

T.C. KOCAELİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER ANABİLİM DALI
ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER BİLİM DALI

**TURKEY AND SAUDI ARABIA REGIONAL
CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE AFTER THE ARAB
SPRING:
A PERSPECTIVE FROM NEOCLASSICAL REALISM**

(DOKTORA TEZİ)

Aboubeid AHMADI

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Tezi Hazırlayan: Aboubeid AHMADI

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ABSTRACT

Turkey and Saudi Arabia are two important and influential countries in the sensitive and strategic region of the Middle East, both of which have gone through a long history of political and military developments and relations. Saudi Arabia intends to expand its power and influence through cooperation and alliances with Western countries and regional countries to emerge as a regional hegemon. On the other hand, since the establishment of the Justice and Development Party, Turkey has turned its attention to the Middle East region and tried to increase its role in the region's development and eventually become the superior power in the area. Considering the particular situation of the Middle East region in recent years, the developments in this region have caused Turkey and Saudi Arabia to take advantage of this opportunity to increase their power. In this regard, they adopted priorities and took extensive measures. When these actions are in the direction of aligned interests, they will cause convergence and cooperation in their relations, however when they are against each other's interests, they will cause divergence and conflict in the two countries' relations.

The Arab Spring marked a transformative period in the Middle East, characterized by widespread protests, political upheavals, and shifts in regional dynamics. Amidst these tumultuous events, the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia underwent a complex interplay of convergence and divergence, driven by their distinct foreign policy priorities, regional ambitions, and ideological orientations. From a neoclassical realist perspective, it is evident that both countries were influenced by a combination of systemic pressures and domestic factors. Saudi Arabia, as a conservative monarchy with a vested interest in maintaining the status quo, initially viewed the Arab Spring as a threat to regional stability and sought to counter any potential challenges to established regimes. Turkey, on the other hand, saw the uprisings as opportunities to promote democratic change and extend its influence in the region, leveraging its historical ties and shared cultural affinities.

The areas of convergence between Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring were centered on certain strategic concerns and shared interests. Both countries cooperated in addressing regional challenges, such as the Syrian conflict and humanitarian assistance, where their objectives aligned to promote stability and mitigate humanitarian crises. Additionally, their participation in international

platforms and organizations allowed them to find common ground on various issues of regional importance. However, the competition between the two countries was equally pronounced, revealing their divergent perspectives and contrasting policy approaches. This was notably exemplified by their differing views on the Muslim Brotherhood and the Qatar crisis.

In conclusion, the Arab Spring period provided a backdrop for the convergence and divergence of Turkish-Saudi relations, revealing the complexity of their interactions in the context of shifting regional dynamics. The neoclassical realist approach offers insights into how systemic pressures and domestic factors influenced their foreign policy decisions. Ultimately, their engagement during this period was a reflection of their contrasting visions for the future of the Middle East, as well as their strategic calculations in a region undergoing profound change. As the Middle East continues to evolve, the lessons learned from the convergence and divergence of Turkish-Saudi relations during the Arab Spring remain pertinent for understanding the dynamics of regional politics and diplomacy.

Keywords: The Arab Spring, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Middle East, convergence and cooperation, divergence, and competition

ÖZET

Türkiye ve Suudi Arabistan, Ortadoğu gibi hassas ve stratejik bir bölgede yer alan iki önemli ve etkili ülkedir ve her ikisi de uzun bir siyasi ve askeri gelişmeler ve ilişkiler geçmişine sahiptir. Suudi Arabistan, bölgesel bir hegemon olarak ortaya çıkmak için Batılı ülkeler ve bölge ülkeleriyle işbirliği ve ittifaklar yoluyla gücünü ve etkisini artırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Öte yandan Türkiye, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi'nin kuruluşundan bu yana dikkatini Ortadoğu bölgesine çevirmiş ve bölgenin kalkınmasındaki rolünü artırmaya ve nihayetinde bölgede üstün güç olmaya çalışmıştır. Ortadoğu bölgesinin son yıllardaki özel durumu göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, bu bölgede yaşanan gelişmeler Türkiye ve Suudi Arabistan'ın güçlerini arttırmak için bu fırsatı değerlendirmelerine neden olmuştur. Bu bağlamda öncelikler benimsemişler ve kapsamlı önlemler almışlardır. Bu eylemler ortak çıkarlar doğrultusunda olduğunda ilişkilerde yakınlaşma ve işbirliğine, birbirlerinin çıkarlarına aykırı olduğunda ise iki ülke ilişkilerinde ayrışma ve çatışmaya neden olacaktır.

Arap Baharı, Orta Doğu'da yaygın protestolar, siyasi çalkantılar ve bölgesel dinamiklerdeki değişimlerle karakterize edilen dönüştürücü bir döneme işaret etti. Bu çalkantılı olayların ortasında, Türkiye ve Suudi Arabistan arasındaki ilişkiler, farklı dış politika öncelikleri, bölgesel hırsları ve ideolojik yönelimleri tarafından yönlendirilen karmaşık bir yakınlaşma ve uzaklaşma etkileşiminden geçmiştir. Neoklasik realist bir perspektiften bakıldığında, her iki ülkenin de sistemik baskılar ve iç faktörlerin bir kombinasyonundan etkilendiği açıktır. Statükonun korunmasında çıkarı olan muhafazakâr bir monarşi olarak Suudi Arabistan, başlangıçta Arap Baharı'nı bölgesel istikrara yönelik bir tehdit olarak görmüş ve yerleşik rejimlere yönelik olası meydan okumalara karşı koymaya çalışmıştır. Türkiye ise ayaklanmaları demokratik değişimi teşvik etmek ve tarihi bağlarını ve ortak kültürel yakınlıklarını kullanarak bölgedeki nüfuzunu genişletmek için bir fırsat olarak gördü.

Arap Baharı sırasında Türkiye ve Suudi Arabistan arasındaki yakınlaşma alanları belirli stratejik kaygılar ve ortak çıkarlar üzerinde yoğunlaşmıştır. Her iki ülke de istikrarı destekleme ve insani krizleri azaltma hedeflerinin örtüştüğü Suriye çatışması ve insani yardım gibi bölgesel zorlukların ele alınmasında işbirliği yapmıştır. Ayrıca, uluslararası platform ve örgütlere katılımları, bölgesel öneme sahip çeşitli konularda ortak bir zemin bulmalarını sağladı. Bununla birlikte, iki ülke arasındaki

rekabet de aynı derecede belirgindi ve farklı bakış açılarını ve zıt politika yaklaşımlarını ortaya koyuyordu. Bu durum özellikle Müslüman Kardeşler ve Katar krizi konusundaki farklı görüşleriyle örneklenmiştir.

Sonuç olarak, Arap Baharı dönemi Türk-Suudi ilişkilerinin yakınlaşması ve ayrışması için bir zemin oluşturmuş ve değişen bölgesel dinamikler bağlamında etkileşimlerinin karmaşıklığını ortaya koymuştur. Neoklasik realist yaklaşım, sistemik baskıların ve iç faktörlerin dış politika kararlarını nasıl etkilediğine dair içgörüler sunmaktadır. Nihayetinde, bu dönemdeki angajmanları, Orta Doğu'nun geleceğine yönelik zıt vizyonlarının ve derin bir değişim geçiren bir bölgedeki stratejik hesaplarının bir yansımasıydı. Orta Doğu gelişmeye devam ederken, Arap Baharı sırasında Türk-Suudi ilişkilerindeki yakınlaşma ve ayrışmadan çıkarılan dersler, bölgesel siyaset ve diplomasinin dinamiklerini anlamak için geçerliliğini korumaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Arab Baharı, Suudi Arabistan, Türkiye, Orta Doğu, yakınlaşma ve işbirliği, ayrışma ve rekabet

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid changes unleashed by the Arab Spring initially amplified the rivalry between Ankara and Riyadh. However, constraints imposed by relative power capabilities, economic interdependence, and common threats also nurtured cooperation. The waxing and waning of tensions provide insights into the complexity of alignment patterns between these two pivotal Muslim powers.

This research looks at the dynamics of convergence and divergence between these two regional powers during the Arab Spring, giving insight into the interplay of international systemic factors, state-level variables, and leadership views within the framework of neoclassical realism. By taking into account the interplay between systemic influences, state qualities, and decision-makers' views, neoclassical realism provides a complete prism through which to study nations' foreign policy choices. It stresses that domestic issues and leaders' perceptions of those considerations impact state conduct in addition to structural reasons. This theoretical paradigm is especially significant for researching Saudi Arabia and Turkey's convergence and divergence during the Arab Spring, as it gives insights into how these nations responded to the shifting regional scene. During the Arab Spring, the convergence and divergence factors influencing Saudi Arabia and Turkey were affected by a complex interaction of regional dynamics, internal politics, historical alliances, economic interests, and perceptions of change. These factors influenced the countries' diverse reactions to the upheaval and highlighted their pursuit of divergent routes in addressing the difficulties and possibilities given by the Arab Spring.

By tracing the nuances of Turkish-Saudi relations during the fluid events of the Arab Spring, this thesis aims to provide a more complete and nuanced understanding of the factors impacting relations between major regional powers in the Middle East. The focus is on comprehending the complex mix of dynamics that produce divergence and convergence.

Saudi Arabia and Turkey are among the most influential and important countries in the Middle East. Turkey is an essential and effective country in the Middle East due to being a member of NATO, being located in a geopolitically sensitive

strategic area, and having the Dardanelles and Bosphorus straits. Saudi Arabia has particular importance in the Middle East because it has enormous oil and energy reserves, is an ally of the United States of America in the region, and is the center of the Islamic world. The Middle East region has always been a field of balancing, and the formation of regional and international alliances and coalitions results from this balancing. Such a situation results from a comprehensive set of factors at this strategic region's global, regional, national, and even transnational levels. With its geostrategic importance, this region has always been the focus of trans-regional powers, regional powers, and various actors in recent decades. Each of them has tried to take steps according to their strength and power and the existing realities in the direction of their goals and interests. In such an atmosphere, the conflict and compatibility of interests between different powers in areas of common influence or areas with relative overlaps are naturally increasing.

Saudi Arabia is trying to expand its power and influence through cooperation and alliances with Western countries and countries in the region to emerge as a regional leader. On the other hand, due to its unique geographical location, Turkey has played an essential role in the strategic and geopolitical developments of the Middle East region. Westernization was the main direction of Turkey's foreign policy for a long time, especially during the Cold War. Despite the historical, cultural, and geographical shares, the East and the Middle East did not have much place for this country.

Nevertheless, this attention increased with the coming to power of the Justice and Development Party and the failure of membership in the European Union. Turkey adopted a new model in its foreign policy, focusing on the Middle East as one of its target areas. Meanwhile, Turkey has had a fluid and pragmatic foreign policy with an intelligent approach. This country also has a fusion of East and West identities and tries to revive its past identity. In this regard, Turkey's new discourse has required active regional diplomacy to increase its role in the developments and eventually become the superior power in the region. As important and influential countries of the Islamic world and the Middle East, Saudi Arabia and Turkey were known for having a conservative approach to their foreign policies. Saudi Arabia was known more as an actor that supported the status quo and opposed change. On the other hand, before the

Justice and Development Party came to power, Turkey had adopted a policy towards the West and refused to enter into developments in the Middle East. But the behavior of these two countries during the last decade in the regional arena shows the transition from the past approach.

The relations between Saudi Arabia and Turkey are highly affected by regional issues in the Middle East, and the approach of both countries to developments in the Middle East will also affect bilateral relations. Saudi Arabia and Turkey have had relations for a long time. The 2003 Iraq war brought together Ankara and Riyadh's regional and national interests in Iraq and other Middle Eastern nations. After 2003, the two nations' relationship was successful in terms of high-level visits, bilateral agreements, trade balance, investment volume, arms sales, and, most significantly, enhancing Turkey's image in Saudi Arabia and Saudi Arabia's image in Turkey. In the shadow of contradictory ambitions between Riyadh and Ankara during the reign of King Abdullah, the relations between the two countries went through many ups and downs, even leading to their termination. In 2006, King Abdullah visited Turkey for three days. This was the first visit of the King of Saudi Arabia to Turkey since the establishment of Saudi Arabia in 1923. With the election of Abdullah Gul as the President of Turkey, the second visit of the King of Saudi Arabia to Ankara took place in November 2007.

This meeting was an attempt by the two countries to adopt common positions regarding the developments in the region (Lebanon's presidential crisis, the beginning of peace talks between the Arabs and Israel, and the escalation of insecurity in Iraq). On January 4, 2009, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited Saudi Arabia, intending to discuss Israel's attack on the Gaza Strip (2008–2009). In 2016, Turkish Prime Minister Davutoglu visited Saudi Arabia. In this meeting, the parties agreed upon the proposal to form a high strategic council between the two countries. Turkey hoped that with this plan, the amount of Saudi Arabia's investment in this country would increase. In general, the regional developments forced Riyadh and Ankara to reconsider their calculations toward each other so that they could take steps toward increasing their regional power and influence. On the other hand, closer relations with Riyadh as a friend in the region align with Erdogan's calculations,

especially since he is suffering from regional isolation after the failure of his calculations regarding the Arab Spring.

Considering the strategic and geostrategic position of the Middle East in recent years, the developments in this region caused the regional powers (Saudi Arabia and Turkey) to use this opportunity to take extensive measures to expand their influence and increase their power. These actions cause convergence when they are in the direction of mutual interests, and when they are against their interests, they cause divergence and conflict. The fear of gaining power and Iran's move towards regional hegemony have increased the convergence of relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, and the two countries are trying to prevent Iran's ideological growth in the region. Considering the unknown situation ahead and considering the Arab revolutions of 2011 and the Syrian crisis, the convergence between Saudi Arabia and Turkey is likely to increase. The economic basis of relations between Saudi Arabia and Turkey is another reason for the convergence of the parties. With the continuation of the competition to become the superior regional power, deepening and expanding relations between the two countries has increased and will continue due to the fear of Iran gaining power. However, due to the existence of different government systems in Saudi Arabia and Turkey and different perceptions of Islam, there are also differences in the relations between the two countries. Also, Turkey is considered one of the Middle East's non-Arab countries, which can be a reason for the divergence of the parties and push Turkey towards an alliance with the non-Arab countries of the region, such as Israel.

After the Justice and Development Party came to power, let us look at the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia strategically. The political elite of the Justice and Development Party have a different view of the Islamic world than their predecessors. In other words, protesting against the European Union's behavior in not accepting Turkey as a new union member changed Turkey's approach towards the Islamic world. Economic cooperation and the energy market can push the two countries of Saudi Arabia and Turkey towards each other, and by being closer in economic and energy issues, they can also get closer to each other in political and security components and prevent Iran from becoming hegemonic in the region. Saudi Arabia has a problem with Iran regarding belief; it considers itself the pole of the

Islamic world and Sunnis. In the meantime, Turkey does not want to be in ideological competition with Iran, but it can have differences with Iran in terms of strategy and politics. Both seek to prevent Iran's influence and the transformation of Iran as a regional power.

During the Arab Spring, Saudi Arabia and Turkey's interests, policies, and actions converged and diverged as they responded to the wave of demonstrations and political upheavals sweeping the Middle East and North Africa. In international relations, convergence and divergence refer to the alignment or divergence of interests, aims, and actions of two or more states. During the Arab Spring, these elements had a vital influence in influencing Saudi Arabia's and Turkey's responses to the regional upheaval. The Arab Spring, a wave of demonstrations, uprisings, and political upheavals that swept throughout the Middle East and North Africa beginning in 2010, marked the beginning of a period of dramatic change in the area. Among the nations immediately affected by this wave of upheaval, Saudi Arabia and Turkey stood out as crucial players, each handling the turbulent terrain in their own way. The Arab revolutions harmed relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia due to the two nations' differing reactions to them and a clash of regional interests. While Turkey saw these protests as a necessary step toward establishing a healthy relationship with the Arab world and its new leadership, and eventually for regional peace and security, Saudi Arabia saw them as anarchy and a source of regional instability.

From the perspective of the theory of neoclassical realism, it can be said that the converging and diverging factors in the relations between Saudi Arabia and Turkey during the Arab Spring period are as follows.

Influencing Convergence

Shared Perceptions and Convergence: Both Saudi Arabia and Turkey had a same assessment of the growing regional dynamics at the start of the Arab Spring. The fall of established administrations, such as Egypt's Hosni Mubarak dictatorship and Syria's President Bashar al- Assad's leadership, provided opportunities for both countries to increase their influence. Their shared fears about Iran's increasing status as a regional adversary and the possibility of a power realignment in the Middle East resulted in a convergence of interests. Because of their similar perspective of the

regional balance of power, both governments sought options for collaboration and coordination in determining the consequences of the Arab Spring.

