

## Saudi-Iran Conflict: Role of International Factors and Impacts on the Muslim Region

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**Abstract:** *The Saudi-Iran conflict has been a long-standing and complex geopolitical rivalry in the Middle East. This article explores the multifaceted role of international factors in perpetuating the conflict and its profound impacts on the Muslim region. International powers, including the United States and Israel, have played a pivotal role by supporting one side or the other, intensifying the regional turmoil. This Proxy war has escalated sectarian tensions, causing widespread instability and humanitarian crises. The conflict's ramifications extend beyond the Saudi-Iran rivalry, affecting neighboring countries and, in some cases, fomenting extremist ideologies. A comprehensive understanding of these international dynamics is crucial to developing strategies for peace and stability in the region, as this protracted dispute continues to reshape the political landscape of the Muslim world.*

**Key Words:** Sunni-Shia conflict, United States, Israel, Lebanon, Bahrain, Pakistan

### Introduction

Saudi Arabia and Iran are both embroiled in proxy wars across the region as a result of a protracted power struggle to balance the dominance of their various ideologies. They both continue to meddle in the politics and domestic affairs of the neighboring countries to avoid any possibility of each other growing their respective powers in the region. Iran now has a new chance to strengthen its position in the world, thanks to the Arab Spring. There was an uprising between the two regimes. On the one hand, Iran does everything in its power to leverage the critical circumstances at hand to intimidate any regional country with a pro-Saudi regime. On the other side, the Saudi government never backs down in any circumstance where its Iranian ally government finds it unable to preserve its position by putting it through even more awful afflictions.

The rival nations compete for control of Lebanon's military, economic, and cultural sectors, using a variety of strategies. Iran's political

and strategic goals depend on the country, and Iranian Hezbollah has existed since its inception in 1982. The Lebanese confessional system has deeply ingrained sectarian networks and identity blocs, which Saudi Arabia skirts by, among other things, supporting a variety of different Salafi groups throughout Lebanon, funding infrastructure projects in Beirut, and helping with the recovery process after the 2006 war with Israel. Saudi-sponsored construction projects predominate in Beirut's architectural landscape, whereas Iranian investment is much less prevalent and focused in the less affluent southern suburbs of the city. Since it is situated between the two hegemonies, Bahrain is frequently seen as the center of sectarian and geopolitical turmoil. After many years of authoritarian rule in Arab monarchies, the 2011 insurrection was framed along sectarian lines by the ruling Al Khalifa, giving sectarian tensions political and security significance. The Securitization of sectarian violence aimed to ensure the regime's survival by

maintaining the support of Bahrain's Sunni populations and Saudi Arabia's continuous help. Iran has always claimed Bahrain as a historical province due to the nation's proximity to Saudi Arabia, its oil wealth, and potential security implications. Since the King Fahd Causeway was built to prevent Iranian incursions after the revolution, it was used by Saudi-led forces of the Gulf Cooperation Council Peninsula Shield Force to enter Bahrain in response to the 2011 unrest ([McGinn, 2018](#)).

Intense intra-Sunni violence has also been brought to light by Pakistan's sectarian environment. Particularly, the Deobandi Orthodox see the Bareli shrine tradition as heathen. This rivalry grew more heated in the 1990s as Sunni Tehreek, a Bareli group with its headquarters in Karachi, was founded to compete with Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, a Deobandi group. Lashkar-e-Jahangir killed top Sunni Tehreek officials in 2006 in a suicide bombing that was meant to target a religious gathering in Karachi's Nishtar Park.<sup>44</sup> Deobandi militants additionally attacked significant Bareli shrines, including the suicide bombing of Islamabad's Bari Imam in May 2005, which claimed 20 lives; the bombing of Lahore's Data Darbar in October 2010, which claimed 37 lives; and the suicide attack on Sehwan's LalShahbazQalandar in November 2017, which claimed over 80 lives ([Hoang, 2019](#)).

The US has given Saudi Arabia's activities in Yemen full moral, logistical, and intelligence support throughout Obama's term. The US is courting Saudi Arabia as part of its current Middle East strategy. It is consequently involved in almost every issue that occurs in the region. Yemen and Syria are two excellent examples. The US wants to highlight Iran's participation in and support of the Houthis in Yemen. Although the UN Security Council (UNSC) lacked any legal authority to use force, its role remained active in Syria in bringing together the Syrian National Coalition to provide the opposition forces with official international recognition.

