Washington in its fight against terror led to a flourishing of US-Turkish relations.[351] Turkey's commitment in the fight against terrorism, in particular, emphasized Turkey's regional significance and enhanced its relations with the US. Salmi and Durgun list examples of Turkey's cooperation in the fight against terror as follows: "it opened its airspace for the American forces to use, it voted to invoke Article 5 of the NATO treaty, it participated in the coalition against al-Qaeda and the Taliban regime, it provided intelligence to the US through its relationship with Uzbek-Tajik-Hazera Afghan Northern Alliance, it sent its Special Forces group to Afghanistan to train Northern Alliance forces, and after the fall of the Taliban regime, it sent 267 troops to join the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) peacekeeping operation."[352] Taşpınar elaborates that following the 9/11 incident, Turkey's domestic and foreign policy orientation gained significance for Washington:

> In the post-September 11 world of polarization between the West and the Islamic world, the symbolism of a Muslim country seeking membership in a Western organization [EU] with a predominantly Christian population acquired global significance. Since Turkey challenged preconceived notions of a "clash of civilizations," Washington tended to present Turkey as a "model" for the Islamic world.[353]

Following the 9/11 attacks, the Western world had a negative perception toward Islam - which was used by the terrorists to justify their attacks - and toward Muslim countries. However, Turkey was considered as a secular country ruled by a Muslim conservative party that promote a moderate interpretation of Islam. In sum, Saudi Arabia's approach to Turkey was due to several factors, but a key one, Ankara's close relationship with the West, especially with the US, pushed Riyadh to engage in close relations with Turkey in order to weaken Western pressure toward the kingdom in the aftermath of 9/11.

6

Regional Developments: Issues that bind Turkey and Saudi Arabia

2003 US Invasion of Iraq: Watershed in the Middle East

The American invasion of Iraq in 2003 and its consequences were a milestone in the politics of the country and the region. The downfall of Saddam's Baathist regime triggered an internal transformation in the Gulf sub-complex[354] and affected wide-ranging changes to the strategic landscape of the region, shifting the regional balance of power.[355] The invasion became one of the most difficult challenges that Turkey and Saudi Arabia faced in the twenty-first century and its aftermath created new conflicts and alliances.

In January 2003, Turkey organized a meeting of six Middle Eastern foreign ministers and invited delegations from Iran, Syria, Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, which was represented by Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal.[356] In the summit, which was held in İstanbul's Çırağan Palace, ministers called for peaceful solution to the crisis with Saddam's Iraq. Upon mutual concerns of Ankara and Riyadh about the US invasion of Iraq, then Turkish Prime Minister Abdullah Gül visited Saudi Arabia in January 2003 and met with then Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah to create a common stance among the regional countries about the crisis.[357] Turkey, which urged Saddam to comply with the UN decisions, was opposed to the war from the very beginning. Therefore, on March 1, 2003, the Turkish Grand National Assembly decided not to support the US-led war against Iraq and refused to give permission to American troops for the use of its northern territory in the war. The decision was one of the key developments that showed the change in Turkish foreign policy toward the Middle East. Ankara's move served to boost Turkey's prestige in the Middle East. A Turkish stance free from American influence created a positive approach toward Turkey in the Arab world. As Altunışık puts it, "this decision challenged the long-held view of Turkey as a "stooge of the US" in the Arab world and increased Turkey's credibility in the region."[358] Despite suffering economically, Turkey turned down an American aid package of $6 billion in direct grants and up to $20 billion in loan guarantees offered

for Turkey's support for the war against Iraq.[359] The decision embodied in the March 1 motion was a key historical moment for Turkey, which stated that it would pursue its regional and international policies upon the basis of democratic legitimacy.[360] Turkey attributed its decision of not allowing the US to use its territory to the stance of the international community, which considered the American move as illegitimate. According to Çağaptay and Parris, American-Turkish relations were tested by the motion, which failed after 100 parliamentarians from the ruling party [AKP] voted against Turkey's participation in the war.[361] Beside the leadership, 95 percent of the Turkish people were also not supporting the war.[362] The Iraq motion also made Turkey popular on Arab streets, which will be elaborated in the following sections.

The other reason for Turkey's reservation was the concern about uncertainty in a post-Saddam Hussein era. As an immediate neighbor of Iraq, Turkey faced serious economic and security problems in the era following on the first Gulf war (1990-91) and did not want to experience a similar situation again. Turkey's biggest concern about the US invasion was its potential for adverse outcomes, such as the emergence of a power vacuum in Iraq that might pose disquieting risks to the security and the stability of Turkey as well as of regional countries. Turkey was enjoying stability in its Kurdish regions particularly after the extradition of Öcalan, and also Baghdad was providing stability in Turkey's southern border. So, the Turkish government, the military and the public were all against to any action that could harm this stability. Therefore, Turkey closed ranks against another war in Iraq. In order to find a diplomatic solution to the crisis, convince Saddam and prevent a war in Iraq, in January 2003, prior to the American invasion, Turkey launched the 'Iraq's Neighboring Countries Platform', led by then-Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül. The platform, considered as a last chance move for Iraq, brought together Iraq and its neighboring countries such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Egypt and Iran. Like Ankara, Riyadh also engaged in diplomatic efforts to prevent a war that posed a risk for the stability of the Middle East and both Turkey and Saudi Arabia adopted similar stances in the platform.

Then Turkish Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit's efforts to convince the US not to launch a military intervention against Baghdad and his warnings for Saddam to allow United Nations inspectors into the country to check if the Baghdad regime had dismantled its supposed weapons of mass destruction were significant steps taken by Turkey in order to prevent a war on its doorstep. During a visit to Washington in January 2002, Ecevit emphasized Turkey's concerns over military action in Iraq and stated that a US invasion could lead to the fragmentation of Iraq and adversely affect Turkey's security and stability. In early 2003, Turkey was under heavy US pressure to cooperate in the event of an attack against Iraq. Ecevit even rebuffed the American request to open a northern front against Iraq when then US Vice President Dick Cheney visited Turkey in 2002.[363] Turkey was not supportive of the Baghdad regime

but the maintenance of the territorial integrity of Iraq was of great importance to Ankara. George W. Bush's administration accused Iraq of seeking weapons of mass destruction and of supporting and harboring terrorist organizations.

Following his visit, Ecevit wrote a letter to Saddam in early February to warn the Iraqi leader that in order to prevent US military action he must allow UN inspectors to enter the country. Ecevit started his letter by saying "Iraq is now face to face with a danger."[364] In his letter, Ecevit noted that Turkey was trying to avoid the risk of military intervention against its neighbor, but added that Turkish efforts could not be successful if Baghdad did not allow UN inspectors to enter the country. "I would not have felt the necessity to bring these considerations to your attention if the situation was not very grave"[365], Ecevit wrote in his letter which only consisted of ten sentences. After a few days, Saddam responded to Ecevit with a seven-page long letter saying that Iraq would not allow UN inspections and that the demands of the UN were unlawful.[366] Turkey, which tried to avert military action against Iraq, lost hope in Saddam after his letter. Thus, the invasion had two consequences for Turkey, both the straining of Turkish-American relations, and the rise of Kurds amid the uncertainty in the post-invasion era.

On the Saudi side, Iraq's invasion was the most challenging development for the country since the Gulf War (1990-91).[367] Riyadh entered the 21st century with increasing economic and political problems at home and strained US-Saudi relations due to the 9/11 attacks. Riyadh preferred the overthrow of the Saddam regime, but worried about the post-Saddam era. Riyadh's worries about the lack of unity in Iraq were reasonable, as the country's potential fragmentation could radicalize Shiites in the kingdom or lead them to seek autonomy, although Saudi Shiites were known to be quite nationalist.[368] Also the larger part of the Saudi people opposed the US invasion, although they also wanted a change of regime in Baghdad. Riyadh's stance toward the American invasion was indecisive and confusing. From one side it didn't want to risk ties with the US by opposing the war; on the other side, it didn't want to create unrest among the people that were highly critical of American moves in the region. Riyadh's dilemma was also reflected in the statements of Saudi top officials. For instance, in one interview, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal stated that it would be unwise to launch a war before trying diplomatic efforts and that Riyadh requested a diplomatic solution from the US. Replying to a question about whether Saudi Arabia would permit US troops to be deployed on Saudi territory, the Saudi foreign minister said "under the present circumstances, and with no proof that there is a threat imminent from Iraq, I don't think Saudi Arabia will join in the war."[369] Also, King Abdullah, the crown prince at that time, underlined in the same month that Saudi forces would not participate in the war in Iraq and that a war posing a threat to Iraq's unity and sovereignty or its resources or internal security would be unacceptable. Although the leadership in Riyadh was not keen on the US invasion,

due to several doubts over the post-invasion era, it decided to play a low-profile role with the Americans in the fight against Iraq.

The rapid changes in the Middle Eastern landscape in the aftermath of the 2003 Iraq invasion led to an improvement in bilateral relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Particularly, the emergence of new challenges in the region contributed substantially to the start of a new era in Turkish-Saudi relations. The two countries had also taken part in the same camp during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990-91. After the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the two countries adopted a similar stance in the face of developments in Iraq. Ankara and Riyadh supported the preservation of territorial integrity and national unity, maintenance of the stability and security of the country, and the avoidance of ethnic and sectarian divisions in the country. While Riyadh supported Turkey's efforts to engage all groups in Iraq in the political process, Ankara supported Riyadh's efforts in the reconstruction process of the country. Turkey and Saudi Arabia, in order to pursue a balanced policy toward all the political groups in Iraq, hosted meetings with Iraq's prominent Sunni and Shiite figures.

The two countries also actively cooperated in the formation of a new government in Iraq. One of the most important indications of the common Iraqi policy pursed by Ankara and Riyadh was their support for Ayad Allawi, a former prime minister and the leader of the Sunni-backed Iraqiya political bloc that included both Sunnis and Shiites. Allawi paid several visits to Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the election campaign in Iraq in 2010. While Ankara and Riyadh threw their support behind Allawi, Iran backed the Shiite-led government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's State of Law and Iraqi National Alliance - also a Shiite party. In the 2010 elections, Allawi's alliance won 24.72 percent, Maliki's party 24.22 percent, and the Iraqi alliance 18.2 percent of the total votes.[370] Although the Iraqiya bloc won a partial victory, Maliki remained as prime minister particularly after a court ruling disqualified about 500 candidates, including some close to Allawi, on charges that they had relations with Saddam Hussein's Baath Party. The demise of Saddam's Sunni regime changed the balance of power in the region. Following the invasion, one of the most crucial developments that further improved the dialogue between Ankara and Riyadh was the rise of Iran's regional influence, which was considered as a serious threat to the stability and security of the Gulf region in particular, and the Middle East in general. The regime change in Iraq and the Shiites getting the upper hand in the country's power equation had not only become an external threat to Saudi Arabia but also a domestic one. The greatest concern of Saudi Arabia was that the Iranian influence and the power change in Iraq might cause unrest among the Shiites in Saudi Arabia.

The American invasion of Iraq did not solve a regional problem; but rather it brought a Shiite led government in Iraq to power – something that rang alarm bells in Sunni governments in the region. Occasionally, the Saudi kingdom adopted an anti-US attitude in order to preserve the balance of power in the region. For instance,

in 2007, at the summit of the Arab League in Riyadh, King Abdullah stated that the American presence in Iraq was an "illegitimate foreign occupation."[371] Riyadh preferred a coalition government in Iraq compromising Sunnis, Kurds and secular Shiites rather than a Shiite-dominated government. From the Turkish perspective, the American intervention in Iraq had worsened Turkey's Kurdish problem. The most important impact of the 2003 invasion, on the Turkish side, was the strengthening of the Kurdish ideal for independence in a weak and unstable Iraq and provoking Turkey's Kurdish population. Larrabee elaborates the repercussions of the 2003 invasion on Turkey's security:

> From the outset Turkish leaders had strong reservations about the U.S. invasion of Iraq. They had no love for Saddam Hussein, but Saddam provided an important element of stability on Turkey's southern border. Turkish leaders feared that his removal would lead to the fragmentation of Iraq, the growth of Kurdish nationalism, and an overall decline in Turkish security. The aftermath of the invasion has seen Turkey's worst fears come true. Iraq has degenerated into sectarian violence; Iran's influence in Iraq and regionally has increased; and the Kurdish drive for autonomy – and eventual independence – has been strengthened.[372]

Shared Concern: Rising Iranian Power in the Region

The American military intervention of Iraq in 2003 not only accelerated the transformation in the fragile region but also affected regional calculations and the balance of power. One of the most significant outcomes of the invasion was the shifting of the balance of power in favor of Iran's interests. Following the invasion, the Shiite population, suppressed under the previous Sunni regime in Baghdad, was empowered – a situation that strengthened Iran's influence over Iraq and other countries. Prior to the US invasion of Iraq, the balance of power in the region was divided between Arab countries and Iran. The fall of a Sunni power in the politically fragile region led to a decline in Arab countries' power; but at the same time, it boosted Iran's rise. Iran's room for maneuver expanded in the heart of the region with the removal of the Iraqi barrier of Saddam. Iranian influence in the region was reinforced particularly after a Shiite-dominated government in Iraq came to power. The American policies in Iraq strengthened the position of Shiites at the expense of Sunnis. Furthermore, the US withdrawal from the country exacerbated its sectarian divisions. Saudi uneasiness over American policy in Iraq was also reflected in Saudi official statements. In 2005, Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal stated that "U.S. policy in Iraq is widening sectarian divisions to the point of effectively handing the country to Iran."[373] The

rising influence of Iran in the region was the main threat perceived by Saudi Arabia, explained Kamrava:

> The rise of Iranian power that followed from the fall of Saddam Hussain and the subsequent increase in Iranian influence in Iraq, Hezbollah's successes in Lebanon, Iran' championing of Hamas in Palestine, and the development of Iran's nuclear program confronted the Saudis with a rising regional challenger.[374]

Concerned by the consequences of the invasion, Riyadh and the Gulf capitals sought to counter the expansion of Iranian influence in the region. Especially Riyadh was concerned over an adverse impact of Iranian influence on its own Shiite population. In order to balance Iran's regional ambitions, to maintain stability at home and in the region, Saudi Arabia looked for a regional power that could counter Iranian influence. Due to the decline in the American presence, a power vacuum emerged in the region which was filled by two regional powers: Iran and Turkey, the latter of which, unlike Iran, was considered as an "independent, credible, and respectable" country.[375] Turkey's ability to engage in dialogue with several groups in the region bolstered its image as a reliable mediator. Turkey, as a NATO member with a strong economy and a positive image in the region, was considered by Riyadh as an important counter-force against Iran. Normally, Riyadh would be greatly concerned by the emergence of a non-Arab power that could limit its influence in the region; however, Turkey was regarded as "a lesser evil" for Riyadh than Iran.[376]

Ankara tried to walk a fine line between Riyadh and Tehran, working to improve its relations with Saudi Arabia while continuing to engage in dialogue with Iran, particularly on the nuclear issue. While both Turkey and Saudi Arabia considered the nuclear issue of Iran as problematic, the two countries had a different approach regarding a solution, with Turkey seeking a diplomatic solution, while Saudi Arabia pursued a confrontational position. Turkey advocated a diplomatic solution for Iran's nuclear controversy with the West, and accelerated its efforts during 2009-2011 to solve the issue through negotiations. In 2010, Turkey and Brazil brokered a deal to decrease the tension between Iran and the West over Tehran's nuclear program; however, the agreement was rejected by the US. Turkey has also not supported UN sanctions against Iran in a move to defy Washington's efforts to isolate Tehran. Turkey's engagement efforts with Tehran were considered as two-faced by Saudi Arabia, which had suspicions about Turkish-Iranian relations. Regarding the Iran nuclear issue, Turkey adopted an opposing stance to a military strike, saying that a foreign intervention would be disastrous.[377] Turkey, having its own security worries, was concerned about a nuclear arms race and the destabilization of the region. Turkey suffered from the instability and insecurity created by the Gulf War both in terms of economy and security.[378] On the other hand, for Saudi Arabia, Iran's nuclear program,

which Tehran argues serves only peaceful purposes, was a serious threat and should be countered by any means possible. Ankara's diplomatic efforts to convince Iranians to negotiate with the West bore no fruit and left no choice but for Turkey to rely more on Riyadh as the backbone of its Middle Eastern diplomacy drive. Iraqi elections in 2010 were considered as a proxy war between the Turkish-Saudi alliance and Iran. After Tehran got the upper hand in Iraq, Turkey collaborated closely with Saudi Arabia to balance the power in Iraq. Linjawi elaborates the Saudi view of Turkey in the face of the Iranian threat as follows:

> At the regional level, there is a rising Iranian influence in the region. When the AKP came to power, Saudi Arabia considered Turkey as a counterforce against Iranian influence. Iran is a one of the factors that led the two countries to cooperate.[379]

As part of their efforts to engage with Turkey, the Gulf countries declared that Turkey had developed a strategic partnership with the GCC, led by Saudi Arabia, in 2008 when Turkey and the GCC members signed a MoU on security. The partnership between the Gulf countries, which are skeptical about Iranian ambitions in the region, and Turkey was considered as a significant step toward countering Iran's power. As a result of Turkey's policies in the region, Riyadh started to consider Turkey as a potential Sunni ally and counterweight to Iran. In that period, one of the most significant attempts by Ankara and Riyadh was to form a Sunni regional group against a Tehran-led Shiite bloc, while keeping dialogue channels open with Tehran. Foreign ministers of Egypt, Jordan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey hosted by Pakistan met on 25 February 2007 in Islamabad where seven Sunni countries adopted a common attitude toward regional problems. Iran, which was excluded from the summit, raised its concerns at the highest level with the remarks of Iranian President Ahmadinejad who said that the summit raised "lots of questions… and apprehensions." In that summit, the countries agreed that the nuclear issue of Iran was to be solved through peaceful and diplomatic means. After several news reports saying that the summit was formed to confront increasing Iranian influence in the region, then-Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated that the summit did not aim to create an alliance against Iran.[380] While accelerating a process of rapprochement with Saudi Arabia, Turkey continued to pursue a policy that did not sideline Tehran in regional matters.

Common Fields for Cooperation: Palestine and Lebanon

In response to the crises in the Middle East, Ankara and Riyadh readjusted their foreign policies and saw eye to eye over resolution of the major disputes in the region,

being successful in some of them. Turkey started to be more involved in Middle East affairs particularly after the Israeli wars in Lebanon (2006) and in Gaza (2008-09), which led the Turkish leadership to embrace anti-Israeli rhetoric. Within this context, Turkish-Saudi relations further developed in recent years as the two countries took diplomatic initiatives in the resolution of the Palestinian issue and the Lebanese crisis. Beside the situation in Iraq, Lebanon could be considered as a significant field of cooperation for Ankara and Riyadh. All these crises were related to Iran as its sphere of influence has increased in all these countries in the post-2003 era.

Turkey had played an important role in finding a solution for a cease-fire for the Israeli assault in Lebanon in 2006. Since 2006, Turkish troops within the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) have been participating in monitoring the cease-fire between the two sides - marking the first time since the end of WWI that Turkish troops have been stationed on Arab territory. The Turkish Parliament extends the mission of Turkey's troops in Lebanon every year. For the reconstruction of the country, Turkey provided humanitarian aid totaling $20 million and pledged to give an additional $30 million at the Stockholm and Paris conferences. Turkey also pursued an active policy in the case of the presidential crisis in Lebanon in 2007 and 2008. Cooperating with Saudi Arabia, Turkey also played an important role in the establishment of a government in the country. Turkey and Saudi Arabia have also cooperated intensively in the resolution of the crisis between the antagonist sides in Lebanon through dialogue and negotiations. Turkey with its efforts to engage the Shiite groups in the cooperation process, in one sense, indirectly helped the maintenance of Saudi influence in Lebanon. The constructive role played by Turkey in integrating the several Lebanese actors in the Middle East political system was also supported by Saudi Arabia. Top Turkish officials have several times stated that Turkey was ready to take part in any initiative to end the political crisis in Lebanon.[381]

In order to end the Lebanese deadlock, in 2007, Erdoğan paid visits to Syria and Iran, the latter being the main supporter of the Shiite group Hezbollah in Lebanon. Also, in 2006, Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Saniora asked for Turkey's mediation to end the violence in the Middle East and Ankara responded positively to the request, saying "Turkey is ready to make every contribution."[382] The month-long political crisis in the country came to an end after Lebanese factions signed an agreement in Doha in 21 May 2008. Turkey's contributions in achieving the signing of the Doha Agreement in 2008, and the formation of the national unity government in Lebanon, increased its prestige in the Arab world and created a positive perception in Lebanon.[383] Turkey's proposal to establish a sub-regional collective free trade and visa-free zone with Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan, was seen as another positive attempt by Turkish leadership.

From the Saudi perspective, Iranian influence over Syria and Lebanon, particularly through the Shiite group Hezbollah, is a concern for Riyadh, which wants the two countries to be removed from Tehran's orbit. In order to avoid instability

in the region, the Saudi regime engaged in several mediation efforts to encourage compromise among the several sectarian factions in Lebanon, where politics is often influenced by external factors. As part of its mediation efforts, Riyadh tried to open dialogue channels to all the different Lebanese parties, including Hezbollah, and to secure a balance of interest between the groups.[384] For Saudi Arabia, Lebanon is important for several reasons, key among them being to counter the threat of rising Iranian influence and to preserve the relations between the Saudi royal family and the Sunni elites in Lebanon. Saudi Arabia aimed to expand its influence in the country through the Sunni elite with whom it enjoys close economic and political relations as well.[385] In order to end the dispute between Sunni and Shiite groups in the country, King Abdullah accelerated its mediation efforts.