Regional Influence and Power: The desire of power and influence by nations within the international system is a major subject of neoclassical realism. Saudi Arabia and Turkey were both motivated by a desire to demonstrate their leadership and improve their positions in the Middle East during the Arab Spring. Saudi Arabia's historical position as a protector of Sunni interests in the area collided with Turkey's desire to reclaim its historical status as a regional force. This confluence of goals resulted in collaborative attempts to shape the outcomes of the Arab Spring in ways that benefited their interests, such as aiding opposition parties in Syria and attempting to balance Iran's influence in Iraq.

Religion and Common Concerns about Iran: Saudi Arabia and Turkey both expressed alarm over Iran's expanding regional influence. Turkey is worried about the increasing presence of Iran in the Eastern Mediterranean region, such as Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon. Religion is another factor in the proximity and convergence of the two countries. Turkey cannot be placed next to Wahhabism, but the tendency toward Sunnis increases their convergence. However, Turkey's approach, at least in the last decade, as the pole of the Islamic world and a power in the Islamic world can naturally cause conflict and divergence with Saudi Arabia. The Arab Spring provided an opportunity to counterbalance Iran's growing clout, pushing both nations to look for methods to limit Tehran's reach and regional aspirations. Saudi Arabia and Turkey both expressed alarm over Iran's expanding regional influence.

Support for Opposition Movements: During the Arab Spring, both Saudi Arabia and Turkey backed opposition movements in a number of countries, most notably Syria. They hoped to take advantage of the uprisings' potential to further their interests by assisting parties with similar goals.

Stability: Despite their differences, Saudi Arabia and Turkey both want regional stability. The threat of widespread unrest in the aftermath of the Arab Spring spurred both nations to work toward preserving some level of stability in order to prevent anarchy from spreading.

However, the onset of the Arab Spring brought about new geopolitical dynamics that transformed Turkey's relations with the Gulf. The rise of new geopolitics in the region altered the nature of Turkey's relations with the Gulf, leading to divergent paths with certain countries. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia found themselves at odds with Turkey, while a closer strategic alignment emerged between Turkey and Qatar. This realignment reflected the antagonism between Turkey, UAE, and Saudi Arabia on one side, and the growing cooperation between Turkey and Qatar on the other side. These developments signified a divergence in their stances and strategies, particularly in the context of the Arab Spring's impact on the region.

Influencing Divergence

Internal Political Dynamics: Saudi Arabia's and Turkey's domestic political dynamics influenced their responses to the Arab Spring. Saudi Arabia's monarchy and conservative beliefs influenced its cautious approach to change, emphasizing stability and existing ties. Turkey's leadership, led by the Justice and Development Party (AKP), adopted a more active stance, pushing political Islam and its own style of governance.

Regional Alliances: During the Arab Spring, Saudi Arabia's historical alliances with other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members and the West affected its objectives. The kingdom's alliance with other conservative Gulf monarchs and Western powers affected its reaction to the region's uprisings and regime transitions. Turkey, on the other hand, sought a more autonomous and forceful regional posture in order to increase its own influence.

Change Perceptions: While both nations recognized the changes brought about by the Arab Spring, their perspectives on the ramifications differed. Saudi Arabia frequently viewed the revolutions with mistrust, seeing potential for instability and the development of Islamist forces that may jeopardize its interests. Turkey, on the other hand, saw potential for its moderate political Islam model to gain popularity in the area.

Economic and Trade Interests: Economic and trade interests also had a role in the divide. The oil-dependent economy of Saudi Arabia, as well as its status as a major oil exporter, defined its goals and interests. With a more diverse economy, Turkey's economic motivations and trade links shaped its responses to the Arab Spring.

Balance of Power and Competition for Regional Influence: Turkey and Saudi Arabia both sought to increase their influence in the region during the Arab Spring. This competition for regional power and influence may have led to areas of divergence in their foreign policies. This competition to balance power and increase influence has sometimes led to sectarianism. The Arab Spring exacerbated sectarian tensions in the region, particularly between Sunni and Shia communities. Turkey, a predominantly Sunni country, and Saudi Arabia, a Sunni-majority country, may have had differing perspectives and interests regarding these sectarian dynamics, leading to divergence in their approaches.

One of the fields of trying to balance of power and increase the influence is the crisis of Qatar and Libya. The Qatar and Libya crises during the Arab Spring underscored the significant divergence in the approaches and priorities of Saudi Arabia and Turkey. These divergences were influenced by factors such as differing perceptions of regional threats, alliances, support for political Islam, and broader foreign policy visions. The embargo on Qatar by Saudi Arabia and its allies and the threat of attack made Turkey stand by Qatar against the expansionist policies of Saudi Arabia and support Qatar against the imposed sanctions. In addition, in order to prevent the attack of Saudi Arabia and its allies on Qatar, Turkey sent military forces and established a military base in this country. In the Libyan crisis, the two countries standing next to two opposing fronts inside Libya deepened the divergence in the relationship between these two countries. Saudi Arabia supported General Haftar, who sought to establish the former military regime and counter the growth of the Islamist Brotherhood in the country. On the other hand, Turkey supported the government of Fayez al-Siraj, whose government had international legitimacy and had close relations with Turkey.

Transition to Democracy in Islamic Countries: One of the divergent components of the relationship between the two countries is related to the transition to democracy in Islamic countries. In the Islamic world, several countries are

transitioning towards democracy, although they may not have succeeded. These countries include Egypt, Tunisia, Iraq, Libya, and Lebanon. Turkey as a successful model for Islamic countries that has been able to establish a balance between democracy and Islam, will naturally support democracy and its transitional model, while Saudi Arabia has never been interested in democratic governments. This can make differences and divergence factors stronger. The way of looking at Islamic and social movements in the Islamic world is one of the factors of divergence between these two countries. The support of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Turkey's support for Mohamed Morsi, and favoring the transition to democracy in Tunisia are the opposite of Saudi Arabia's view. It can be said that Saudi Arabia's oil money destroys democracy in the Islamic world and leads governments to authoritarianism.

In essence, the factors of convergence and divergence between Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring period were influenced by their evolving perceptions, shared interests, and changing geopolitical dynamics. The proactive engagement policy pursued by Turkey before the Arab Spring facilitated their convergence through economic partnerships and strategic dialogue. However, the shifts in regional geopolitics after the Arab Spring led to a divergence in their relations, with Turkey finding itself in a closer alignment with Qatar while facing differences with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The neoclassical realism perspective allows us to understand how perceptions, interests, and external pressures shaped their relations, providing a comprehensive framework to analyze their convergence and divergence during this transformative period. In the next sections of this thesis, we will delve more into Saudi Arabia and Turkey's convergence and divergence during the Arab Spring period, examining individual incidents of collaboration and dispute. We will examine the interaction of systemic forces, state-level factors, and leadership views that impacted these two regional powers' foreign policy choices through the prism of neoclassical realism. We want to improve our knowledge of the complex dynamics that govern their interactions and the larger consequences for the Middle East by exploring the intricacies of their responses to the Arab Spring.

Research Purposes

Considering the importance of the Middle East region as well as the key and influential role of two countries, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, each of which seeks to increase their influence in the region, the political relations between the two countries have been expanding in the last decade, the new order of the Middle East after the Arab revolutions and the new configuration of the balance of power is greatly affected by the relations between these two countries. This factor has increased the importance of the issue.

A) The Main Goals: Understanding the factors of convergence and divergence in relations between Saudi Arabia and Turkey during the Arab Spring period from the perspective of neoclassical realism theory is the main goal of this research. Knowing the factors of convergence and divergence between the two countries can be a good guide for students and researchers of international relations to better understand the mechanisms of competition and cooperation of influential governments that seek to expand influence. These competitions and collaborations contribute to our better understanding of the coalitions for the reconstruction of the new Middle East order and the new configuration of the balance of power.

B) Sub-Goals: recognition and more detailed and specialized examination of phenomena such as the Arab revolutions, the crisis of the nation-state in the Middle East, sectarian conflicts, the involvement of extra-regional powers, and geopolitical and identity differences, which cause convergence and divergence in the relations of the countries of this region.

Research Questions

The Main Question

- a) What were the factors of convergence and divergence in the relations between Saudi Arabia and Turkey during the Arab Spring period, and in which regional policies did the two countries converge and in which did they diverge?
- b) What is the advantage of the theory of neoclassical realism for a better understanding of convergence and divergence between these two countries?

Sub Questions

- 1- What are the priorities of Turkey's foreign policy in the Middle East during the Arab Spring?
- 2- What are the priorities of Saudi foreign policy in the Middle East during the Arab Spring?

Research Hypotheses

Main Hypothesis: Economic interests, common security threats (threat of terrorism), and alignment in regional crises (Syria) are the factors of convergence and difference between (Islamic Brotherhood and Salafi Islam), historical competition for the leadership of the Islamic world, the way of looking at social movements in the Middle East, the relationship With Iran and the transition to democracy in the region, are the factors of divergence in the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring period.

Sub-Hypotheses

- a) Balance in regional politics, leading the Islamic world and becoming a regional model, increasing influence in the region, and becoming a central power is among Turkey's priorities in its foreign policy in the Arab Spring.
- b) Maintaining strategic relations with America, confronting Iran's regional power and influence, leading the Islamic world, and increasing regional power and influence as a hegemon is one of Saudi Arabia's foreign policy priorities during the Arab Spring.
- c) The Syrian crisis, familiar rivals, economic relations, military cooperation, and the leadership of Islamic countries around the Turkish-Arab axis in the form of a Sunni coalition against a Shia coalition have caused convergence in the relations between the two countries.
- d) Identity conflict in foreign policy, differences in priorities (the issue of Egypt, Yemen, Qatar, and Libya and the type of relationship with Iran, the competition for the leadership of the Islamic world, and the difference in the type of governance system) are factors of divergence in the relations between the two countries.

Variables

Independent Variables: The developments of the Arab Spring and how it is understood by the decision makers of Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

Dependent Variable: (subject of research): convergence and divergence in the relations between Saudi Arabia and Turkey during the Arab Spring.

Data Collection and Research Method

A descriptive-analytical method has been used in this research. To answer the research question, the data will be collected and scanned from primary and secondary sources. In response to the research questions, the comparative method analysis has also been used.

Literature's Review

In this part of the introduction, we analyze and review the research literature. For the selection of this section, only the analysis of sources related to the topic of the present thesis has been limited. In other words, among the numerous sources of articles and academic works, we have analyzed the sources related to the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, especially the relations between the two countries during the ruling period of Justice and Development Party and the Arab Spring period. The reason for this choice is to pay special attention and focus on the relations between these two countries during the period known as the Arab Spring so that the reader understands the topic and related research in advance and has background information to enter into reading this thesis. The difference between the current thesis and the mentioned research works will be shown at the end of this section.

Some of these research works have focused on the history of relations between the two countries since the establishment and after the First World War with a descriptive method based on the relations between the two countries in different political, economic and military fields and at the regional and global levels, for example Mustafa Bostancı, in his PhD thesis titled "The Establishment of the State of Saudi Arabia and Turkey-Saudi Arabia Relations (1926- 1990)", Oğuz Bilge Güngördü, in his master's thesis, Turkey-Saudi Arabia Relations Since the Establishment of The Saudi Kingdom"(from the end of the 19th century to 2015), and Muharrem Hilmi Ozev, in an article titled "In the Framework of Political Economic

Interests and Identity Politics: Turkey-Saudi Arabia Relations Between 1929 and 2015," examine the history of the relations between the two countries. According to these studies despite internal differences, common goals in foreign policy became the basis for positive relations between the two countries

Muhittin ATAMAN, in an article titled "Turkish-Saudi Arabian Relations: From Acts with Deliberation to Bipartite Relations," investigated how the relations between the two countries changed based on, changing conditions and understandings in the attitude of the two sides towards each other. In Turkey, the view that saw the Saudi government as a symbol of backwardness and bigotry has begun to change. On the other hand, instead of understanding Turkey as a symbol of anti-Arabism among Saudi elites, a more pragmatic and institutional view was consolidated.

Birol BAŞKAN, in an article titled "Turkey between Qatar and Saudi Arabia: Changing Regional and Bilateral Relations," examines the change in Turkey's bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia and Qatar after the Arab Spring and analyzes how the geopolitical factor like Syrian conflict and regional conditions have affected the relations between the two countries. This article argues that the geopolitical issues that separated Turkey and Saudi Arabia have brought Turkey and Qatar closer together.

Another group of researchers have investigated the relations between the two countries in the new millennium and after the coming to power of the Justice and Development Party. for example, Ruveyda GÖRCÜER, in her master's thesis "Turkey-Saudi Arabia Relations (2002-2015)," has analyzed the political, economic, bilateral, tourism, and cultural relations of the two countries. The topics examined in this research are that the plans, visions, and attitudes that have changed due to the change of leaders in both countries have also caused changes in policies in the relations process between the two countries. Then, he examined the consequences of this change in economic, political, and bilateral relations, which have caused closer relations.

Another group of much more detailed studies have only dealt with the problems in the relationship between Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the period of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, for example, Barış Canver AĞAR, in the master's thesis titled "Relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the Era of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman," examines the problems that are the subject of bilateral relations. The author considers the views of the two countries regarding the mentioned

problems based on their identity characteristics (the structure of the state and the government, its historical background, and the reflection of the transformations it went through throughout history on foreign policy execution, etc.).

Some other researchers have investigated the relations between these two countries in a limited period of time based on the level of regional analysis and comparative policy, for example, Amr Mohamed Hassan Ellithy, in his master's thesis titled "Turkish-Saudi Relations: From a Regional Perspective in the Period From 2003 Until 2013," seeks to analyze how the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia evolved in the 2000s. The author compares the foreign policies of Turkey and Saudi Arabia by examining the regional contexts created after the US attack on Iraq in 2003 and the Arab Spring in 2011. It also tries to find out how the regional relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, a combination of cooperation and competition, have affected these two countries' political, economic, and military relations between 2003 and 2013.

Another group of researchers have only studied the close relations and cooperation between the two countries during the Arab Spring, such as Muhittin Ataman, in an article titled "Turkish-Saudi Arabian Relations During the Arab Uprisings: Towards a Strategic Partnership?" argued that after the beginning of the Arab Spring in 2010, both Turkey and Saudi Arabia increased their cooperation. They have maintained close relations with Western countries and America and have been trying to maintain stability and balance in the region against Iran and its allies.

Another group with a different analytical approach has investigated the relations between the two countries during the Arab Spring period, relying on the role analysis model of regional leaders, such as Emre Yılmaz, in his master's thesis titled "Regional Powers' Contradictory Leaderships: Turks and Saudis in the Arab Spring," examines two regional powers, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, who have two different perceptions of foreign policy and the surrounding environment. How have they dealt with the vital developments in the region and how have they reacted? Also, assuming the leadership role of these countries in the Arab Spring, their intentions and performance in the mentioned period are compared and analyzed in the framework of regional powers. This thesis focused solely on the controversial leadership of Saudi Arabia and Turkey in the Middle East's most transformative period, the Arab Spring.

Therefore, their leadership role was considered in this research. Turkey supported democratization, legitimate demands, and regime change by protesting people. On the contrary, Saudi Arabia, which saw the Islamist political movement of the Arab Spring as a threat to its survival, dealt with the developments with a different approach and did its best to preserve the existing regimes and governments in Egypt, Bahrain, and Yemen.

At the end of this section, we should say that compared to the studies that have examined the foreign policies of Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the period after the Arab Spring, this study shows the paradigm shift in the foreign policy of the two countries and the factors influencing this change. In general, the difference between this thesis and the studies mentioned above is the methodological, theoretical, and thematic difference:

In terms of the research method, the current thesis has used the comparative politics method to investigate the foreign policy behavior of Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring period. In such a way, the foreign policy of these two countries has been compared to each other simultaneously for each issue.

The theoretical difference, which is the most essential difference between this thesis and the research mentioned above, is the application of the theory of neoclassical realism. In other words, the comprehensive approach of the theory of neoclassical realism has made it necessary not to analyze the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring only from one perspective. In analyzing these relations, in addition to factors such as the balance of power and competition in economic and military issues, cooperation, and alliances, the influence of non-material factors such as ideology, identity, cultural issues, leaders' perceptions of the existing conditions, and the influence of internal political groups in determining foreign policy has been pointed out.

The thematic difference also refers to the simultaneous examination of the factors of convergence and divergence in the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring period. In other words, we will show how the regional conditions, mutual relations, and attitude of the leaders at one point caused convergence and cooperation and, at another point, caused divergence and competition

between these two countries. Another thematic difference is the level and time of the research; that is, the purpose of the research is only to analyze the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring and at the regional level, not at the international and intergovernmental level.