Examining the most popular justifications for the Sunni-Shia separation at the local level has shown that neither history nor identity by

themselves can explain the return of the Shia-Sunni rift there. Instead, sectarian (or conversely anti-sectarian) discourse is used by the governments – the leaders, the elite, and even the media – to promote their power and political objectives. Neorealism provides a helpful framework for understanding the anti-Iranian policies of the US and Sunni Arab governments as well as the current realignment of the region against Iran, but it is unable to account for the impact of sectarian identification on the political behavior of states, assuming such an impact even exists. According to many analysts, a loose coalition of countries that are cautious of Iran is formalizing into a strategic alliance. The notions of the Shia-Sunni divide and the Rise of the Shia have been used by the US, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, and the small Gulf states to their advantage to contain Iran and its allies and preserve the stability of US-friendly Sunni Arab regimes. To a certain extent, establishing an artificial division between "Sunni states" and "Shia states," or "moderates" and "radicals," at the regional level promotes the interests of these countries. Although the birth of this sort of discourse was initially significantly motivated by the ongoing conflict in Iraq, "sectarian talk" has been perceptible and intensifying in regional politics and the media since 2006. This is a sign of the sectarianization of regional politics and occurs together with it ([Luomi, 2018](#)).

Both Sunnis and Shia were the organizations that investigated Islam and its teachings from their respective angles and methods. These produced similar results and polarizing beliefs as a result. So the main difference between the two was *ijtihad* inside Madhhab. The essential distinctions were not the focus. It was difficult to deny that Sunni and Shia were similar in many ways because they were both Muslims and members of the same race. Thus, there was no dispute between the madhhabs of Sunni, Shia, or any other. It relates to a difference in interpretation of Islamic beliefs. If necessary, both Sunnis and Shia should be prepared to acknowledge their shortcomings. At the same time, they should value one another and recognize each other's strengths. It must be admitted that

Shia culture has more advanced intellectual traditions than Sunni culture. As evidenced in Ali Shariati's writings, the traditions' interpretation and metaphorical understanding of Islam's principles were their stronger aspects. Shia people were therefore more speculative than Sunni folks. They even agreed with philosophical principles. Shia philosophers continued to advance, whereas Sunni philosophers saw a decline as a result of the belief ([Manan, 2020](#)).

## **Impacts of Sunni-Shia Conflict on the Muslim Region**

### **Impacts on Lebanon**

Following are the main impacts of the Sunni-Shia conflict in Iran and Saudi Arabia on Lebanon. Political deadlock

The Saudi Arabia-Iran confrontation over religious matters has had a profound impact on Lebanon's political deadlock. Since Hezbollah and its backers "stopped supporting the parliament's hearings" for the assembly to elect, and legislators and factions alternately supported by Iran and Saudi Arabia are at odds over the nomination of a new president, the country has been without a leader for almost two years ([Khan, n.d](#)).

### **Iran's Influence on Lebanon's Politics**

Iran now has a stronger chance of influencing Lebanon's political landscape since Hezbollah, its main ally in Lebanon, has developed into one of the country's most potent political forces. Others contend that Hezbollah controls a security system, a military, and a political entity in Lebanon that doesn't just offer a sizable welfare network. Hezbollah is viewed by some as a regional security risk and a global terrorist threat. Furthermore, Hezbollah ensures that if Israel attempted a strike, it would be against Iran's supreme leader rather than other Shias who do not belong to the group and are not supporters of Iraqi Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, has handled Lebanon as if it were its own. To promote its efforts to strengthen Wahabbism, Arabism, and the country's Islamization process through faith and oil revenue, Saudi Arabia saw the brutal

conflict in Lebanon as a means to do so ([Hoang, 2019](#)).

### **To Maintain their Political Supremacy, Prominent Sunni Politicians Start Using Violent, Religious Language**

Presently, prominent Sunni elites are content to let Islamists make insurgency-related appeals. If they begin to lose the support of their main audience, they may be driven to authorize violent confrontation ([Morse, 2015](#)).