The other field of cooperation between Ankara and Riyadh was the Palestinian issue. In this context, Turkey had played a significant role in the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian issue, which occupies a core place in Turkey's Middle East policy. Turkey also took part in efforts to end the Fatah-Hamas rift, which was deepened when Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip in 2007. Hamas and Fatah have a history of rivalry as the two Palestinian groups confront each other over how to share power in Palestinian politics. Turkey, unlike Saudi Arabia, did not alienate Hamas in the reconciliation process and moved the Palestinian issue to the international platform. In 2007, Hamas asked for Turkey's mediation in the resolving of the dispute with its rival Fatah. Also Turkey had offered in 2009 to mediate between the two Palestinian groups to create a consensus for a long-lasting ceasefire in Gaza.[386] Turkey's developing ties with Hamas created suspicions in Riyadh toward Ankara. However, Erdoğan cleared the air during his visit to Saudi Arabia in 2010, saying that Turkey and Saudi Arabia had common goals and similar approaches in the resolution of the Palestinian issue.

In order to maintain unity among the Palestinian groups and end the civil war in 2006 that had led to the death of hundreds of people, the Saudi monarch had mediated between Hamas and Fatah. Abdullah offered a Peace Plan for the crisis. In 2007, after intensive negotiations in Mecca, Fatah and Hamas decided to end their rivalry and to establish a national unity government.[387] However, the negotiations, led by Abdullah, which later came to be known as the Mecca Accords, failed to resolve the divisions between the two Palestinian factions in the long term. The hope to reunite the two rival Palestinian factions was also revived in 2011 when Hamas and Fatah signed the Cairo reconciliation agreement, which also failed to be implemented. As an effort to implement the stalled Cairo deal, in 2012, the Doha agreement was signed between the leaders of secular Fatah and conservative Hamas. However, the Doha deal was also not accomplished. Prior to the Cairo meeting, Turkey had planned to bring together the leaders of the two factions in Istanbul, but after the two sides agreed on a deal in Cairo, the meeting was removed from

the agenda.[388] As part of the mediation efforts, Turkish leaders came together with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal in several meetings in recent years. For Turkey, a political reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas is crucial for the unity of Palestinian interests.

On relations with Israel, Ankara's ties with Tel Aviv started to deteriorate after the Israeli operation in Gaza in 2008-2009. The heated debate between Erdoğan and Israeli President Shimon Peres in 2009 at the Davos summit further strained relations. However, the last straw was when Israeli commandos raided the Mavi Marmara, a humanitarian aid ship heading to break Israel's blockade of Gaza, in May 2010, causing the death of eight Turkish nationals and one Turkish-American. Following the incident, Turkey reduced its diplomatic relations with Israel by withdrawing its ambassador and expelling the Israeli envoy from Ankara.[389] For the normalization of relations, Turkey demanded an apology for the raid, compensation for the families of the victims and lifting of the Gaza blockade. The apology came from the Israeli side in 2013 and talks for the compensation are not yet concluded between the two sides.

In sum, regarding the Palestinian issue, Turkey and Saudi Arabia supported the establishment of a dialogue between the Palestinian groups, Fatah and Hamas, the end of Palestinian-Israeli conflict by peaceful means and the establishment of an independent state on the 1967 territories. Turkey had also supported Palestinians in their lobbying efforts for the United Nations vote to upgrade the Palestinian Authority to non-member observer status. In late 2012, the UN General Assembly voted in favor of Palestine - a historic move praised by Turkey.[390] Sager elaborated on the importance of cooperation between Turkey and Saudi Arabia:

> Being two major states in the Middle East region, cooperation between Turkey and Saudi Arabia could span a number of vital fields, such as economic relations, energy, counter-terrorism, regional conflicts and peacekeeping operations, WMD elimination and prohibition, resolving the political-security crisis in Iraq and Syria, the Iranian nuclear issue, and intelligence cooperation.[391]

Tools for Cooperation: OIC and GCC

The improvement in Turkish-Saudi relations was also seen in their cooperation within other organizations such as the OIC and the GCC. Turkey has been a member of the OIC since its establishment in 1969. The development of bilateral political and economic relations with the members of the Jeddah-based OIC was a significant feature of Turkey's participation in the organization. Before going through the cooperation between two countries in the field of OIC, it is worth touching upon the process of Turkey's membership in the organization, the motives behind Ankara's

decision and the international conjuncture that shaped its motivation. Turkey's joining the OIC and gradually increasing its level of representation at the organization was a clear indication of a considerable transformation in its traditional foreign policy based on pragmatism.[392] Köni notes that the process resulting with Turkey's joining the OIC was very controversial because Turkey's type of OIC membership also changed. Turkey began as a preliminary member as it did not approve the OIC Charter because it was found to be in opposition to the secularist principle in the Constitution, and also because the leftist Republican People's Party in the parliament opposed Turkey's participation in Islamic forums and organizations.[393] Turkey's reluctant stance was related to the references to Islamic solidarity that might contradict its principle of secularism. In a letter presented by the head of the Turkish delegation the OIC Secretary-General, Turkey expressed its decision not to join as a permanent secretariat as follows: "I have the honor to inform you that the Turkish Government accepts the resolutions adopted during the Islamic Conference to the extent they are consistent with the Turkish Constitution and the guiding principles of Turkish Foreign Policy."[394] Köni elaborates the motives behind Turkey's decision to participate as a full member later as follows:

> But due to eminent foreign policy concerns, such as the oil crisis and the Cyprus issue, Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Şükrü Elekdağ announced - before Islamic foreign ministers convened in Istanbul in 1976 - the government's decision to ratify the OIC Constitution to remove the last barrier to full membership. Yet, Turkey maintained its reservations on the type of decisions that could bring it into conflict with the principles of Turkish secularism and its membership in the UN.[395]

The Turkish government under the leadership of Süleyman Demirel, who had a conservative worldview, tried to use participation in the OIC to erase the misunderstandings of the past between Turkey and the Middle Eastern states. According to Bozdağlıoğlu, both domestic and external political developments pushed Demirel to send Turkey's foreign minister to the first meeting of the OIC in Rabat in 1969.[396] While approaching the Arab world, Turkey was also trying to keep relations with Israel on track. However, this was not a policy welcomed by the OIC member states. In the second summit held in 1974, Turkey was asked to break its ties with Israel. Although Turkey approved some of the decisions taken at the summit, it did not agree to sever its relations with Tel Aviv and was denied funding from the Islamic Development Bank.[397]

Turkey reacted to this move by increasing its level of representation at the organization. Turkey attended the first and the second OIC summits, held in Rabat in 1969 and in Lahore in 1974, at the level of foreign minister, while at the third

summit, held in Taif in 1981, it was represented at the level of prime minister and at the fourth and the fifth summits, held in Casablanca in 1984 and Kuwait in 1987, it was raised to the level of president, one level higher than the other participating countries.[398] In return, Turkey asked the Turkish Cypriot President Rauf Denktaş to make a speech at the summit and to allow a representative from the Turkish Cypriot community to attend all OIC meetings. Turkey's requests were accepted and was also allowed to host the OIC meeting in Istanbul.[399] Denktaş delivered his speech at the Seventh Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Ataturk Culture Center Istanbul in May 1976 with the participation of delegations from 42 countries. In the final declaration of the conference, it was stated in Article 14 that "the conference adopted a resolution on Cyprus recognizing the equality of rights of the two Cyprus Communities in an independent and non-aligned Republic of Cyprus, and their right to be heard in all international forums where the Cyprus problem comes up for discussion. It was also agreed that the representatives of the Turkish Muslim Community of Cyprus be invited to attend future meetings of the Islamic Conference."[400] It was in this conference that Turkey agreed to allow the PLO to open an office without any preconditions. Also, Turkey's call to hold the OIC meeting for Islamic ministers of economy, industry, and technology was accepted, which was held in October 1977. Turkey received the benefits of these moves particularly when Turkish Finance Minister İsmet Sezgin paid a visit to Riyadh with a formal request for a $1 billion loan.[401] Interestingly, the negotiations for the financial credits coincided with Turkey's downsizing bot not ending its relations with Israel. Another gain of Turkish overtures was the Saudi position regarding Cyprus. In order to show its support to Ankara on the Cyprus issue, Riyadh, in the Conference of Foreign Ministers of Non-Aligned Countries held in Belgrade in 1978, was the only Arab country to vote against the 5th article in the draft resolution about Cyprus, which was to Turkey's disadvantage.[402]

The change of heart in Turkish-Saudi relations in the 2000s was also reflected in Turkey's position in the OIC. In 2005, for the first time in its history, the OIC elected its secretary-general by a democratic vote. The members of the organization elected Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, a Turkish academic and diplomat, after an open election between three candidates rather than negotiating behind closed doors.[403] Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries supported his candidacy as the first Turkish diplomat to occupy the post. Turkey, a country with a secular constitution, had tried in the past to take over the OIC presidency, but failed.[404] The election of a Turk as the ninth secretary-general of the OIC, the second largest intergovernmental organization after the United Nations, was an indication of Turkey's increasing prestige in the Middle East[405] and its deeper involvement with the goals and issues of the organization. Following the election, Gül stated that the election of İhsanoğlu by democratic means was an indication of the beginning of reformist

moves and democratization with the organization.[406] The Turkish government had made great efforts for the election of İhsanoğlu to the position of OIC head.[407] During the 31st meeting of the OIC foreign ministers held in İstanbul, in 2004, Gül stated that "if our candidate will be elected, we will succeed in the restructuring the organization."[408] The fact that İhsanoğlu was born in Egypt and spoke Arabic and served as the founding director-general of the İstanbul-based Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA), the first subsidiary body of the OIC, for approximately 25 years were the main factors in his election. During his term, 2005-2014, İhsanoğlu made several changes to increase the effectiveness of the OIC, such as changing the name of the OIC to Organization of Islamic Cooperation in 2011, and revising the Charter of the OIC in 2008. Turkey supported İhsanoğlu's efforts in restructuring and transforming the organization. In the beginning of 2014, İhsanoğlu, who served two consecutive terms as secretary-general of the OIC, handed over his position to former Saudi Minister of Culture and Information Iyad Madani, who became the first Saudi to take the position of secretary-general of the organization. Turkey and Saudi Arabia are active members of the organization, in which the two countries cooperate on a number of issues ranging from Palestine to Myanmar. The two countries also actively cooperate within the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC), an advisory body for the OIC. The body, which was established in 2011 as part of İhsanoğlu's efforts to promote the importance of human rights, has 18 members and two commissioners, one of whom is a Turk and the other a Saudi.[409] The remarks of Akeel, the director of the OIC's press department, on the role of İhsanoğlu's term in the developing of Turkish-Saudi relations, are worth recording here:

> İhsanoğlu was a successful secretary-general and that's why he was re-elected. He was very dynamic in his first term, he made many changes for OIC and these were all noticed by the member states, particularly by Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia supported him a lot in his re-election. When he was nominated by the Turkish government to the position of the secretary-general, it was a secret ballot. There were three candidates and Saudi Arabia in that election gave its vote to another candidate, not İhsanoğlu. But İhsanoğlu received the largest number of votes and became secretary-general. In his second election, Saudi Arabia supported him fully and Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al Faisal praised İhsanoğlu a lot. For the OIC, both Turkey and Saudi Arabia worked hard to make the organization a more active one and OIC was a tool that enabled both countries to easily cooperate. During the years of İhsanoğlu, the ties between Turkey and Saudi Arabia were generally very good. There was a sustainable increase in cooperation between two countries, which found a mutual interest and agreed on several issues.[410]

The two countries also actively cooperated in the Kashmir Group of the OIC. Besides the OIC, Turkey also holds observer status in the Arab League since 2005 and attends almost every conference. In order to enhance the political, cultural and economic ties between Turkey and the Arab League member countries, in 2007, then-Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan and then-Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa inked a deal to form the Turkish-Arab Cooperation Forum. İhsanoğlu's election coincided with Turkey's inking of a security cooperation agreement with Saudi Arabia.

The other organization in which Turkey and Saudi Arabia deepened their cooperation was the GCC, founded in 1981 by the six Gulf countries: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and the UAE. Economic cooperation between Turkey and the GCC was first raised at a meeting of the regional bloc in June 2004, and further developed with the signing an economic cooperation deal in May 2005. The milestone in Turkish-GCC relations was the MoU signed, in 2008, between GCC countries and Turkey, declaring the latter as a strategic partner.[411] It is noteworthy that Turkey was the first non-member strategic dialogue partner of the regional bloc. Several factors have played a role in Turkey's becoming a strategic partner of the Gulf. First and foremost was the change of leadership in Turkey to one that was keen to develop relations with the Gulf. Second was the economic development that the new ruling party achieved within a decade. Third was Turkey's close ties with the West and its membership of NATO. These factors led the Gulf countries to consider Turkey as a trading and political partner. Turkey and the GCC countries held ministerial meetings from the beginning of the strategic dialogue mechanism. Turkey also launched several initiatives with the GCC countries at the bilateral level. For instance, Turkey played a significant role in the establishment of the strategic dialogue between NATO and four out of six GCC states, those being Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, through the Istanbul Initiative of 2004, which aimed to develop cooperation in the field of security with the Middle East.[412] Turkey actively supported the partnership between NATO and the GCC. In a significant step for economic relations, Turkish president Gül and Secretary-General of the GCC, Abdul Rahman Bin Hamad Al-Attiyah, inked a framework agreement to launch talks for a free trade agreement between Turkey and the GCC in 2005 in Manama.[413] At the ministerial meeting in Kuwait in 2010 between Turkey and the GCC countries, Davutoğlu emphasized that the talks for the free trade agreement should be reached as soon as possible. However, the GCC head noted that despite economic progress, there were still difficulties in concluding the agreement. The agreement is not yet concluded.

Turkish-GCC relations are important in economic terms as the two sides have complementary economic structures, which offer a good basis for deepening economic and trade connections. For example, Turkey is the leading industrial economy in the Middle East, and the Gulf countries have rich energy resources. Turkey's rising political role in the region also has been reflected in its economic ties with the Gulf

countries. The trade volume between the Turkey and the GCC has increased rapidly in recent years; however, remained below their potential levels. Turkey could be the "Germany" of the region for GCC investments; however, the two sides have failed so far to realize the full potential.

Table 2: Turkey-GCC States Trade Volume Between the Years of 1990s-2000s[414]

GCC	1996	2002	2005	2009
Saudi Arabia	2.138	1.348	2.850	3.462
Bahrain	0.014	0.035	0.060	0.138
Kuwait	0.210	0.165	0.251	0.395
Qatar	0.013	0.026	0.132	0.375
Oman	0.020	0.031	0.043	0.122
UAE	0.234	0.558	1.880	3.566
Total	2.632	2.165	5.220	8.059

Beside the economic aspect, there were also other factors in developing the Turkish-GCC relationship, such as instability in Iraq, Iran's nuclear threat, security of the region, Turkey's EU accession process, international terrorism, and issues regarding the region and the Islamic world. Security concerns have been the major determinant of the GCC countries' policies and their relations with other countries. Rising Iranian influence and the activities of radical Islamic groups are the main threats perceived. As mentioned previously, the US invasion of Iraq had changed the balances in the region and affected the security strategies of the GCC states. Threats derived from Iranian nuclear power, al Qaeda terrorism and instability in Iraq pushed the GCC states to revise their foreign policies toward the regional countries. The changing perception of the GCC toward Turkey could be understood in this context.

The perception toward Turkey developed so positively that then Secretary-General of the Arab League Amr Moussa, in the last Arab summit before the Arab uprisings held in March 2010 in Libya, proposed to expand the Arab League to include Turkey. Moussa called on Turkey to be part of the Arab regional system in a strategic dialogue as a friendly neighboring major power with strong historic, cultural, and economic ties to the Arab world.[415] However, Moussa's "Arab neighboring policy"[416] was postponed to the next summit and was never realized after the region was shocked by the wave of Arab uprisings that started a few months later.

PART III:

TURKISH-SAUDI NICHE IN THE POST-ARAB UPRISINGS ERA

"The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born: in this interregnum, morbid phenomena of the most varied kind come to pass."

Antonio Gramsci[417]

7

Arab Uprisings: Change of Regional Balance of Power

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Turkey has made numerous overtures toward the Middle East, in every respect: economic, political and cultural. The Turkish leadership wanted both to create a 'virtuous cycle' for greater security along the borders with Syria, Iran, and Iraq and increase mutually beneficial activity through economic interdependence between Turkey and regional countries.[418] Ultimately, economic and security concerns were interlinked and they acted as the driving forces of the new Turkish activism in the region. However, the Arab uprisings had a tremendous impact on its proactive foreign policy toward the region, exposing its limitations. Not only Turkey was affected: it also showed the shortcomings in Saudi policies in the region, as it caught all countries by surprise.

The Arab uprisings, popularly known as the 'Arab Spring', have marked a watershed moment for the geopolitical fault lines of the politically fragile Middle East. The protests started at the end of 2010 in Tunisia and spread to the rest of the region, resulting in the ousters of the regimes of Zain al-Abidin bin Ali in Tunisia, Hosni Mubarak in Egypt and Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, and creating a civil war in Syria and Yemen. The uprisings, which changed the course of Middle Eastern history, had an impact beyond the region, not only shocking the countries in the region but also changing the dynamics and the calculations in the area and reshuffling alliances in the Middle East. While Egypt, Tunisia and Libya experienced regime change, other countries in the region have reconstructed their policies politically and economically. The uprisings continue to affect regional countries, transforming the balances in the region and creating structural incentives for the new actors to increase their influence at the expense of others. It offered an opportunity for non-Arab countries in the region, namely Turkey, Iran and Israel, to consolidate their involvement in Arab politics. These three countries had already found fertile ground to expand their influence in regional affairs following the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. With the uprisings, Turkey's support of the MB, Iran's support for Shiite factions in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq and Saudi Arabia's support of the status quo became crystal clear. In addition to

this picture, the rise of non-state actors, such as Kurds, ISIS and others with their own political, religious and territorial goals, have further changed the Arab Middle Eastern landscape and posed a considerable challenge not only to war-torn countries, such as Syria, but also to Turkey, Iran and Iraq.

Turkey and Saudi Arabia - two heavyweights of the region - were not directly affected by the uprisings, but the unprecedented wave in the region pushed the two countries to revise their foreign policies and regional calculations according to their interests.[419] It was clear from the onset of the Arab uprisings that Riyadh and Ankara viewed the developments from different perspectives. While Turkey viewed the uprisings as an opportunity to project its power throughout the region, Saudi Arabia skeptically viewed the uprisings as a deep challenge to its leadership in the region. Although having differing motivations toward the uprisings, the two countries managed to cooperate in the face of the Arab uprisings, particularly in Syria.

However, the positive climate between Turkey and Saudi Arabia was severely tested with the crisis in Egypt in 2013 that led to the overthrow of the country's first democratically elected president, Mohammed Morsi. The interests of the two countries - for the first time – apparently clashed. Turkey described the political change in Egypt as a "coup d'état", while Saudi Arabia was among the first countries to recognize the new leadership and extend its support to it. The government under the rule of the AKP strongly supported the MB movement and regarded the movement as an ally in the post-Arab uprisings climate in the Middle East, while Saudi Arabia, which considered the movement as a serious threat to regional order and to its rule, didn't welcome Turkey's attitude. The confrontation of these policies over Egypt strained Turkish-Saudi relations and affected the subsequent developments in their relationship. Although Turkey became the main supporter of political change and democratization attempts in the era of uprisings, its ability to influence the path of change in the region has proved to be limited when taking into account the developments in Egypt and Syria. Following the counter-revolution in Egypt and rapid evolution of the Syrian war, the region entered into the second phase of the Arab uprisings, which posed disquieting challenges to Turkey and exposed Ankara's limitations. In this second era, Ankara started to perceive the developments in the region as threats rather than opportunities, and started to shift its policies from "soft power" to "hard power." The developments related to Kurdish groups in Syria played a crucial role in this transformation of foreign policy; but also domestically Turkish leadership was challenged by several developments. In a nutshell, the Arab uprisings challenged Turkey's "zero-problem policy" and eventually resulted in the decline of the "Turkish model" in the Middle East, undermining Turkey's image of a sole regional power.

Turkish and Saudi Approaches Toward Uprisings

Before examining the stances adopted by Ankara and Riyadh toward the Arab uprisings, it is important to assess the motivations behind the involvement of the two countries in the Middle East since the beginning of the Arab revolts. Turkey and Saudi Arabia – two important and stable countries in the politically fragile region – held different desires toward the outcomes of the uprisings and exerted their influence in the region while the tectonic changes were taking place.

While Turkey wanted to be emulated as a role model by the Arab countries with its economic development and capability of combining both democracy and Islam, Saudi Arabia's motivation was the preservation of the status quo of its regime from the ongoing wave and to keep the upper hand in the regional competition with its long-time nemesis, Iran. Saudi Arabia considers Tehran, its policies and its influence on the Shiite population in the kingdom and in other Gulf countries, and the rise of the MB in the regional order as an existential threat to its stability and the security of the Gulf.

