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Abstract: *The study examines the Iran-Saudi conflict and the role of the United States in shaping its dynamics. The study explores the United States' engagement in the region, analyzing its motivations, interests, and diplomatic interventions. It also delves into the military dimension of the United States' involvement, discussing strategic considerations and implications for regional security. Additionally, the study investigates the economic aspects, such as sanctions and arms sales, and their impact on stability and the balance of power.*

Key Words: Dynamics, United States Engagement, Sanctions, Economic Aspects, Balance of Power

Introduction

It is not a secret, however, that the US has a hidden purpose in West Asia. "For almost 50 years, the US has pursued two principal objectives in the Middle East: guaranteeing oil supplies for US industry and creating Israel as a Jewish homeland." The US benefits from a position that allows it to promote demilitarisation; The United States, however, "has been responsible for the transfers of hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of highly advanced armaments into the region throughout the previous twenty years, comprising 80% of all U.S. arms exports to the Third World, rather than encouraging demilitarization. "In the relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia,

the US element has played a dual role (Augusty, [2004](#)).

The US has been involved in exploiting the difficult relationship between the nations, as opposed to mediating or offering consolation to the two adversaries. For example, Fathollah-Nejad asserts that "the presence of Western countries such as the United States in and around the Persian Gulf has not resulted in a stable security order in the area. In fact, their existence has caused regional unrest, aggressiveness, and violence both in the past and in the present. It is impossible to impose an effective security order on the Persian Gulf region from outside, and especially not by continuously escalating a weapons competition. It can only be developed as a

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mutually advantageous contract by the littoral region and emerge naturally from within (Mullen, [2009](#)).

The United States has always been interested in the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran, but its main ally, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, has been voicing its concerns because "U.S. interests frequently overlap with those of Saudi Arabia... Although Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy hostile to Arab democracy and any democratic reform of the current monarchical institutions, Saudi Arabia and the United States frequently cooperate successfully in their efforts to curb Iranian influence. Iran, on the other hand, sees the US as its most deadly enemy (Mishra, [2022](#))

The United States has become more involved in the region recently, concentrating on containing Iran's influence. The United States has strengthened its military presence in the Gulf region and imposed economic sanctions on Iran. Additionally, the United States has given Saudi Arabia military assistance through the selling of weapons and the exchange of intelligence. The U.S. involvement in the conflict has drawn condemnation from a number of analysts. The humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen, where a coalition led by Saudi Arabia is fighting Houthi rebels, is said to be exacerbated by the United States' support for Saudi Arabia, according to critics. Some scholars also contend that the situation has worsened as a result of U.S. sanctions and military involvement in the region and that the country should instead concentrate on diplomatic attempts to resolve the conflict. Overall, the US has a complicated position in the dispute between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and its actions and policies probably have an effect on the situation both positively and negatively (Editors, [2018](#)).

Literature Review

Francis (1998) in his article stated that the United States military in the region is paying close attention because of the high level of violence in the Middle East. Its accorded geostrategic significance due to the rising need for American military personnel. The prosperity and long-term stability of the world will be significantly impacted by the region's future expansion. There have been numerous confrontations in the Middle East since 1979, none of which have been unique to the region. The hostage crisis, Lebanon's civil war, the Gulf War, and the EI Dorado Canyon airstrikes against Libya are just a few instances of how the US has opposed Iran's new Islamic Revolution and its new Iranian government. One must consider a number of factors in order to comprehend why American authorities are so interested in the Middle East. They regard the Middle East peace process and the existence of Israel as two of the most crucial factors affecting energy security. The battle against terrorism, political and economic reforms, and anti-hegemonic and anti-proliferation initiatives are all components of this strategy.

Geranmayeh (2018) argues in his research article that the next ten years will be difficult and unsettling for the Middle East. The intense competition developing with Iran and those nations opposed to it, headed by Saudi Arabia, has been a significant barrier to lasting peace and growth in regional Israel and the UAE with substantial backing from the US. Political tensions are likely to increase as a result of the Trump administration's harsh attitude toward Iran in order to counter the present tendency towards increasing instability and possibly larger conflict, European players must carefully handle the geopolitical tensions in the region. The region has experienced numerous armed confrontations over the past 20 years, as well as collapsing