### **The Sovereignty of State Institutions, Particularly the Lebanese Army, Is Contested By Sunni Politicians and Elites**

In the majority Sunni narrative, which continues to support the Lebanese government, only extremists like Sheikh Ahmad al-Assir have criticized the Lebanese Army. However, if the Sunni populace begins to believe, like Sheikh Assir, that Hezbollah has gained control of the Military, Sunni leaders may be pushed to publicly condemn the Military.

### **Sunni Gang Tries to Gather More Powerful Weapons**

There is more evidence of local physical power, but it seems to be small. However, if the Sunni community thinks that Syria is responsible for a significant amount of violence, it may feel compelled to arm itself ([Schbley, 2013](#)).

### **Impacts on Bahrain**

Bahrain is ruled by a Sunni monarchy, with the majority of the population being Shiites. The sense of unfairness among the general populace has led to a religious rift. Similar to Yemen, there was unrest in 2011 between the public and the government, especially in the wake of the Arab Spring. The authorities' response was violent. Shiites in the opposition were targeted for kidnapping, murder, and torture. The monarchs referred to them as Iran's fascist dictatorship and blamed them for Iran's support of the Shiite masses. Since the issue could not be contained, Bahrain's government asked the Gulf

Cooperation Council (GCC) for aid. Bahrain convinced the GCC members that Iran was to blame despite Iran's denial of any involvement. According to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah, the revolts of the people of Bahrain are largely comparable to those of the people of Egypt, Tunisia, or Libya. Is it unreasonable to want free votes? Eventually, for the first time in the history of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the group's armed wing was activated, and GCC forces led by Saudi Arabia forcibly put an end to the protests directed at Bahrain's Shiite majority. Saudi Arabia accused Bahrain's Shiite majority of the turmoil there. Some experts assert that Saudi Arabia frequently manipulates sectarian tensions to justify its interference in Middle Eastern countries like Bahrain ([Bardaji, 2016](#)). Saudi Arabia began assisting the Sunni people to put an end to the Shiite uprising, but in reality, like Iran, Saudi Arabia is only paving the path for political involvement. When the Pan-Islamic protests in Bahrain first began, Iran offered support. Iran has once more set the way for its supremacy in the area by waging ideological war against those who oppose the Islamic revolution. To defend its imperialist position against Iran, the Saudi leadership feels compelled to be there whenever Iran enters space ([Alghunaim, 2014](#)).

### **Impacts on Pakistan**

The Sunni and Shia sects give rise to sub-sects. There are twelve different Shia sects, including the Ismailia, Bohra, and IthnaAshari. The Wahhabi-like Ahl-e-Hadith, the Deobandi, and the Sunni Islam Bareilvi are only a few examples of Sunni sects. Dissident experiments and ideas can be pursued in such a society without worrying about animosity or violence. There are sectarian conflicts elsewhere in the world, not just among Muslims in Pakistan. Sectarianism poses a serious threat to Pakistan's security. It has shaken Pakistan's core framework and brought about social unrest, bloodshed, enmity, and instability. Due to sectarian conflict, there has been an increase in bomb attacks, bomb explosions, murders, and terrorist acts throughout the past three decades. Although India periodically poses a threat to Pakistan, the main danger at the

moment is sectarian war. Scholars' opinions on the gravity of the internal problems that sectarianism poses to Pakistan, given that it is undermining society, are divided. Pakistan's society was torn apart by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which sparked sectarian conflict. Saudi Arabia aided the Sunni community in Pakistan, while Iran helped the Shia community. Pakistan's security was jeopardized by the sectarian conflict that stemmed from these ideological differences. Sectarianism has spread throughout Pakistan to the point where many people are losing their lives as a result. The South Asian Terrorism Portal 2009 report (South Asian Terrorism Portal 2009 report 2012) estimates that during the years 2002 and 2008, there were 642 occurrences of sectarian violence, resulting in 1,518 fatalities and 2,817 wounded. Despite being an Islamic country, Pakistan's religious and political leaders divide society into multiple sections and utilize religion for personal benefit ([Alghunaim, 2014](#)). The hardline Islamic parties in Pakistan are also active in Kashmir and Afghanistan. The extremists received their education in these madrassas. In Pakistan, these extremists also give power to Sunnis who murder Shia, and in retaliation, Shia kill Sunnis. These problems substantially jeopardize national security and cause instability in the country. The sectarian conflict was previously only present in disagreements between religious leaders, not suicide assaults on mosques and targets during the procession. Due to sectarian violence, the nation is currently in peril. Nearly all of the South Asian nations, including Pakistan, continue to be plagued by terrorism, sectarianism, and religious, racial, and political violence ([Kalim, 2016](#)). The inability of the state to simply provide stability resulted in the "Marketization of Stability," where "Small Arms" and "Light Weapons" have emerged as the primary instruments of violence in racial and other internal conflicts by both state and non-state actors, endangering the lives and wellbeing of defenseless civilians. These wars have resulted in numerous deaths, risking life itself. A welfare state is important, but national defense cannot be achieved without it. A state owes it to its