The Time and Place of Research

The time frame of the research is from 2011–2019 and geographically includes the countries of Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the Middle East region.

Research Organization

The current research is compiled into five chapters. We have devoted the first chapter to analyzing and examining the theoretical framework of the thesis that is neoclassical realism. Neoclassical realism is a theoretical framework that emerged in the field of international relations, building upon the foundation of classical realism while incorporating insights from other disciplines, such as psychology and sociology. At its core, neoclassical realism seeks to explain states' foreign policy behavior by considering a combination of systemic pressures and domestic variables, with a specific focus on the role of leaders and their perceptions in shaping state actions. For this reason, we chose this theory because of its high analytical ability to analyze the foreign policy of Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring.

"In the first chapter, we have discussed in detail the theoretical foundations of neoclassical realism, its commonalities and differences with classical realism and structural realism, its advantages in analyzing the foreign policy of states in the international system, and its ability to eliminate the shortcomings of the general theory of realism in the analysis of international politics and foreign policy. In other words, neoclassical realism follows this model to analyze states' foreign policy in the anarchic international system.

In the second chapter of this thesis, we will examine and analyze the revolutions of the Arab Spring in the Middle East and North Africa. Here we briefly examine how protests and revolutions took place in the countries that experienced this event. In the rest of the chapter, we have analyzed the Middle East's general situation and its challenges after the Arab Spring. In the final part of this chapter, we will mention the reasons for the revolution in the Arab countries of the Middle East during

the Arab Spring; in this regard, we will mention two internal and regional factors. At the domestic level, we have categorized the causes of unrest, protest, and revolution as follows: the existence of a permanent crisis in the state-society relationship in Arab countries, problems from the beginning of the creation of new state-nations, the lack of dominant and hegemonic discourse in Arab societies, the lack of achievement to democracy, civil wars and lack of cohesion and social discord. At the regional level, we have considered the permanent ideological, sectarian, and religious competition between regional powers and the competition and interference of extra-regional powers as factors of instability and permanent crisis in the Middle East.

In the third chapter, for a better and more complete understanding of the topic studied in this thesis, which is the convergence and divergence in the relations between Saudi Arabia and Turkey during the Arab Spring period, we must throw a flashback to the relations between these two countries in history, without a doubt to understand the dynamics of the current relations between the two countries will only be complete with taking a look at the pages of history. For this purpose, we classified the relations between the two countries as follows: examining the relations between the two nations before the First World War, the end of the First World War and the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and the establishment of the new government of Saudi Arabia, the relations between the two countries after the Second World War and the beginning of the cold war, the opening of political and economic relations within the years 1980 and 2002, the relations between the two countries with the coming of AKP to power and the development of political, economic and military cooperation until 2015, The impact of the Arab revolutions on the close relations between the two countries and the ups and downs in economic, political, and military relations, the reflection of these ups and downs on the foreign policy of the two countries and the region, especially its impact on Iran's foreign policy.

The fourth chapter is one of the two final and main chapters of the thesis, which deals in detail with the factors of convergence in the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring. We mentioned earlier that we used neoclassical realism's theoretical framework to analyze this issue in this thesis. According to this theory, the essential structural factor at the regional level was the Arab revolutions and the domino-like fall of the rulers of these countries. The political power vacuum after

the collapse of Egypt and Tunisia would redistribute power at the level of regional powers. As two powerful regional countries, Saudi Arabia and Turkey naturally wanted their share of redistributed power. In the meantime, factors such as the common understanding of the leaders in opposing Bashar al-Assad's regime and helping the Syrian armed opposition increased the convergence in the relations between these two countries. At the beginning of the Arab Spring, convergence between the two countries in regional issues strengthened economic and especially military cooperation. Preventing the growing influence of Iran in countries such as Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, Lebanon, and the Palestinian issue made the leaders of Saudi Arabia and Turkey turn to more regional cooperation to counter this influence to balance Iran's power. In other words, the leaders' shared understanding of regional events, political, economic, and military cooperation, and the coherence of decision-making elites in both countries in determining foreign policy at this time, according to the theory of neoclassical realism, were among the factors of the convergence of Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

In this thesis's fifth and final chapter, we discuss the divergence in the relations between Saudi Arabia and Turkey during the Arab Spring. After the initial convergence of the two countries on issues such as the Syrian crisis and economic and military cooperation, Saudi Arabia support for the military coups against the elected government in Egypt, which was supported by the international community and Turkey, led to differences and separation between the two countries. The differences were also dragged into Syria, and Saudi Arabia's support for the armed Kurds against Bashar al-Assad, a branch of the PKK terrorist group, angered Turkey.

On the other hand, the Qatar crisis and the differences between Saudi Arabia and this country opened Turkey's eyes to this issue. The threat of attack from Saudi Arabia caused Turkey to send troops to Qatar. In contrast, Saudi Arabia imposed an unwritten economic embargo on Turkish companies and food products, and economic relations between the two countries reached the lowest possible level. Following the events of the Arab Spring, from the point of view of neoclassical realism theory, the change in the two countries leaders towards the direction of the events and the change in perceptions of mutual respect in both countries caused divergence. The effort to create a desired regional order, the coming to power of aligned governments in the

Middle East, and the power struggle increased the differences and divergence day by day. In the following, differences in the Libyan crisis, differences over the type of view and relationship with Iran, differences over the leadership of the Islamic world, differences in the governance system, and the murder of the Saudi dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul became factors of divergence in the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

Finally, in conclusion a brief look at the generalities of the research topic will be discussed. Then, we will analyze the convergence and divergence between Turkey and Saudi Arabia from the point of view of the theory of neoclassical realism. In this section, we argue how the application of this theory helps us to better understand the relations between the two countries during the Arab Spring period, in other words, by applying the basic assumptions of the theory of neoclassical realism on the foreign policy of Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring period we will argue analytically the converging and diverging factors in the relations between the two countries.

FIRST CHAPTER

1. NEOCLASSICAL REALISM: FROM INTERNATIONAL POLITICS TO FOREIGN POLICY

In the dynamic realm of international politics, understanding countries' foreign policy decisions is a complex task that demands a comprehensive theoretical framework. Neoclassical realism has emerged as a potent analytical tool, bridging the gap between the macro-level systemic factors and state leaders' micro-level individual decision-making processes. This theoretical approach presents distinct advantages in elucidating the intricacies of foreign policy behavior, emphasizing the role of unit-level variables and leaders' perception of the balance of power. Neoclassical realism builds upon the core principles of classical realism while incorporating insights from other disciplines, such as psychology and sociology. At its heart lies the notion that states, as unitary actors, interact with their external environment based not only on the anarchical nature of the international system but also on their domestic attributes, capabilities, and political leadership.

One of the chief advantages of employing neoclassical realism in foreign policy analysis is its attention to unit-level variables. Unlike traditional realism, which predominantly focuses on the influence of the international system on states, neoclassical realism delves deeper into the domestic factors that shape a country's behavior on the global stage. By considering elements such as the structure of the state, its bureaucratic processes, and societal influences, neoclassical realism offers a more nuanced understanding of how domestic politics mediate the impact of external pressures. Moreover, neoclassical realism highlights the significance of leaders' perceptions in shaping foreign policy decisions. As central actors in the decision-making process, leaders are imbued with their own beliefs, experiences, and cognitive biases. These individual-level factors significantly influence how they interpret and respond to power distribution in the international system. Through the lens of neoclassical realism, leaders' perceptions become crucial in explaining variations in foreign policy outcomes as they adapt to perceived threats, opportunities, and constraints.

The theory's emphasis on the balance of power as perceived by leaders adds a new layer of depth to foreign policy analysis. By acknowledging that leaders' subjective perceptions may not always align with objective reality, neoclassical realism acknowledges the role of misperception and misjudgment in shaping international outcomes. This acknowledgement is particularly crucial in explaining instances where states' actions may appear irrational from an outsider's perspective. Additionally, neoclassical realism recognizes that foreign policy decisions are not static but can evolve as leaders and their perceptions change. This temporal dimension provides valuable insights into the shifts and fluctuations in a state's behavior on the international stage, allowing analysts to understand how leadership transitions and domestic political changes impact foreign policy trajectories.

Overall, the neoclassical realism theoretical framework offers a robust and nuanced approach to analyzing countries' foreign policy decisions. By focusing on unit-level variables and leaders' perceptions of the balance of power, this theory presents a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between domestic and international factors that shape a state's actions on the global stage. As the world grapples with an ever-changing international landscape, neoclassical realism provides an indispensable lens through which scholars and policymakers can comprehend the intricacies of foreign policy behavior and navigate the complexities of international relations.

1.1. NEOCLASSICAL REALISM: UNRAVELING FOREIGN POLICY THROUGH THE LENS OF UNIT-LEVEL VARIABLES AND LEADERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE BALANCE OF POWER

The theory of realism developed over the years, especially after World War II, with the publication of Hans Morgenthau's influential book "Politics Among Nations" in 1948, and its traditional assumptions underwent a fundamental transformation. Extensive changes in world politics during and after the Cold War have led to a revision of this school of thought. Realists have tried to adapt to "reality" with changes in international relations. In their view, their core concepts are transcendental and objective. Neo-realism accepted the basic assumptions of the theory of classical realism but, to provide a reason for the state's seeking power, considered realism and

its interpretation of theory insufficient and limited. Therefore, neo-realism considers the system of states as the main factor in the behavior of the state, not the states separately or the relations between them.

The decentralized distribution of material capabilities is defined as the distinguishing feature of each country's power and as a structural situation that shapes the system of states and puts pressure on it. Based on Kenneth Waltz's assumption, states cannot overcome the force imposed on them by the structure of the international system (Kolodziej, 2011: p, 167-168). Nevertheless, after the end of the Cold War, neo-realism, with a shift in attitude, sharply criticized realism and its inability to predict the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. New theories have also accused realism of neglecting the construction of the state and the internal factors influencing its behavior.

In response to these accusations, the neoclassical realism approach combined elements of classical realism with neo-realism. On the one hand, like neo-realism, it accepted an extensive uncertainty in the international system and anarchic influence on the behavior of states, assuming that the "International Anarchic System" limits and restricts the options and choices of states' foreign policy. In determinants of foreign policy, priority is given to independent systemic variables. In other words, the goals of a country's foreign policy stem primarily from its relative material power. However, on the other hand, like classical realism, it considers and analyzes the effect of countries' characteristics and unit-level variables on state behavior (Meibauer, 2019: p, 1-17).

Neoclassical realism was presented in the context of the realist paradigm to overcome the shortcomings of other realist theories in explaining why differences in unit behavior are the same despite environmental conditions. Neoclassical realists believe that by case study, objective observation, and theoretical analysis, they will be able to test realistic theories based on the basic principles of realism, Principles that may, in practice, have been ignored in realistic theories. This theory's central question is why other international relations theories cannot interpret causal relations and how this shortcoming can be overcome. For this reason, neoclassical realism assumes that a complete theory explaining causal relations in the international system should consider the system as its starting point. However, at the same time, it addresses the

units' internal characteristics and identifies the units' behavioral consequences by considering the internal structures.

Accordingly, the question of this chapter of the thesis is: What effect has the foundations of theory and meta-theory on the theory of neoclassical realism had on understanding international relations? Relying on the issues raised by the prominent thinkers of this theoretical current, it can be said that the rationalist foundations of neoclassical realism have been able to develop a realistic understanding of international relations by combining a systematic view and an attitude based on the originality of actors and agents (Magcamit, 2020: p, 416-436). The title "Neoclassical Realism" was first introduced in an article by Gideon Rose based on the views of earlier realist thinkers who were particularly critical of the systematic view and balance of power of Kenneth Waltz. This theory gradually grew in the writings of Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, William S. Wolfworth, Randall L. Schuler, and others. The critical premise of the theory is that "in a complex world, no meaningful theory can be true at all times, and no policy can be true for all situations."

The essential task of experts is to determine under what conditions which theory can be the discoverer of causal relationships to provide a basis for recommending policies that are likely to be effective (Wohlforth 1996:195). Based on this belief, neoclassical realism seeks to use useful variables in other theories to explain events or to disprove their importance based on objective events. However, it continues to adhere to the realist paradigm and, despite criticisms of the explanatory power of realism, especially following the inability of realism to predict the end of the Cold War, it still sees realism as stable (Wohlforth, 1994-1995). Neoclassical realism is based on two general assumptions: First, the realism paradigm involves many theories (Wohlforth, 2011: p, 445). Thus, the entry of a new theory into the set of realist theories is not forbidden and does not necessarily negate the previous theories; Second, realism has a "support belt" and a "hardcore" (Shweller, 1997: p, 927), and therefore neoclassical realism as a new theory can further enrich the realism paradigm by strengthening the support belt that it is said that neo-realism had given up on it (Shweller, 2000: p, 174).

The main goal of neoclassical realism is to explain the dimensions of international relations within the framework of the central principles of realism, which

are hidden from other realistic and unrealistic theories or have been avoided. Here, "explanation" first means that neoclassical realism examines "why" and not just "how." Second, "explaining the dimensions of international relations" means that classical realism is a theory related to reality rather than confined to mere abstract ideas. This theory even introduces norms and ideas for a natural explanation. For this reason, in terms of nature, it is a theory of maintaining the status quo. In addition, it is a prescriptive theory when it comes to explaining how the United States behaves.

According to some scholars, neoclassical realism is a more realistic theory of foreign policy. While the theory of international politics seeks to explain international phenomena, the theory of foreign policy seeks to explain the cause of the behavior of units. To achieve such a goal, neo-realism is too "weak" because of the savings in explaining causes. (Kitchen, 2010: p, 118). Realism, like the liberal theory of democratic peace and other theories of domestic politics, is too specific (Lobell, 2009: p, 2), and therefore, explaining international behavior and drawing a vision for the future requires a more sophisticated theory that can include both systems and internal factors.

Although the central realist assumption is that international outcomes will be consistent with the relative distribution of material resources at the system level, as Aaron Friedberg puts it, "the structural considerations are the starting point for international policy analysis, not the end. Even if one acknowledges that those structures exist and are important, this question remains as how statesmen take command from inside to determine the possibility and manner of determining their relative national power at any point in history" (Taliaferro, 2000a: p, 181).

For this reason, neoclassical realism breaks the holistic view of systematic theories and seeks out the internal mechanisms of units and the causes of certain behaviors and events, and is more specific. In this explanation, the difference between the units and the difference in the decision of a single unit in different periods and places is essential. Neoclassical realism, meanwhile, is an attempt to systematize the vast and varied realist perspectives. At the same time, it acknowledges the complexity of international relations and sees events as a reflection of various factors (Kitchen, 2010: p, 118). It incorporates this diversity into a theoretical study and, based on it, recognizes the reforms necessary for other realist theories. Here are some common

goals for neoclassical realism, A: Achieve better explanations and more accurate predictions. B: Refining and revealing the theoretical concepts of the research program. C: Expanding the research program to cover new subject areas (Shweller, 1997: p, 92). For this reason, neoclassical realism does not accept a "limited and rigid formula of realism" because such a fidelity does not allow realism to "assume its rightful role in the study of international politics" (Taliaferro, 2000a: p, 178).

Neoclassical realism can be praised primarily because of its coherent logic, which mixes ideas and domestic politics in a way expected to be used in structural realism. This is the natural growth of neo-realism, which serves in two ways: First, ideas and internal political variables are essential factors in a state's ability to use its potential material power. In simpler terms, neoclassical realists deepen Waltz's shallow understanding of power by referring to nationalism or state-society relations. Second, discussing issues outside of material power does not mean that domestic policies and ideas do not play a role in Waltz's structural realism. However, considering they do not have an independent impact on international politics, their influence is limited to adverse effects on foreign policy.

Neoclassical realism explains a period in which states cannot reconcile themselves properly with systematic constraints and points to the severe consequences of such an outcome (Rathbun, 2008: p, 296). In contrast, realism assumes that systematic constraints are powerful enough to cause similar behavior in all states (Waltz, 1979: p, 72-73). Therefore, it only suffices to some guesses about the possible behavior of states. In summary, the neoclassical realism research program can be summarized in the definition of Gideon Rose: It includes both external and internal variables and updates the basic views arising from the idea of classical realism. They argue that the scope and purpose of a foreign policy in a country are primarily due to its position in the international system and especially to its material power which is why they are realists. However, they go even further and consider the effect of material capabilities on foreign policy as indirect and complex because systemic pressures must be translated through single-level variables. That is why they are neoclassic (Rose, 1998: p, 151-152).