While Saudi Arabia's foreign policy throughout the Arab uprisings was shaped by the Iran and MB concern, Turkey's foreign policy was determined by the thought of presenting its model to regional countries and enhancing its position in the region through cooperation with MB-led governments in the new regional order. Turkey under the AKP leadership was comparing the uprisings to its own story. The story was that uprisings will sweep away culturally alienated political elites in the region and bring to power those who represent the public as it was supposed to have happened in Turkey with the rise of AKP.[420]

In the initial days of the Arab uprisings, Turkey's reactions differed from country to country, depending upon its interests in each country. However, as the Arab uprisings wave spread across the Arab world, the Turkish government adopted a stance in favor of pro-democracy movements.[421] On the contrary, Riyadh approached the uprisings with concern and suspicion and was alarmed at the ousting of its long-time friends in the region. In the case of Tunisia, the Turkish government welcomed the change that ousted Bin Ali's regime and regarded the movement favorably in the spirit of democracy.[422] While Turkey sided with the revolution in Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, uneasy over the developments there, preferred to support its friend by offering a refuge to the ousted Tunisian leader, who enjoyed close intelligence and security links with the Saudi regime.[423]

Regarding Egypt, the Turkish stance was consistent and Erdoğan was among the first international leaders to call for the fall of the Mubarak regime.[424] Needless to say, it wasn't a tough decision for Ankara to support the fall of Mubarak because Turkey and Egypt had been at odds with each other for long. The tense regional rivalry between the two countries was due to Turkey's rising role in the region, increased involvement in regional issues and its efforts to overcome the rift between the two

rival Palestinian factions, Hamas and Fatah. Thus, Mubarak's Egypt was often seen as an obstacle to Turkey's increasing role in the Middle East. Also it was easy for Ankara to adopt a critical stance toward the Egyptian leader and support its opponents as Turkey did not have a major economic interest in the country to be concerned about. However, Saudi Arabia, worried by the fall of her second friend in the region, opposed the protests against Mubarak from their beginning until his downfall. As Prince Turki Al-Faisal puts it, "King Abdullah held the closest relations with President Mubarak for 30 years, abandoning him or any close ally during a revolutionary uprising was not and will never be a policy option for the Kingdom."[425] Riyadh stood with Mubarak and backed the leader financially in order to compensate for the loss of American aid. Riyadh felt shock that Washington abandoned a decades-long ally and tried to convince the US government to extend its support to the ousting Egyptian leader. Even in a personal phone call, the Saudi monarch Abdullah had told Barack Obama not to 'humiliate' Mubarak.[426]

While in the case of Tunisia and Egypt, Turkey sided with the calls for democratic solutions, in Libya realpolitik came into play. Turkey's adoption of a differing stance in each uprising country became particularly apparent in the Libyan case. While the international community harshly criticized Libyan leader Gaddafi's crackdown against the pro-democracy protestors, who called for the fall of his regime, Ankara adopted a silent stance, in contrast to its critical position against Egypt's Mubarak. Unlike Tunisia and Egypt, in Libya there were substantial Turkish investments, which pushed Ankara to adopt a cautious stance and call for reform rather than the fall of the regime. While the conflict in Libya escalated, the number of Turkish workers in the country was about 25.000, and Turkey had invested billions of dollars in the construction sector in the North African country.[427]Concerned over the adverse impact of a military intervention in the country, Turkey initially objected to the NATO intervention to enforce a no-fly zone and called for diplomatic efforts to convince Gaddafi. Turkish opposition to the no-fly zone over Libya sparked harsh reaction with anti-Turkish demonstrators in a number of Libyan cities burning the Turkish flag and trying to occupy Turkey's consulate. According to Salem, beside Turkey's $15 billion investments in the country, the other reason for Turkish hesitancy was concern over the negative impact of a foreign intervention in Libya.[428] Erdoğan, referring implicitly to the adverse effect of the US invasion of Iraq for Turkey, said "military intervention by NATO in Libya or any other country would be totally counter-productive….. We have seen from other examples that foreign interventions, especially military interventions, only deepen the problem."[429] However, after it became clear that the fate of Gaddafi was to be no different than those of Mubarak and Bin Ali, Ankara called for the Libyan leader's resignation. Yakış points out Turkey's U-turn in the Libyan case in the following citation:

> In Libya, Turkey hesitated at the beginning to get involved in the crisis and even wanted to keep NATO out of it. Seeing, however, that "a coalition of the willing" was going to intervene with or without Turkey, it made a swift change and participated in the operations with six aircraft and five ships.[430]

Unlike Turkey, Saudi Arabia, along with the Arab League, was the staunchest supporter of the NATO-led intervention in Libya. The Saudi motivation was due to the antagonistic relations between Libya and Saudi Arabia during the era of Gaddafi, who was once even accused of trying to assassinate the Saudi monarch Abdullah.[431]

Saudi Arabia's actual stance toward the Arab uprisings became apparent in Bahrain. The Saudi regime threw its support behind the Sunni regime in Bahrain and deployed its troops to the country in order to protect the regime against the pro-democracy movement there.[432] Bahrain, a country predominately Shiite but ruled by the Sunni Al-Khalifa family, is a vital country for Saudi interests, as the success of a Shiite uprising there could trigger a similar one in the kingdom as well. After failing to pull the US into a military confrontation with Iran since 2008, Saudi Arabia decided to employ hard power tools and shifted its policy toward military interventionism. Bahrain, and later in Yemen in 2015, are good exemplars of Saudi military interventionism during the Arab uprisings. Al-Rasheed elaborates the Saudi stance in the Bahraini crisis as follows:

> In Bahrain, which is much closer to home and has a Shiite majority linked to their Saudi counterparts in the Eastern province, the idea of democracy or majority rule could not be tolerated. With the support of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Saudis sent troops to help the al-Khalifa rulers against the pro-democracy movement, consolidating Sunni rule and rolling back what they saw as Iranian influence. The Bahraini regime was also propped up financially. This triggered a reaction across the border in Saudi Arabia. Playing up sectarianism became a Saudi pre-emptive counter-revolutionary strategy that exaggerates religious difference and hatred and prevents the development of national non-sectarian politics.[433]

The other reason for the kingdom's intervention in the Bahraini uprisings was that Saudis inspired by the Arab uprisings wave started to protest against the Saudi regime. Saudis, including liberal and religious factions, had sent several petitions to the king calling for further reforms and change in the political system of the country. When the unrest among the public increased in 2011, the kingdom, in order to end the protests in the country, announced spending of a total of $130 billion on causes including unemployment and housing shortages.[434] Following this move, the situation seemed to calm in the kingdom, except among the Shiite population in the eastern part of the

country. When Shiite protests increased, the Saudi regime banned all anti-government protests and marches.[435] Bahrain was the red line for the Saudi royal family which finds its raison d'être in maintaining the old order. Gause attributes the success of the Saudi regime in weathering the storms of the Middle East over the past six decades and remaining in power to three crucial domestic political factors:

(1) an oil-funded, patronage-based system that links important constituencies to the ruling elite while keeping them divided from each other; (2) a strong relationship with the religious establishment that provides both legitimization ideologically and support from an important social constituency; and (3) cohesion within the ruling family itself.[436]

The combination of these domestic actors with the Saudi regime's relationship with the United States at the international level has been an important element of regime stability. In regards to Bahrain, Turkey adopted a cautious stance toward the Gulf country, which became a battlefield in a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran. In order to diffuse the tension in the Gulf country, Ankara called on the Bahraini government to show restraint.[437] Concerned over the emergence of a Sunni-Shiite conflict, Davutoğlu also engaged in efforts to mediate between Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Iran.[438] However, the Turkish efforts did not bear fruit.

In the Syrian crisis, things became more complicated for both Turkey and Saudi Arabia as Syria became the toughest ordeal of the Arab uprisings. The Syrian case has regional implications as the countries in the region were directly involved in the crisis by supporting particular sides. In the early days of the uprising, Turkey was optimistic about convincing Assad to respond to the calls of the demonstrators. Having strong personal relations with the Syrian leader, Turkish officials sought mediation between Assad and the opposition, and several times contacted Assad calling for the implementation of major reforms. However, after the attempts to convince Assad to make reforms failed, Turkey became among the most vocal critics of the Assad regime and the staunchest supporter of the opposition. Regarding the shift in the Syrian policy of Turkey, Davutoğlu stated that: "We wanted [al-Assad] to be the Gorbachev of Syria, but he chose to be Milosevic. That is a problem."[439]

Ankara's Syria policy cost Turkey politically, economically and socially. Turkey's adoption of an anti-Assad stance led to the loss of the Syrian market, which was also the experience of the other Middle Eastern countries, especially the Gulf. The other impact of the policy was the increasing number of Syrian refugees fleeing from the war-torn country and taking shelter in Turkey. Following the spillover effects of the conflict for Turkey, Ankara made calls for a military intervention. As Ennis and Momani put it, "where, in Libya, the Turks were more hesitant about military intervention than were their NATO allies, in Syria it is NATO allies that have been more hesitant than Turkey."[440] Turkey several times made calls for NATO to enforce a no-fly zone over Syria. Though not giving a green light for that option, NATO did agree to deploy

Patriot air defense missiles for defensive purposes solely.[441] The missiles, which were deployed to protect Turkey from the spillover of the Syrian crisis, became operational in January 2013. Turkey also changed its military rules of engagement after Syria shot down a Turkish jet in 2012. Turkey's anti-Assad stance also strained its relations with Iran, a Shiite ally of the Syrian regime.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia, which was uneasy over the change of regimes in the region, became one of the strongest supporters of the opposition aiming to topple Assad, and insistently called for military action against Syria. Since 2005, before the Syrian crisis, Saudi-Syrian relations had been strained due to the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister and a close Saudi ally, Rafiq Hariri, inasmuch as Syria was accused of responsibility for the incident. Saudi Arabia also called on the international community to arm the Syrian opposition against Assad's atrocities. The Saudi position in the Syrian crisis was motivated by several factors, most importantly political and sectarian. Saudi Arabia was extremely concerned over the close relationship between Damascus and Tehran and considered the fall of Assad as a blow to Tehran's sectarian aim in the region. The uprising in Syria, predominantly Sunni but ruled by the Alawite Assad family, was considered as a golden opportunity by the Saudi regime to bring Damascus back into the Arab and Sunni sphere of influence and to weaken Iran's hand.[442]

While Turkey and Saudi Arabia were on the same page in the Syrian crisis, both countries backing the Syrian opposition and calling for the fall of the Assad regime, the motivations of the two countries toward the Syrian crisis were different. For its part, Riyadh considered the Syrian crisis as a chance to break the influence of Iran and Hezbollah over the country. Ankara, on the other hand, approached the crisis with stability and security concerns, as the number of the refugees sheltering in Turkey rose and the influence of the PKK on the Syrian Kurds increased. Although curbing Iran was also a significant objective for Turkey, protecting its border from the Kurdish threat became a priority. The worst scenario for Ankara in the Syrian crisis is the fragmentation of the war-torn country and the emergence of an autonomous Kurdish region in the northern part of Syria that would pose a threat to the territorial integrity and security of Turkey, which shares a 900-kilometer (560-mile) border with Syria. As Altunışık puts it "for Turkey, managing the Syrian crisis is not a way to limit Iranian influence; instead, it is a means of protecting Turkey from chaos on its southern border."[443] In the Syrian case, Saudi Arabia and Turkey were accused several times of providing logistical support to the radical groups in Syria fighting against the regime of Assad. Turkey had denied such allegations. Ankara and Riyadh, two allies of Washington, were also disappointed to see US inaction in the Syrian crisis. Saudi frustration over the US position in the crisis has also led Saudi Arabia to reject a seat on the United Nations Security Council in 2013.

In sum, although they adopted different policies in the cases of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, Ankara and Riyadh managed to be on the same track in the Syrian

crisis with the goal of the overthrow of Assad and the establishment of a friendlier government that would not pose a threat to the stability of the region. To achieve this goal, they began to provide support to opposition groups. However, one difference between Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the Syrian crisis was not their approaches to the unfolding crisis, but their differing views of the post-Assad era in Syria. Saudi Arabia seeks to strengthen its ties with Sunni Islamist groups within the Syrian opposition, whereas Turkey calls for the participation of all the groups in the post-Assad process, particularly MB affiliated groups. In a key example of this, the post-revolution era, the Saudis are naturally concerned over the potential rise of the Syrian MB, which is particularly supported by Ankara.

The Turkish-Saudi Cold War over Egypt

In the post-2010 era, the policies of the two countries clashed in Egypt when the military takeover by General Abdul Fatah al-Sisi ousted Morsi, who enjoyed close ties with the Turkish leadership during his one-year presidency, in mid-2013. While Turkey strongly criticized the move, saying the military intervention was unacceptable, Saudi Arabia threw its support behind al-Sisi and backed his rule by providing financial aid. The harsh stance adopted by the Turkish government against the ousting of Morsi put Ankara at odds with Riyadh, which was among the first countries to welcome the removal of Morsi from power. Turkey's AKP had close relations with members of Morsi's Islamist party, the Freedom and Justice Party, in Egypt. Morsi attached great importance to strengthening political and economic relations with Turkey, which for its part provided political and economic support to the MB.[444] Turkey considered the movement, which took power in Egypt following the popular uprising that toppled former president in 2011, as a new ally in the region in order to bolster its influence in the Middle East. After the election of Morsi in mid-2012, the Turkish Foreign Minister was the first foreign minister to pay a visit to Cairo to congratulate him after becoming president. Morsi provided the opportunity to AKP to establish an axis that could transform the balance of power in the entire region in favor of Turkey and MB-led governments. Therefore, the overthrow of Morsi signified the loss of an ally.

By contrast, the success of the coup in Egypt gave the counter-revolutionary bloc led by Saudi Arabia a fresh confidence in its regional policies. Riyadh did not have warm relations with Cairo during Morsi's term and had deep concerns toward the MB movement. The Saudi perception toward the MB is shaped by the belief that the movement poses a threat to the survival and the stability of the kingdom. The deep antipathy toward the MB strengthened after the movement won the elections in Tunisia and Egypt. The concern that the movement might export its revolutionary ideas to the Gulf, where the movement has a significant presence, and lead to the

downfall of the regimes there, was the real motivation behind Riyadh's support for the overthrow of Morsi. Also, Saudi Arabia considers the MB ideology as a challenge to the kingdom's religious legitimacy, which is based on Wahhabi thought. As Khanna and Çağaptay put it, "Saudis dislike the idea of an Islamic democracy led by the MB, because they still see it as tumultuous and destabilizing."[445] Turkey's support for the MB movement in Egypt and elsewhere was not welcomed by Saudi Arabia, which not only considers the presence of the movement as a threat but also Turkey's combining of Islam and democracy as a threat to its own regional role.[446] For Saudi Arabia, its own interpretation of Islam has been crucial to domestic and foreign policy goals as one of its leading sources of political legitimacy.

In March 2014, Saudi Arabia declared the MB a terrorist organization,[447] and the move was followed by the UAE and Bahrain. Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt also accused Turkey of supporting the MB movement in the region. The Saudi move to categorise the movement as terrorist came after Erdoğan expressed his appreciation for the MB as an ally for establishing a new order in the Middle East. After Qatar was pressured by its Gulf neighbors to refuse those who had fled from Egypt in 2013, Turkey became a safe haven for MB members, hosting them in İstanbul and providing them with funding. Since 2013, several TV channels affiliated with the MB have started broadcasting from Turkey, attacking the al-Sisi leadership.[448] Furthermore, while Saudi Arabia issued a decision to ban the "four-finger Rabia sign", which became a symbol of support for the pro-Morsi protests in Egypt, Erdoğan used the sign in public rallies in order to show his support for the MB movement. According to Al-Rasheed, Erdoğan even asked Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal Faisal, "How could a country claiming to uphold Islam and Sharia support the overthrow of an elected Islamist president who came to power after fair elections?"[449] Sager explains the impact of the Arab uprisings and the Egyptian crisis on Turkish-Saudi bilateral relations:

> The Arab Spring phenomenon had a negative impact on the development of the relationship, as the crisis revealed the fact that the two leaderships have ideologically opposed positions. Turkey's support for the MB in Egypt and elsewhere was seen as interference in internal Arab affairs and was not acceptable to the Saudi leadership and other Gulf governments.[450]

Turkey, which had limited knowledge about the internal dynamics in Egypt, failed to engage in dialogue with several groups in the country; rather, it simply ideologically aligned itself with the MB movement. Thus, the Turkish government's ideological linkages clashed with the national interests and geopolitical priorities of Turkey. The Turkish government's hard-liner position toward Egypt had high costs. Cairo accused Ankara of intervening in the internal affairs of the country after Turkey heated

up its rhetoric toward Egypt and the countries supporting it. The tense relations between Cairo and Ankara led to the expulsion of their respective ambassadors in the two capitals and the downgrading of diplomatic relations.[451] Turkey is among the few countries that does not recognize the al-Sisi regime and refuses to have a rapprochement with the Egyptian government. In fact, over the years, there were some attempts to mend the ties between two countries; however, they all eventually failed.

Ankara's harsh stance on Egypt also resulted in Turkey's alienation from the Gulf countries, with the exception of Qatar, which also adopted a pro-MB stance in Egypt. The opposing stance of Turkey and Saudi Arabia over the situation in Egypt had also put the political and economic investments both sides have developed over the last decade at risk. Both the Turkish and the Saudi media adopted harsh rhetoric, each criticizing the other country's policies on Egypt. The cold war in the Turkish-Saudi press found its expression in Al-Rasheed's words:

> Since June 30, Turkish pro-government media excelled in reporting on Saudi and Gulf support for the coup, calling it the "collaborators' evil alliance," with sensational stories circulating in the press about an alleged statement by Dubai Sheikh Maktoum's daughter, Mahra, in which she stated, "The massacre in Egypt is done with our money."….On the Saudi side, while the Turkish-Saudi partnership is officially celebrated as a great new strategic alliance, the Saudi press occasionally launches attacks that undermine this veneer of cooperation. Accusations that "Sultan Erdogan" longs for the return of the Ottoman caliphate regularly appeared in the Saudi sponsored pan-Arab press.[452]

Although President Gül visited the kingdom in October 2013 to test the waters, yet the waters were not warm enough for any rapprochement at that time. It is noteworthy that throughout 2014, no high level visit took place between two countries with the exception of the Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs who attended Erdoğan's inauguration dinner in August 2014. Since the Egyptian crisis, the Turkish-Arab Cooperation Forum, which was established to further enhance the relationship between Turkey and Arab League countries on political, security, economic, cultural and social issues, had not taken place again. The forum established in 2007 held five ministerial sessions, the first being held in İstanbul in 2008, before it ended in 2013. It was also rumored that Saudi Arabia, along with Egypt, had led a campaign in 2014 against Turkey's candidacy for a non-permanent membership seat in the UN Security Council.[453]

Turkey also showed no participation at the Jeddah Economic Forum, also known as "the Davos of the Middle East" in 2014 in Saudi Arabia. The forum brings together prominent politicians, businessmen and academics to discuss the economic and social issues in the region. In the past years, Erdoğan was among the most popular

speakers at the event. For instance, Erdoğan received a hero's welcome when he visited the kingdom to attend the forum in 2011. At that year's forum, then Prime Minister Erdoğan – whose popularity was increasing among the Arabs due to his position against Israel – was invited to speak at the session on "Global Leaders" where he talked about the success story of the "Turkish model."[454]

The Turkish Model: Rise and Demise

> *"Turkey is the only European country in the Middle East [and] the only Middle Eastern country in Europe."*[455]

The "Turkish model" for the post-Arab uprisings Middle East became one of the hot topics of political discussion across the world while the region was shaken by the uprisings. Turkey was considered, by the international media and many academic researchers, as a success story of economic development and political democracy.[456] Turkey was cited as a model for the future of the post-Arab uprisings' countries in its success in achieving a balance between Islam and modernity and its policies toward the Western and the Islamic worlds. For the Arab world, Turkey, under the rule of the AKP, was a source of admiration with its democratic regime and secular nature and Muslim identity. One main aspect of admiration for Turkey was its economic success that Tol elaborates as:

> Turkey has built a productive and rapidly growing economy. It produces the equivalent of half the entire output of the Middle East and North Africa, where other big economies such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, dependent on gas and oil revenues, have not been able to raise productivity to global levels and create sufficient jobs. The AKP government has singled out economic interdependence as an important tool allowing Turkey "to gain depth" in its neighborhood and strengthen relations with Middle Eastern countries while generating sustainable economic development.[457]

As stated above, several regional and domestic factors played roles in improving the Turkish image in the eyes of the Arab world. On the domestic level, the growing of the Turkish economy, Turkey's improving ties with the EU, and its developing relations with regional countries based on the motto of "zero problems with neighbors", paved the way for the changing of the Turkish perception in the Middle East. Ankara's accession talks with the EU and its reform process also played a significant role in enhancing Turkey's position in the region. On the regional level, developments such as Turkey's becoming a strategic partner for the GCC, an observer for the Arab League,

İhsanoğlu's leadership of the OIC, Turkey's role in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and its mediation efforts between parties in the region raised Turkey's image in the Arab world. Also, the Turkish parliament's refusal to allow American troops to use its territory as a second front in the war against Iraq in 2003 increased Turkey's prestige on the Arab streets. Needless to say, Turkish soap operas – considered as Turkey's main influential export to the Middle East – played a significant role in increasing Arab curiosity about Turkey and boosting tourism.

Arab admiration of Turkey reached its peak following Turkey's condemnation of Israel's military operation in Gaza in 2008-2009, Erdoğan's Davos reaction in 2009 and the Mavi Marmara incident in 2010. Regarding the Mavi Marmara, which aimed to deliver aid to Gaza, Samaan notes that, "Many people in the Arab world saw the event as confirmation of Turkey's support for the Palestinian cause and, by the summer of 2010, Arabic newspapers were hailing Erdoğan as "the new Nasser."[458] Ankara's strained relations with Israel, with whom it had enjoyed close cooperation during the 1990s, contributed to Turkey's increasing prestige in the Arab world.

In September 2011, Erdoğan was invited to address Arab foreign ministers meeting in Cairo as part of his North Africa tour to boost his government's position in the region after the uprisings. He was received with thousands greeting him on his arrival at Cairo airport. In his extraordinary speech, he employed tough rhetoric against Israel, which drew support from the Arab world and raised his popularity.[459] While Erdoğan was winning the hearts and the minds of the Arab public, at the same time he was causing distaste in Arab leaderships, particularly Saudi, which felt overshadowed by his popularity. Erdoğan's speech, in which he called Egypt to adopt a secular constitution, also received criticism from the MB members.[460] Despite sharing sympathy with Turkish leadership, MB did not like Erdoğan's idea of a secular Egypt. During my interview with then secretary-general of the MB in Cairo in September 2012, he stated that they were against a secular state like Turkey or a religious state like Iran.