economies, political institutions, and weak governance; The growth of extremist organizations, civil upheavals, both natural and human-caused calamities, nuclear proliferation risks, usage of chemical weapons, and the mass movement of people. The Syrian crisis and the ensuing rise in terrorism and refugee flows have had major repercussions for Europe, proving that Middle Eastern instability is related to internal stability in Europe. Everything seems to be overwhelming. The need for humanitarian assistance, stability, and reconstruction operations in Yemen and Syria, which are still embroiled in war, will persist after the bloodshed has subsided. Regional powers are putting their own foreign policy into practice whereas global powers like the Russia and US continue to be involved in the Middle East. Washington and Moscow have been unable or unwilling to change their regional allies. Apart from seeking out larger conflict. Events have been catching European players off guard more frequently, and they have been disregarded on crucial political fronts, especially the Syria issue. However, there are some areas, like Iran policy, in which there is a noticeable European influence and stockholder to affect certain regions. The present study analyzed the Geopolitical rivalry, and instability in the Middle East and its implications on Europe but did not highlight the ideological rivalry in the Middle East, the power struggle between two states Iran and Saudi Arabia and how long this conflict affected the Middle Eastern countries.

The Role of the US in the Iran-Saudi Conflict

The world's most powerful economic and military force is a North American country called the United States of America. The United States possessed almost all of the characteristics of a great power; in terms of

population, geographic size and placement on two seas, economic resources, and military perspective, superior to almost all other nations. After World War II, the United States assumed its position as the region's dominant foreign power, focusing on three key issues: the oil in the Persian Gulf, Israel's security as a young nation, and Soviet containment. The objectives proved challenging to accomplish, particularly in light of the growth of Arab nationalism, two significant Arab-Israeli conflicts, and Arab oil sanctions. In the Middle East, oil has long been the U.S.'s top concern. Just before the end of World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt visited with Saudi King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud and talked about oil. Assistance for Israel has been another tenet of American foreign policy in the area. Even when the United Nations voted to divide Palestine into Jewish and Arab governments in 1948, the United governments was one of the first countries to recognize Israel (Gavin, [2023](#)).

The 1953 coup that toppled Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh in Iran, supported by the United States and the United Kingdom, increased Arab suspicion of the United States. Throughout the Cold War, American foreign policy saw the delivery of substantial assistance in a variety of forms to anti-communist and anti-Soviet regimes. Assistance for the State of Israel against its Soviet-backed neighbouring Arab countries during the height of the Arab-Israeli conflict was one of the U.S.'s primary objectives with regard to achieving the aim. In the period between the years 1960 and 1970, the U.S. also took over from the United Kingdom as the primary security supporter for Saudi Arabia and the other Arab states of the Persian Gulf in order to, among other things, guarantee a consistent supply of oil from the Persian Gulf.[1] Except for Iran, with whom contacts were severed following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, and Syria, with

whom relations stopped in 2012 following the start of the Syrian Civil War, the United States has diplomatic ties with every Middle Eastern nation as of 2023 (Harb, [2023](#))

US-Saudi Relations

From the start of Saudi Arabia's exploration of oil in 1933, the United States and Saudi Arabia have had close working ties. Since that time, the two nations have continued to cooperate on economic and security matters, maintaining their close relationship. The US has had an actual presence and military advisory function in Saudi Arabia for a long time. Saudi Arabia is the largest foreign military export partner for the US. While there currently appears to be an alignment of strategy between Saudi Arabia's and the US's priorities in the area, with the main focus on limiting Iran's regional influence, there have been low moments in this relationship that were triggered by significant events. Saudi Arabia has long attempted to strike a balance between its position as an Arab global leader and its close relations with the US (Nawaz, [2023](#)).

Saudi-US Complicated Relation

According to a top counsellor to Prince Salman last March, "relations had undergone a period of difference of opinion" during the final years of the Obama administration. These disagreements were mostly concentrated on Saudi Arabia's refusal to communicate with Iran and the Obama administration's warnings to the country regarding the cost of the Yemen war on civilians. The US, however, is completely supporting Saudi Arabia in its regional role as relations have improved under the government of Donald Trump. Before taking office, President Trump had long held a very unfavourable opinion of the country, declaring that he was "definitely not a big fan" and that the US shouldn't be supporting "Saudi terrorists. "A very

amicable visit by Saudi Arabia's Deputy Crown Prince and Minister of Defense, Prince Mohammed bin Salman, to Washington, DC, highlighted the shift in this viewpoint. The conference's various topics were touched upon in a statement by bin Salman's senior advisor, including the development of economic cooperation, an agreement that Trump's travel ban was appropriate and not a "Muslim ban," and the two leaders' "same views on the gravity of the Iranian expansionist moves in the region.