1.2.THE FOUNDATION OF META-THEORY OF NEOCLASSICAL REALISM

According to theorists such as Gideon Rose, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Schweller, R, L. and Steven E. Lobell two ontological and epistemological dimensions can be described for neoclassical realism as follows:

1.2.1. The Ontological Dimension

At first glance, the theory of neoclassical realism is objectivist. It believes in a social world outside of theory, and its goal is to explain this world to achieve a more accurate prediction of the future and to be more generalizable. It means neoclassical realism is a theory for the real world, and it measures its validity and competitive theories concerning reality. Nevertheless, the focus of research activity on neoclassical realism, unlike structural realism, is not solely on the matter, and it puts the mental and perceptual dimensions next to the objective and material dimensions. It, therefore, considers both the structures and the actors' perceptions of the structures, the material military, economic, and technological forces, as well as the ideological forces. In this way, neoclassical realism embraces the importance of structure and, simultaneously, the agent's influence and incorporates both in detail in its analysis. Although this effect has been accepted in structural realism, it is not operational. Of course, in the final analysis, the understanding of neoclassical realists is also classified into materialist groups. Despite their efforts to recognize the mental, perceptual, and ideological dimensions, in the end, these phenomena are considered tools (Rose, 1998).

1.2.2. Epistemological Dimension

Neoclassical realism believes in the possibility of knowing the outside world. In cognition, it considers rationality necessary but does not explain decisions solely based on rational logic and the calculation of mere cost and benefit. This is because internal and external constraints can affect the rational choice of units and increase ambiguity in foreign policy decisions. It is also an explanatory reductionism in epistemology because it explains the foreign policy of the units to explain the international policy. Neoclassical realism also expresses the hypotheses of falsifiability about the causal relationship between variables and, in this sense,

considers itself committed to the falsifiability of Lakatos (Shweller, & Priess, 1997: p, 24).

1.2.3. Neoclassical Realism as a Theoretical Exploration

The above summary of neoclassical realism shows that this theory combines neo-realism and classical realism, which derives its realistic interpretation of facts by studying internal, international, and interactive mechanisms. The question arises of how neoclassical realism differs from classical and neo-realism as the two main branches of realist theory. We must first point out the first differences to gradually reach broader differences. The starting point is the difference between the above three realistic branches in their view of the explanatory position of theory: Classical realism is more than just a theory; it is more like a political and fundamental philosophy for other realist theories that have been interpreted in many ways. Neorealism, on the other hand, contrasts its definition of theory with that of a model and distinguishes theory from a model, which does not necessarily correspond to the reality of the event and does not describe external events. Its purpose is to explain the facts, especially the behavioral consequences comprehensively (Barkin, 2020: p, 47-72).

Waltz believes that if it were possible to understand the world directly, there would be no need for theory, and therefore, theoretical considerations can only be invented, not discovered (Waltz, 1979: p, 5). because the theory is not a revelation and a reflection of reality, but an explanation of it. In contrast, what is a complete reflection of reality is a model, not a theory (Waltz, 1979: p, 7). In this sense, achieving a "reality-based proximity" invalidates the theory (Waltz, 1990: p, 31) and reduces it to a simplified model of external reality. In short, the systematic theory is a frugal theory of reality that ignores the details to maintain its theoretical position.

There is a belief among neoclassical realists that they will be able to test realistic theories based on the principles and foundations of realism through case studies and objective and theoretical observations. Neoclassical realism does not accept the distance from reality for theory. Instead, it seeks to provide a case-by-case description of the issues. Due to this feature, many critics consider the theory of neoclassical realism to be dependent on different and scattered subject areas and need more comprehensiveness. To counter this dispersion and respond to these criticisms, neoclassical realism systematically seeks to generalize similar issues after case studies.

Principles may have been overlooked in realist theories. In this way, an attempt is made to reveal the operational shortcomings of other realistic theories to explain individual issues in foreign policy, which has the maximum explanatory power, and beyond that, to explain the "details of causal relationships" in individual issues. (Shweller, & Wohlforth, 2000: p, 63).

Neoclassical realists claim that more than any other realist theory, they adhere to the basic principles of realism and do not sacrifice operational precision for theory. The question is, why can neoclassical realism be more successful in explaining than neorealism? The answer to neoclassical realism is that the neorealism theory cannot achieve the answer to "whys". It should be noted that the theory of structural realism deals with consequences, not actions or the foreign policy goals of a specific state at a specified time. Instead, it describes only the expected consequences of states' actions. Therefore, we must be careful that not all states that act contrary to the predictions of neorealist theory (actions that do not react to structural pressures) are called stupid or irrational. Actions seemingly irrational from the point of view of systematic pressures may seem perfectly rational from the point of view of domestic politics (Shweller, 2002: p, 11-12).

Thus, neorealism and neoclassical realism are distinguished from each other by the phenomena they seek to explain. In this sense, neorealism and neoclassical realism are complementary; each considers the explanation of phenomena that are not considered by the other.

Neorealist theories seek to explain international consequences; it means phenomena that arise from the interaction of two or more actors in the international system. For example, the explanation for the possibility of a tremendous or hegemonic war can be seen in the context of neorealism. Other examples of international consequences include international cooperation, arms competition, bargaining in crisis, coalition models, and the inevitability of war in the international system, phenomena that cannot be attributed to the behavior of any particular state. However, other phenomena specific to individual states' foreign policy behavior should be considered.

As Kenneth Waltz points out, a purely systematic theory can tell us what pressures are applied and what facilities are available for systems with different

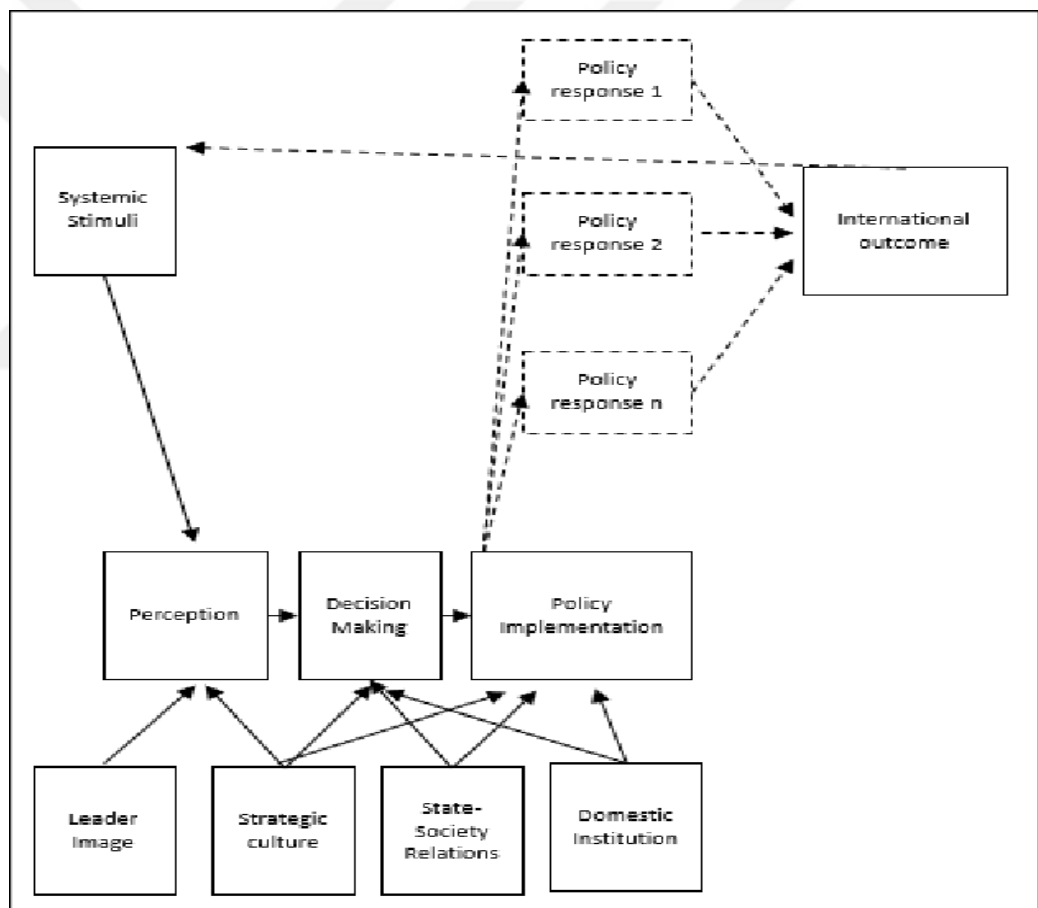
structures. However, it cannot say how and to what extent the system units respond to such pressures and opportunities (Taliaferro, 2000b). For example, neorealism cannot answer how a particular state will likely act in the face of the abovementioned conditions. That is why critics call neorealism, which gives only one general answer to a question and predicts the possible behaviors of units based on only one variable, unfalsifiability. Neoclassical realism, like other theories of realism, believes in the necessity of the falsity of hypotheses and, consequently, adherence to the whole theory. It considers neorealism incapable of accurately explaining reality and, therefore, unfalsifiability due to its totality and single variability. A theory for being falsifiability must provide the causal proposition of falsifiability which is distinguished from the predicted causal patterns by competing theories and speaks enough to identify its error. For this purpose, three essential components are needed: First, there must be a standard for measuring causal importance (Orhan, 2021).

Due to the lack of determination of theories of international relations and the apparent complexity of reality, the proposition that only "one type of cause" is essential is meaningless. The questions should be how and why a cause should be necessary to help or damage a particular theory. Second, the primary causal claims must be generalized to be tested by other researchers. Third, these generalizations must predict the future patterns expected in a similar case, given the evidence and various sources' notes, archives, etc. (Shweller, & Wohlforth, 2000: p, 67). Neorealism does not provide these demands.

The question is how neoclassical realism responds to such needs. How does it explain, and on what basis does it define its propositions? In response, this theory expands the scope of its research to include different levels of analysis. In this respect, it is distinguished from classical realism and neorealism, which focus on one of the levels of internal or systematic analysis. The emphasis of neorealism on the systematic variable and ignoring the internal variables of the units is quite clear. In defending the theory's systematic nature, Waltz considers himself free from reductionism. In emphasizing material power instead of "ideology, the form of government, tranquillity, militancy, or anything else," he defines it as "comparing the capabilities of several units." Although capabilities are a feature of units, the distribution of capabilities among units differs from this.

The distribution of capabilities is not a feature of the units but is a concept as extensive as the system. His theory, like market theory, which assumes companies to be similar, considers states of being the same (Waltz, 1979: p, 98). Wherever there is talk of internal structures, Waltz's goal (Waltz, 1979: p, 81-88) is not an explanation of how units operate internally as a hierarchical environment, but rather an expression of their distinction from anarchic external realm (structure and interacting units) in the three leading indicators. Therefore, he means predicting unit behavior in the system (Waltz, 1979: p, 88-99).

It can be said that the analytical model of neoclassical realism for analyzing the foreign policy of countries in the international system is like this. (table 1).



(Table1) Neoclassical Realism Model Source: Ripsman, N., Taliaferro, & Lobell, 2016

Neorealism accepts the causal relationship between the interacting units and the international consequences and sees the causes not as one-way, which means from the units interacting to the results, but as two-way. Because changes at the unit level

do not cause significant differences in outcomes, he does not consider the explanatory value for the variables at the unit level to be in favor of the theory.

However, in contrast, neoclassical realism considers two levels of analysis, unit, and structure, and, of course, based on realistic assumption, examines individuals within units and groups and does not give them an independent ontological status. In this multidisciplinary study, three categories of factors are studied in theory:

- First: The starting point or background factor that includes the international system and its variables
- Second: Factors involved, or intermediaries that are found at the unit level or states
- Third: The results are the behavior of foreign policy of states.

It should be noted that all essential factors for analyzing foreign policy are the raw materials of an explanation. The problem is to sort them according to their importance and composition in sufficient dimensions (Taliaferro, 1996: p, 198).

1.3.THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM AS THE STARTING POINT OF NEOCLASSICAL REALISM

Neoclassical realism, like neorealism, defines the actor's global position, the share of international power distribution, and the international limits and opportunities as the starting point for his research. "The importance of the anarchic international system is the distribution of relative power and widespread distrust"(Lobell, 2009: p, 7). The system, with its anarchic nature, limits the actors' actions. The critical question is how does neoclassical realism look at the system and the essential and influential variables of the system? The answer to this requires examining these variables from the perspective of neoclassical realism. These are considered before other variables, including unit-level variables.

1.3.1. Anarchy

The main feature of the system is anarchic. Anarchy means the absence of a world state or sovereignty (Taliaferro, 2000b). Such a feature requires that system members seek to ensure their survival in a self-help environment with limited resources. Thus, due to this inherent feature of the system, *international politics* is

defined as the use of force or the threat of the use of force. However, international politics cannot be limited to the use of force and the threat of the use of force because non-military and non-material tools are appropriate for action and can be used to secure interests.

1.3.2. Systematic Forces

It means the distribution of material power, the position of each unit resulting from this distribution, and the "expected changes in the balance of power and coalitions" (Taliaferro, 2009b: p, 1) based on the pattern of systematic power distribution. System forces impose restrictions on units. These restrictions operate within the system and arise from it without relating to the internal status of the units.

The scope of these restrictions is the whole system, not just a limited set of actors or a response to a specific topic. Then, Systematic restrictions are a feature of the international system that restricts the freedom of action for actors by prohibiting some actions, increasing the cost of specific actions, or forcing others to engage in other types of action (Brooks, & Wohlforth, 2002: p, 3). In other words, systematic restrictions severely limit the ability to use [internal] resources to pursue security goals (Brooks, & Wohlforth, 2008: p, 14). Different power distribution structures require different types of restrictions. In other words, the limitations of a multipolar system cannot be equated with the limitations of a unipolar system. In contrast to multipolarity, which consists of several equal international powers, unipolarity refers to a structure in which only one great state exists. It differs from an empire, which includes the policy of influence and control, not just the distribution of capabilities - as it is referred to in unipolarity (Brooks, & Wohlforth, 2002: p, 12).

This argument is made by neoclassical realists that when the power of a state increases beyond the tolerance threshold of others, systematic restrictions on its security policy become generally ineffective (Brooks, & Wohlforth, 2002: p, 4). Under these conditions, the system environment is considered more permissible than the restrictive or the opposite for the action of a more powerful unit and this is when a great power has the military, economic, and other capabilities that will generally lead to its victory in a great war or an ongoing competition. Great power is temporarily benefiting from the blessings of power, and this is due to the destruction or relative

weakness of its former rivals as well as its partners. Here, great power may be aware of possible future threats to its security. However, such threats are often uncertain. Second there are several ways to deal with them or not (Taliaferro, 2009b: p, 10). This is because a great power, with the supremacy of material power and persuasive power, will probably be able to bring others with it or lead them not to oppose it.

In contrast, in multipolar conditions and the presence of several balanced powers side by side, which complicates the dynamics of the system and, as a result, the processes of coalition formation, the likelihood of fraud in games or withdrawal from coalitions is higher, the choices of the actors are more varied, and due to the ambiguity in the system, the possibility of the actors making mistakes in evaluating the external environment increases, which leads to miscalculations and misunderstandings.

Assessing why and how an actor will act in a multipolar situation is not possible by studying the external environment alone. For this reason, neoclassical realism transcends systematic multipolar variables within the foreign policy structure of units to achieve more precise explanations and complete predictions (Christensen, & Snyder, 1990).

Thus, systemic constraints operate differently in different international structures. In addition, the consequences of systemic constraints do not directly lead to states' foreign policy behavior. However, the effect of these constraints (type of structure) on the internal mechanisms of the units must first be measured. That is why systemic pressure and constraint only sometimes lead to a foreign policy in line with that constraint. There is sufficient evidence of unit violations of the expectations of neorealism theory (Şahin, 2020: p, 483-500). As a result, the distribution of international material capabilities cannot be directly translated into foreign policy behavior. For this reason, a systemic variable in neoclassical realism is more than an independent variable; it represents the preconditions for the operation of units, not a determining factor.

1.3.3. Interests

The interests of the units in the international system are diverse and variable. Like other branches of realism, Waltz's neorealism acknowledges the diversity of

interests but sees security as the first and higher interest for all states, regardless of internal characteristics and distinctions (Waltz, 1979: p, 121). According to neorealism, other interests, such as gaining prestige (meaning credibility) or internal stability, depend more on security. In theoretical research, they should not be given explanatory value. For this reason, neorealism assumes that the struggle between states to ensure security is a zero-sum game. Of course, cooperation is possible, but it is less likely because international actors are in a security dilemma. Neoclassical realism rejects this notion in Waltz's defensive neorealism that states seek only a sufficient amount of power to gain security and therefore are potentially defensive because this argument is only for those states that want to maintain the status quo, not revisionists.