inhabitants to protect them against the dangers of sectarian and ethnic conflict ([Afzal, 2012](#)).

## **Role of International Factors in Conflict**

### **Role of the United States in the Conflict**

The dispute between the Shia and Sunnis over the caliphate of the Prophet Muhammad in the 7th century is largely to blame for the long-standing animosity between Iran and Saudi Arabia. In the modern era, differences between Shias and Sunnis have become increasingly pronounced due to a variety of reasons, most notably politics. These differences are more about style than belief. Radicals on both sides consider the opposing perspectives to be heretics (Malik, 2017). Shi'as today make up a very small minority in the Islamic world as a whole, whereas Sunnis make up a very large majority. The Islamic Republic of Iran considers itself to be the world's foremost Shia power, and its ideology is based on advancing its interests. The struggle for control in the region had given rise to a wide range of differences on issues such as religion, oil policy, support for competing regional organizations, and relations with the US. Saudi Arabia maintained tight connections with the US whereas Iran severed them after the revolution of 1979. After the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, which strengthened Iraqi Shias and increased Iranian influence at the expense of Iraqi Sunnis, sectarian regional alliances and sectarianism grew. For control of the region, Iran and Saudi Arabia had been constantly engaged in proxy conflicts in states including Yemen, Iraq, and Syria. Many world leaders in the contemporary age support the Saudi Monarch, a key ally of the United States ([Krause, 2019](#)). Saudi Arabia, an oil-rich country, was a dependable consumer of goods from the West, particularly arms. Recently, the competition has gotten worse. Shia leader Sheikh Nimr al Nimr was one of the 47 people executed on January 2, 2016. There had been Shia protests against Nimr's death in a number of the countries in the area. He previously urged for the establishment of a separate Shia state in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province, which was home to a substantial Shia majority. He was a fierce opponent of the Saudi

ruling class. On January 3, 2016, Saudi Arabia severed ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran. ([Sayed, 2019](#)). Bahrain, Sudan, and the UAE are just a few of the countries that cut or ended diplomatic ties with Iran after Saudi Arabia. One expert labeled the move as "a dangerous escalation of the rivalry with potential consequences for the peace talks in Syria and the ongoing conflict in Yemen." Saudi Arabia has requested that the recently conducted emergency Arab League summit address the deterioration of diplomatic ties between it and Iran, which has engulfed other regional countries in conflict ([Nikookar, 2014](#)). In a statement released during the summit, the Arab League "vilified" Iran for its attacks on the Saudi Embassy in Tehran and said that Iran was to blame for "intentionally acting against peaceful goals and stoking sectarian strife between Shia and Sunni Muslims in the Muslim World." The continuous disputes between Sunnis and Shias are entirely the fault of Saudi Arabia, claims an editorial in the Independent ([Jahedi, 2014](#)). The JCPOA, the nuclear agreement made with Iran a year ago that reduces its nuclear aspirations in exchange for the lifting of sanctions, is what has caused the most recent tensions with Saudi Arabia. The agreement was the most significant and initial move towards perhaps improving relations between the West and Iran. That didn't go over well with the Saudis, and as a result, tensions have increased. Iran's foreign minister, Javad Zarif, has charged Saudi Arabia with inciting unrest in the area. Instantly disputing the accusation, the Arab League members pointed the finger at Iran for fomenting sectarian conflict. According to Zarif, Saudi Arabia is to blame for the worsening regional unrest because it is afraid that normalizing relations with Iran will disclose its fervent support for violent extremism. With the very recent JCPOA, he claimed, the world will finally be able to pay attention to the severe problem of terrorism that is destroying the region. Saudi Arabia was afraid that Iran would become more dependent on the US as a result of the recent final agreement, which had brought about a new era of cooperation between the US and Iran. The Saudi strategy, according to Zarif, consists of three parts: upsetting Iran directly,