In the years following the uprisings, the positive climate between Turkey and the Arab world was severely tested and admiration for the Turkish model saw a decline. According to Kirişçi, Turkey's credentials began to weaken in the Middle East due to a variety of developments, of which he lists two: 1) Turkey's policies in the Syrian conflict and the Egyptian crisis and 2) its stance during the Gezi park protests.[461] The Turkish model, which was praised for its success in achieving democracy, particularly started to diminish after the anti-government protests that started in May 2013 in Istanbul and across Turkey. The Gezi Park demonstrations had repercussions on the voguish "Turkish model" in the Arab world[462] as it brought questions to people's minds about the democratic credentials of Turkey. The Gezi park protests were also covered by Saudi media in a negative tone, raising questions about the democratic credentials of Turkey.[463] For the regional countries, Turkey's NATO membership and its EU

accession process were the most admired elements since Turkey was the only country in the Middle East having these. However, the NATO and EU officials' criticisms of the government's handling of the protests started to change the perception in the Arab world. I had observed this during a meeting of European and Middle Eastern journalists and analysts at the NATO headquarters in Brussels in June 2013.[464]

Also, Turkey's overtures did not go as expected neither in Egypt nor in Syria. Kirişçi says that "Turkey increasingly became embroiled in the regional conflicts rather than an arbiter of them"[465], referring to Turkey's active involvement in the conflict in Syria, with which it had cultivated political, cultural and economic relations after the Adana Accords. Turkey's policies in the Syrian crisis had serious implications for her security, economy and regional position. The crisis dealt a severe blow to Turkey's image in the region. Turkey's active involvement in the crisis with its backing of the Syrian opposition, which is comprised of a Sunni majority, was criticized by both the Shiites in the region and by Turkey's own Alevi community.[466] As a result of this policy, Turkey's relations with Iraq and Iran also became strained. Even for those in the Arab world who supported the fall of the Syrian regime, according to Samaan, "Turkey's assertiveness has been progressively seen as ill-advised and perilous, leading to an escalation of the conflict."[467] Turkey's response to the military overthrow of Morsi in 2013 further harmed Ankara's relations with some countries in the Arab world. Turkey's harsh criticism of the new administration in Cairo and its support for the MB movement was not welcomed by the Gulf countries that supported the overthrow of Morsi. As a result, Turkey's relations not only deteriorated with the most influential country in the Arab world, Egypt, but also with the Gulf countries, in particular with Saudi Arabia, which considered Turkey's stance as interference in the domestic affairs of another country.

In addition to Syria, Iran, Iraq, Egypt and the Gulf countries, the strained relations with Israel due to the "one minute" crisis and the Mavi Marmara incident led to the conclusion by commentators that the "zero problems with neighbors" policy had turned to a policy of "zero neighbors without problems" or" full-problem policy with neighbors" in the Middle East. It would not be wrong to say that the Arab uprisings became a serious challenge to Turkey's "zero problems with neighbors" policy. To sum up, although as a consequence of the Arab uprisings wave, Turkey was cited as a model for the regional countries with its democratic structure, stable political environment and successful economic growth, with the failure of the "zero-problem policy" with regional countries, admiration for the Turkish model declined dramatically. The Syrian and the Egyptian crises revealed the fact that the zero-problem policy, which was praised in theory, failed to achieve success in practice.

8

Internal Dynamics in Turkey and Saudi Arabia

On 23 January, 2015, Abdullah, the sixth king of Saudi Arabia, succumbed to lung cancer and passed away at the age of 90 in the National Guard Hospital in Riyadh. One of the last surviving sons of the founder of the kingdom and last of his generation to rule the country, the ageing crown prince, Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, ascended to the throne at the age of 79. As soon as the death of Abdullah was announced by Saudi officials, Erdoğan cut his African tour for a day in order to attend the funeral of the passing king. This was Erdoğan's first visit to Saudi Arabia since 2012. Turkey even declared a day of mourning over the death of Abdullah. Following these conciliatory gestures, Turkey made more overtures by extending its support to Saudi intervention in Yemen and vocally criticizing Iran's expanding role in the region. Just a month after attending the funeral of Abdullah, Erdoğan was back in the kingdom to test the waters, being one of the first regional leaders to hold extensive talks with the new Saudi leader. The two-sides sought a rapprochement when Erdoğan met Salman in a highly publicized meeting in late February 2015.[468] The visit took place after a period of political standoff between Ankara and Riyadh over Egypt. In bid to recover the relations between the two countries, Erdoğan paid another visit in December 2015, the third one in the same year, which was followed by prime ministerial and foreign ministerial visits. This was followed by the Saudi king's visits to Turkey in November 2015 to attend the G20 (Group of Twenty) meeting and again in April 2016, just three months before the coup attempt in Turkey. Salman visited Turkey upon the invitation of Erdoğan and also attended the 13th OIC Summit held in İstanbul. During that visit, Turkey bestowed its highest honor, the Order of the State, on Salman as a rare mark of respect. The burgeoning ties between two countries since Salman came to power became evident when Erdoğan awarded him the highest state medal. During the king's visit, the two countries emphasized cooperation on regional matters and signed a MoU to establish a Strategic Coordination Council.[469] Then came Erdoğan's Gulf tour in 2017. In all these mutual visits, the two sides signed a number of agreements in diverse fields, including in the military. In 2016 alone, Saudi Arabia and Turkey

joined four different military exercises and formed a partnership in the defense field.[470] Turkey also worked with Riyadh by supporting Operation Decisive Storm in Yemen, and took part in the Saudi-led alliance against terrorism, allowing Saudi jets to use its İncirlik Air Base.

After the new king's coming to power in the kingdom; there were several opinions among analysts claiming that Salman's ascendancy to the throne might lead to a possible Turkish-Saudi rapprochement or a change in the Saudi approach toward the Egyptian crisis. Several op-eds by Turkish and Saudi analysts read the visits of 2015-16 as the opening of a new page in the relationship. However, despite the good will that Erdoğan and Salman enjoyed, the rapprochement based on expedience was short-lived. The geopolitical conditions failed to overcome ideological differences owing to three factors. First was the internal political transformation in the kingdom particularly after the rise of Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, known colloquially as MbS, in 2017. Second was the domestic challenges that occurred with the July 2016 coup attempt in Turkey. Third was the political transformation at the international level with Donald Trump becoming US president. This section highlights how domestic factors in the two countries might impact their foreign policy toward each other and how national interests and policy decisions are defined by these forces.

The crises in Egypt and Qatar serve as a good case to show to what extent the domestic considerations of the two countries had an impact on the Turkish-Saudi relationship. The contradictory regional agendas of Riyadh and Ankara put them on a collision course. Since then, a relationship already viewed with skepticism has gradually, but systematically, become further strained with several subsequent developments. The onset of the Gulf crisis in 2017 brought a new dimension to the relations and the gap between the two states on a bilateral and regional level has been widening since then. The killing of prominent Saudi journalist, Jamal Khashoggi, in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Turkey, in 2018, added salt to the wound and became the last nail in the coffin of relations between Ankara and Riyadh.

Rise of MbS and Internal Transformation

> *"Titanic changes were afoot in Saudi Arabia, and the man driving them was a mysterious, workaholic son of the king, named Mohammed bin Salman"*[471]

In domestic political structure, the Saudi royal family experienced a significant change.[472] Saudi Arabia has undergone social and political transformations since Salman took office in 2015 and appointed his sixth son MbS as crown prince, who set the kingdom on a different path. According to Gause, there are three areas in which the new leadership pursues very different policies from its predecessors: domestic

economic management (Vision 2030), regional foreign policy (Yemen, Qatar and Libya) and family politics (change in succession process).[473] This change in the kingdom has led to the adoption of a more assertive and centralised foreign policy in pursuing national goals. Salman and his son started to change the nature of decision-making from a consensual one within the royal family to a centralised one concentrated in the hands of only one person - MbS - who became the most influential figure driving Saudi foreign policy. This concentration of power in the hands of one person largely sidelined other members in the royal family. Al-Rasheed refers to the young crown prince's role in the kingdom as follows: 'he was the de facto orchestrator of Saudi foreign policy even before he was confirmed in his new role.'[474] It is an interesting case to see how he rose to this level in a country where seniority reigned. MbS significantly differed from his more sophisticated siblings. He preferred to stay in Riyadh and study law at King Saud University instead of going abroad for education. Following his graduation in 2007, he spent two years working from the bureau of experts, a research body for the Saudi cabinet. During his teen years, MbS was mostly with his father Salman, who was governing the province of Riyadh. Salman held the position of the governor of Riyadh for almost 50 years, witnessing the transformation of the city from a desert town to a metropolis. Spending his time with his father led MbS to learn in depth the tribal relations in which clerics play a significant role, and business balances. As Hubbard says, "MbS' world was Saudi Arabia, and he seemed to love it as much as his cousins loved London, Geneva, or Monaco."[475]

He rapidly came into prominence following his father becoming crown prince in 2012. He first became the special adviser to his father, and then the head of the crown prince's royal court in 2013. Later, he was promoted to a cabinet-level position as minister of state, and in 2015 he became defense minister when Salman became king.[476] When his father took the leadership, Deputy Crown Prince Muqrin was promoted to crown prince and Interior Minister Muhammad bin Nayef (MbN) became deputy crown prince. However, in April 2015, when Salman sacked Muqrin and promoted MbN to crown prince, MbS became the deputy crown prince in Salman's surprising decision. At that time MbS was also holding the positions of minister of defence, chief of the royal court, and chair of the Council of Economic Development Affairs.[477] In the history of Saudi Arabia, there is no other prince who ever held such key positions at such a very young age.[478] In a widely expected move, Salman issued a royal decree in June 2017 and raised MbS to the position of crown prince, making him heir to the throne. Actually, from the very beginning, for Salman the next king was his son. However, in order to avoid the shock of raising his son, he went step by step by first appointing MbN as crown prince, thus changing the "Saudi succession from horizontal to vertical."[479]Salman played a crucial role in boosting MbS' rise in the kingdom thanks to his strong character in influencing Saudi politics even before he became king in 2015. Salman altered the succession arrangement that

King Abdullah had put in place and concentrated power in the hands of his son. This paved the way for MbS to pursue a muscular approach to domestic and foreign policy. MbS dramatically rose to leadership level while the region was torn between conflicts and the kingdom was facing severe domestic challenges.

MbS rose to power with a series of unprecedented challenges on domestic and foreign fronts. The Syrian war was ongoing, where the opposition supported by Riyadh had failed to topple Assad. A leader backed by Riyadh was in power in Egypt but the country was under severe economic crisis. While Libya was torn between two opposition camps, one of them led by Riyadh and the UAE, and the other by Turkey and Qatar. Iran had expanded its influence in Yemen, threatening the Saudi rule. In addition to all this, ISIS had exerted its influence in Syria and Iraq. In this context, Riyadh adopted a 'hard-realist' policy of military interventionism. Yemen in 2015, and before that Bahrain, are good examples of Saudi military interventionism during the Arab uprisings. This new foreign policy, dubbed Salman's doctrine, aims to protect the regime above all else. With a Machiavellian understanding of 'everything is permissible in the path to purpose', Riyadh had hardened its policies in the region to eliminate the Iranian threat from Damascus to Sana'a, and from Manama to Baghdad through hard-power tools.[480] As Gause notes, "Riyadh might be contemplating a rewriting of the regime-survival strategy that has served it so well over the past decades."[481] There is no alternative influential institution or body that can alter Saudi foreign policy, which is conducted solely by Salman and his son.[482]

In the domestic sphere, a tough ordeal was awaiting the new leadership as well. The drop in international oil prices, which began in the second half of 2014, had a severe impact on the economy of Saudi Arabia, whereupon its leaders started to reevaluate the country's economic development[483] inasmuch as it has become tougher to maintain the rentier state model. As a rentier state, the Saudi royal family relies on oil and gas revenues to stay in power and to secure domestic political alliances.[484] The level of economic development also plays a role in shaping the foreign policy of a country.[485] The high unemployment[486] levels and the central state's dominance in economic life had increased the political pressure on the leadership. Concern over regional matters and domestic stability triggered MbS to initiate the grand economic plans in his Saudi Vision 2030, which aims to end the kingdom's dependence on oil by 2030 and diversify its economy, in order to provide employment and services to its citizens. Under 'Saudi Vision 2030', he plans to transform Saudi Arabia into an economic power in the same camp as the world's leading countries to maintain domestic stability. MbS is aware that if country failed to diversify its economy, there would be threats posed to the ruling family's ability to govern. This initiative is considered to be MbS' signature mark on the country's domestic and foreign policy and as the most important project Saudi Arabia has ever undertaken. Although it is not the first time Riyadh has carried out economic adjustment under a similar situation, this adjustment

has a new background, a more profound content under a new leadership.[487] This new economic diversification contains its own unique characteristics, which not only has an impact on the economy but also on the socio-political situation in the country. MbS with his popular appeal in the kingdom aims to develop self-identity amongst youth from "passive observers to active nationalists."[488] Developing a new narrative of Saudi exceptionalism and cultivating a stronger sense of Saudi nationalism, especially amongst the younger population, is highly significant for MbS to achieve the social and economic transformation he needs. He seeks to mobilize support behind him to pursue his foreign policy goals which are presented as a matter of national pride.

As a young dynamic leader, preparing to inherit the throne, he not only showed a great degree of confidence in regional affairs but also in domestic affairs. The powerful heir to the Saudi throne stated that he would return Saudi Arabia to 'moderate Islam.'[489] His version of `moderate Islam` raised eyebrows in Ankara, which criticized the statement of MbS, saying that such a concept weakens Islam and plays into the hands of the West. Erdoğan himself reacted to MbS's remark on "moderate Islam", retorting that "There is no moderate or immoderate Islam; Islam is one", criticizing the young crown prince for adopting a Western idea. "The patent of 'moderate Islam' does not belong to you, it belongs to the West… Why the term 'moderate Islam' being lathered up again? It is about weakening Islam, weakening our religion."[490]

Since 2017, in order to attract foreign investment and restore Saudi Arabia's reputation internationally, he has carried out a series of social reforms as part of his economic and social plan, Vision 2030. Following a decision made by the new leadership regarding women's status in the kingdom, where they were treated as second-class citizens for many years, women are now able to drive and no longer need the permission of a male guardian to travel, despite opposition from the religious hardliners. Now it is more common to see women socializing openly with men and not covering their hair or faces than it was a few years ago. Saudi Arabia also lifted its bans on commercial cinemas, movie theatres, concerts and festivals which bring to the kingdom world-famous artists and performers. Saudi Arabia also ended the death penalty for crimes committed by minors and the practice of flogging, replacing it with jail time, fines or community service. MbS also curbed the authority of the religious police (mutawaeen), who had significant power over women to check if they dressed modestly or had the permission of their guardian.[491]

With all these moves, MbS, who entertains global ambitions and seeks greater international legitimacy, wanted to present himself as a modernist reformer. However, critics argue that MbS only wants change on his own terms. The crackdown on liberals, women's rights activists, and the treatment of dissidents drew sharp criticism locally and internationally. In less than six months in office, in November 2017, MbS carried out the arrests of country's most prominent citizens under a decree issued by the king. In what was called an anti-corruption sweep, more than 30 senior figures,

including businessmen, royal family members, and current and former government officials, were locked up for three months in Riyadh's Ritz-Carlton hotel, which was turned into a five-star jail.[492] In March 2020, the Saudi leadership carried out further arrests in an attempt to tackle corruption and bribery.[493]

In a nutshell, MbS's leadership, which differs drastically from his predecessors, is interpreted as a combination of reform and repression and his assertive foreign policy is considered as a reflection of the domestic political and economic uncertainty that has prevailed since his father ascended the throne.

2016 Failed Coup Attempt in Turkey

The developments in Egypt and Syria played a crucial role in this transformation of Turkey's foreign policy; but also domestically, the Turkish leadership was challenged by several developments. The AKP was first challenged by the Gezi Park protests that spread all around Turkey in mid-2013. This followed the collapse of the fragile Kurdish peace process in 2015, which was launched by Turkey in 2013 to find a solution to the long-standing Kurdish problem. In addition to these, the years-long alliance between AKP and the Gülen movement, which was accused as the mastermind of the attempted coup in July 2016, came to an end. During the period between 2015-16, Turkey faced several attacks from the PKK and ISIS, causing a severe impact on the country's financial situation. In the face of such a conjuncture, Erdoğan pursued policies to consolidate his power in both domestic and foreign spheres. In this direction, he was firstly elected as president of the country by a popular vote in 2014 and then country's political system was changed through a referendum from a parliamentary system to a presidential one - Erdoğan becoming the first president under the new system.[494] Amid all these developments came the resignation of Davutoğlu, who was the prime minister at that period and the mastermind of Turkey's foreign policy during the Arab uprisings. Turkey started to pursue less ideological and more pragmatic foreign policy in the post-Davutoğlu era, or in order words, idealism was replaced by realism in Turkish foreign strategy. The post-Davutoğlu government launched an initiative to repair Turkey's ties with some of its neighbors, including Iraq and Israel, but also with Russia through negotiations for Syria's future.

Against this background came the 2016 botched military coup which would be remembered as a major landmark in Turkish political history. On a warm night in Istanbul on 15 July 2016, Turkey experienced a violent coup attempt by elements in the armed forces targeting the government.[495] The coup was short lived and was completely countered within the early hours of the next day due to both poor planning and public resistance. Upon Erdoğan's call, Turkish people took the streets across the country to resist the attempted coup, defending the elected government from being

overthrown. The public's stance played the most crucial role in countering the military coup attempt. Although Turkey had experienced several military coups in the past that overthrew civil governments, the July 2016 coup attempt differed significantly from the previous ones. The first difference was that Turkish people, regardless of their political views, took the streets to defend the democratic tenets of the country. Also on that night, along with AKP members, opposition leaders and politicians condemned the coup attempt and sided by the democratic will of the people. This was not because they were the fans of the government, but "most opposition groups found the prospect of another military government an embarrassing one for Turkish democracy."[496] The second difference was that most countries condemned the coup attempt and threw their support behind the Turkish government elected by the people. Thirdly, although the coup attempt was foiled thanks to the stance of the public, it has had considerable impact on Turkish politics, economics, society, and foreign policy up until today. In economic terms, the coup attempt caused difficulties in Turkey's economic development. On 20 July 2016 the Turkish lira fell to an all-time low against the US dollar, while ratings agency Moody cut Turkey's sovereign credit rating to "junk," citing worries about the rule of law and risks from a slowing economy.[497] The national emergencies extended six times after the coup attempt raised concerns over foreign direct investment and foreign trade. In the societal aspect, the coup further intensified the already sharp divisions within society between pro- and anti-government segments. In the foreign policy aspect, Turkey's relations with the West, both with the EU and the US, further deteriorated. European politicians and then US secretary of state, John Kerry, called on Turkey to respect the rule of law amid a purge of state institutions in the aftermath of the failed coup.[498] For Ankara, the coup attempt was a litmus test for the relations with the West.

The reactions from Middle Eastern countries also shaped Ankara's view of who is its foe and friend. Qatar was fast in condemning the failed coup and the emir was the first leader to call Erdoğan to extend his country's support to Turkey. At the end of July, Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani became the first foreign official to visit Turkey in the aftermath of the coup attempt.[499] Saudi Arabia also issued a formal announcement condemning the attempted coup – although it was regarded as a delayed one – and welcoming Erdoğan's success in prevailing against the coup attempt. Saudi state agency SPA quoted a foreign ministry official as saying "the source expressed the kingdom's welcome that things have returned to normal led by his Excellency President Tayyip Erdoğan and his elected government and in line with the constitutional legitimacy and the will of the Turkish people."[500] In order to show its will to cooperate with Turkey's post-coup crackdown, Saudi Arabia detained Turkey's military attaché to Kuwait at Dammam Airport upon Ankara's request.[501] Under pressure, Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya TV even removed the interview they made with Fethullah Gülen, the man who was accused of masterminding the

coup attempt, in August 2016 from their website and YouTube.[502] Despite some Saudi media outlets' criticisms of the Turkish government, the Turkish foreign ministry refuted those reports, emphasising that Riyadh's position regarding the coup attempt was clear. It was a period when both Ankara and Riyadh engaged into efforts to mend ties and avoid any rumor that could strain a fragile relationship. It was also a show of strength by Ankara to the West that it was not alone in the region. While, for the Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE, it was an opportunity to deflect accusations that they had backed the coup in Turkey financially and through their media arms.[503] Despite Saudi Arabia's position regarding the coup attempt, the rumors that its close ally, the UAE, spent $3bn on the plot was causing distaste in Ankara.[504] According to Erdoğan's inner circle, the Turkish leader considered the coup attempt as part and parcel of the same conspiracy that ousted Morsi and sought to overthrow the Qatari emir.[505]

Then Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Nayef (MbN) paid an official visit to Turkey, his second visit in six months, in late September of the same year. The signing of several agreements during that visit was a clear indication to ease Ankara's suspicions over any Saudi role in the coup attempt. The visit, indeed, achieved its goal as the Turkish leadership thanked Saudi Arabia for the solidarity it had shown following the July 15 coup attempt. Erdogan welcomed the crown prince with an official ceremony at the Presidential Complex in Ankara and awarded him the second highest state decoration for foreign nationals, the Order of the Republic.[506] In early September, Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir also paid a visit to Ankara where he prepared the ground for the crown prince but also delivered Riyadh's message of support for and solidarity with Turkey. He delivered a talk entitled "Saudi-Turkish relations: a cooperative approach in an increasingly transforming region" at the Ankara-based think tank Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA), which has close links with the Turkish government. During his speech, al-Jubeir emphasized that the Saudi government supported Turkey and the two countries closely cooperated against terrorist organizations.[507] In October 2016, the GCC, of which Saudi Arabia is the most powerful member, and the OIC designated the Gülen movement, believed to be behind Turkey's July 15 coup attempt, as a terrorist organization.[508] In November 2016, the Security Dialogue with the GCC convened in Riyadh after a long recess and approved a 38-point statement advocating stronger economic and military ties and expressing support for the current Turkish regime. In February 2017, the first meeting of the Turkish-Saudi Coordination Council, which allows all kinds of cooperation, including political, military, intelligence and economic, was held in Ankara between foreign ministers of the two countries who discussed the possibility of increasing free trade.[509]

In the same year, in April, just few a months before the coup, Salman visited Turkey. The visit made headlines in both countries, seeing the visit as a landmark event.