On the other hand, the security dilemma, in the sense that it is presented in neorealism, is not acceptable in neoclassical realism because if states want to expand their sphere of influence (revisionists), then we have to accept that these states seek to maximize power, not security itself. So, the security dilemma results from misunderstandings, and we are not witnessing conflicts over interests but misunderstandings about interests (Shweller, 1996). The claim of offensive realism about the priority of maximizing power, which is based on offensive intentions and opportunistic expansionism of states and ultimately leads to regional hegemony, is rejected (Shweller, 2009: p, 231). The reason for opposing the above definitions is that neoclassical realism considers neorealism ambiguous in defining concepts, including the concept of interest.

In neoclassical realism, the concept of "real interest" has changed over time, and this has been overlooked both in increasing offensive power and defensive security. Thus, based on neoclassical realism, not all states pursue a single interest, and security is not all interest. So, greed, cultural hegemony, achieving a vital space, gaining a good reputation in the external environment, etc., are among the interests of states. So, security is only part of the story, or at least not for all states, and it is necessary to differentiate between two groups of states, the status quo states and the revisionist states. States that want to maintain the status quo may still seek security. However, revisionists are more likely to seek a change in their position in the system than security and may want to exchange security for power (Shweller, 1996). Thus, each of the offensive and defensive tendencies covers the interests of a particular group of states.

1.3.4. The Type of International Game

Following the argument about the interests of the units, it is argued that competition in the international system is not necessarily a zero-sum game such that increasing the security of an actor may increase the security of other actors. Therefore, cooperation is possibly more than what is expected in neorealism. Thus, neoclassical realism assumes a game with various sums, sometimes zero and sometimes non-zero (Shweller, 1996). Here neoclassical realism becomes closer to neoliberalism.

1.3.5. The Power

In neoclassical realism, power refers to the resources and capabilities of states that may be used to pursue their goals. Based on neoclassical realism, like all kinds of realistic theories, any war has targeted a kind of power (Shweller&, Wohlforth, 2000: p, 71). But power is not only a goal or only a tool, but is "both tool and goal", and therefore a combination of classical realism and neorealism in the definition of power is considered. Power also has two dimensions: hardware and software, material and perceptual. In other theories of realism, however, the software and perceptual dimensions of power are less analytical. The territorial, military, and economic dimensions can be defined in the material dimension. In terms of territory, the population is considered alongside the geography. The military dimension includes the power of warfare, naval and commercial, military spending, and the economic dimension are measured by the per capita production of goods and the amount of capital (Shweller, 1998: p, 187).

Economy is the software aspect of material power. Of course, today, the growing role of technology in promoting the international status of states and expanding their software power should not be overlooked because technology has fundamentally changed international politics and changed the nature of power, the ability to use power, using power ways, and the goals of power itself. Neoclassical realism accepts that people will continue to define their identity with the land, and nationalism will continue to be more than cosmopolitanism. However, geography and geopolitics-rooted policies, an essential requirement of state power in the past, could be more effective today in shaping strategy and policies (Shweller, 2011b: p, 462-463). Although international politics is still based on competition for power and the

influence of others and the environment, and governments, as in the past, want to increase wealth, influence, security, prestige, political autonomy, and freedom of choice, the world has been changed significantly (Shweller, 2011b: p, 467) and so, despite the importance of superiority in military power, there is a greater need to address the technological and economic variables of power.

In addition to economics and technology, other software concepts of power, such as internal stability, political sufficiency, national will, cohesion, state's personality, and quality, are considered. Although other realistic theories have spoken of their importance, they have rarely been used, and it may be said that these variables have never been used to make a state's power operational. Even the standard type of balance of power theory has made predictions based solely on the hardware elements of national power and often uses a mere military capability as a scale to exclude economic and political capabilities (Shweller, 2002: p, 11).

While power includes an immaterial dimension related to ideas and legitimacy, these ideas differ from material power but are connected to it. This is where the importance of the perceptual variable of power is highlighted. Neoclassical realism considers the perceptual dimension of power or the perception of other states' decision-makers of a unit's power alongside other material dimensions. Accordingly, if power affects international relations, it must be through the perceptions of state representatives. These qualitative power scales are used to test different theories of power and estimate the imagined power (Wohlforth, 1987: p, 353). The perceptual variable in neoclassical realism is not independent of various material variables but is an inborn variable arising from material power. Thus, there is no gap between power and perception of power; however, changes in perceptions of power sometimes cause more changes in behavior than in power relationships (Shweller, 2003: p, 336- 340). That is why relying solely on material variables, both hardware, and software, is not enough, and it is interesting to note that standard scales based on the distribution of material capabilities are also incorrect both in assessing national power and estimating the actual balance of power (Wohlforth, 2000: p, 184).

1.3.6. Rationality

Neoclassical realism considers a limited definition of rationality for units that are based on a cost-benefit analysis of conditions, but because the cost-benefit analysis does not force all units to behave in the same way, understanding the behavior requires referring to variables beyond systematic variables and considering the possibility of violating international rules as possible and even acceptable according to the capabilities of the units. Success in such actions will depend on both the material and the non-material variables of power, including the satisfaction of competitors.

This approach complements other realistic tendencies that do not consider rationality at explanation to be fundamental. Although some realist theories make strong assumptions about rationality, such assumptions are not inherent in realism. There also needs to be mention of rationality among the basic principles of realism. Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz, leading theorists of realism, reject the claim that states must necessarily act purposefully to achieve their goals. Neorealism also is not a rational theory of the state's behavior. Waltz clearly states that his theory does not require any assumptions about rationality because structure essentially influences the behavior of the state through the processes of socialization and competition.

Waltz emphasizes that political leaders cannot be expected to make carefully calculated decisions, as the word rationality suggests. Similarly, Morgenthau's writings refute rationalist research and the possibility of creating what is called political science (Shweller, & Wohlforth, 2000: p, 70). For example, the symbol of the rejection of rationality can be seen in Morgenthau's definition of power, which defines a "mental relationship" between weak and strong actors that arises from "expectations of profit, fear of loss, respect, or love for people or institutions" (Taliaferro, 2000a: p, 179-180). Thus, actors' decision-making based on the power relationship is not necessarily consistent with cost-benefit calculations, and rationality, in this sense, does not always govern decisions. Although in examining the decisions of actors and the international consequences of these decisions, rationality is also tested as an influential variable; it is not the only variable that is effective.

1.4. GOVERNMENT AS AN INTERMEDIATE VARIABLE

Referring to the role of an intermediate variable is necessary for international relations theory because the international system cannot determine precisely how each state will act under certain conditions and frameworks. As mentioned earlier, Waltz agrees that structures form put pressure on states. Structures do not determine behaviors and outcomes; this is not only because of the interaction between unit-level causes and structure-level causes but also because the formation and application of pressure may face successful resistance. It will be up to the decision-makers and experts to know how much is the relative power of the structural pressures on each state over time and a list of a state's possible reactions to these external stimuli (Taliaferro, 2009b: p, 9). The logic of neorealism is dogmatic because it sees the international system as an inviolable body with an independent explanatory value. However, it defines it ontologically as dependent on units and their distribution of capabilities.

This prevents neorealism from giving units a role in choosing between options ahead and overcoming systemic requirements. However, the decision-making structure also has an explanatory value, even if it rarely significantly impacts systemic outcomes (ŞEN, & ŞAHİN, 2020). The mediating variable and decision-making factor in the field of foreign policy, according to realistic principles, is usually the government, which is still the most prominent and significant actor, and its mechanisms and internal characteristics, both the material (state's institutions) and the non-material (ideology and understanding of the elites) can affect the intensity and weakness in minimum and behavior style of units in general.

Neoclassical realism sees the state as distinct from society. However, like classical realism, it accepts the "relationship between state and society" (Taliaferro et al., 2009: p, 13). Social forces cannot be separated from leaders' decision-making process and foreign policy formulation. Neoclassical realism is based on the same concept from top to bottom about the state and its relationship to internal society, as found in the writings of twentieth-century classical realists (Taliaferro, 2009b: p, 14).

The definition of government in neoclassical realism is consistent with Morgenthau's definition that "the nation pursues foreign policy within a legal entity's

framework called the state, and its agents act as the nation's representatives in international affairs. They speak on behalf of the state, negotiate over the treaties on behalf of the state, and try to maintain, promote and consolidate state's power." Thus, neoclassical realism, like classical realism, considers the complex relationship between the state and society but does not ignore the central view of the balance of power theory. Like classical realism, the power of the state differs according to the state and different historical periods, and like neorealism, the international environment, which is the scene of states' interaction, is the primary determinant of the interests and behavior of states; it means the ontology of both neoclassical realism and neorealism are based on the environment (Taliaferro, 2009a: p, 210).

Neoclassical realism bases its internal resource extraction hypotheses on a conceptualization from top to bottom. Therefore, the state is not independent and free of external and internal influences. This means that systemic forces shape internal processes within the state and may limit the ability of a state to respond to systemic stimuli. That is, unit-level variables are the variables that depend on pre-existing system conditions.

As a result, a favorable external environment allows the state to consolidate its internal institutions. An unfavorable environment can prevent the growth of internal forces in a country, but this is not the only determining factor in shaping a state's internal strategies because the government is the arena of "bargaining between the rulers and social activists" (Taliaferro, 2009a: p, 211). The distribution of material power at the system level between units is only helpful if exploited. A population or rich mineral resources in a state may remain unused due to weakness in institutional and human elements or even cause further weakness. So, in neoclassical realism, firstly, there is a two-way relationship between the system and the state. Secondly, within the state, the interacting forces bargain with each other and influence the foreign policy process. Therefore, it is necessary to consider these two components:

1.4.1. State Institution

Domestic institutions are the political-military institutions of the state that constitute the first element of government power. Institutional arrangements are material and organizational structures in which the formulation of mobilization

strategies and the extraction of resources are done within them, and the more coherent the mechanism and the more independent power they have, the more valuable strategies will be developed. These arrangements determine the mechanisms of mobilization and resource extraction.

There are two strategies for mobilizing resources: In the first type of strategy, the government directly controls economic activity, redistributes resources and does it through a centralized plan to nationalize key industries and specific factories. In the second strategy, the government indirectly intervenes in the economy to facilitate the accumulation of wealth and, thus, tax revenue for the government. These two strategies are only possible with spending money, which requires government political and economic investment. These investments are made in two ways: first, on a large scale, which is done for direct mobilization, and second, in the form of government subsidies and withdrawals in favor of non-governmental actors for the development of production, which leads to indirect mobilization. Nevertheless, to extract resources, the government, with direct intervention, turns social wealth into military power and does it by collecting taxes, recruiting, and exporting.

There is a two-way relationship between both mobilization and resource extraction. As the extraction increases, the government is likely to exaggerate its efforts to mobilize, but this may reduce the efficiency of the mobilization; because with the increase in the extraction of available resources, firstly, the sum of investable wealth will be less, and secondly, the incentives to create more wealth in the future will be weakened (Taliaferro, 2009a: p, 215). The extraction capacity of central institutions and the barriers and tools of internal mobilization are two variables for defining government power (Taliaferro, 2009b: p, 8). However, determining the level of government power in these two areas also depends on human variables.

1.4.2. The Non-Institutional State's Element (Human)

In addition to decision-making bodies and formal arrangements, the government comprises human leaders and prominent domestic ideologies. However, neoclassical realism assumes that the Foreign Policy Executive Committee is a coherent central decision-maker committed to promoting the security and power of the nation. However, at the same time, it does not accept that the leaders of governments

automatically have access to all national resources and do not have to bargain with social groups to implement their policies (Ripsman et al., 2009: p, 289). Leaders are also assumed to be erroneous and constrained in assessing environmental conditions and in contact with other human complexes.; their Foreign Policy Executive Board also has confidential information and a monopoly of information about foreign countries. In addition to the formal structure of government, the role of social elites should be noticed, as they have a unique role in assessing events, that is, their perception of events (threat or opportunity) (Lobell, 2009: p, 56-57). Nevertheless, first of all, it is necessary to rely on the role of leaders, who are responsible for evaluating the events; that is, they need to know how much threat or opportunity lies in them. The leaders make foreign policy options for governments; their threat assessment is essential.

Strategic realities go beyond the filter of leaders' perceptions, which often misunderstand the objective strategic environment (Christensen, & Snyder, 1997: p, 920). Even when the international system or regional subsystem provides transparent information about political threats and reactions, the politician is still making mental assessments, prioritizing threats and opportunities, and recognizing the intentions of others or possible changes in power distribution in the future (Taliaferro, 2010). Which is not necessarily consistent with systemic requirements; however, it is better to be. Therefore, determining the best option in the field of foreign policy is the responsibility of leaders and influenced by their perceptions. On the other hand, even if there are solid central institutions with extensive extraction capacity, leaders will continue to face the problem of widespread mobilization for foreign and security policies (Taliaferro, 2009b: p, 14), and the mobilization of resources depends on the way of policy-making, the relationship between the government and society, and the government's ability to persuade the people.

Although power can be used to force society to take action, the ability of leaders to persuade society to engage in resource mobilization policies will give the government more power. In general, the four non-institutional or human variables of the unit level affect the state's capacity to extract and mobilize resources and foreign policy behavior. These four variables are: 1) Elite Consensus, 2) Elite Cohesion, 3) Internal vulnerability, and 4) Social cohesion. Elite consensus and coherence affect the

government's will to balance or expand its presence, while internal vulnerability and social cohesion affect its ability to extract resources. These variables largely explain why national reactions to the same foreign threats and opportunities differ in different governments (Shweller, 2002: p, 11). The non-institutional elements of government shape its perception of the environment and information processing.

Thus, the state's power is defined not only by the available material resources but also by understanding the internal and environmental threats and opportunities that vary according to location and time. The causes of perception changes are unclear and difficult to understand (Wohlforth, 1996: p, 197). The perceptions of the actors provide an answer to the reasons for certain specific behaviors in the international arena, especially the occurrence of wars or the end of them. For example, offensive realists who insist on rational choice assumptions believe that national leaders choose offensive foreign policies for a time and place where costs and risks are low. Elites generally make rational decisions based on norms. In this way, political leaders measure the costs and benefits of retreating or continuing the war, updating their preferences in response to new information and carefully examining the benefits and costs. However, according to some historical evidence, the great powers sometimes insist on wars that have no end but failure.

The root of such behaviors is less related to the objective distribution of power or the standard calculation of costs and benefits but more related to the mental method that based on leader's measure information about the international environment and the relative position of their country compared to other states. Here, how elites process information acts as an intermediate variable (ŞAHİN MENCÜTEK, 2020). Based on their understanding of environmental information and the specific way they process it; elites prescribe a particular type of foreign policy that may differ from systemic requirements. That is why sometimes the great powers not only enter into wars that are certain to fail but also sometimes enter wars in areas with no strategic importance.

In other words, although actors' actions must be consistent with systemic requirements, this adjustment only sometimes comes true. This is where we need to pay attention to psychological variables, such as the desire of actors to observe phenomena. This means that contrary to the assumption of neorealism that there is a

simple relationship between systemic stimulus and the state's response, we see a complex relationship between the two levels of analysis, systemic and national. In particular, in times of danger, the behavior of actors is not necessarily consistent with systemic and structural rationality, although it needs to be complementary (Taliaferro, 1997). It should be noted that beliefs do not have an independent effect on states' foreign policy. The perception of the elite is a channel through which structural variables are translated into foreign policy. Every foreign policy theory must define how explanatory variables are translated into a policy. This often includes a careful study of how leaders understand the distribution of power and its trends (Taliaferro, 2000a: p, 181-182). Is it possible to act under the influence of internal variables and against systemic requirements without being subjected to the unpleasant consequences of such behavior? The answer is no. Neoclassical realism emphasizes that "in the long run, regimes or leaders who continually fail to respond to systemic stimuli will jeopardize the survival of their state" (Lobell, 2009: p, 7). However, this does not preclude paying attention to the characteristics of states and their interactions and the structure of the international system in any analysis of international politics because, of course, to explain the causes of behavior, it is necessary to pay attention to all variables (Shweller, & Priess, 1997: p, 24).

1.5. FOREIGN POLICY OPTIONS AS A RESULT VARIABLE

The behaviors of foreign policy can be categorized into three categories:

- continuing existing strategies
- imitating the successful strategies of the great powers in the system
- taking the initiative to pursue a new foreign policy

The choice between these behaviors depends on systemic and internal factors. The international system incentivizes states, especially the great powers, to pursue similar strategies or eliminate risks as independent entities.