applying pressure to the West, igniting worldwide turmoil by waging war in Yemen and promoting extremism. These three elements work together to undermine the nuclear agreement and exacerbate regional unrest. Despite these incidents, Iran has so far refrained from retaliating against Saudi Arabia, according to Zarif, because of its prudent management. Many blame Iran for the issues and draw attention to Iran's role in countless acts of terrorism. For instance, in 1995, Hezbollah attacked US Air Force personnel, resulting in the deaths of 19 Americans. The Hezbollah organization in Saudi Arabia had connections to the mother Hezbollah in Lebanon. Iran backs Hezbollah in Lebanon. To fight the Islamic State (IS), a sizable Muslim coalition headed by Saudi Arabia was organized in December 2015. Saudi Arabia's move is consistent with American thinking that armed Sunni Muslim resistance was the most effective strategy for battling and ultimately defeating the IS. The US would provide operational and informational support to the coalition. However, the bilateral relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia is currently quite stressed and may need to be reconsidered, at least in Saudi Arabia. The US needs to act right away to calm the tension in the Persian Gulf. The US should vigorously and effectively resist Iranian agitation to reassure Saudi Arabia of its support ([Hashim, 2016](#)). The country couldn't reclaim its deterrent power in the future and persuade Iran to give up its clandestine nuclear objectives due to the catastrophic degradation of American credibility. While the importance of American safeguards diminished, Saudi Arabia was responding to the Iranian challenge in its clumsy way, such as by executing a Shiite agitator and attacking Houthi rebels in Yemen. In essence, it suggested that the Muslim World will remain hazardous and antagonistic to US interests. However, Saudi Arabia and Iran must share responsibility for the problems. Iran was a medieval religious theocracy that also violated human rights, as was Saudi Arabia, a medieval monarchy that appeared to be concerned with faith. On the other side, the Saudi government has backed extremist Sunni groups that are at war with Shia militants. The indirect

battle has been going on for years. Without a doubt, the executions on January 2 indicated Saudi Arabia's growing concern over unrest. The Saudi kingdom faced challenges, particularly in the economic sphere. It was said that Saudi Arabia's government finances could only be maintained for a brief period, even with a massive loan of 5% of the economy. However, Saudi Arabia's search for a different alliance was getting more expensive. The Saudis recently promised Egypt \$8 billion. A thorough Saudi Arabian conflict that had lasted longer than expected had taken place in Yemen. Additionally, it supported a proxy war in Syria. However, others truly wanted Saudi Arabia to support Sunnis against Iran's Shia population to fight the horrible ideology of the Islamists.

The United States must take the initiative by engaging in diplomatic discussions and controlling media coverage. Alert all parties right away to the danger that unrest will pose to the region's stability. In this circumstance, the United States must enlist allies. Bring on the Gulf States, Turkey, Pakistan, the UK, and France. At this point, only effective negotiation can reduce tension. Also, make use of the United Nations Secretary General's and leading European diplomats' good offices. It can only be done by the United States of America. The United States is unable in any way to choose a side in a long-standing Shia-Sunni conflict. The objective of the US is to exert some influence over Iran. The nuclear deal with Iran was a crucial first step in the correct direction. Despite Saudi assumptions, the US needs to engage in ties with Iran; as a result, the Iranian government needs to be recognized. The United States does not need to interfere in Iran. Just admit that we must now strengthen our connections with Iran. To its credit, the Obama administration battled valiantly yesterday to approve the nuclear deal. Now is the time to take it a step further and recognize the Islamic Republic. To allay Saudi concerns, the United States must indirectly assist the Kingdom by supporting the recently established coalition of significant Muslim states ([Modebadze, 2019](#)). Through allies like Pakistan and Turkey, the United States can and should

support Saudi Arabia's defense. The US can provide some defensive resources and training once the new partnership structure is up and running. The goal is to interact with both tactfully while remaining unbiased. It demands immediate action ([Mahmood, 2016](#)).