Erdoğan personally received the Saudi monarch at the airport with a lavish welcome, ignoring the normal protocol rules. Hosting him at the presidential palace in Ankara, Erdoğan said "My dear friend, since you succeeded to the throne in Saudi Arabia, you have contributed a lot to strengthening friendly relations with our country." Prior to his Turkey visit, Salman was in Egypt for a five-day official visit, in which it is said that he tried to convince Turkey and Egypt toward a rapprochement. Egyptian Foreign Minister Hassan Shoukry represented Cairo at the 13th OIC summit and many hoped that this could break the ice between Turkey and Egypt. However, Salman's efforts failed as Ankara refused to recognize the al-Sisi administration. Since then, the issue of relations with Egypt has been deeply sensitive for both sides.

Just six months after the coup attempt, Erdoğan made a Gulf tour in July 2017 which included stops in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar, but not in the UAE, as an aim to further strengthen ties with Gulf states. The visit was presented by Ankara as yet another exemplar of "intra-regional solidarity."[510] Although the visit mainly focused on regional and economic matters, particularly at a time when the Turkish economy was facing problems, it also aimed to mediate in the Gulf crises that started in June 2017 between GCC countries. However, not only did Turkey's mediation attempts bear no fruit, but also all the hopes for stronger ties between Turkey and Saudi Arabia were dashed with the rapid escalation of the Gulf crisis.

9

Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Regional Geopolitics

The most recent ruptures in Saudi-Turkish relations can be whittled down to three major events: the Gulf crisis, the Khashoggi case and the Kurdish issue. The tense relations since the eruption of the Gulf crisis in 2017 further deteriorated with the killing of Khashoggi. While the dust from the killing was yet to settle, Saudi support for Greek claims over the Cyprus issue, its stance in backing Greek Cyprus against Ankara's position in the Eastern Mediterranean, and its closeness with Kurdish groups in Syria that Turkey considers as terrorists have further fueled the tension. Beside these, the developments regarding Libya, where the two countries support opposing parties involved in the conflict, and the Israeli-Palestinian issue, did not help to ease the tension between the two sides. Additionally, Saudi uneasiness over Turkey's military operations in northern Syria, its collaboration with Russia and Iran through the Astana peace process and its participation in the recent Islamic summit in Malaysia were some of the driving forces in the Turkish-Saudi Cold War. While this book was being written, the tension reached the level of media wars as the two countries banned each other's state-owned news agency and the media outlets affiliated with the state. Although the relationship did not collapse completely, the confrontations in political, media and economic fronts have adversely affected the relationship between two major regional countries. The Cold War between two heavyweights has also shown its impact on other regional crises ranging from Syria to Libya, from Iraq to Egypt, and even to Horn of Africa and Mediterranean Sea. While Ankara cooperates with Riyadh's nemesis, Iran, through the Astana peace process, and has close relations with Qatar, another country that Saudi Arabia is at odds with, and has been supportive to the MB movement in the region; Riyadh is cozying up to Greece and Greek Cyprus, and also to Kurdish militias in Syria, which Turkey considers as terrorists. This chapter will delve into the geopolitical and ideological divide between Turkey and Saudi Arabia and will highlight the point that the current tension between two sides is based on geopolitics as well as competition for the leadership of the Middle East.

Gulf Crisis

On the morning of 5 June 2017, the world woke up to news of a crisis shaking the Gulf region.[511] In a coordinated move, a coalition comprising Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Yemen, Egypt and Libya severed their diplomatic ties with Qatar, withdrew ambassadors, imposed travel bans and placed the tiny peninsular country in the Gulf under a blockade shutting it off by land, sea and air.[512] The Saudi-led coalition cited Doha's alleged support for terrorism and extremist groups as the reason for their move[513] and released a list of 13 demands which were rejected by Qatar.[514] Doha denied the allegations and termed them as 'baseless'[515], while responding with similar claims against the coalition. The campaign launched against Qatar was not fully supported by the international community; even the GCC was divided within itself, with Kuwait and Oman adopting a neutral stance and playing a mediator role.[516] The crisis resembled one that unfolded in 2014, when the same countries withdrew their ambassadors from Doha due to a similar set of reasons. Although the 2014 crisis was resolved within nine months, the latest crisis, which took many observers by surprise, seems unlikely to be resolved anytime soon. Although the tensions between the GCC members were not something new, the latest crisis has escalated at an unprecedented pace and until today a solution has not been achieved despite several mediation efforts carried out by regional and global actors. Moreover, it created a theatre for the involvement of other regional actors, namely Turkey and Iran. The Gulf crisis could be considered as a small affair in contemporary world politics; however, it has the potential of changing the geopolitical balance of power in the region.[517] The Gulf crisis, once again, brought to the surface the policy differences of Ankara and Riyadh.[518] While Saudi Arabia led the campaign against the blockade of Qatar, Turkey stood by its long-time ally. Both states have stakes in the Gulf crisis that have significant implications for their regional policies. The underlying causes of the opposing stances of the two countries have deeper roots based on the domestic situation of the state, the regional and international environment and the perception of decision-makers. In the case of Saudi Arabia, the King and his increasingly powerful son MbS centralized power and became the most influential figures who drive Saudi foreign policy. In a similar vein, Erdoğan is the sole decision-maker when it comes to the foreign policy of Turkey. As Jervis notes, "it is often impossible to explain crucial decisions and policies without reference to the decision-makers' beliefs about the world and their images of others[519]"- nowhere does this seem to be more accurate than in Erdoğan's Turkey and MbS' Saudi Arabia. As in the words of Henry Kissinger: "As a professor, I tended to think of history as run by impersonal forces. But when you see it in practice, you see the difference personality makes."[520]

But how did the Saga Start?

On 23 May 2017, a report published by Qatar's official news agency stated that Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, Emir of Qatar, at a military graduation ceremony, criticized its neighbors for raising tensions with Iran, which he described as "a big power in the stabilization of the region"[521], called for the re-establishment of ties with Tehran, and expressed understanding for Hezbollah and Hamas.[522] Although Qatar denied that the emir had ever made such statements and that the website was hacked[523], the news of Al-Thani's remarks sparked a crisis between GCC members. After two weeks of a war of words, accompanied with a media campaign launched between the two sides, on 5 June 2017, the Saudi-led coalition severed its diplomatic ties with the tiny peninsular country, closed its air and land routes, and withdrew diplomats. Due to the atmosphere of mutual suspicion, mediation efforts carried out by regional and global actors bore no fruit. On 23 June 2017, the Saudi-led coalition announced a list of 13 demands for the resolution of the crisis. These demands included; shutting down Al Jazeera and other Qatar-funded media organizations, curbing diplomatic ties with Iran and 'terrorist' organizations such as MB, termination of the Turkish military presence in Qatar, and paying reparations to other Gulf countries for 'financial losses' resulting from Qatar's policies.[524] Qatar was required to agree to these demands within 10 days.[525] Doha considered the demands as an assault on its national sovereignty[526] and officially rejected them on 3 July in a letter to the Kuwaiti emir who acted as a mediator between the two sides.[527]

It wouldn't be wrong to say that Qatar has been always at the heart of intra-Gulf disputes since the 1970s.[528] However; since the Arab uprisings, Doha pursued an independent and quite different policy than the other GCC members by supporting anti-status quo movements starting from Tunisia to Libya, from Egypt to Syria and doing this by using Al-Jazeera as an effective tool of its soft power.[529] Qatar did not only pursue an independent foreign policy, but undermined Riyadh's leadership by pursuing good relations with Iran, whose policies are considered as an existential threat by Riyadh. Qatar's relations with these actors were regarded as security risks and unacceptable by Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi.[530] The first major diplomatic crisis happened in 2014 when the members of the anti-Qatar coalition withdrew their ambassadors from Doha.[531] The 2014 crisis lasted about nine months and was solved after the mediation efforts of Kuwait and Oman, the other neutral GCC members. However; despite the good will shown by all the actors at that time, the main problem underlying the division had never healed.[532]

The recent intra-GCC dispute presents the greatest challenge to the GCC since Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990-91[533] and it differs importantly from the previous confrontation. There have been several factors behind the recent crisis. One of the main reasons claimed by the anti-Qatar coalition was that Doha reneged on the

2014 demands after it had initially accepted them. The crisis was also triggered by the contradictory tendencies of some states in the context of the general shift of the regional balance of power.[534] There was a deep divergence between Qatar and the others on how to deal with Iran, political Islam, and issues of regional leadership.[535] The competition over regional leadership between Qatar and Saudi Arabia could be particularly seen in two particular cases; namely Syria and Egypt. The increased soft power of Qatar in the region based on its ambitious foreign policy with different priorities than its neighbors, its support for the MB and its rapprochement with Iran, were the main points of contention between Doha and the anti-Qatar coalition.[536] According to Gause, the crisis might reach a solution in the short run but is unlikely to be solved in the long term as he terms the crisis as a "larger Sunni-Shiite conflict' led by Iran and Saudi Arabia."[537] That is, the current crisis is not only an intra-Gulf rift; but a larger political conflict in the Middle East.[538]

Why Turkey Threw Its Support Behind Qatar

From the very beginning of the Gulf crisis, Ankara stood by its long-time ally Qatar while avoiding deterioration in Turkish-Gulf relations. Turkish leaders carried out shuttle diplomacy between the sides – though this did not bear fruit – in order to ease the tension, as prolonging of the crisis has the potential to lead to negative consequences.[539]

Turkey's domestic and foreign policy cannot be examined without taking into consideration Erdoğan's leadership style which has a clear influence on the major decisions made in foreign and domestic policy.[540] In the words of Yavuz: "Few leaders have had greater impact on Turkish political life than Erdoğan. He has been dominant in both the domestic and the foreign policy of Turkey."[541] Erdoğan is at the center of decision-making in Turkey and has become the sole force behind the country's policy choices, so that even scholars and analysts have started to refer to the country as "Erdoğan's Turkey."[542] His religious tendencies, ideological sentiments and political background play an important role in who he considers friends or foes.[543] When the Arab uprisings shook the region, Erdoğan and Davutoğlu envisioned an "MB belt", under the leadership of Turkey, from Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt to Syria.[544] Like Syria, Egypt and Palestine, the Gulf crisis turned into another issue in domestic politics in Turkey. Erdoğan had the belief that the Gulf crisis was part of a larger conspiracy that eventually aims to target Turkey after Qatar.[545] Turkey worried that successful pressure on Qatar could lead to similar pressure on itself by the same forces that toppled Morsi in Egypt.[546] Erdoğan's approach in the Gulf crisis was referred to as a "duty of loyalty" toward the Qatari emir, whom he calls "brother." Al-Thani was the only foreign leader to send an elite squadron of Special Forces to Ankara to protect the Turkish leader in the aftermath of the failed July 15 coup.[547] The relationship between the two countries

gained further strength after the failed coup and this was seen from frequent visits they paid each other. Erdoğan was the first leader that the Qatari emir met in his first trip abroad since the start of the Gulf crisis.[548] The essential part of Qatar's strategy was synchronized with the Turkish leadership through forming a strategic relationship that has guided Erdoğan's support for Qatar during the current crisis.[549]

Turkey and Qatar have a long history of being on the same side of regional affairs. When the Arab uprisings took place, Turkey and Qatar considered the uprisings as the start of a new era in the region that would pave the way for the emergence of elected governments led by the MB. The rise of the MB in Egypt and the Sunni groups in Syria raised hopes in both Ankara and Doha inasmuch as the inclusion of the MB into mainstream Arab politics was addressing their ideological expectations.[550] The pro-change stance of Turkey and Qatar put them on a collision course with the pro-status-quo camp led by Saudi Arabia. Just as Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain consider the MB as a lethal threat to their national security and stability, and the MB threat put three GCC countries along with Egypt in the same camp. Turkey and Qatar share the same ideological view in defending the cause of political Islam[551] – which in their version contradicts the Saudi interpretation of political Islam. Both countries carried out their policies independently throughout the Arab uprisings. While Ankara acted independently of its Western allies in Libya, Egypt, and Syria; Qatar acted independently of the GCC in Syria and to a certain extent in Yemen.[552] The two countries also pursue a similar policy of 'balance' toward Iran. Although both Ankara and Doha are concerned over Iran's regional aspiration for domination, they sought to have ties with Tehran based on mutual interests, in contrast to Riyadh. For Turkey, which aspires to be a regional power, Qatar is a trustworthy partner in the Gulf to achieve its regional goals; therefore, their relationship has political, economic and military dimensions. A few days after the Saudi-led coalition cut ties with Qatar, the Turkish parliament authorized the deployment of Turkish troops to its base in Qatar[553], although closure of the Turkish base was one of the demands of the anti-Qatar coalition. Though there are some clear political and security dimensions in Turkish-Gulf relations, economy also plays a part.[554] Turkey's bilateral trade with the UAE and Saudi Arabia are outweigh that with Qatar; however, the latter is a significant economic partner for Ankara, particularly in terms of investments. Ideological, regional and economic factors are three main drivers that shape Ankara's policy toward the Gulf crisis.

Why Saudi Arabia Stood Against Qatar

King Salman's appointment of his son, whose rule represents a hard line in regional policy, rang alarm bells in both Ankara and Doha.[555] The fast-rising star is considered as the mastermind of the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen in 2015 and the Gulf

crisis with Qatar in 2017.[556] Though Saudi Arabia's row with Qatar has its roots in geopolitical and regional hegemony matters, the timing of the crisis is strongly related to personal issues between MbS and Al-Thani.[557] From the other side, MbS has close relations with his Abu Dhabi counterpart Mohammed bin Zayed who is also critical of Qatari policies. The two crown princes share similarities in their foreign policy tendencies and conception of Islam, which differs from that of Qatar. The Arab uprisings, and then the vacuum created after the decline of US power in the Gulf led to a competition between Qatar and Saudi Arabia. The Crown Prince, in a speech, reportedly said that "psychological complexes were behind the moves by Qatar's rulers towards Arab nations."[558] MbS, who is highly critical of the MB ideology, describes the movement, which is classified as a *terrorist organization* in the kingdom[559], as "very dangerous"[560] Also, Qatar's moderate ties with Iran are a serious concern for the crown prince, who adopts the anti-Iranian rhetoric that dates to the reign of Abdullah.[561] King Abdullah was in power when the 2014 demands were presented to Qatar. Hence, the demands by MbS in 2017 couldn't be seen as something new, rather it was a continuation of a policy with a difference in the tactics employed by MbS. At the individual level, MbS`s ideology, his perception of who is enemy and friend, did play a very significant role in Saudi Arabia's leading of the coalition against Qatar.

Riyadh was quite comfortable with the old Arab order prior to the Arab uprisings of 2011 in which it had stable and long-term partners, in contrast to Doha. The difference in their socio-political, economic and geopolitical interests pushed Riyadh and Doha to take contrasting policies towards the issues that they face in the region. While Qatar bet on the rise of the MB throughout the Arab world, the Saudi-led anti-MB bloc worked forcefully to curb the movement's rise and block Qatari interests in the region. In Syria, although both Qatar and Saudi Arabia stand by the opposition, they support different factions, as they harbor different visions for the post-Assad era. Qatar's historical support for the MB, such as by hosting exiles like the Egyptian scholar Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Hamas leader Khaled Mashal, was a source of controversy between the two neighbors that came to the surface repeatedly after several MB members found safe haven in Qatar.[562] The spat between Qatar and Saudi Arabia over the MB is mainly based on their very different understandings of how political Islam should be exercised among the Sunni powers of the Middle East.[563] Though both Qatar and Saudi Arabia are Sunni majority and rule monarchies in the Gulf, both have differing ways of interpreting Sunni Islam. Doha's decision to support the movement partly reflects its ideological and strategic inclinations; the Qatari emir was close with al-Qaradawi and his movement's theocratic ideology but also Qatar considered the movement as a future for the region where they started to rise after winning elections in Egypt and Tunisia.[564] Additionally the movement was not posing a threat for the internal balances in Qatar. However, the situation was not the same with Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has typically considered Qatar

not a sovereign country but another province of the kingdom[565], an approach that doesn't accept Qatar pursuing an independent policy that clashes with Saudi strategic interests. Located between Saudi Arabia and Iran geographically, Qatar tried to walk a thin line between the two regional powers.[566] However, Qatar's policy was perceived by the Saudi-led bloc as unacceptable. The Gulf crisis has not only affected the balances in the Middle East but also in the Horn of Africa, where both Qatar and Turkey and a Saudi-led coalition have an active presence politically and economically.[567] Ever since the outbreak of the Gulf crisis, the Horn of Africa, particularly Somalia, became a ground where geopolitical interests of the two camps, Turkey/Qatar and Saudi/UAE, confronted each other.[568] Qatar's policies in Africa are in alliance with those of Turkey but not the Saudi/UAE camp and this is one of the dimensions of the ongoing Gulf crisis. The current Gulf rift is multilayered. Historical disputes, contradicting regional policies for dominance, different ways of interpreting political Islam and diverse alliances have been the underlying reasons of the Saudi policy toward the Gulf crisis.

How has the US Affected Turkish and Saudi Positions in the Crisis?

Overlapping with these dynamics was the international dimension. When the Gulf crisis erupted in early June, Trump took sides with the anti-Qatar quartet, hailing Saudi-led efforts to isolate Qatar.[569] Just two weeks before the outbreak of the Gulf crisis[570], Trump paid a visit to Riyadh where he blamed Iran for instability in the region and urged the countries in the region – implicitly Qatar – to fight extremism. He mentioned Qatar as the "funder of terrorism at a very high level". With this move, the US altered its tradition of neutrality in the conflicts within the GCC. Trump's visit to Riyadh prior to the Gulf crisis seemed to embolden the anti-Qatar quartet to break their relations with Doha and impose a blockade against the country.[571] Trump showed that the US planned to pursue policies in the region that will be aligned closely with those of the Saudi-led bloc.[572] According to Ulrichsen, while the Obama administration followed a Gulf policy where all members were included, the Trump administration preferred to build its Gulf policy on Saudi Arabia and the UAE as the twin pillars. However, Trump was aware that the prolonging of the crisis would have serious implications as Qatar is a crucial part of the regional security system for the US, which has two strategically important bases there. Trump sent his Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to mediate between the parties, but the move failed. Also the mixed messages coming from the US did not help in de-escalating the tension.[573]

This had led Turkey to strengthen its position in regards to the Gulf crisis. Turkey, whose ties are already strained with the US due to several reasons, decided to take sides in contrast to the US-supported coalition against Qatar. After a year, Trump welcomed the Qatari Emir in the White House, saying that he (Trump) had become a "big advocate" of combating terrorism. Two reasons have played a significant role in

the US' taking of a moderate approach toward Doha. Firstly, the largest US airbase in the Middle East, namely Al Udeid Air Base, from where the US carries out operations against ISIS, is based in Qatar and secondly, within the "regional unity" to counter Iran, Qatar is considered as an asset by the US.

When considering all the factors, the Gulf crisis is not only about the rivalry between ambitious and assertive princes, or competition of regional actors with different ideological backgrounds; it is also a regional crisis fueled by influences of global powers that have stakes in this crisis.[574] The Gulf crisis is a good case to show the degree to which several factors drive the foreign policies of Turkey and Saudi Arabia.[575] At the individual level, the leadership of Erdoğan in Turkey and MbS in Saudi Arabia played a significant role in their approaches toward the Gulf crisis. Erdoğan's close friendship with Al-Thani, while MbS`s personal acrimony and competition with the latter played a significant role in their contrasting approaches. The personalities, backgrounds and motivations of the two figures have contributed to our understanding of the decision-making process both in Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Sigmund Freud's phenomenon of 'Narcissism of Small Differences' is the best explanation for the clash of Turkish leadership under Erdoğan and Saudi leadership under MbS. The argument is that rather than differences, sometimes similarities are reasons behind feuds.[576]

While Turkey and Qatar have a long history of being on the same side on regional affairs, Saudi Arabia has been always at loggerheads with Qatar on regional issues. While Qatar's approach toward the MB overlaps with Turkey's, it contradicts Saudi Arabia's. While Turkey and Qatar pursue a balanced policy towards Iran, Saudi Arabia considers the stances of both Turkey and Qatar toward Iran as problematic. Turkey considers Qatar as a regional partner with whom it shares similar ideological and political motivations; however, Saudi Arabia considers Qatar as a challenge to its regional hegemony. Turkey's and Qatar's views of political Islam also overlap, but they conflict with Saudi Arabia's interpretation. Also, the US position of siding with the Saudi led-quartet had led Turkey to strengthen its position in regards to the Gulf crisis. Thus, the former even has a military base in the Gulf country. However, Saudi Arabia accuses Doha of sponsoring terrorism and calls for the closure of the Turkish military base in Qatar.

The combination of all these factors led Turkey and Saudi Arabia to adopt opposing stances toward Qatar in particular, and the Gulf crisis in general. The best case to show the degree to which domestic ideological considerations drove foreign policies is the Egyptian crisis in 2013 and the ongoing Gulf crisis. Both cases revealed the fact that the ideological differences, different political motivations and leadership goals seemed to form the rationale behind the foreign policies of Turkey and Saudi Arabia and eventually led two countries to take opposing stances.[577]

Khashoggi Case

> *"In 2009, a well-known Saudi journalist who had spent decades with kings and princes and had a good feel for royal dynamics laid out the issue to an American diplomat. The kingdom was "a country in transition," the journalist said, facing tough questions about its future. Within ten years, he predicted, Saudi Arabia would have a young ruler from the "new generation." The problem was, "No one knows who this will be."*
> *The journalist's name was Jamal Khashoggi.*
> *He was right."*[578]

On 2 October 2018, Jamal Khashoggi, a leading Saudi journalist who went into self-exile in the US, walked into his nation's consulate in İstanbul and was never seen again after that fateful day. He went to the consulate to get a 'single status' document certifying he was divorced because he wanted to remarry with a Turkish citizen. Polygamy is illegal in Turkey; unlike in Saudi Arabia where sharia law is implemented. That day, Khashoggi, 59, went to the consulate with his Turkish fiancée, Hatice Cengiz, to whom he handed his mobile phones and said "see you soon, wait for me here." After hours of silence, it was Cengiz who alerted the world to her Saudi fiancé's disappearance, which rocked the region and turned into an international crisis.