Neorealism acknowledges that states tend to imitate the military, technological, and governmental practices of the most successful governments in the system. However, the problem that both proponents and critics of neorealism point to is that Waltz's theory does not state why and how states choose between different types of

internal balancing strategies, such as imitation, initiative, or the continuation of existing strategies (Taliaferro, 2009a: p, 196). Neoclassical realism sees the state's power or relative ability to extract and mobilize social resources as the determining factor in various domestic balancing strategies, which is determined by government institutions as well as nationalism and ideology. Based on this, 4 categories of states can be introduced:

- a) States with more extraction capacity and external vulnerabilities choose the imitation option.
- b) States with low extraction capacity and mobilization and high external vulnerability face more problems in imitation.
- c) States with high extraction and mobilization capacity and low external vulnerability are pursuing the initiative to improve their security in the long run.
- d) States with limited extraction and mobilization capacity and low external vulnerability are less likely to imitate or take the initiative but are more likely to pursue existing strategies (Taliaferro, 2009a: p, 197).

Along with other domestic variables, the lack of nationalist sensitivities in a country and the existence of anti-government ideology limits the ability of governments to imitate or initiate. In these circumstances, vulnerable states insist on their strategies. Thus, unlike neorealism, which introduces its dependent variable as the balancing behavior of units in the international environment, neoclassical realism does not introduce balancing as dependent variable. However, the problems of the coalition that complicate the process of balancing (Christensen, & Snyder, 1997: p, 920) and behaviors which are likely to conflict with behaviors predicted by the balance of power theory, for eradicating them, there is a need to refer to internal variables and to find its root, one must refer to internal variables.

1.6. CONNECTING THREE LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

International relations theories are classified according to the levels of analysis or the position of the independent variable, whether the unit of variable analysis is the international system, the nation-state, or the individual decision-maker. Here is a fundamental distinction between theories of international politics, occasionally called

systems theories, and foreign policy theories. For realists, the theory of international relations is a theory of how states treat each other. Power is the main guiding factor in the behavior of states. Classical realists share the view of all realists that international politics can be described as a permanent struggle for power. They also agree with structural realists that international anarchy is an essential factor in the relentless demand for power and security, and ignoring or overcoming it is beyond the state's capacity; they cannot change these systemic conditions. Nevertheless, in contrast to structural realism, from a neoclassical point of view, anarchy is more than an independent causal force; it is a condition. Thus, anarchy and relative power distribution alone cannot explain a state's specific power-seeking behavior (Schmidt, 2007: p, 57).

While the anarchist environment encourages survival and competition, it is an internal cycle responsible for the state's ability to compete with the actions of others. Thus, the internal situation is a final arbiter for the state's survival within the anarchic environment (Schweller, 2003: p, 320). structural realists see a direct relationship between structural conditions and foreign policy outcomes. In that case, neoclassical realists see another type of indirect relationship in which the complex domestic political situation acts as a mediator in policy-making in response to external factors, primarily changes in relative power (www.fokususa.com). Thus, the theory seeks to explain how, why, and under what conditions the internal characteristics of countries, such as the ability and capability to extract resources and mobilize military-political institutions, the influence of social actors and Interest groups, the level and extent of government autonomy from society, the level of cohesion of political or social elites, intervenes and mediates between foreign policy decision makers' assessments of international threats ,opportunities , the policies they define and pursue (Lobell et al., 2009: p, 15).

These critical questions and points cannot be answered by the major theories of international politics, realism, liberalism, and the rational choice approach. The causal logic of neoclassical realism places domestic politics as a mediating variable between the relative distribution of power and foreign policy behavior. Thus, neoclassical research aims to add internal mediating variables between systemic stimuli and foreign policy decisions. Therefore, foreign policy analysis should include systemic, internal,

and individual factors and explain the impact of each of these factors on different dimensions of foreign policy.

Although foreign policy theory focuses on the state level, neoclassical realists do not see the need for a distinction between systemic and domestic levels of analysis because they are trying to explain the foreign policy of a state that results from the international structure as well as the internal factors that can strengthen or weaken the influence of structural elements (Wieclawski, 2011: p, 176). The impact of the distribution of capabilities in the international system or the structural pressure on foreign policy is indirect and complex; because systemic pressures and constraints affect foreign policy through unit-level intermediate variables such as perceptions of decision-makers and government structure. Therefore, from the perspective of neoclassical realism, understanding the relationship between the distribution of relative power and foreign policy requires examining both domestic and international contexts in which foreign policy is planned and implemented within this framework.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the bipolar order (adjustment of structural pressures on political units) dramatically affected the theory of structural realism. The incident contradicted Kenneth Waltz's predictions about the end of the Cold War. Thus, the explanatory capacity of structural realism in post-Cold War international relations has been somewhat problematic. As William Wolfworth puts it, the collapse of the Soviet Union was not only the result of a decline in relative power in the Soviet Union but also an understanding of this decline by the Soviet elite (Wieclawski, 2010: p, 173). Thus, the influence of the relative power of the state in the international system (independent variable) is analyzed through the structure of the state, the decision makers' perception of relative power (mediator variable) on foreign policy, and the strategy of countries (dependent variable). Unit-level variables (mediators) limit or facilitate the ability of all states to respond to systemic constraints, so neoclassical realism can also help to understand the different roles that countries play at different levels of the international system. For example, Russia's different roles at different levels of international politics, its global relations with the United States, its regional relations with the European Union, and its relations with the (CIS) States. In addition, the neoclassical realism examines the government's readiness for rational action based on cost-benefit calculations.

1.7. CRITIQUE OF THE BALANCE OF POWER

The balance of power is one of the oldest concepts in international politics and has been very frequent in international studies and foreign policy. After World War II, Morgenthau formulated the balance of power in theory. From Morgenthau's point of view, the balance of power is a natural and inevitable consequence of the power struggle, which manifests itself as a union of states concerned about their independence and rallying against the plan of a state that seeks global domination.

However, Waltz sees the balance of power theory as explaining the reversibility and reproduction of anarchy. According to Waltz, a change in the distribution of power will lead to a change in the distribution of security and a sense of insecurity in states, and the response of states will be to increase power and improve their security position as a balancing act which automatically restores the balancing and the power distribution structure. Thus, neorealism sees the relationship of power in the international system as determining the position of the state and its foreign policy, not the state's perception of itself. From this perspective, the government's foreign policy level and type are not determined by its national interests; instead, the superior powers and hegemons of the international system determine the national interests of states.

Nevertheless, neoclassical realists have criticized structural realism regarding the balance of power and have tried to offer a different reading of the concept. Neoclassicists believe that neorealists only explain systematic results, such as the repetition of the balance of power and the lack of stable hegemonic systems throughout history. In contrast, neoclassicists seek to explain the variability in the same state's foreign policy in the process of time or among different states in the face of similar external constraints (Lobell et al., 2009: p, 35). However, the neoclassical assumption may be able to explain the diplomatic, economic, and military responses of certain states to systemic restrictions. However, this critique can be argued that it cannot explain the systemic consequences of states' reactions. So, while systemic variables have a causal advantage in shaping the behavior of a state's foreign policy, neoclassical realism has also put casual indicators at both the structural and unit levels. This shows that neoclassical realism is distinct from internal to external approaches.

Liberals and constructivists have adopted an internal-external attitude toward foreign policy. That is, the direction of a state's foreign policy is determined primarily by internal factors, such as the priorities of domestic actors, their ideas, identities, or the nature of their internal institutions (Onea, 2012: p, 142-143). More importantly, the neoclassical (unlike neorealism) does not see the state as a cohesive actor. In other words, it rejects the notion of the state as a black box. The state is divided into community and elite levels, therefore, less likely to act according to the predictions of the balance of power (neorealism).

Thus, states often respond differently to similar systemic opportunities and pressures, and their reactions may have been less likely to be caused by systemic-level factors than unit-level factors; because every state has a different macro strategy. Therefore, Neoclassical realists seek to give agents more explanatory value in the theory of international relations (Schmidt, 2007: p, 59). These reactions could be due to the actors' priorities, which may be more influenced by domestic rather than international concerns or the high internal costs of balancing. The first reason is related to the desire and will of the actors, and the second is related to the ability of the actors to balance and react to the changes in relative power around them.

Thus, according to Schweller's theories, four unit-level variables, including elite consensus, government vulnerability, community cohesion, and elite cohesion, intervene in determining balancing strategies against changes and threats from the external environment of governments (Schweller, 2004: p, 160-170).

- a) The first model: Changes in relative power, elite consensus on the nature of the threat and degree of elite cohesion, barriers to equipment and mobilization due to regime vulnerability and lack of community cohesion, continuity or change in foreign policy
- b) The second model: The emergence of an External Threat, Dispersal of Society, Vulnerability of Regime or Government, Elite Dispersal, Elite Disagreement on how to respond to Threats, or Elite Consensus on balancing or under balancing (Schmidt, 2007: p, 59).

Thus, the balance of power theory cannot explain why and how states choose existing strategies among various "internal" balance strategies, such as imitation,

innovation, or pursuit current policy. Explaining this requires a theory that integrates both systemic and unit levels variables. While systemic variables have causal priority in shaping the state's external behavior, internal variables have a role in determining the types of balancing strategies that governments are likely to pursue (Taliaferro, 2006: p, 467-466).

Developments in the Arab world and the importance of the domestic level of the countries in this region have affected the foreign policy of the countries and the equations of regional power. In other words, in the past, the "balance of power" in the region was at the level of the classical actors which was easier and faster. However, with the Arab developments, the balance of power is simultaneously centered on the dynamics of the domestic politics of "Arab societies" and the role of states, so it is more complex and slower.

Therefore, how the internal capacities affect the regional policy of the actors is the central issue of the power equations in the region. As a result, following the developments in the Arab world, a kind of interconnection has been created between the element of "domestic politics" and "classical issues and the actions of states." In other words, the internal capacity of the countries of the Arab world plays a vital role in the orientation of the regional policy of the main actors in the development of the Arab world. The regional policies of the actors, under the influence of the internal capacities of the Arab world and relying on independent national trends, have led the actors to turn to regional solutions for regional problems seriously. Thus, by moving away from structural realism instead of linking the balance of power to the reproduction of the international anarchist system, more attention is paid to specific foreign policy reactions, and the balancing is linked to a particular type of foreign policy behavior.

1.8. UNIPOLAR SYSTEM AND IMBALANCE

The balance of power theory, particularly structural realists in general, explains what happens, not when it happens. The non-fulfillment of the theory of the balance of power against the United States after the Cold War led Stephen Walt to shift the

focus of realism from the balance of power to the balance of threat (little, 2007: p, 3-31).

Walt argues that when we focus not on power but on threats, the abnormality of states' imbalances against the United States disappears. He described the United States' behavior as the most critical factor in not forming a coalition against it. Although Walt seeks to correct the approach to the balance of power, it should not be overlooked that the basis for Walt's conceptualization of the elements of balance contradicts one of the main hypotheses of realism because realism sees any density of power as a threat, and that is regardless of the intentions of the governments. As Schweller argues, countries have often needed to understand the apparent danger in international politics. For this reason, they have either not reacted to this danger or their reaction needs to be increased. He calls this behavior "under balancing," which contradicts the central prediction of structural realism. In his view, the under-balancing pattern has persisted, so no equal competitor has yet emerged to balance the United States (Balci et al., 2020).

Realists, on the other hand, thought that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Europe would become a unifying force against the United States. Alternatively, Germany alone will play this role, and the transatlantic alliance will collapse so that NATO will disintegrate, but as NATO continued to live, some realists argued that institutions had no causal effect on state behavior. Others have argued that the United States, through NATO, will dissuade Europe from pursuing a policy of balancing the United States. This contradicted Mearsheimer's predictions that with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of NATO, the United States would no longer pay attention to Europe, and Europe would return to its old competition (Michael, 2006: p, 8-10). Although the United States effectively pursued a new policy of expansion in the late 1990s and in the invasion of Iraq in 2003, in contrast to the expansion models, such as NATO expansion in 1997 and the US presence in the Persian Gulf since 1991, failed to achieve maximum purposeful power (Onea, 2012: p, 142).

According to Schweller, one of the realists' main contradictions is that establishing a unipolar system did not cause a global warning to restore the balance of power. He sees the emergence of "under balancing" as not a deviation but a regular

aspect of international politics. He hypothesizes that only powerful and allied countries can effectively adapt to systemic structural stimuli, even when intense and compelling (Schweller, 2006: p, 130). Therefore, from Schweller's point of view, it is still possible to form a benign hegemon. As the unipolar system, Wolfworth believes that structural pressures are weak and that it is impossible to understand the US macro-strategy using a structural perspective. In contrast, he accepts the view of neoclassical realism, which focuses on the interaction of domestic sources of foreign policy with the structure of the international system (little, 2007). Thus, the US macro-strategy is based on the ideological orientation and political economy of the United States, as well as on the distribution of power in the international system.

1.9. THE SECURITY DILEMMA, POWER, AND PRIORITIES

Some realists, known as defensives, have argued that governments are not inherently hegemonic but cautious and are only concerned with ensuring survival and security under existing geopolitics, which is better ensured through balancing. This prediction has two fundamental implications for defensive structural realism. That the order is anarchic and is based on units that seek survival and security. Therefore, the first concern of states is not to increase power but to maintain their position in the international system. Consequently, defensive realism suggests that states have no real incentive to become expansionist and revisionist states (Rynning, & Ringsmose, 2008: p, 25). In this perspective, conflict and competition can only occur because states do not trust each other's strategic intentions and actions. Uncertainty with excessive risk aversion forces states to recognize and evaluate each other's intentions only through action. This distinction complicates an assumed action's defensive and offensive intentions; hence, states find themselves in a constant security dilemma.

If the international system does not explain revisionist behavior rationally, how does defensive realism examine genuine efforts toward expansionism? According to Schweller, defensive realism depicts a "world full of policemen, not looters," if it is assumed that governments do not pursue anything more than their survival, why do they feel threatened? (Legro, & Moravcsik, 1998: p, 12-13). In practice, states often seek to expand regardless of the objective security requirements, but defensive realism rejects attributing any of this expansionism to systemic stimuli. Therefore, defensive

realism, with focuses on the priority of survival and the lack of confidence in the intentions and actions of states, still considers power as a goal.

Offensive realists acknowledge that anarchy often encourages expansionism. Nevertheless, offensive realists assume that states are mainly concerned with understanding how to survive in a world without an agent to support them. Therefore, the best strategy for survival is not to maintain power but to increase power and gain hegemonic status, so states should be considered revisionist (Rynning, & Ringsmose, 2008: p, 27). Neoclassical realism contrasts with defensive and offensive realism. The analytical structure of neoclassical realism includes an independent variable (international system) and mediator variables (domestic policy issues), and a dependent variable (foreign policy). In other words, the effect of system pressures and capabilities due to mediator variables at the unit level is indirect and complex (Rose, 1998: p, 153). However, the argument for neoclassical realism is that states differ not only in their relative power but also in their motivation. Survival is one of the potential interests of the state, which may be preserved with a revisionist strategy or by maintaining the status quo.

However, this approach focuses on "security-seeking states" in the security-survival equation, and it is believed that the distrust of these actors for each other's motives will cause conflict. However, it immediately insists that while distrust of incentives cannot be eliminated, states have ample opportunity to reduce it, and "security-seeking states" can generally identify each other as security seekers and prevent conflict because of internal tendencies (Kyda, 1997: p, 117). These states must focus on the other side's concerns and the issues reinforcing the motivations of distrust and, by building trust, must reduce the likelihood of war. They put greedy states against security-seeking states. Security and survival are not necessarily the priority or the only concern of these states.

Therefore, anarchy in the international system is not inherently wrong. It is only problematic when there are offensive motivations behind wealth and power. Schweller states that when the defense is dominant, states invest in defense weapons; when the offense is dominant, security seekers will still invest in defense weapons. Such investments send warning signs that under harsh conditions could lead to the

possibility of a dangerous war (Schweller, 1996: p, 4-103), but the model of decision-making in neoclassical realism, as a realist theory, like other realism (structural and classical), falls within the model of "rational action" and "logic of result" however, rationality in this theory means that countries adopt targeted policies in pursuit of relative power or security.

Contrary to the neorealist materialist-structural approach, the neoclassical approach is considered a materialist-agent approach. Hence the rationality of neoclassical realism is not the same as realistic rationality. Instead, the rationality of neoclassical realism is a kind of "strategic rationality," which is structurally different from the structure of parametric rationality (Little, 1994: p, 81-85). Neoclassicists believe in "strategic rationality" because they believe in the possibility of changing state priorities interacting over time. Therefore, this approach does not believe in the indisputability of the desire of all states to survive because, in the opinion of the neoclassical realists, countries do not always and at all times make decisions based on the worst-case scenario, which requires prioritizing independence-survival over influence. Instead of making decisions based on threats, they make decisions based on threats probability. The probability of a threat also varies in different circumstances and depends on various factors. Therefore, in cases where the threat to national security is low, rational decision-making prioritizes influence over independence and survival.