### **Role of Israel in the Conflict**

It is becoming evident that the fundamental cause of stress in the Arab World today is not the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict but the Sunni-Shiite division inside Islam. For a long time, the Sunni-Shiite conflict served as the foundation for Lebanon's internal conflict, which the Shiites ultimately prevailed in owing to Hezbollah. The Sunni-Shiite conflict, which also served as the impetus for the Shiite rebellion against Bahrain's Sunni rulers, is responsible for a sizable chunk of the civil war in Yemen, where Zayidi Shiites are fighting the country's Sunni-led government. A full-scale battle between Sunnis and Shiites could start due to the region's rising hostilities, according to Mohammad Kharroub, a columnist for the Jordanian daily al-Ra'i. Currently, it appears that Israel's goals in this conflict are linked to Sunnis, in large part because Iran supports the Shiites' aspirations for power. Looking beyond the present, is it true that Israel will always support the Sunni world against the Shiites? Iranian-born former U.S. official Vali Nasr reminds his readers of the false beliefs that pervaded the American defense establishment regarding the Sunni-Shiite division: He uses the words of a Pentagon official from the 1980s who called Shiites "bloodthirsty, baby-eating monsters." These overt biases had a political backdrop. At the time, the U.S. was funding the Afghan mujahedeen and their Sunni extremist allies who were battling the Soviet army, while Lebanese Shiites had engaged American Marines in combat in Beirut. Israel's interpretation of these ideas was distinct. In the 1980s, Israeli defense experts frequently asserted that Sunnis were not participating in terrorism. However, the expansion of Hamas and al-Qaida on the Sunni side showed how generalized these beliefs had been, particularly in the wake of the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, terrorist attacks ([Naeem, 2020](#)).

It can be observed that Israel's role in the Saudi-Iran conflict is complex and multifaceted, though not always explicitly acknowledged. Israel shares common concerns and interests with Saudi Arabia in countering Iranian influence in the region. These common interests include the desire to contain Iran's nuclear ambitions, limit its regional influence, and address the threat posed by Iran-backed militant groups such as Hezbollah ([Gold, 2012](#)).

Israel and Saudi Arabia have, to some extent, engaged in covert cooperation, intelligence sharing, and diplomatic initiatives aimed at curbing Iran's regional activities. This alignment of interests has been driven by their shared concerns about Iran's expanding influence and regional destabilization. However, it is important to note that Israel's official stance has often been to remain publicly neutral in the Saudi-Iran conflict. Israel's open involvement could risk inflaming regional tensions and exacerbate its security situation. Israel is not openly participating in the conflict but is often aligned with Saudi Arabia in opposing Iranian influence ([Mahmood, 2016](#)).

In the Middle East, Israel must protect its national interests, particularly in light of Iran's rising threat to develop nuclear weapons. Yet, it should avoid being involved in the Sunni-Shiite conflict as a result of false perceptions about either side ([Gold, 2012](#)).

### **Conclusion**

The Sunni-Shia conflict harmed Muslim regions as well, resulting in political turmoil and two years of no leadership in Lebanon. Bahrain's population is estimated to be around 1.6 million as of the year 2020, with between 65 and 75 percent of the overall population being Shi'ites. Iran viewed it as a nation that should have fallen under its sphere of influence automatically but is instead ruled by a Sunni dynasty. Iran has established proxies in Bahrain and tried to overthrow the government numerous times. Opposition groups started protests in Bahrain on February 14, 2011, in response to Iran's ongoing support for the "Islamic awakening." Their top

priorities included increased freedom, reforms, fair and free elections, and the liberation of prisoners. Saudi Arabia faced a significant challenge when an uprising against the government quickly spread throughout Bahrain. Saudi Arabia was worried that the uprising might have consequences for its own prosperous Eastern Province, which is home to a sizable Shi'ite community (Shi'ites make up about 10% to 15% of Saudi society or about 2 to 4 million people). Saudi Arabia consequently responded quickly and effectively. It initially used the Sunni populace of Bahrain's hostility to the uprisings as leverage before exploiting a security clause in the Gulf Cooperation Council to justify a military invasion. The main objectives of Saudi Arabia in Bahrain were to preserve the status quo, guarantee the survival of a favorable rule, and put a stop to the uprising. Bahrain consequently became the center of an ongoing proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Due to its proximity to the Saudi border, Bahrain, an island nation in the Persian Gulf, is in a very important geostrategic position. Iran continued to back the protests as a consequence and condemned what Bahrain and Saudi Arabia were doing to the protesters. Ayatollah Khamenei responded to Saudi and Bahraini claims of interference by saying, "The leader of the island of Bahrain asserts that Iran interferes in their internal affairs; this is a falsehood." If we had acted, the situation in Bahrain would have been different.