US-Saudi ties under the Trump Administration

Trump's first overseas journey as US president will take him to Riyadh on Friday. Following that, he will travel to Sicily, Israel, the Vatican City, and Brussels. In the course of the trip, Trump will participate in three summits: the first of which will be with Saudi King Salman, the second will be with the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and the third will be with the heads of state and other senior leaders from a number of Arab and Muslim nations (Chughtal, [2017](#)).

US-Iran Relations

1979 Revolution

Following months of protests and strikes against his authority by secular and religious rivals, Iran's US-backed Shah, Mohammed Reza Pahlevi, is forced to flee the nation on January 16. The Islamic Republic of Iran is established on 1 April after a vote, two weeks after the exiled Islamic religious leader Ayatollah Khomeini comes back.

Hostage Incident in 1979-1981

In this 1979 archive photo, an American prisoner is presented to the media by his Iranian captors. In November 1979,

demonstrators seized the US embassy in Tehran, and American hostages were held there for 444 days. On January 20, 1981, the day of US President Ronald Reagan's inauguration, the final 52 hostages were released. In the 2012 Academy Award-winning film *Argo*, another six Americans who had escaped the embassy are smuggled out of Iran by a group posing as film producers.

1985–1986: In apparent repayment for Tehran's assistance in releasing US hostages held by Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon, the US surreptitiously transferred weaponry to Iran. Reagan faces a political problem as a result of the profits being illegally transferred to Nicaraguan rebels.

1988: Coffins of the victims of the IR655 attack were shot down by an Iranian passenger airliner in Tehran in July 1988. On July 3, an Iran Air flight is shot down by the American cruiser USS Vincennes in the Gulf, killing all 290 passengers and crew. According to the US, the Airbus A300 was misidentified as a fighter plane. Iran-bound Muslims travelling to Mecca make up the majority of the victims (Maceyko, [2005](#)).

2000s: Iran is building nuclear infrastructure, including a uranium enrichment plant, according to information released in 2002 by an Iranian opposition group. Iran denies the US's allegations that it has a covert nuclear weapons project. The next ten years are spent in diplomatic activity and sporadic Iranian cooperation with the UN's nuclear monitoring.

However, the governments of the US, the EU, and Iran's ultra-conservative president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad have been subject to numerous rounds of sanctions. Iran's currency loses two-thirds of its value as a result in just two years.

2002: President George W. Bush attacked Iran in his State of the Union speech, labelling it a member of an "axis of evil" that

also includes Iraq and North Korea. Outrage over the speech is felt throughout Iran.

2013–2016: Hassan Rouhani, moderately new president of Iran, and Barack Obama had their first phone call in more than 30 years in September 2013, a month after Rouhani assumed office. Then, in 2015, following a flurry of diplomatic activity, Iran and the P5+1 (US, UK, France, China, Russia, and Germany) agreed to a long-term deal on its nuclear project. According to the agreement, Iran consents to restrict its delicate nuclear activities and welcome outside inspectors in exchange for the relaxation of punishing economic sanctions.

2019: After being assaulted in the Gulf of Oman, an oil ship can be seen. Donald Trump, the president of the United States, renounced the nuclear agreement in May 2018. He then redispenses economic penalties against Iran and threatens to do the same to nations and companies that continue to purchase its oil. Iran's economy is experiencing a severe downturn. When the US intensified the embargoes aimed at Iran's oil exports in May 2019, relations among the two countries deteriorated. Iran responds by launching a counter-pressure operation.

2020: Gen. Qasem Soleimani, the head of Iran's armed forces, was assassinated by a US drone strike in Iraq on January 3, 2020. Iran withdraws from the 2015 nuclear agreement and swears "severe vengeance" for his passing.

By supporting Saudi Arabia militarily, the US has contributed to the war between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Due to Iran's perception that the US is supporting one side in the conflict, this has led to friction between the US and Iran. The US has also sanctioned Iran, which has heightened tensions between the two nations. Iran has accused the US of intervening in its internal affairs and supporting Saudi Arabia's aggressive actions, while the US has accused Iran of

aiding terrorism and destabilizing the area. (BBC, [2020](#)).