From a neoclassical point of view, states do not always expect conflict, while from a classical and structural realist point of view; states always expect conflict and design goals and strategies in anticipation of conflict. This expectation of "perpetual conflict" is a kind of prediction, and it is vital that if states do not always expect conflict, the relationship between them will not be tense. Accordingly, from the point of view of neoclassical realism, pursuing power in the international system and at the regional level is not an inherent goal but relatively the most essential tool for the state to control and shape the environment and the context in which it is located. According to this formula, when the power of one state increases, its interests are considered, and it will seek a "balance of interests" with other states. By increasing its capabilities, a state will seek to influence, control and shape the external environment. When its

power resources are weakened, its interests and ambitions will significantly reduce. So, the pursuit of power is not a goal in itself; it is a mechanism.

In other words, states are pursuing maximizing opportunities to operationalize their priorities. So instead of describing states as beings seeking to increase power and security, neoclassicists prefer to describe states as beings seeking to increase influence (Schmidt, 2007: p, 60). By "distributing interests," Schweller argues that security is not a top priority for states, and some states may be more interested in territory, influence, power, wealth, or other goals (Schweller, 1996: p, 121-90). By emphasizing unit-level mediator variables such as decision-makers, perceptions, and internal structure of states, neoclassical realism explicitly presents the state's interests as a variable between structure and behavior, which Schweller calls "balance of interests" (Schweller, 1998: p, 22). From the point of view of neoclassical realism, gaining power requires influencing others. Therefore, if one state gains power, other states must have more talent for permeability. Thus, neoclassicists better examine the relationship between power, the state's priorities, and behavior. Accordingly, "power in terms of neoclassical realism" can be defined as a kind of ability or capacity of a state to control another's behavior. This definition can be shown as follows:

State A exerts influence over State B to perform a specific action.

A seeks to influence B because it has specific goals for itself. Influencing B requires establishing a relationship between A and B. If the relationship is over for a while, it is a process. If A can force B to act, but B cannot force A to do the same, then it can be said that in this particular period, A has more power than B. Therefore, power can still be considered as a quantity, but a quantity that only makes sense in comparison with the power of others (Holsti, 1937: p, 249-252). Hence, from the point of view of neoclassical realism, power is a relative, relational, and a kind of capacity manifested in interaction. From a neoclassical point of view, foreign and international politics is a process based on how a state influences the behavior of other states to secure its interests. Therefore, if we look at the act of infiltration, power is a process, a relationship, and a tool to control others. Therefore, power involves a causal conception of the power relationship, also called "actor control".

Of course, power resources are an essential factor in how to influence and control successfully; from a neoclassical point of view, relative capabilities largely shape states' intentions. When a state becomes powerful, it tries to maximize its influence and control its international environment. However, the problem with this approach is that due to the lack of separation between processes - the result includes the unintended consequences of actions that should be different. It does not pay attention to the fact that the action of one party may not wholly determine the behavior of the other party and only limit the scope of the action and, in a way, it is capacity (Mushirzadeh, 2005: p, 13).

In conclusion, the neoclassical realism theoretical framework has proven to be a valuable and comprehensive approach for analyzing the complex dynamics of foreign policy and international relations. By incorporating both systemic pressures and domestic variables, this theory presents a nuanced understanding of how states navigate the global arena, particularly during critical moments like the Arab Spring. Neoclassical realism's emphasis on unit-level variables, such as the role of leaders' perceptions, ideologies, and domestic politics, allows for a deeper exploration of how individual decision-makers influence a state's foreign policy choices. This aspect becomes especially crucial in understanding the convergence and divergence between countries like Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring, as their leaders' perceptions played a significant role in shaping their responses to the uprisings. Furthermore, neoclassical realism's acknowledgement of revisionism as a driving force behind states' foreign policy decisions breaks away from traditional realist theories, providing a more accurate representation of the complexities of international politics. This recognition allows for a more in-depth analysis of how countries, including Turkey and Saudi Arabia, pursued their desired regional orders and sought to increase their power and influence in the region during the transformative period of the Arab Spring.

Incorporating the neoclassical realism theory into the study of international politics and foreign policy analysis offers several advantages. It not only facilitates a more holistic understanding of the interplay between systemic and domestic factors but also highlights the significance of leaders' perceptions and their impact on state behavior. By accounting for revisionism, neoclassical realism allows us to explore

states' aspirations for power and influence, going beyond the traditional focus on mere survival and balance of power. As we navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing world, the neoclassical realism theory serves as an essential analytical tool for policymakers, scholars, and observers of international relations. Its ability to unravel the multifaceted motivations and actions of states during critical moments like the Arab Spring empowers us to gain deeper insights into the global order's intricacies.

One of the central tenets of neoclassical realism is its emphasis on leaders' perceptions. Individual leaders, with their beliefs, experiences, and cognitive biases, are seen as key actors in the decision-making process. Their interpretations of the international system, threats, opportunities, and constraints impact how they navigate global affairs. This focus on leaders' perceptions provides a more nuanced understanding of foreign policy outcomes, as it recognizes that state actions are not solely driven by objective conditions, but also by subjective interpretations.

SECOND CHAPTER

2.THE ARAB SPRING: UNRAVELING THE COMPLEXITY OF REVOLUTIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

We have reached the second chapter of our thesis. As we understand from the title of the thesis that is regional convergence and divergence between Turkey and Saudi Arabia after the Arab Spring, the term Arab Spring itself must be clarified first. For this purpose, in this chapter, we seek to investigate the phenomenon of the Arab Spring, the revolution in the mainly Arab countries of the Middle East, the reasons for the revolutions within the countries themselves, and finally, the insecurities and regional rivalries that have arisen after these revolutions, which sometimes lead to civil wars.

In the early 2010s, a seismic wave of change swept the Arab world, shaking the foundations of longstanding authoritarian regimes and redefining the region's political landscape. This historical phenomenon, famously known as the Arab Spring, brought with it a powerful force of popular uprisings, awakening the collective yearning for justice, freedom, and dignity among the people of Arab countries. From Tunisia to Egypt and beyond, the Arab Spring saw the fall of entrenched leaders and the rise of new political forces, each vying for control over the future direction of their nations. The Arab Spring also set a web of geopolitical and ideological developments in motion, leading to fierce competition among regional powers seeking to assert influence and dominance in the Middle East. The Arab Spring exposed and fueled regional competition between influential players in the Middle East, such as Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. These countries, each with distinct interests and agendas, sought to influence the outcomes of the uprisings, creating a complex geopolitical chessboard that further complicated the region's stability.

This chapter explores the reasons behind the Arab Spring, analyzing how domestic discontent, regional rivalries, and global interests converged to shape events. In this chapter, we delve into the heart of the Arab Spring, examining the multifaceted reasons behind its emergence and its profound implications on the entire Middle East region. The Arab Spring was not a single event but a series of interconnected movements that arose due to complex domestic, regional, and global factors, each

playing a pivotal role in shaping events. One of the critical challenges that emerged from the Arab Spring was the struggle to form stable and inclusive governments. With the absence of a hegemonic ideology in the Arab world, the transition to democratic rule often devolved into military or factional governance, further complicating the establishment of new political systems. The eruption of civil wars in countries like Syria, Iraq, Egypt, and Lebanon showcased the depth of internal disputes and ideological fissures that plagued the region. Additionally, the entanglement of religious elements, ethnic tensions, geopolitical rivalries, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict contributed to the ongoing instability. As we examine the fallout of the Arab Spring, it becomes evident that the Middle East's security landscape remains volatile and multifaceted. Regional rivalries encompassing great powers, religious factions, and ideological camps continue to fuel tensions and further exacerbate the instability.

2.1. ARAB SPRING AT A GLANCE

In 2010, Mohamed Bouazizi, a young Tunisian vegetable seller, set himself on fire in protest of unemployment and the high cost of living in Tunisia, setting fire to the Arab world, the effects of which remain to this day and are likely to continue for years to come. The mass protests that erupted in many Arab countries after the incident became known as the "Arab Spring" at the time.

2.1.1. Tunisia: From the Arab Spring to The Recession

The revolution in Tunisia was won in less than a month after weeks of nationwide protests and the killing of 331 people. Western-backed President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was ousted after decades in power, and the Muslim Brotherhood's political wing, "the Nehzah," entered the ruling class decades later. The European media, especially the French, initially strongly desired to portray the Tunisian revolution as another peaceful revolution of the third wave of democracy. The name of this bloody political change was given at the beginning: "Jasmine Revolution." However, the rapid course of events led politicians, writers, and the media to accept the reality of the new developments, at least in the news coverage. In Tunisia, the origins of the Arab Spring, and possibly due to Ben Ali's Westernization, were civil society: women's rights organizations, trade unions, writers, and intellectuals who were significant opponents of the former repressive government. They played an active

role in the transition period, especially in drafting the Constitution and holding elections. However, the activation of extremist Islamist currents, several attacks on Western tourist resorts, and the assassination of "anti-Islamic" politicians caused the decline of the country's primary source of income, tourism. Tunisia's emerging democracy of 12 million faces severe economic challenges despite its survival.

2.1.2. Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Egypt

Egypt was the second country to join the Arab Spring in the winter of 2011. The organized army and intelligence of Hosni Mubarak's decades-long dictatorship lasted only a few weeks in the face of angry protesters in Cairo's Tahrir Square. Despite widespread repression and killings of protesters in the capital and Alexandria, the Egyptian revolution won almost a month after the Tunisian revolution, with more than 1,000 people killed in less than four weeks of protests. Hosni Mubarak stepped down and was replaced by a military transitional council. The Islamists quickly came to power in the birthplace of the Muslim Brotherhood. In June 2012, Mohamed Morsi, the first president-elect in a free election to represent the Freedom and Justice Party, the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, replaced Hosni Mubarak. However, the life of this Islamist-elected government did not last more than a year. Numerous opponents of Morsi, who were mainly supporters of the ousted Mubarak regime, ended democracy in Egypt with the support of the army. In the tradition of twentieth-century coups, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, the Joint Chiefs of Staff chief, ousted and imprisoned Morsi. Supporters of the February 2011 revolution were massacred in the streets of Cairo and Alexandria in July 2012, amid the silence of Europe and the United States. When Mohamed Morsi died of a stroke in the summer of 2019 during a trial for revolutionary activities in February 2011, the news of his death sparked no government condemnation except in Turkey (Ettelaat Newspaper, 28.8.2014).

2.1.3. Bahrain: Forgotten Revolution, Lulu Square

The predominantly Shiite citizens of the Emirate of Bahrain joined the passengers of the Arab Spring train during the "People want the overthrow of the regime" demonstration. Nevertheless, the story was complicated by this small island

on the southern shore of the Persian Gulf. The Al Khalifa monarchy, unable to suppress the protesters, appealed to its older brother, Saudi Arabia, for help.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which knew that in the event of the fall of Bahrain, this strategic island would naturally come under real Iranian influence, acted swiftly and destroyed even the statue in the middle of Lulu Square in Manama to disperse protesters. The severe and low-cost repression of Bahraini protesters, which naturally did not result in significant international condemnation, showed that the victory of the angry masses in the revolution was not inevitable.

2.1.4. Libya; From Humanitarian Intervention to Collapse

Muammar Gaddafi, the absolute ruler of Libya for more than four decades, was the next target of the Arab Spring storm. The crackdown on protesters, such as in Egypt and Tunisia, began in the country. The urban revolution turned into a civil war with the army's intervention and the arming of part of the opposition. It seems that the world powers, which were shocked by the untimely revolutions in the Arab world from the beginning of the developments, have recovered from the Libyan affair. With Russia's unexpected green light, the UN Security Council issued two resolutions in 2011 approving humanitarian military intervention to save the lives of Libyan citizens. France and Britain entered the fray when the United States was beginning to end the fruitless foreign wars of the Bush era, bombing Gaddafi's military positions in the Libyan Desert. Nearly a year later, the lone Colonel Gaddafi and his son Mutasim were killed in Sirte without trial. Subsequent developments, including the civil war and the collapse of a country called Libya, which continue to this day, despite the peace agreement between Caliph Haftar and Fayeze Al-Siraj, clarified the futility of the analysis and the aspirations of politicians and experts. USA Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and many world leaders rejoice over Gaddafi's ouster and Libya's move towards democracy and human rights.

2.1.5. Endless War in Yemen

The Arab Spring arrived in the winter of 2011 in Yemen, the poorest country in the Middle East. Many citizens of this not-so-urban and highly tribal community called for an immediate repetition of the Egyptian-Tunisian experience and the early overthrow of Ali Abdullah Saleh (per.euronews.com, 2020/12/17). However, Saudi

Arabia, confident after a successful experience suppressing the revolution in Bahrain, sought to negotiate with the not-so-cohesive opposition as chairman of the Gulf Cooperation Council and prevent the protests from continuing by shifting the top of the power pyramid. The Yemeni president left power a year after the revolution began in February 2012 and was replaced by Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, the president who won the single-member election, similar to the Iraqi election under Saddam Hussein. The Yemeni revolution weakened the state repression apparatus and allowed the Houthi Zaidi Shiites to seize the capital in September 2014 in protest of the high cost and shortage of fuel and the disorganization of government services in Sanaa. The Iranian-backed Houthis formed the Revolutionary Council after Hadi fled to Aden and allied themselves with Abdullah Saleh, a former sworn enemy.

Saudi Arabia and its allies invaded Yemen in March 2015 to overthrow the Houthi rebels. Despite numerous attempts to end the civil war, neither the Iranian-backed Houthis nor the supporters of Mansour Hadi's government in Aden have shown any determination to end the bloody conflict. The latest UN report shows the deaths of more than 100,000 people in this "forgotten" war. Thousands of Yemeni children who were born during the long years of war, if they survived the bombings, would have to deal with the risk of dying from disease or starvation in the early years of life. The decision to end this war should be made in Yemen, Tehran, or Riyadh.

2.1.6. Syria: From "People's Uprising" To Global Settlement

The Arab Spring breeze reached Syria later than anywhere else in the world, so late that Bashar al-Assad had the opportunity to say in February 2011 that the events in Egypt and Tunisia had nothing to do with our country. However, Syria, Iran's only ally in the Arab world, was not separated from the Arab Spring. If the Assad regime had not been an ally of the Iranian government, the revolution in this country would have taken a different path with a different form of foreign intervention. Syria is a neighbor of Israel and, unlike Egypt and Jordan, has not yet recognized its existence. Worse, Syria is still at war with Israel over the Golan Heights (Gause III, 2015). As a 30-year ally of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Assad united the rival forces in the region: Saudi Arabia and the UAE, despite their bloody enmity with the Muslim Brotherhood, sided with Turkey, Qatar, and Egypt over the Syrian revolution. The repression of the first weeks of the revolution in Syria, which, unlike in Egypt and Tunisia, began not

in the capital and big cities but in the slums, suffered far fewer casualties than the revolutions in the two countries. However, for the enemies of the Alawite Assad regime, both in the Middle East and Europe, there was no other way but the victory of the revolution. Today, none of the European heads of state who 10 years ago were preparing for the "imminent fall of the Assad government" is in power.

ISIS was born less than two years after the "popular uprising" in Syria. The absence of civil society and independent political parties and the rise of Islamic extremist forces made Syria the world's second-most populous extremist barbarism after Iraq. The moderate militias of the Free Army, the Revolutionary Council, etc., which were the typical hope of European democracies and Arab countries for the ouster of Bashar al-Assad for at least the first three years of the Syrian civil war, were pushed to the margins in the summer of 2014 following ISIS's rapid victories in Iraq and Syria (www.counterpunch.org). Iran and Russia kept Bashar al-Assad in power against Europe, the United States, and the "Arab world." Neither the use of chemical weapons nor the massacre of civilians by the Syrian army, the Free Syrian Army, and other small and large Islamist terrorist militias, unlike in Libya, led to humanitarian intervention. Nearly 10 years after the Arab Spring and the start of the civil war in Syria, Israel with Iran, Iran with the Arab countries and Turkey, Russia with Europe, and the United States somehow settled in the Syrian field with rivals and enemies. Ten years ago, the Arab Spring was in the eyes of many observers, the fourth wave of democracy.