Shi'ite organizations supported by Iran had problems as a result of Saudi engagement in Bahrain, which ultimately played a part in the episode's role in fueling anti-"other" sentiments and strained relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Around 20% of Pakistan's population is Shi'a, and the political confrontation between Iran and Saudi Arabia there had an effect. Saudi Arabia supported and promoted Sunni Wahhabi ideas while simultaneously stoking anti-Shiite sentiment in Pakistan at the beginning of the 1980s, as Iran increased its support for Shiites throughout the region to contain Iran and shield Pakistan from Iranian revolutionary philosophy. Some of the vilest terrorist organizations gained notoriety as a result of the terrible division that

ensued and are actively promoting sectarian violence in Pakistan today. India has always represented a threat to Pakistan from the east, and the country is still in the emerging stages with weak economic roots. Pakistan must strike a balance in this situation between the necessity to rely on outside help to meet its defense needs and the desire to defend its West against an assertive East. Pakistan has long sought to influence Afghanistan to safeguard its western border while remaining careful of its connections with Iran owing to the Saudi factor, even though Saudi Arabia has greatly contributed to and supported Pakistan's military expansion.

The situation might have been different if Iran had the same financial sway as Saudi Arabia and had been eager to support Pakistan's economy in the same manner. Saudi Arabia, which has consistently offered Pakistan the assistance it requires, is fully aware of Pakistan's Achilles heel. However, recent regional developments, particularly the Iran-US nuclear agreement, have changed the context. Pakistan cannot ignore Iran as it grows in importance. It also cannot abandon Saudi Arabia at the same time, though. Due to this complicated formula, Pakistan has been compelled to take a very cautious approach and will probably do so shortly. Iran, while being a Muslim country, threatens not only Saudi Arabia but also all the other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council if it obtains nuclear weapons. Saudi Arabia, which has a history of supporting Pakistan, has a compelling reason for approaching Pakistan to provide nuclear technology. This would put Pakistan under a lot of pressure because it has already been accused of facilitating the spread of nuclear weapons, and Pakistan has been left out in the cold while India has been able to gain concessions from the Nuclear Suppliers Group as a result of its arrangement with the USA. Nevertheless, the issue is not anticipated to destabilize the situation because of the recent nuclear agreement between the West and Iran. Pakistan has suffered the most from the Saudi-Iran dispute in the energy sector, specifically the electricity sector. Pakistan has a national goal to seek long-term agreements and create the necessary infrastructure to obtain



energy from Iran. Two countries will be able to work together as a result, leading to interdependence. Saudi Arabia, however, disagrees with this idea. All of these deteriorate relations between Pakistan and Iran, something Pakistan cannot currently afford.

The United States does not want to re-enter into massive and lengthy conflicts in the region. International factors also play a vital role in conflict. The best course of action is to remain unassuming and impartial. The United States looks unwilling to intervene at this moment, despite appeals to stand with Saudi Arabia in opposition to the Iranian regime. It is best to communicate with both to reduce tensions. The US quietly collaborates behind the scenes with Pakistan and Turkey to reduce tension. It would be unacceptable for the Obama administration to openly oppose Iran or even openly support the

Saudis. A cautious approach is required. In conclusion, maintaining official neutrality while working behind the scenes to bring the two foes together would be the best course of action for the United States. Therefore, the United States must take the lead in stabilizing the region. The United States needs to act right away to defuse the situation. When the Middle East is stable and peaceful, the world is safer. Israel has also significantly contributed to the escalation of the Sunni-Shi'ite conflict to defend its national interests in the Middle East. Contrarily, Israel must defend its national interests in the Middle East, particularly in light of Iran's increasing threat to develop nuclear weapons. Despite this, because of false beliefs about both sides, it should keep away from the Sunni-Shiite conflict.

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