Saudi Arabia's first reaction was an immediate denial of any involvement with the affair. Then, the next day the Saudi government issued a statement confirming Khashoggi was missing and that the journalist had disappeared after he left the consulate a day before. However, this wasn't convincing for Turkish officials who believed that a hit squad of 15 men which arrived from Saudi Arabia on 29 September were involved in Khashoggi's disappearance.[579] Unlike his advisers, Erdoğan had adopted a more cautious tone in his initial remarks over the incident. His adviser, Yasin Aktay, warned the Saudi side saying "if they consider Turkey to be as it was in the 1990s, they are mistaken. There is concrete information; it will not remain an unsolved case." Day by day, gruesome details of Khashoggi's murder inside the consulate was linked via Turkish media which further increased the pressure on Riyadh. Growing international pressure, comments from some Western governments and the US, as well as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)'s conclusion that MbS ordered the assassination of Khashoggi[580] exacerbated the pressure on the kingdom to make a convincing statement over the incident. After 18 days, Saudi Arabia admitted, for the first time, that the Saudi journalist was dead due to a "fistfight" that occurred inside the consulate between him and Saudi officials.[581] Riyadh also announced a purge of senior officials, including Saud al-Qahtani, an influential adviser to MbS, and General Ahmed al-Asiri, a senior intelligence official. Both men were fired and eighteen Saudi nationals were said to be arrested.[582]

Khashoggi was a prominent critic of the current leadership in Saudi Arabia and in the past few years he raised his concerns openly in several platforms. His death was interpreted as a signal by the current leadership to dissidents abroad. Indeed, the fact of his murder in Turkey, which had been at odds with Saudi Arabia on several issues, and the subsequent developments led to a further deterioration of relations between the two countries. The incident was considered a milestone in Turkish-Saudi relations, which affected the relationship more than the Egyptian coup or the Gulf crisis.

The Saudi crown prince's first ever reaction to Khashoggi's death was that the case "would not drive a wedge" between his country and Turkey. "I want to send them a message: They will not be able to harm Saudi-Turkish relations as long as there is a king called Salman bin Abdulaziz and a crown prince called Mohamed bin Salman in Saudi Arabia and a president in Turkey named Recep Tayyip Erdogan," the crown prince declared.[583] His remarks came a day after Erdoğan revealed details of Khashoggi's death. While it aimed to calm the Turkish side over the course of events, the move failed to ease Turkish pressure since Ankara was convinced that the incident was beyond doubt a murder. Although, on every occasion, Erdoğan reiterated that he did not believe "for a second" that the Saudi king would have ordered the murder, he insisted that the murder was planned at the "highest levels" in the kingdom. "We know the order to kill Khashoggi came from the highest levels of the Saudi government"[584], he said in an article he wrote for The Washington Post condemning Riyadh in strong terms for the case. He complained that the Saudi consul in Istanbul had "lied through his teeth" about what happened to Khashoggi, and that Saudi Arabia's public prosecutor had refused to answer "even simple questions" about the investigation. According to Lippman, the case "handed Erdoğan an irresistible opportunity to embarrass the prince by parceling out grisly details of the crime."[585] Although Erdoğan has studiously avoided mentioning MbS, the evidence leaked by Turkish authorities to the media and statements made by those close to Erdoğan's inner circle hinted that the crown prince was aware of the incident since those involved in it were close to him. Ankara's avoidance of mentioning MbS openly and the dripping of links slowly regarding the case was an indication that it didn't want a full-scale confrontation with Riyadh. It was a two-sided intention though, as both sides were careful not to allow the case to lead to a total break in relations. There were several reasons behind Turkey's handling of the case and avoiding it to turn into an open confrontation with Saudi Arabia, says Uygur and elaborates:

> There are rational reasons behind Ankara's position. On the one hand, Turkey closely monitors the problem areas where Riyadh is involved, especially the Saudi Arabian relations with the PYD/PKK while at the same time avoiding a direct confrontation. In addition to spiritual and material factors such as the Saudi control of the Islamic sacred sites and its extensive economic ties with

> Turkey, Turkey's unwillingness to be seen as a part of the Saudi-Iran tension also played a role on Turkey's careful policy.[586]

Also, Erdoğan's dealing with Salman, rather than MbS, keeping the dialogue between two countries at the level of head-of-state was intentional according to some observers, who underlined that the Turkish leader aimed to isolate the ambitious crown prince and drive a wedge between him and his father.[587] Erdoğan's stance on the Khashoggi matter was interpreted as "a matter of honor for the [Turkish] government."[588] According to The New York Times's correspondent in Istanbul, "with a skillful drip of intelligence leaks linking the prince to a gruesome crime", the Turkish leader tried to undermine his regional rival MbS[589]so that he could be replaced with a more cooperative figure. To realise this aim, Ankara pushed the US to be involved so that the latter could exert pressure on the crown prince. For Gause, the Turkish leader "played that like a Stradivarius."[590]

Just two weeks after the incident, Erdoğan declared that "Turkey is the only country that can lead the Muslim world"[591] as a clear challenge to Saudi Arabia which aspires global Islamic leadership too. However, their competition over leadership of the Muslim world is ideological, rather than religious or national and the two countries' position regarding the Khashoggi case was considerably shaped by this competition.[592] Although the Khashoggi case didn't cause a permanent rift between the two countries, it definitely exacerbated the Turkish-Saudi Cold War in the region. Following the Turkish public prosecutor's 117-page indictment[593] released in April 2020 against 20 Saudi nationals, including two former top aides to MbS, the Cold War turned into a media war between two countries, adding a new layer of conflict. In April 2020, Saudi Arabia blocked access to Turkish media outlets, including state news agency Anadolu, along with the website of state broadcaster TRT. Riyadh's move to block the sites came after the Istanbul prosecutor's announcement. In response, Turkish authorities blocked Saudi and UAE state news websites. The Turkish website of the UK-based Independent newspaper, which is operated by a Saudi company, was one of the sites to be blocked, in a move that its Turkish editor said reflected the ongoing tensions between Turkey and Saudi Arabia.[594]

The Turkish-Saudi Cold War has taken numerous forms beyond a media war. With the rise of nationalism in Saudi Arabia under the new leadership, the country's media, education and tourism landscape has adopted an adverse perception toward Turkey. In 2019, Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Education made a series of modifications to its history textbooks referring to the legacy of the Ottoman Empire as "occupiers" and that the empire was an "invasive and criminal state."[595] Images across social media have circulated of the curriculum taught to students in the second year of secondary school as Saudi Arabia propagates a stronger nationalist identity. Even the Saudi ally, the UAE, has produced a soap opera, "Kingdom of Fire," in which the producers focus

on the history of the Ottoman Empire, not as the zenith of Muslim unity, but as a dark time for the Arabs. In addition, Saudi-owned broadcaster MBC stopped airing Turkish soap operas, stoking tensions between Ankara and Riyadh.[596] Halting of the TV shows dealt a severe blow to Turkish soft power in the region. Ankara considered the move as "political" and "clear censorship." In parallel with these developments, Saudi Arabia launched a social media campaign boycotting all Turkish products and discouraging Saudis from visiting Turkey, primarily on the grounds that the country is unsafe for them. This led to a thirty percent decrease in number of visitors from Saudi Arabia to Turkey in the first five months of 2019.[597] Also, Saudi Arabia issued warnings to its citizens against making investments and doing business in Turkey citing possible investment risks and the "security situation."[598] Saudi Arabia took the Cold War to an economic dimension further with the boycotting of Turkish products. One of the well-known examples of this 'boycott Turkey' campaign went viral after a video in which the governor of Riyadh, Prince Faisal ben Bandar defiantly refused to accept a cup of Turkish coffee served to him.[599] Also, chairman of the Riyadh Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ajlan al-Ajlan, called for an import boycott on Twitter and said: "As the Turkish leadership and Erdogan continue their hostility and target the kingdom's leadership, we call more than ever before to boycott them... in all areas - imports, labor and dealings with Turkish companies."[600] Against this backdrop, Erdoğan did not attend the OIC summit held in 2019 in Mecca in which Turkey was supposed to hand over the presidency of the organization to Saudi Arabia.[601] However, after the summit, he called the Saudi king to greet him on the occasion of the Eid al-Fitr. Erdoğan's move was interpreted as Ankara's intention to resume constructive dialogue with Riyadh and open up a personal communication line with the Saudi king. However, this attempt failed to bear fruit.

Within this context, while the Turkish-Saudi Cold War draws to an uncertain future, Khashoggi's case remains unclear, casting a dark shadow somehow on Turkish-Saudi relations. At the time when this book went into production, the world had still not discovered the details of what really happened inside the Saudi consulate.

Kurdish Issue

The Kurds, who constitute the fourth largest ethnic group of the Middle East region, after Arabs, Persians, and Turks, are often referred to as the largest ethno-linguistic group in the contemporary world without their own state.[602] Divided among the territories of Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Iran, independence and recognition as a national entity have eluded the Kurds.[603] With the new Middle East order that has been installed since the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, which evolved further after the Arab uprisings that swept the region from the end of 2010, the Kurds have emerged as

important actors in the region. These new actors started to attract the attention of those Gulf countries in search of local partners to counter threats and increase their sphere of influence in the region.

Arab uprisings showed the limitations of Saudi Arabia in gaining security for the regime by wealth. This led to Saudi Arabia developing a new approach to regional politics. In recent years, there have been attempts by the Saudi leadership to cozy up to Kurds in the region, placing a clear emphasis on its Iraq and Syria policy. The Saudi approach to the Kurds in Iraq and Syria is based on the threat perception it perceives from both Turkey and Iran. Both Turkey and Iran share similar concerns over Kurdish attempts toward independence which is considered as an existential issue for the two countries. While limiting the influence of two non-Arab states in the region, Turkey and Iran, by collaborating with actors that are perceived as threats by these two countries, Saudi Arabia aims to curb the influence of Ankara and Tehran in the region.

Riyadh is quite aware that a possible Kurdish independence would represent an important conundrum for both Turkish and Iranian policymakers; however, it remains cautious as the consequences of such an independence may cause threats to regional stability and security. Riyadh's neutral stance is also largely due to the international context, which is not in favor of an independent Kurdish state. However, in order to curb the increasing influence of Turkey in particular, it will be keen to use the Kurdish card, at least behind closed doors. Thus, the Saudi approach toward the Kurds cannot be better explained than by the phrase: "my enemy's enemy is my friend." Growing alignment between Saudi Arabia and the Kurds in the light of Riyadh's strained relations with Turkey is noteworthy.

The AKP from the very beginning commenced its work to solve the country's longstanding Kurdish issue in a peaceful way rather than by confrontation. However, the collapse of the Peace Process in September 2014, the start of the Syrian civil war, which had adverse impacts for Turkey in several ways, and the developments regarding northern Syria where the Kurds had aspirations for self-determination, had brought the Kurdish issue back to the surface. The Syrian civil war has changed all the dynamics in the region and evolved the calculations of regional actors. The Syrian Kurds particularly gained international recognition after they were supported by the US as a key local military force against ISIS. This support angered the US' NATO ally Turkey, which considers the Democratic Union Party (PYD)'s armed wing, The People's Protection Units (YPG), as simply an offshoot of the PKK, which is considered a *terrorist organization* by Turkey, the US and the EU. Although the creation of a Kurdish state in the Middle East is an unacceptable case for Turkey, Ankara has adopted a pragmatic approach in its relations with Iraq's Kurdish Regional Government (KRG).[604] However, the situation with the Kurds in Syria differs significantly from the Iraqi case. The Syrian war has internationalized

Turkey's Kurdish problem, linking the PKK in Turkey and the PYD and its armed wing YPG in Syria.

Thanks to the Syrian regime's withdrawal from the Kurdish areas soon after the uprising, the PYD created three geographically discontinuous self-governing Kurdish cantons collectively known as Rojava in northern Syria that raised eyebrows in Ankara.[605] Turkey has carried out three major military operations in Syria since 2016. The latest one, "Operation Peace Spring", launched in October 2019 in northern Syria, aimed to counter the regional dimension of the PKK threat and create a safe zone in the Kurdish-held territories for refugees. The offensive coincided with the US announcement to withdraw its troops stationed alongside their Kurdish allies. Saudi Arabia condemned the Turkish operation in northern Syria, describing it as "military aggression" and a "threat to regional stability."[606] The Saudi stance is also very much related to their fear that Turkish intervention may harm the capital - diplomatic and economic - they extended to ease the tensions between Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Arab tribes in northern Syria.[607]

As Al-Rasheed notes, "with the Arab uprisings, the Saudi regime seems to combine its old behind-the-scenes diplomacy with an aggressive regional foreign policy."[608] In recent years, there have been other Saudi attempts at cozying up to Kurds in the region, showing a shift in its regional policy. The pro-government newspaper in Turkey, Yeni Şafak, published a photo of a meeting between Saudi and PYD officials held in an office where a photo of Öcalan, leader of the PKK who is now serving a life sentence in prison in Turkey, was hanging on the wall. After a few months, Saudi minister for Gulf affairs Thamer al-Sabhan paid a secret visit to Raqqa, where he was photographed with Brett McGurk, US special envoy to the anti-Islamic State campaign, accompanied by military commanders with the US-backed SDF. This visit raised eyebrows in Turkey which considers SDF a terrorist organization.[609] Syrians Kurds have even mentioned that "the presence of Saudi Arabia helps to consolidate the Syrian community and to boost relations between the Kurds and Arab tribes."[610] In the media first it appeared that Saudi military officials met with an Arab group of the YPG-dominated SDF for talks regarding a new force following the withdrawal of the US troops from Syria,[611] and then Saudi Arabia announced that it was planning to contribute 100 million dollars for stabilization projects in areas liberated by the SDF in northeastern Syria, with a special focus on Raqqa.[612] This announcement was made on the day that US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo arrived in the kingdom. Turkish media, however, insisted that the funds would flow to the YPG and there were even reports saying that Saudi Arabia had sent aid to the YPG on trucks that traveled through Iraq to enter Syria. According to Turkish and Russian media outlets, a delegation from the SDF had paid a visit to Riyadh in December for discussions on the future of northern Syria. The report added that the Saudi leadership officially invited the delegation to discuss further cooperation between the SDF and Riyadh,

along with the ongoing situation in northeastern Syria, after the Turkish military launched an offensive in October.[613] Turkey, a powerful regional actor, and the Kurds as a rising ethnic group with aspirations to self-determination, will continue to be significant elements of regional politics.[614]

According to Lucas, "regional foreign policy is not just about preserving the survival of a particular monarchical regime but ensuring the leadership of a particular set of individuals within the ruling family."[615] The issue of regime survival is thus a crucial factor in how the Saudi leadership conducts its foreign policy in the region and on a much wider scale, shaping its relations with the Kurds. Saudi support for the Syrian Kurds is not only limited to Riyadh's intention to have a say in the post-war Syria in which Kurds will be one of the crucial actors; but also to limit Turkish moves in Syria, in particular and in the region, in general.

Meanwhile, Kurds are not the only actors that Saudis cozy up to. In recent months, Riyadh started to build close relations with countries that have had a history of animosity with Ankara over the past decade. Greece and the Greek Cypriot administration is one of those two actors that appeared on the Saudi leadership's radar. Amid tensions with Turkey, in January 2020, Greek Cypriot foreign minister Nikos Christodoulides met with Salman in the Saudi capital of Riyadh.[616] It was reported that Salman promised to offer the Greek Cypriot administration all the support it needed in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Saudi side had reciprocated and a Saudi top diplomat paid a visit to Athens. Ankara's concerns at a possible axis between Saudis and Greeks materialized after Saudi foreign minister Faisal bin Farhan's statement as follows: "The kingdom is following with great interest the current developments in the Eastern Mediterranean region, is showing its concern for security and stability there and stresses its full support for the sovereignty of Cyprus over its territories."[617] Also, the Greek government pledged to send equipment to the kingdom to help boost air defenses, which caused uneasiness in Ankara. Riyadh's support for the Cyprus issue in favor of Greece and its condemnation of Ankara's activities are the latest chapters in a dispute between Ankara and Riyadh. For Riyadh, Ankara's moves in the Eastern Mediterranean region are another example of Ankara's aggression. As Turkey flexes its muscles in Qatar and Libya by deploying troops in those countries, Riyadh has engaged in an "anti-Turkey" axis with Egypt, Israel, Greece and Greek Cypriots. However, as mentioned in the previous chapters, Riyadh's closeness to Greece and its support of Greek claims is neither a surprising move nor something new.

10

Bringing in the International

The Arab uprisings and subsequent crises in the region not only altered the internal dynamics of the regional countries, but also laid the foundation for new understandings regarding the regional order. While the traditional regional powers, Egypt, Syria and Iraq, lost their positions in the regional system, states such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia rolled up their sleeves to shape the order in the Middle East. The decline in the US' influence in the region coincided with the crumbling of the old regional order in which states put forward their own visions for the new regional order and sought new allies. The shrinking of the US position in the region created opportunities for other extra-regional actors to expand their influence in regional affairs, notably China and Russia, which emerged as two key powers that aimed to strengthen their relations with the regional countries in several aspects, even if they could not totally fill the American void. Both Russia and China provided the regional states with an opportunity to lessen their dependence on the US as the only heavyweight in the region. Thus, Russia and China's role in the region is not only limited to the Syrian conflict; but, in recent years, they have developed a multi-faceted relationship with both Turkey and Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia. The positions of the world powers are generally indicated when they take part in ongoing conflicts around the globe, and how other states meddle in these conflicts affects international circumstances. Before delving into Russia and China's relations with both Turkey and Saudi Arabia respectively, it is important to examine the US's relations with its two traditional allies in the Middle East, and how its relations with both Ankara and Riyadh affected the regional crises. One of the consequences of the divergence of Turkish and Saudi interests is that they also differ sharply in their relations with the US.

Obama out, Trump in

In February 1945, as World War II was approaching its end, US President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Saudi King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud came together in an extraordinary

meeting aboard the USS Quincy in the Suez Canal. It was the first time an American president had ever met with a Saudi king and this meeting laid the foundation for the US-Saudi relationship. In that encounter, the two leaders reached an agreement that ensured US access to Saudi oil in exchange for American protection of the kingdom from foreign attacks. That agreement became a pillar of the US policy in the Middle East. Thanks to geopolitics and oil, the two countries have had a significant, despite occasional severe strains, relationship alliance that endures until today. As Cooper notes, "Oil is also the Saudis' primary weapon of national self-defense and the key to their security and survival."[618]

Both Saudi Arabia and the United States are traditionally strategic allies in the Middle East. Especially since the Gulf War, the Gulf countries have maintained the US as their primary security ally.[619] The US security umbrella provides Saudi Arabia with protection against any attack from external powers. With this protection behind her, Saudi Arabia feels confident to pursue policies without any fear of military retaliation by its regional competitors. However, with the changing dynamics in the region and emergence of a new regional order, Riyadh feels less confidence in the US security commitment than has been the case in the past.[620] Actually, since the early 2000s, Saudi Arabia has gone through a sharp change in its military relation with and oil exports to the United States.[621] Already strained relations due to 9/11 received another blow with the US reaction to the Arab uprisings, particularly in Syria and Egypt. During the administration under Barack Obama, the US pursued policies which have led Gulf monarchies to question the US commitment to guarantee their security. Riyadh felt that the US was abandoning its years-long alliance with the kingdom. In order to show its dissatisfaction with the American stance, in 2013, Riyadh even refused to serve as a non-permanent Security Council member of the United Nations, a position it had just been elected to.[622] Gulf countries were frustrated by Washington's hesitant stance, including its belated response in supporting leaders of the old Arab order, refusal of military intervention in Syria against the Assad regime, and signing the nuclear agreement with Iran despite the security concerns of the Gulf states.[623] The Obama administration's desire to solve the Iranian nuclear issue through political means had led to great disappointment from the Saudi royal family. On 14 July 2015, in Vienna, a multinational nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was signed between Iran and the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council; namely China, France, Russia, the UK and the US, plus Germany) in an aim to resolve the conflict with Iran over its clandestine nuclear programme and ensure that Iran's nuclear program will be exclusively peaceful. According to the Obama administration, the best way to serve American interests in the region in face of increasing instability in the post-uprisings era was to open dialogue channels with Tehran instead of isolating it.[624] This led to concerns in Riyadh that the US could return back to its Twin Pillar policy in which

Tehran would be again an American ally at the expense of Saudi Arabia just as the case was in pre-revolution in Iran: "Riyadh in particular worries that, even if there is a friendly regime in Tehran, the kingdom will be consigned to the status of junior partner."[625] The Obama administration's prioritizing the resolution of the nuclear crisis and criticizing the Gulf countries for being "free-riders"[626] raised eyebrows in Gulf capitals, needless to say, particularly in Riyadh. Obama's use of the term "free riders" prompted a sharp response from Turki al-Faisal, a senior Saudi prince who previously served as his country's ambassador to Washington. In an open letter to the president in the Arab News newspaper entitled 'Mr. Obama, we are not 'free riders', Turki lists what he says are Saudi Arabia's contributions to its relationship with the U.S. A similar response came from another US ally, Kuwait as well. Although Obama vetoed the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act (JASTA) allowing the families of the 9/11 victims to sue Saudi Arabia in American courts, the US senate passed it, dealing a severe blow to the already tense relations during the tenure of Obama.[627] Despite Obama's visits to Saudi Arabia, he was received in a distanced way, while his country continued selling arms to the kingdom.