While talking with Iran over nuclear weapons, the US is attempting to reduce Iranian influence within Syria. It opposes the Iranian-allied authority in Syria and supports a Sunni Muslim insurgency in which Islamists have a significant influence. In contrast, it supports the Iranian-allied government in Iraq opposing a Sunni Muslim insurgency in which Islamists have a significant influence. Subsequently, it joins the Assad regime in a deal to get rid of Syria's chemical weapons after calling for the overthrow of the regime but backing off from using force to overthrow it. While advocating for democracy in Egypt, it avoids referring to the military takeover as such. The number of items on this list is endless. This contradiction is not unexpected. The new Middle East Cold War is not how the United States sees the region. Although it is worried about the balance of power in the area, its interests are not as closely related to each step that the struggle for influence between Iran and Saudi Arabia takes. To put it bluntly, Riyadh and Tehran are more concerned with who controls Syria than Washington is. The Obama Administration appears to be completely at ease with its wide range of Middle East objectives, many of which go outside the parameters of the current Middle East Cold War.

Undoubtedly, one of the Administration's main goals is reaching a nuclear agreement with Iran. To secure the agreement, Washington is not, as several in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States believe, eager to abandon the Middle East as an Iranian sphere of dominance.⁵⁶ It is difficult to picture a United States that is so strongly allied with Israel consenting to an Iranian regional hegemony. The Government, on the other hand, views a nuclear agreement as a component of a longer-term plan to

reduce Iranian influence in the region and reassert a more moderate Iran in the international political economy. It has taken many actions to convince the Saudis that a nuclear deal with Tehran does not signify a geopolitical "grand bargain" reaffirming Iranian influence in the region, involving the President's own trip to Riyadh in March 2014.

Conclusion

The United States, Iran, and Israel are the main actors involved in the nuclear program debate. The United States has historically played a significant role in the Middle East, focusing on issues such as oil in the Persian Gulf and Israel's security. The U.S. has had diplomatic ties with most Middle Eastern countries, except for Iran and Syria. The relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia has been close, especially since Saudi Arabia's exploration of oil in 1933. The U.S. has had a military presence and advisory role in Saudi Arabia, and the two countries have cooperated on economic and security matters. While there have been moments of disagreement, the relationship improved under the Trump administration, which supported Saudi Arabia's regional role. Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia in 2017 highlighted the warming ties between the two countries. The recent events have further complicated the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and they have implications for regional dynamics in the Middle East. US-Iran relations have been tumultuous over the years. In 1979, the Islamic Revolution led to the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the seizure of the US embassy in Tehran, resulting in a 444-day hostage crisis. In the 1980s, the US secretly transferred weapons to Iran in exchange for assistance in releasing American hostages held in Lebanon, which became a political controversy. In 1988, a US naval vessel

mistakenly shot down an Iranian passenger airliner, causing further strain. During the 2000s, tensions escalated as Iran was suspected of pursuing a covert nuclear weapons program. The US, along with the EU, imposed sanctions on Iran, leading to a significant economic downturn. In 2002, President George W. Bush labelled Iran as part of an "axis of evil" in a speech, generating outrage in Iran. In 2013-2016, there were positive developments when President Hassan Rouhani and US President Barack Obama had a phone call after three decades of no direct communication. In 2015, Iran and the P5+1 countries reached a long-term nuclear deal, which involved Iran limiting its nuclear activities in exchange for sanctions relief. However, tensions resurfaced in 2018 when President Donald Trump withdrew the US from the nuclear agreement and re-imposed economic sanctions on Iran. The US accused Iran of aggression in the Gulf of Oman, leading to

further deterioration in relations. The assassination of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani in 2020 further escalated tensions, prompting Iran to withdraw from the nuclear deal. The US has also been involved in conflicts indirectly related to Iran, such as supporting Saudi Arabia in its war against Yemen, which has strained relations with Iran. The US has accused Iran of supporting terrorism and destabilizing the region, while Iran has accused the US of interfering in its internal affairs and supporting its rivals. Overall, the US has pursued a complex approach toward Iran, seeking to address the nuclear issue while also aiming to reduce Iranian influence in the region. The US sees a nuclear agreement as part of a broader strategy to moderate Iran's behaviour and reduce its regional dominance. However, there are differing views and contradictions within US policies, reflecting the complexity of the Middle East dynamics.

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