It was during Obama's era that Salman ascended the throne with his son beside him. The new Saudi leadership came to power at a time when the kingdom was facing serious challenges; such as oil price crash, unemployment of youth, terrorism of ISIS and rising Iranian threat. At that critical time, Riyadh needed the US, but Obama had little interest to address Saudi concerns. There were concerns that the US-Saudi alliance might reach to a breaking point during Obama's tenure. However, the breaking point was never a scenario as it would be too costly to both sides. As Köni notes, "while most US presidents had supported Saudi Arabia, even Barack Obama in his own way…turning a blind eye to Saudi interventions in Bahrain, Yemen, and Syria."[628] A short-lived period of strained relations with the US occurred during Obama's era but it came to an end after Trump entered the Oval Office in early 2017. The course of US-Saudi relations entered into a new, a positive, phase. With Trump's taking office, US policies changed in favor of the Gulf monarchies as the new president pursued a new US foreign policy that rejected many pillars of his predecessors' approaches to international affairs.[629] Trump's decision to pull the US out of the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement was welcomed by the Gulf countries.[630] Although Trump is a more welcome partner in the case of Iran, his contradictory policies also lead to confusion in the kingdom.

In terms of MbS' relations with the new administration, Al-Rasheed underlines that the crown prince succeeded in building good relations thanks to his investment in lobbyists in Washington, as he considers the US the sole superpower that can guarantee his survival, despite his search for new international partners.[631] Trump's policies raised new hopes in the Saudi leadership of gaining support for its regional ambitions. Riyadh's confidence in the US was built again after Trump's decision

over the Iranian deal and its stance in the Gulf crisis. This confidence was further enhanced after Trump's firm support for MbS in the face of congressional outrage over the Khashoggi case.[632] As Al-Rasheed notes, "winning the favour of the USA under Trump has been the major achievement of the new Saudi leadership."[633] On 20 May 2017, Trump visited the kingdom in his first foreign trip as the new president, signaling that his administration acknowledged Riyadh as a vital US ally in preserving regional order and global market security. This visit was also significant in another way as it is believed to have given the green light to the Saudi leadership for the Gulf crisis.

Like the other US allies in the Middle East, Turkey was also disappointed by the US administration during the Obama tenure. When Obama was newly elected, he made his first historic overseas country visit to Turkey in April 2009 – the visit to next-door Canada and some bilateral summits are not included to this.[634] This move raised hopes over an opening of a new page in Turkish-American relations. Obama's presidency was welcomed by the AKP leadership and some in the political corridors of Ankara were even convinced that Obama was a Muslim, calling him "Huseyin Obama." Although the Bush administration experienced the Iraqi war as a crisis in its relations with Ankara, the Obama administration began its relations with Turkey in a positive atmosphere. This atmosphere lasted only few years. With the start of the Arab uprisings, Turkish-American relations went through one of their toughest eras due to several issues, but most importantly the latter's support for the PKK and its offshoots in Syria.

As in Saudi Arabia, Trump's election raised hopes in long-standing NATO ally Turkey over the resetting of Turkish-US relations which had been damaged during the previous era. Erdoğan expressed optimism and firm support for the new administration. Despite Turkey's willingness to get the relations back on track, several issues have continued to plague Turkish-American relations. These issues ranged from US support to the YPG/PYD to extradition of Gülen, whom Ankara considers as mastermind behind the July coup attempt in Turkey, from the arrest of Turkish-Iranian businessman Reza Zarrab to Turkey's purchase of the S-400 from Russia, from the Jerusalem embassy issue to the Gulf crisis. According to several scholars, many of the problems in Turkish-American relations are structural, regardless of Erdoğan or Trump in power. As Oktav notes, "If there is one single issue that has bedeviled relations between Turkey and the U.S., it is the PKK issue."[635] US-Turkey disagreement in Syria is simply due to US support to the PKK offshoots fighting against Daesh despite Turkey's strong objections. The view in Ankara was that the US administration had abandoned Turkish concerns and considered terrorists as an efficient force fighting against ISIS. Turkey's concern falling on deaf ears led Ankara to launch subsequently three military operations in northern Syria in order to eliminate the elements considered as threats to Turkish's security and stability. Turkish-US relations experienced one of the most astonishing spats in diplomatic history after

Trump sent a letter to Erdoğan urging him not to carry out an operation against Kurds in Syria, saying: "Don't be a tough guy. Don't be a fool!"[636] The Turkish side confirmed that Erdoğan threw the letter in the bin and ordered the operation to begin. Also, Trump's vow, in his letter, to harm the Turkish economy if Ankara did not come to terms with the US was a clear indication of the strained relations between two NATO allies. In a nutshell, Turkey's deep disappointment with its Western allies following the July 2016 coup attempt, as well as the drift in Turkish-American relations over Syria, marked important drivers of Turkey's upgrading of its relations with Russia and Iran through the Astana peace process and Sochi summit.[637] Turkey's rapprochement with Russia peaked with Turkey's decision to purchase, deploy and activate an advanced air defense system, the S400, from Russia - which raised eyebrows in Washington. Traditionally, Ankara's close partners in defense cooperation were the US and NATO. However, despite sanctions and threats that the S400 incompatible with NATO systems, Ankara insisted that it would not give up the Russian air defense system and "it was a done deal."[638]

At the regional level, the Gulf crisis and the US decision to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem further exacerbated the tension between two traditional allies. On 7 June 2017, a day after Trump tweeted in support of the anti-Qatar coalition led by Riyadh, the Turkish Parliament approved legislation allowing its troops to be deployed to a Turkish military base in Qatar in support of the tiny Gulf country.[639] The photograph of Trump, Salman and al-Sisi touching a glowing orb at a summit in Riyadh in which Erdoğan was not invited and the eruption of the Gulf crisis in the aftermath of this was a clear indication of what regional order the US had wanted. That was an order in which Russia and Iran, Turkey's new partners in the region, should be sidelined. Also, Erdogan's attitude towards Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and moving the US embassy to Jerusalem sparked another dispute between two countries. Erdoğan considered Trump's move as a "huge mistake"[640], urging that that Jerusalem was the red line for Muslims and Turkey would consider breaking off ties with Israel.

Against this background, in contrast to Saudi Arabia, Trump's presidency didn't bring the same benefit to Turkish-American ties as it did to American-Saudi relations. Almost thirty years after the Cold War, Washington and Ankara often find themselves on opposite sides of a variety of significant issues. Tensions on Kurdish militants in Syria since 2014, the domestic situation in Turkey, including the July 2016 coup attempt and Erdogan's increased consolidation of the political sphere since 2016, the denial of extradition of Gülen from the US, Turkey's purchase of the S-400 and participation in the Russian-led Astana process since 2017, have all become the driving forces of American-Turkish relations. Disagreements between the two countries also had an impact on the regional level. Trump's position in regional affairs, mainly against Turkish concerns, also had indirect impact on Turkish-Saudi relations, mainly in an

adverse manner. In a nutshell, despite both sides acknowledge the importance of the "strategic partnership", the tension in the relationship in the past few years raised questions about the future of the Turkish-American relationship.

Pivot to Russia and China

The US' traditional allies Turkey and Saudi Arabia's improving relations with Eurasian states, namely Russia and China, signify an important reorientation in Turkish and Saudi foreign policies to obtain greater diplomatic and economic leverage. In the post-Arab uprisings era, Saudi Arabia and Turkey underwent an evolution in their foreign policies as a result of the changing situation in the Middle East. In regards to their relations with Russia and China, in recent years, both countries have begun to increasingly diversify their political, economic, and security partnerships, considering Eurasian countries as potential partners. Starting with the motivations behind the Saudi approach to Eurasia. Saudi Arabia's leaning to China and Russia has a dimension that is related to the US' position in the region and to Riyadh's relations with its traditional ally Washington. As America shifted its interests to Asia, the two allies have also alienated each other in economic matters, especially on energy issues. In the past few years, Riyadh began to move away from its foreign policy of being completely dependent on the US. There is an understanding in the kingdom that all alternatives should be open and that the dependency on only one global power should change.[641] However, it would be very unrealistic to expect an abandonment of the US, although some realities have come to the surface with the Arab uprisings. Riyadh, which seeks to ensure its stability and survival, aims to tread a fine line between the US and other global actors in order to maintain balance. China or Russia are not considered as powers to replace the US as the great military power in the near term; however it is important to note their increasing role in Saudi military development.[642]

Relations with Russia

Regarding Saudi-Russian relations, Katz notes a significant description as follows: "Whether they deteriorate, improve, or remain as they are now, the state of Saudi-Russian relations will not only have an important effect on these two countries, but on world politics generally. Despite all the changes that have taken place since the collapse of Communism, the Saudi-Russian relationship is one that merits continued attention."[643] Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy said people do not become leaders due to fate or their characteristics, but due to the social circumstances at that time – the zeitgeist (spirit of the time). Russian leader Vladimir Putin has been studying the zeitgeist

in the Middle East in recent years. In this regard Russia's relations with the major Gulf country, Saudi Arabia, have demanded significant attention. Amid geopolitical uncertainty, with shrinking US influence in the region and the oil prices issue, Russia and China appear to have reconsidered their relationship with the Gulf countries and moved toward something closer. On the Russian side, Putin's third term focused on developing multidimensional relations with regional countries, in particular with Riyadh. On the Gulf side, the increasing power of the new leader played a significant role in Russo-Gulf rapprochement. With official visits from both sides and several agreements signed, Russia and Gulf countries have further developed the relationship. The visit of Salman in 2017 to Russia and Putin in 2019 to Saudi Arabia have been significant indicators of the foreign policy decision-making orientation taking place in two countries. The first-ever visit by a Saudi king to Russia in 2017 by Salman should be seen from a context of Russian-Saudi rapprochement triggered by several factors. In this visit both sides stated that "relations between Saudi Arabia and Russia were going through one of their best moments ever."[644] The two countries signed several agreements and memorandums of cooperation in several fields. Two years after this visit, Putin visited Saudi Arabia for the first time in over a decade in 2019.

Putin was the first Russian president to ever visit the kingdom in February 2007, when he met with King Abdullah as well as the future King Salman, who was then the governor of Riyadh. However, his 2019 visit was of greater significance in several aspects. Putin was welcomed with a red carpet, in contrast to his last state visit to the country in 2007 which was humbler.[645] A series of memorandums of understanding and cooperation deals valued at $2 billion in the fields of energy, petrochemicals, transport and artificial intelligence were signed on this visit. Putin's Gulf tour, which also included the UAE, came at a time when US troops withdrew from northern Syria as Russian-backed regime forces deployed deep inside Kurdish-held territory.[646] Putin met Salman and MbS, with whom he said he had friendly relations. In televised remarks, the two leaders stated that the relations between the two countries were significant to regional security and stability. The latest visits, signed agreements and increasing dialogue between two leaderships indicate that both countries have an interest in building a closer relationship as the war in Syria does not promise a peaceful resolution in the near future. Saudi Arabia and Russia seek different outcomes from the Syrian case and their foreign policies have clashed dramatically since the beginning of the crisis. However, despite having divergent visions regarding the war in Syria, both countries have managed to find common ground on certain issues. For instance, Saudi Arabia supports Russian efforts in the Astana peace process, which also includes Turkey and Iran - the two countries that Riyadh has strained relations with. Also, Riyadh and Moscow share common concerns over stability of the oil market and have rolled up their sleeves in taking steps regarding the matter. For the first time, in May 2018, Saudi Arabia and Russia,

the biggest of the oil producers opened discussions over easing the curbs and raised concerns over potential supply shortages.[647]

Saudi Arabia's primary objective is the downfall of the Syrian regime. This will contain Iran from expanding its influence through its Syrian ally to the other countries in the region. The presence of a Sunni-led government to power would serve Saudi Arabia's long term interests in the region. Thirdly, Saudi Arabia wants to ensure that the Levant will not experience a similar experience to Afghanistan in 1980s.[648] The fear of its citizens to take part in the Syrian war and return back to Saudi soil with radical ideologies is another concern of Riyadh. However, Russia's stance toward the Arab uprisings was different in every case based on its own strategic interests. Moscow regarded the developments as a threat to its regional goals and described the developments within its traditional narrative of being part of American-backed colored revolutions.[649] In Moscow's description, the crisis in Syria was not a 'spring.' It rather used the terms 'turmoil', 'extremism' or 'destabilization' in defining the developments in the country.[650] For Russia, which enjoys good ties with the Syrian regime stretching back more than four decades, the crisis was as an internal matter of Syria. It wouldn't be wrong to say that Moscow played almost no active role in the uprisings until they reached to Syria.[651] Syria occupies a unique place in Russia's Middle East policy and to keep the regime in power is essential in maintaining Russian interests in the region. Thus, strong support "for Assad has its roots in Russia's recent history and politics rather than in burning Middle Eastern realities"[652], as Gaub and Popescu argue. Moscow did not hesitate to throw its full weight behind the regime with all kinds of diplomatic and military support and used its power to veto resolutions critical of the regime at UNSC, considering Libyan-style intervention by the West would harm Russian interests in the country.[653] The Assad regime's survival means a lot for Moscow. Russia wants to preserve its key naval facility at the Syrian port city of Tartus, which serves as Russia's only naval base outside its borders since the Soviet era, and its air base in Latakia, the heartland of the Assad regime. Secondly, the Syrian regime has been the main client for Russian arms since the 1960s.[654]

Russia doesn't want to leave Syria to the influence of the US and the Western powers and is concerned that the ouster of Assad will lead to a geopolitical gain for Washington and a loss for Moscow.[655] Russian military engagement in the Syrian war in 2015 was Russian military's first direct operation since the collapse of the Soviet Union.[656] Moscow militarily involved in the crisis and continued to provide regime with weapons, economic assistance, and presumably intelligence support.[657] It began launching air strikes against rebels. Thus, the Russian leadership's decision to intervene militarily is deep-rooted with Russia's power and influence in the region.[658] Also, Russia is concerned that the weakening of the Assad regime will result in increased radicalism that may even reach to its own soil.[659] Undoubtedly, it not only wanted to weaken ISIS in Syria through its intervention[660], but also

aimed to guarantee that Moscow will have a decisive say in who rules Syria, even in a "hypothetical post-Assad future."[661] Thus, in the words of Kozhanov, "all in all, the reasons for Russian support of the Syrian regime are complex and cannot be explained using an Occam's razor approach."[662]

After Russian involvement in Syria, the balances started to alter as the opposition's hand weakened; and this meant Riyadh had to consider realities on the ground.[663] Also, the US withdrawal from the country while leaving its Kurdish allies behind caused concern in Saudi leadership which started to evaluate new options to remain in the Syria game. This new situation pushed the Saudi leadership to acknowledge Russia as an important player in the region whose opinion needed to be taken into account.[664] Even influential newspapers such as Al-Sharq Al-Awsat and al-Hayat considered the failure of the American administration to change the Russian stance on Syria. For MbS, reconciliation with Russia through dialogue for a political solution was the most rational policy. Salman's historic four-day visit to Moscow in October 2017 and Putin's reciprocal one in October 2019 must be read from this perspective. In this meeting, both Saudi and Russian sides hinted that there would be further cooperation on several issues, including lifting of the oil price - a topic that Russia gives great importance to. There were even news outlets reporting that Saudi Arabia offered Russia investment funds if it stopped supporting the Syrian regime. While Putin wants to rebuild Russia's lost leverage in the region with revitalizing her position in the international political arena[665], Salman and his son, with the Vision 2030, want to raise the Saudi position in the region with a new foreign policy approach. These overlapping interests led to a rapprochement which is likely to have significant consequences for Middle Eastern politics in general and the Syrian crisis in particular as the two countries aim to maximize benefits and minimize costs.

Russian military involvement has also played a significant role in enhancement of Russo-Turkish relations. Through the Astana peace process for Syria launched in early 2017, relations between Ankara and Moscow entered a new phase. On January 23, 2017, after the Geneva talks had been stuck for a year, having shown that they were not likely to achieve success,[666] the Astana peace process was brokered by Russia, Turkey and Iran in the Kazakh capital in order to achieve a ceasefire and to solve humanitarian issues. The main difference of the Astana peace process is that it is being led by Russia, in contrast to the Geneva talks which were led by the US and Western countries.[667] Secondly, it adopted a shift in the Syrian Peace Process from the focus on Assad's ouster to humanitarian issues and the cessation of violence.[668] In the process, the Turkish role is to guarantee the participation of the opposition, while the Russian role is to guarantee the regime's participation. The Astana peace process brings these countries together while American influence sees a decline in the region, which is likely to create a vacuum that several actors will seek to fill. The failure of American unipolarity in the region is a plus not only for Russia and Iran, but also for Turkey

due to Washington's support of the Kurdish forces in Syria, which are considered by Turkey as terrorist elements threatening its national security and stability.

Turkish objectives in Syria vary from those of the Russian and Iranian. Turkey regarded the Syrian uprisings as "calls for democracy" and supported the opposition trying to overthrow the regime. In the first months of the conflict, Turkish officials, in particular Erdoğan and Davutoğlu, tried to convince Assad to leave power in a peaceful way and carried out shuttle diplomacy to this end. After the failure of these efforts, it adopted a harsher stance and started to host opposition meetings and to provide military and financial assistance to Syrian opposition forces. For Turkey, the Syrian conflict came to be perceived as an international issue; therefore, it started to also pressure the US and the UN to take harsher steps against the regime.[669]

When compared to Russia and Iran, Turkey is affected by the Syrian crisis severely in terms of the refugee burden and terrorist attacks, as well as economically and sociologically. The driving force for Turkey in joining the Astana process was to secure its national interests and minimize the costs of the Syrian crisis. Turkey's primary argument in the process centered on the downfall of the regime and handover of power by force if necessary. However, recently, Turkey's priority in Syria changed from the downfall of the regime to the prevention of Kurdish aspirations for independent statehood. Turkey's relations with both Russia and Iran, the deterioration of its relations with the US, and changing power equations on the battlefield played a significant role in the shift of this prioritization.[670] Turkish-Russian relations, which were very close throughout the 2000s, deteriorated with growing differences over the Syrian crisis, particularly when the Turkish armed forces shot down a Russian fighter jet for violating Turkey's airspace near the Syrian border in November of 2015. However, after almost a year, the two countries engaged in a rapprochement process when Erdoğan met with his Russian counterpart Putin. Two weeks after this meeting, Turkey launched "Operation Euphrates Shield" and sent its troops to Syria to fight against ISIS.[671] A year after this operation which achieved its objectives, Turkey launched "Operation Olive Branch", an air and ground offensive in the Kurdish-controlled enclave of Afrin in northern Syria. Here, the noteworthy point is that such an operation wouldn't have been possible without Russia's explicit approval, as the latter controls the airspace in the war-torn country.[672] Turkey, later on, launched "Operation Peace Spring" in northern Syria in October 2019 as its third operation in the country, which was also realised after tough bargaining between the Russian and Turkish leaders.

Relations with China

As this year marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and China, relationships between the two countries have reached to a

significant level.[673] Saudi Arabia's close relationship with China is actually part of the broader cooperation between the Gulf and East Asia. Mason describes the Saudi approach as reflecting the fact that 'All states, whether classified as hegemons or small states, tend to 'look everywhere' since opportunities must first be identified before durable relationships can be established.'[674] The Sino-Saudi relationship is among the most striking of such cases which have occurred in the early twenty-first century. Sa'ud Al-Faisal stated the case for promoting the relationship with China simply: 'with China there is less baggage; there are easier routes to mutual benefit.'[675] Key variables such as concerns regarding domestic stability, the struggle with Iran for domination in the region, economic concerns connected with the oil price drop and rentierism, the decline of US influence in the region and the complication of Saudi-American relations, played a significant role in Saudi foreign policy toward China.

Given that both sides have their own long-run strategic plans, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, the course of the relations has entered a new phase.[676] In recent years, official visits from both sides and several agreements signed between the two countries further promoted their relations. MbS, who wants to increase his global partners to garner both political and economic support, plans to expand Saudi influence not just in the Middle East but also in other regions. Thus, MbS is interested in East Asia. China, one of Saudi Arabia's leading trading partners, plays a crucial role in meeting Saudi Arabia's economic needs to overcome domestic pressures. MbS considers Beijing's BRI initiative an opportunity to be integrated with Saudi's 2030 Vision, which takes into account Saudi Arabia's external relations based on security agreements. The launch of the two strategies coincided with both countries' foreign policy plans; while Riyadh aims to increase its economic gains in Asia, China aims to expand its influence in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia, as the energy superpower in the Gulf that exports nearly 18 percent of its oil to China[677], wants to be one of the important nodes of BRI. MbS, during his visit to China in 2019, stressed that the 'Arabian Peninsula is considered as a major part of the Silk Road initiative of the Chinese President. The Silk Road Initiative and China's strategic orientations converge very much with the vision of the kingdom for 2030, stressing keenness to achieve all the gains and meet all the challenges that the two countries face.'[678] As can be observed from MbS's visit, during which the two countries signed more than $28 billion worth of deals[679], Riyadh seeks to diversify its need to export oil into other economically viable areas such as nuclear power and renewable energy resources.[680] In other remarks, MbS underlined the importance that Riyadh attaches to its relations with Beijing, saying 'Riyadh has a serious desire to deepen cooperation and strengthen relations in all fields between our two friendly countries and push them forward in the course of strategic relations.'[681] The combination of the two initiatives seems to be the start of a 'Saudi-Asian pivot', which has important geopolitical consequences. This is a massive international power shift, because it

supports the meeting of Saudi and Chinese strategic interests.'[682] The two countries set up the Saudi-Chinese High-level Joint Committee in 2016 in order to enhance the ties, and the third meeting took place in 2019. Saudi Arabia realises that solutions to many of its problems – including unemployment, lack of economic diversification, and stagnated advancement in the field of science and technology – lie in the linking up with China, in particular, and Asia, in general.

However, economic motivations are not the sole factors that drive Saudi-Sino relations; security ties seem to grow even more significantly. Thus the increasing relationship between the two countries goes beyond oil into a more multifaceted one, since both countries are seeking stability and security in the Middle East for the safe flow of energy. MbS, who adopted a pragmatic and assertive approach in containing perceived Iranian influence, has notably approached Iran's close partners, namely China and Russia. Thus, the Iran factor is certainly one of the political motives behind Saudi Arabia's 'Look East'[683] policy. One of the dangers to Saudi security lies in the perceived existential threat posed by Iran for both its regime stability and wider regional security[684] and for Beijing, the stability of Saudi Arabia is of vital concern due to the latter's important role in the global oil market and as a major source of Chinese oil imports.[685] Although, Iran and China have had a very special and unique relationship based on a shared interest since the end of the Cold War[686], keeping relations with Beijing on track is a priority for Riyadh. According to Fulton, the significance of the GCC far outweighs that of Iran in economic terms, demonstrating that the 'Saudi-Sino relationship will continue to ensure that Saudi Arabia has in China a great power upon which it can rely on while it attempts to continue balancing against Iran.'[687]

MbS visited China a few months after he was accused of involvement in the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Turkey, a charge which has put Saudi Arabia under pressure from Western nations.[688] He was welcomed in China and other Asian countries which were included in his regional tour. One of the most important factors in the Saudi tilt to China is the latter's policy of non-interference in others' domestic affairs.[689] Saudi Arabia had welcomed Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang's statement made in late December over the kingdom's handling of the Khashoggi case. The Saudi Press Agency (SPA) had reported that China considered the case as a Saudi internal affair which should not be politicized or internationalized.[690] Riyadh greatly appreciates Beijing's policy of strict non-interference in Saudi Arabia's domestic affairs[691] and in general its neutral stance toward the Middle East's disputes, in contrast to the US stance.

China and Saudi Arabia adopted diametrically opposed positions in regard to the Arab uprisings, particularly in Syria. Chinese interests in Syria are more closely aligned to that of the Syrian regime in comparison with Saudi interests. While the former's stance was based on the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs

of other states, the latter took active involvement, and even participated in NATO's international military intervention in Libya.[692] However, instability in the region and change in the geopolitical landscape of the world's energy demand and supply became common concerns for both Beijing and Riyadh[693] and with the efforts of the two sides, the negative impacts have been thoroughly addressed and the bilateral cooperation between the two countries have reached a higher level.[694]

Saudi media close to government circles have also been supportive of the growing Saudi-Chinese relationship, and also reflect the perceptions of the Saudi leadership under MbS. Abdul Rahman al-Rasheed, a prominent Saudi media figure with close ties to the royal court, wrote in the Saudi-owned Asharq al-Awsat newspaper in 2016 that Saudi Arabia's future lies in its relations with China. "It is clear that Riyadh is heading toward China as we see in the successive visits to the country by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in his efforts to face the surrounding challenges and develop economic resources. China is one of the world's major arms exporters, and Saudi Arabia has had a successful experience since the 1990s."[695] However, we see a change in tone of the pro-government Saudi media in 2019. Still emphasising the importance of relations with China, Rasheed argues that Saudi Arabia shouldn't move away from the West to the East and that Saudi-Chinese relations are based on economic interests that cannot substitute for the interests it shares with the West.[696] In a similar vein, the editor-in-chief of the newspaper, Ghassan Charbel also penned an article on the MbS visit to China in which he reiterated that Saudi Arabia should stay in the Western camp but considers China as a serious partner in the international arena. "Relations are built on partnerships, interests, stability and investment. This is why Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman declared that the Arabian Peninsula is a fundamental part of the BRI, which is in line with the Saudi Vision 2030. This was further demonstrated by the decision to include the Chinese language in Saudi school curricula. The Saudi interest in the rise of Asia did not begin yesterday, but it was more evident during the past three years. This is why the Crown Prince's trip was not aimed at searching for alternatives as Saudi Arabia is aware of the importance of relations with the West, despite some passing dark clouds."[697] This shift in tone was very much related to the change in presidency in the US as Riyadh was frustrated with the Obama administration and Saudi media editorials were reflecting this in their tone.

China's rise in the global order with its fast developing economy is also grabbing the attention of Turkish policy-makers. Although the relations between Turkey and China experience occasional ebbs and flows, it is true that in recent years their relationship has entered a period of growth based on mutual benefits by increasing trade and accelerated intergovernmental dialogue. Turkey, like Saudi Arabia, attaches great significance to fostering relations with the China as the world's new great power. Beijing provides an opportunity for Ankara to diversify its global relations and

decrease its overreliance on the West. However, when considering the fact that Turkey is a NATO member country and throughout the Cold War it has been a reliable ally to the West, closer relations with China have raised questions about a possible shift in Turkey's foreign policy orientation from time to time.

In recent years, as Turkey under the leadership of AKP faced tensions in its relations with the West and the Turkish economy suffered under the West's pressure, the enhancement of Turkey's relations with China appeared to be a significant option. Ankara's approach toward Beijing is based on pragmatism and rationalism that is predominately motivated by economic concerns, rather than any ideological choice. For Ankara, China is a crucial player in the international system, the second largest economy in the world, and a key trading power that can help Turkey to overcome its infrastructure and technology gaps. As noted by Atlı, "Turkey's increasing relations with China, in the form of expanding inter-governmental dialogue, and increasing cooperation in trade, energy, defense industry, and infrastructure related issues do not represent an ideological choice or an animosity towards the West, rather they originate from requirements of the interconnected global economy and changing dynamics of international politics."[698] While for China, Turkey's geostrategic location between Europe and Asia and its status in the Middle East serves as a strategic position within the framework of BRI, which brought a new dynamism to Turkish-Chinese relations. The bilateral trade between two countries reached $24 billion in 2018, according to the Turkish Statistics Office, as Beijing became Ankara's third largest trading partner.

The numerous exchange visits between Erdoğan and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping indicate a strong desire by both sides to bolster relations further. Some of those meetings were held at the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, the G20 summit of Hangzhou and the BRICS summit in South Africa. At a time when Turkey was yet to overcome the domestic instability caused due to the failed coup attempt in July 2016, Erdoğan attended the G20 summit in Hangzhou hosted by China in September 2016. At that summit, Erdoğan thanked China for her support for Turkey to "maintain its national security and social stability."[699] Erdoğan had appreciated China's stance in the aftermath of the coup attempt in Turkey and said "The friendly attitude of China was a of friend in need. We, the Turkish people, will never forget about it." In May 2017, Erdoğan had also participated in the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation opening ceremony held in Beijing, where he gave a keynote speech. The other keynote speaker was Russian president Vladimir Putin.[700] A group photo taken at the end of the forum in which Turkish and Russian leaders flanked the Chinese President highlighted China's willingness to further develop its relations with Russia and Turkey in the future. The summit, which brought together 130 nations, was held with the aim of discussing the future of an initiative which will change the landscape of the region through a number of projects and investments. Erdoğan's attendance as head of state signified Turkey's interest in

the initiative. In late 2017, Erdoğan, in order to show Ankara's interest to develop closer ties with Beijing, appointed one of his key advisers, Abdulkadir Emin Önen as ambassador to the Chinese capital. Önen, who is also a former AKP deputy and experienced businessman, was among the few newly appointed ambassadors that Xi received in their first week of arrival to Beijing, which was interpreted as a sign of China's reciprocity to the Turkish president's gesture.

Turkish-Chinese relations have gone beyond economy and include a security and political dimension. Both countries are avoiding thorny areas such as the Uyghur issue, not to undermine the economic-political nexus between them.[701] Despite the issue of the Uyghurs, a Turkic/Muslim community living predominantly in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region with a sizable diaspora in Turkey, both countries have managed to find ways to keep their relationship on track and focus on mutual interests. According to Çagaptay, despite their opposing stance over the Uyghur issue and their limited economic activity, Turkey and China are likely to get closer if the West fails to meet Turkey's financial needs.[702] Thus, it seems the two countries are likely to enhance the "strategic partnership" they concluded in 2010 while the Middle East was going through a transformation posing both opportunities and challenges to the two countries. The Syrian war is the other area where the two countries have an interest. In his latest visit to China in July 2019, Erdoğan underlined that Turkey will not allow anyone to drive a wedge into its relations with China, emphasizing the readiness to deepen political mutual trust and strengthen security cooperation with China.[703] In an op-ed to the Global Times in 2019, Erdoğan stated that "Turkey and China, the world's most ancient civilizations, have a responsibility to contribute to building a new international order, which will serve the interests of all humanity." In the past Erdoğan has even suggested Turkey could join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a regional security body composed of China, Russia and four Central Asian nations. Erdoğan's remarks raised eyebrows in Western capitals which had to point out Ankara's status as a NATO member country. However, it is crystal clear that Ankara intends to raise the stakes by showing that it has the ability to expand its relations on the international arena and diversify its partners at times of crises. Despite the political differences over Syria and the Uyghurs, Turkey and China are expanding their cooperation in several fields at a time when US influence faces a decline in the region and the distrust between Turkey and the West deepens.

Conclusion

The purpose of this book has been to examine the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia within the context of internal, regional and international dynamics during the decades of the 1990s and the 2000s.

The end of the Cold War had a significant impact on the domestic and foreign policies of the two countries. It not only changed the dynamics and the balances in the region but also led to the emergence of several challenges in the region that pushed Turkey and Saudi Arabia closer. Until the 1990s, the Turkish and Saudi approaches toward each other were shaped by mutual suspicion. In Turkey, the ruling elite adopted a pro-Western foreign policy orientation and pursued a distant policy toward the Middle East and Saudi Arabia in order to preserve the secular state structure and Western values. Meanwhile Saudi Arabia, which viewed Turkey's secular orientation as a threat to its political regime, did not have any interest in engaging in relations with the Turkish state.

However, the collapse of the Cold War political system forced Turkey and Saudi Arabia to redesign their foreign policies. In the post-Cold War era, the two countries engaged in efforts to carve out new roles for themselves in the Middle East. The course of relations particularly seemed to change with the First Gulf War (1990-91), in which Turkey and Saudi Arabia took part in the same camp against Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. Turkey's active support for the US-led coalition and its key role in supporting the UN sanctions imposed on the Saddam regime received great appreciation from Saudi Arabia, the main regional player in the war.

Despite the role of regional and international developments in Turkish-Saudi rapprochement, bilateral relations between the two countries did not see much improvement in the 1990s. Turkey adopted security-oriented policies toward the Middle East due to the threat of the PKK, which intensified its attacks against Turkey from neighboring countries, particularly Syria. On the other side, Saudi Arabia was engaged in efforts to support Syrian claims in Damascus's disputes with Turkey. In such an environment, mutual distrust and suspicion dominated relations. Against this background, after the signing of the Adana Agreement with Syria in 1998 and with the elimination of the PKK threat after the extradition of its leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1999, Turkey's relations with the Middle Eastern countries – including Saudi Arabia – started to normalize.

Particularly as a result of domestic transformations in Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the 2000s, relations between the two countries entered a new phase. With the AKP taking office in 2002 with a new vision and strategy, based on a zero-problem policy with neighboring states, the 2000s witnessed a period of improvement in Turkey's relations with Middle Eastern countries. On the Saudi side, Abdullah's taking office in 2005, with an active approach toward regional countries, helped relations with Turkey develop even more rapidly. After a long standoff between the two countries in the past, bilateral relations seemed to deepen in this new era with common regional and strategic interests. The mutual visits from both sides and the signing of several agreements between the two countries seemed to further improve the ties. On the regional level, the rapid changes in the Middle Eastern landscape in the aftermath of the 2003 Iraq invasion and concerns over uncertainty in the post-Saddam Hussein era in Iraq led to improvement in bilateral relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Particularly, the emergence of new challenges in the region contributed substantially to the start of a new era in Turkish-Saudi relations and forced the two countries to consider each other as regional partners to fill the power vacuum in the area and to counter Iran's expansionist policies. The two countries sought similar goals and cooperated in the face of problematic issues, such as the Lebanese crisis, the Palestinian issue and the future of Iraq.

On the Turkish side, economic considerations and the enhancement of its position in the Middle East and the Arab world played a significant role in its approach to Riyadh, while on the Saudi side, the adverse impact of the 9/11 attacks and the US invasion of Iraq, which strengthened the Shiite position in the country, as well as rising Iranian influence in the region had an important impact on the Saudi regime's consideration of Turkey as a potential partner. In other words, while the concern over the maintenance of the integrity of the kingdom and the political regime pushed Saudi Arabia to consider Turkey as a balancing power in the region to cooperate with, the goal of increasing its regional influence motivated Ankara to cooperate with Riyadh. It seemed likely that Turkey and Saudi Arabia agreed on the fact that without mutual cooperation it would be quite difficult for the two countries to maintain the balance in the region in such a way as to favor their own interests while Iran was expanding its regional influence.

During the 2000s, domestic factors did not play a role in shaping the foreign policy decisions of Ankara and Riyadh when developments were more related to the balance of power in the Middle East. For the sake of their regional interests, Turkey and Saudi Arabia did not allow their domestic differences to come to the surface and adversely affect their cooperation. Also, while Turkey's initial moves to improve relations with the region in the 2000s, the golden years of Turkey's activism, were welcomed by Riyadh, with the Arab uprisings Turkey's activism was received with suspicion. The honeymoon that Ankara and Riyadh enjoyed during the 2000s ended fairly soon with the Arab uprisings, which changed the balances in the region.

During the uprisings, the two countries did not see eye to eye. However, Ankara and Riyadh enhanced their cooperation in the Syrian crisis, in which the two countries sought the fall of Bashar al Assad. In this regard, both Turkey and Saudi Arabia threw their support behind the Syrian opposition forces wrestling to topple the Assad regime. However, each supported different groups in the opposition coalition with different motivations regarding the post-Assad era. Ankara's motivation was to ensure the formation of a Sunni and Turkey-friendly government in Syria – something that did not comply with Riyadh's strategic calculations. Syria was the first area of rivalry based on ideological differences.

With the ouster of Egypt's president by a military intervention in 2013, the relationship between Turkey and Saudi Arabia became increasingly strained as the two countries adopted opposing stances toward the toppling of the MB leader in Egypt. The two countries' differing stances in the Egyptian crisis - with Turkey supporting Morsi and Saudi Arabia backing military intervention – damaged relations. Saudi Arabia, in the Egyptian crisis, seemed to reveal its domestic concerns over democracy and the MB movement. While the two countries, at one stage, shared common concerns over Iranian influence and regional issues, at a separate stage they were involved in an "ideological proxy war", which seemed to preponderate over their otherwise mutual concerns regarding the Middle East region. The two countries had common aims but different methods for reaching those aims and these methods led to competition.

The domestic developments and regional dynamics since 2015 have further affected relations, mostly in an adverse way. The internal political transformation in the kingdom particularly after the rise of MbS and the domestic challenges that occurred with the July 2016 coup attempt in Turkey played a role in the evolution of the relationship. On the regional level, the contradictory regional agendas of Riyadh and Ankara put them on a collision course. Since then, a relationship marked with skepticism has gradually, but systematically, become strained through several subsequent developments. The onset of the Gulf crisis in 2017 brought a new dimension to the relations and the gap between the two states on a bilateral and regional level has been widening since then. The killing of prominent Saudi journalist, Jamal Khashoggi, in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Turkey, in 2018, added salt to the wound and became the last nail in the coffin of relations between Ankara and Riyadh.

The examination of relations showed that a combination of regional and international factors pushed the two countries toward cooperation when it came to developments regarding the balance of power in the region. When the developments were mostly about power distribution, both Turkey and Saudi Arabia approached each other positively, keeping aside their domestic considerations. For instance, despite having different political systems, historical traditions, ideologies and regional goals, Ankara and Riyadh cooperated in the face of several developments, such as the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the rise of Iranian influence in the region, escalation of

the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Lebanese crisis, in order to secure regional dynamics in their favor.

However, when the driver of regional development is about ideology, we see that domestic factors have acted as a limiting factor in the Turkish-Saudi relationship. The best case for showing the degree to which domestic ideological considerations drove foreign relations is the Egyptian crisis, which was part of the post-2010 developments in the Middle East, and the Gulf crisis of 2017. Both crises revealed the fact that the ideological differences, different political motivations and leadership goals of the two heavyweights of the Middle East remained as the main challenge to Turkish-Saudi cooperation.

The post-2010 developments in the region have been about ideological struggle, which brings out the domestic differences between two countries. The two countries, which managed to keep aside their differences when cooperating against Iran's expansionist policies, failed to establish the same cooperation when it came to the MB movement.

Beside the ideological nature of the regional developments, there are several issues between Turkey and Saudi Arabia that may encourage the two countries to compete rather than cooperate. These issues include competition over regional leadership. Particularly the struggle over which country controls the leadership in the region seems to be an important obstacle in relations. Neither does Riyadh consider positively Turkey's increased activism in the Middle East, nor does Ankara want to see Riyadh's regional influence increase at its own expense. The struggle over the leadership of the region is also linked to the difference in the two countries' promotion of their own Sunni understanding - Turkey represents a moderate Sunni version while Saudi Arabia a conservative Wahhabi Sunni vision - a factor that seems to push the two countries toward rivalry. The Turkish structure, which combines democracy with Islam, seemed to be considered as a challenge by the Saudi regime to its regional role and to the Saudi political system, which is shaped by Wahhabi understanding. The Turkish leadership's political motivations toward the region, been based on supporting conservative Islamic movements such as MB, considered by the Saudi regime as a threat to its survival and to the values of Wahhabism, seemed to contribute to the factors that led to competition between Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the region. Although both countries have majority Sunni populations and have similar concerns regarding rising Shiite influence, the struggle to control the Sunni Muslim world and the Middle East seemed to be an obstacle in Turkish-Saudi cooperation.

The support for the Palestinian groups also draws a division between Ankara and Riyadh. Although Turkey's approach to the 2008 Gaza crisis, Erdoğan's attitude in the Davos Summit and its degrading of diplomatic ties with Israel after the 2010 Mavi Marmara raid were welcomed by Riyadh, Ankara's close ties with Hamas, an off-shoot of the MB, were not welcomed.

Future Prospects for Relations

As stated above, when the balance of power becomes the priority, domestic factors do not have great importance. However, these factors can still affect foreign policy when domestic considerations are in question. During the field research for this book, it was also made clear to me on several occasions that Turkey-Saudi relations could not be developed on a sustainable basis if the two countries did not prevent their ideological differences (domestic factors) from interfering in their strategic calculations. That is, if ideological differences related to regional developments rage on, Turkish-Saudi cooperation will be quite difficult to be achieved.

Needless to say, the power struggle between these two aspiring regional countries is nothing new and, as the developments described in this book make clear, it continues to impact the balances across the Middle East today. Both leaders, Erdoğan and MbS, have utilized domestic factors when implementing their foreign policy goals, as their foreign policy strategy affects their political stance domestically. Since the domestic considerations of the two countries are constant and ideological confrontation is still a topic, it is to be expected that with Erdoğan and MbS in charge, competition is more likely than cooperation. This situation is unlikely to change unless the two leaderships give priority to the balance of power in the region rather than to ideological differences, as they did in the early 2000s.

It is hard to make predictions on the future of Turkish-Saudi relations, which will depend on developments that are unknown for now. Two prominent heavyweights aspire to become a regional power in the Middle East where a single development can change the entire landscape of the region, as in the case of the Arab uprisings which continue to impact the balances in the region. How will the Syrian war unfold, will the instability in Iraq, Libya and Lebanon, the war in Yemen end anytime soon or not, how long will the Gulf crisis last, how will the role of the global actors (Russia, China and the US) evolve in the coming years, and the durability of the current personalities in Ankara and Riyadh are questions having no answers for today.

Regarding the future prospects for relations, there seem to be three scenarios ahead. In the first scenario, both leaders stay in power, the differences deepen and already strained relations reach to a point of no return. In 2019, Erdoğan became the longest-serving Turkish leader in modern history, surpassing even Atatürk. When his current term ends in 2023, he will have controlled the country for two decades exactly, first as prime minister between 2003 and 2014, and then as president since 2014. While MbS on the other hand is known to be the only prince in the history of Saudi Arabia who ever held such key positions at such a very young age. He wants to rule the kingdom for a long period, transforming the country according to his own vision. Both leaders want to make their countries "great." In the second scenario, one of the leaders loses power, and relations take a different path since the leaders will continue

to face both internal and external threats to their survival. In the third scenario, both leaders will "agree to disagree" on contending issues and try to be aware of the benefits that approach can bring to the table. Although the third scenario seems unlikely to happen, I believe there is still potential room for Turkish-Saudi cooperation in the economic sphere and regional security. In this volatile region, Ankara and Riyadh need to work to minimize the damage to their interests. On both sides, there is a lack of knowledge and comprehensive understanding of each other's priorities, agendas and capabilities in the region and beyond. If Turkey and Saudi Arabia fail to develop realistic understanding and expectations of each other, this situation might undermine the mutual trust needed for furthering cooperation.

Notes

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Sinem Cengiz, born in Kuwait, is a researcher based in Turkey and the Gulf. Her research interests are Gulf politics, and Turkey's relations with the broader Middle East. She was a diplomatic correspondent covering the post-2011 Middle East through fieldwork mainly in countries of the region (2012-2014). Based in Athens, she contributed to Al Arabiya as a weekly columnist (2014-2015). She also worked at the Embassy of the State of Kuwait in Turkey (2015-2018) at the department of press and political affairs. Lastly, she was affiliated with Kuwait University (2018-2019). She has been a weekly columnist in the Arab News, a Saudi newspaper, since 2016.