2.2. MIDDLE EAST AFTER THE 2011 DEVELOPMENTS

The Middle East, especially the Arab world, has undergone many changes since 2011. The so-called "Arab Spring" has had a profound effect on international relations and Middle Eastern governments and opened a new space for a regional mechanism. With this new atmosphere, many experts hoped to see a new wave of governments bring stability and regional order. It did not take long for these expectations to turn to despair, and the region's governments once again became involved in conflict, political and social crises, and even civil wars. As a result, after years of conflict, a new political order at the state level in the region will emerge that is distinct from its previous order and identity, which were based on conflict and

disagreement. In an anarchic atmosphere, many historical, identity, political, and geopolitical differences between the states in the region flared up again like fire under ashes, and regional stability and security were again threatened. The outbreak of civil wars, bloody rivalries, ongoing crises, sectarian strife in the form of Shiites and Sunnis, Kurdish ethnic movements, and Turkey's entry into the Middle East's playing field all portrayed a negative image of the region and the state system in the Middle East. In addition, the emergence of takfiri-terrorist groups that emerged from the instability and power vacuum resulting from popular uprisings in some Arab countries posed a severe threat to the new political order in the Middle East. This atmosphere of threat also provided a new arena for the intervention of the great powers. Thus, with the creation of the threat, the beginning of a new era of new governments in the region became ambiguous (Hanafi, 2013). In the regional sphere, the efforts of three regional powers, namely Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, to redefine their role in the region and change the rules and environment of the game according to their will to build a new region and their competition to restructure Power in the region has played a significant role in increasing the scope of instability.

Finally, at the global level, changing the way and look of the great powers, especially the United States, in the form of the doctrine of "soft power," "smart power," "proxy war," and US rivalry with Russia, especially in the Syrian issue, The Middle East faced a chaotic and anarchic atmosphere that made achieving regional order and unity increasingly challenging.

2.3. LEVELS OF ANALYSIS AND STUDY OF THE MIDDLE EAST AFTER THE ARAB SPRING

2.3.1. Internal Level

Although mainly in the Middle East, regional and global levels were extreme independently, the domestic level is also notable for its insecure post-colonial regimes and obsessive concerns for security (Ayoob, 1995). In many cases, insecurity and crises exist mainly within the framework of the state system. At the domestic level, many countries in the region need to be in a stronger position of socio-political cohesion. Democracy is rare; tyranny, force, and repression are familiar in domestic political life. Strong ties between authoritarian regimes with oil resources,

international capital, and alliances with great powers have allowed these rentier governments to use their vast internal security forces to suppress the people and distance themselves from civil society (Krause, 1995: p, 339–342). In another analysis, although the framework of government is established in the Middle East, it has been challenged by groups such as the Islamists, entities such as the Kurds, which have no state, and more recently, by takfiri-terrorist movements. Due to the problems that are seen at the domestic level among Middle Eastern countries, there is still a long way to go to achieve stability and order. In the meantime, many other reasons and factors, in addition to the above, have made the Middle East subject to insecurity and instability since the 2011 events.

2.3.1.1. Important Reasons for Instability at The Internal Level

In this section, we examine the most important factors of instability in the Middle East countries at the internal level.

2.3.1.1.1. Permanent Crises and Fundamental Problems of the Arab World

Let us look at the realities in the region with a realistic view. We should point out the numerous crises and problems that have plagued the Middle East, both in the past and in the present. These crises and problems can be divided into different political, social, economic, legal, and cultural dimensions and, according to some scholars, have caused severe disorder in the region after the Arab Spring. Problems and crises such as: lack of strategic attitude, intense political and cultural polarization between Islamist forces on the one hand and Salafi and secular forces on the other hand, dependence on foreign forces, and the division of Arab countries into small states with racial and sectarian approaches within a single homeland, for example in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, have made the unification of a country or a homeland a problematic dream. The use of violence against the people, the direct occupation of countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine, the lack of individual freedom and democracy, the sharp divide between rich and poor, the lack of national production, and instead the increase in imports of consumer goods for the needs of the affluent classes in Arab countries, remaining in the "past" that still exists, is one of the most critical issues that, in addition to problems such as the crisis of participation, influence,

legitimacy, distribution, the conflict of identity and role, has obscured the future of Islamic countries in the Middle East. Hence, according to some thinkers, there will be no hope for an Arab movement until these crises are resolved (Ruhi, 2016: p, 178–182, and: p, 193–206).

2.3.1.1.2. Conflicts and Instability of the New Model of Government in the Middle East

Why have the Arab countries of the region succeeded in transitioning from authoritarian regimes to revolutions, but this transition did not lead to governments based on the will of the nations, or basically, why has not a new model of government taken place after the Arab Spring? These questions have always occupied the minds of many researchers and analysts in the Middle East. Significant obstacles have been faced in building a new Middle East government since 2011. The most important of them are the following:

2.3.1.1.3. Continuation of the Government-Nation-Building Crisis

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the independence of the Arab nations, various political regimes ruled the Middle East: the dynastic monarchy, the constitution, the lifelong republic based on military coups, and authoritarian one-party regimes were the three main types of government in the region. Tribal traditionalism, Arab nationalism and socialism, and, more recently, neoliberalism, have also been the dominant discourses in the politics and economics of these countries in recent decades. Despite differences in structure and political discourse, the common denominator of these states has been authoritarian modernization and sovereignty based on tribal, party, and military oligarchy (Javanpour, & BaniHashemi, 2013: p, 137). Accordingly, the Westphalian tradition was not the basis for establishing the nation-state and forming nation-states in the Middle East. However, the monarchy with tribal tendencies has been the logic of politics and government in the region for centuries (Martin, 2004: p, 13–14). Crises of participation and legitimacy have resulted from such a pattern of state formation and the modernization of the Arab world. The continuation of these crises can also be considered the essential background of the popular uprisings and revolutions of the people in the Arab Middle East, the subsequent collapse of governments in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, and then the crisis

of widespread political violence in Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain, shaking the foundations of the authoritarian governments of Jordan, Morocco, and the emirates of the region (Javanpour, & BaniHashemi, 2013: p, 137–138). According to Huntington's theory, the fundamental stage of any revolution is the creation and institutionalization of a new political order, and a successful revolution requires the creation of a new political order or government (Huntington, 1991: p, 6911).

A look at the phenomenon of the Arab revolutions shows that a new political or governmental order has not been established that can establish the foundations of a stable state that will lead the country towards state-building. The region's countries have a long way to go to achieve political order. Some thinkers who practically and theoretically consider the root of inconsistency and conflict in the Middle East to be the imperfection of nation-building processes state that in many parts of the world, countries have a clear definition of themselves, society, and the orientation of their country, but this is not the case in the Middle East. In the Middle East, it is rare to find a government that can define its issues in the context of the "social contract" and employ national resources in the same context. That is why there is so much conflict in the Middle East. For example, in a country like Egypt, although it is a deep-rooted and ancient country, Egyptians have not reached standard definitions on questions such as what is the definition of Egypt, how they want to generate wealth, what is the nature of their foreign relations, and the place of crucial concepts such as government, religion, time, the future, and the rights of the people (Sari al-Qalam, 2015). This is true of most Middle Eastern societies. Therefore, until this contradiction and inconsistency are seen, a standard definition of "self" and "other" will not be formed. Accordingly, forming a new government will continue to be out of reach.

2.3.1.1.4. Lack of Hegemonic Ideology

In addition to authoritarian state-building from above, designed by colonialism, the lack of a hegemonic ideology in the region that can include all groups is another important factor that has made it difficult to form a new government in the Middle East after the Arab Spring. According to Nazih Ayubi, there is no hegemonic ideology in the Arab world that includes all groups. As a result, political systems become military or gang states (Ayubi, 1995: p, 3). By accepting this idea, it can be said that

in recent decades, when the intellectual foundations of political and social currents in the Arab world have been influenced by intellectual and political schools such as liberalism and modernism, political tradition and Islam, Arab nationalism and socialism, the central conflict between these schools and ideologies has been Each of which was a rival to the other has been an essential factor in the instability of the Middle East. The rivalry over regional hegemony and leadership that each of these discourses has asserted, however, in the past, laid the ideological foundations of post-independence governments. It shaped Middle East politics and power, but it has been one of the significant obstacles to establishing a new government or political order within the Arab world (Javanpour, & BaniHashemi, 2013: p, 146).

A new round of regional rivalries has emerged between the dominant discourses in the Middle East: The Islamic Revolution led by Iran, Salafi Islam led by Saudi Arabia, Brotherhood Islam led by Turkey, and radical Islam led by Takfiri groups. Each of these discourses claims that leadership and the political climate in the Middle East are in turmoil. As a result, forming a new government has faced more serious challenges and obstacles.

2.3.1.1.5. Internal Disagreement

Following the fall of the Arab dictators, an all-out coalition of socio-political forces was formed to overthrow the ruling regimes. Nevertheless, after this, in the transition to a new and democratic government, influential political parties and active social organizations became involved in issues The methods of achieving a new government, the philosophical and intellectual structure and foundations of the government, the origin of sovereignty and legitimacy, the role of religion and sharia in drafting the constitution, and the position and degree of military power in governance and the new government in general were widely disputed. In societies that experienced a peaceful transition from authoritarian governments, such as Egypt, there were still ongoing differences of opinion between the conservative institutions of the former government, such as the army and the judiciary, about the structure and nature of the future government. During the upheavals and uprisings in the Arab world, the military has played multiple roles in the transition and state-building phases in Egypt, Tunisia, and, to some extent, Libya and Yemen (Javanpour, & BaniHashemi: p, 161–162). On the other hand, there were significant intellectual and political conflicts

between the revolutionaries and the two conservative currents, such as the traditionalist Islamists and the moderates, and the radical forces of the new generation and the liberal and left parties. Henceforth, the quadrilateral power struggle between these three internal forces and the Transnational Front will determine the fate of the model government in Egypt, Tunisia, and other revolutionary societies. In addition, the new governments in the Arab world are stuck in a conflict between traditionalism and modernism. Also, the army and its role in the transfer of power and the creation of a new government, on the one hand, are an opportunity and a significant challenge, given the previous experiences.

In this regard, the army's role during the Egyptian Revolution is worth considering. In Egypt, the army first became neutral during the escalation of the protest movement and was watching the fall of Mubarak. Nevertheless, later, during the drafting of the new constitution, it exercised its oversight and influence and played a balancing role between rival and conflicting forces in Egypt so that the process of political and legal developments would not structurally change the existing order. When the Muslim Brotherhood came to power, after a year of the government of "Mohamed Morsi," it ended the life of this government with a coup. In Libya, a few years after the revolution, General Haftar, a former general of the Libyan army, is trying to create another model similar to what happened in Egypt in Libya under the pretext of Libya's deviation from the revolution. It can be said that the formation of a national government in the Middle East, both before and after the Arab Spring, when there was a lot of hope and optimism for this process, is still a long way from being institutionalized due to the problems mentioned. Government-building in the Middle East is based on something other than a compromise; both sides find a balance point to pursue their goals and provide opportunities for other goals. This disagreement and non-compromise have always led to situations for different groups in such a way that the benefit of one is to the detriment of the other. Each group wants power to the detriment of the other, not to share.

2.3.1.1.6. Civil Wars

The Arab countries reached civil war very soon after the revolution, such as Syria, Iraq, Egypt, and Lebanon, which were once the four poles of the Arab world (Khari, 2016). The Arab world has been in turmoil since 2011, and Iraq has been in turmoil since 2003. The situation in Libya, Lebanon, and Yemen is no less dire than in these countries. Ghassan Sharbal, a well-known Lebanese journalist and writer, writes: *"In Iraq and Syria, the central governments have collapsed." International borders have no place in these countries, and today we are talking about determining where the Shiite borders are in what is called Iraq. Where are we talking about the borders of Sunnis, Kurds, and Alawites? The military has joined extremist gangs and militant groups. A peaceful life is gone. The Arab world is mired in group wars. The Syria we knew no longer exists. Currently, Syria has become more dangerous, both for itself and for its neighbors. Today, we are witnessing sectarian wars in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, in which whoever has more power will take over more of the ruins left by these countries. This is the current situation in the Middle East. "The fall of Arab civilization has brought about a tragedy that has destroyed the majority and the minority together"* (Sharbal, 2015).

2.3.1.1.7. Failure to Achieve Democratic Change

Many hopes for democratic change in the Arab countries have not yet been realized due to the different conditions in these countries. Overthrowing former regimes has not facilitated a smooth power transfer to democratic and pluralistic societies. Although the changes in the Arab world have brought about a delicate but fundamental change in the relationship between the governments and the people of these countries, the leaders still do not have the time to think about democracy as they did in the past. They are also deeply concerned about their legitimacy after the Arab Spring. At the same time, they have not yet realized that legitimacy can no longer be bought by paying more people or passed from father to son (Ettelaat Newspaper, 2013/12/22). According to Rami Khari, the conditions for a stable democracy in countries are provided when they are based on local values and when countries have gone through a period of nation-building. In his view, the lesson to be learned from the insecurity and unrest in Baghdad, Damascus, Beirut, and Cairo is that the six dominant phenomena that define the Arab world—religion, armed forces, resistance,

sectarianism, Arabism, and tribalism—which shapes the personal identity of the Arabs and is an effective tool for street activity and rallies—are no longer suitable for the creation of modern, pluralistic democracies. However, countries in the region cannot hope for democratic and stable governments (Rami Khari, 2013). The British Economist published a question on July 13, 2013, entitled "What has happened to the Arabs?" While calling the cover an "Arab tragedy," it attributed the current problems in the Arab world to a lack of political reform, reforms that strengthen the values of equality, political participation, pluralism, transparency, respect for human rights, and the rule of law in Arab society. According to the authors of this publication, the only way forward for the Arab world is to establish political reforms and democracy, and this is how the war on terrorism is achieved (Economist, 2013/07/13).

2.3.2. Regional Level

The existence of religious elements, ethnicity, geopolitical and ideological issues, the confrontation between Iranians and Arabs or between Arabs and Turks, the problems of Kurdish insecurity, and the conflict between Palestinians and Israel, as in the past, were the cases that defined conflict dynamics in the Middle East at the regional level (Buzan, 2002). With the spread of this insecurity into regional politics, security dynamics have become widespread. At present, sectarian, ethnic, and religious elements, along with the Palestinians' conflict with Israel over an independent state, prevent Israel from forming such a state, and some regional actors' support for groups in countries involved in crisis and civil war, these include Iran's support for groups such as Islamic Jihad and Hamas in Palestine, Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and Shiite movements in Iraq and Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia's support for the Egyptian military, the rulers of Bahrain and Yemen, and groups opposed to Bashar al-Assad Jabhat al- Nusra and ISIS, and finally Turkey's support for Brotherhood movements throughout the Arab Middle East, as well as groups such as the Free Syrian Army in Syria, have blurred the internal and regional boundaries in complex and contradictory ways.

In addition, a bitter dispute over energy and water has added to the atmosphere of insecurity and tension in the region (Ruhi, 2016). On the other hand, the unbalanced power structure in the Middle East, the attempts of some actors to change the power

structure in their favor, as well as the struggle for power and regional leadership and the formed alliances, the composition of existing governments (weak governments, fragile or transitional governments, and strong governments), and the foreign policy of important regional governments such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Syria, and Iraq, are other factors that shape and advance relations in the Middle East security complex. These factors, which have reproduced the controversial and anarchic nature of the region, have played a vital role in the recent instability in the Middle East. However, many experts believe that the root of many of the current dynamics and crises of the national government in the Middle East should be traced to the regional rivalries that have taken place at the national level in the region since the Arab Spring. According to Buzan and Waever, in the controversial Middle East complex, these interstate rivalries in the military-political and cultural spheres have determined the daily order (Buzan, & Waever, 2009: P, 129).

2.3.2.1. Regional Competitions in the Middle East

According to many experts, the rivalry of the great powers, the rivalry of regional powers, religious rivalries, and ideological rivalries are the four significant rivalries that have gripped the Middle East since the Arab Spring.

2.3.2.2. Competition of the Great World Powers

Although the geopolitical outputs of the Middle East are primarily influenced by the rivalries and differences of the powerful Middle Eastern countries, at the same time, global and European rivalries, US and Russian rivalries for position and influence at the regional level that strengthen the existing Middle East poles, trying to manage conflicts instead of resolving them, the use of a bipolar structure for arms sales and economic balance, and using it as leverage to intensify or reduce disputes have played a significant role in destabilizing the region the issues of Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey are mainly influenced by the nature of the global competition between Russia and the United States (Sari al-Qalam , 2017).

2.3.2.3. Religious Competition

After the Arab Spring, the rivalry between Shiites and Sunnis, whose borders and fronts have never been defined between countries, is one of the areas that has

fueled instability in the region. This rivalry, especially between Iran and Saudi Arabia after the transformation of Iraq and the establishment of the Shiite state in this country, has spread to the borders of Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Yemen and has made the Middle East an arena of conflict. Many attribute the "Cold War" between Iran and Saudi Arabia and the "proxy war" between the two countries in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen to this religious rivalry (Gause III, 2014; Cooke et al., 2014).

2.3.2.4. Ideological Competition

The overthrow of authoritarian governments in the Arab world following the Arab Spring, especially in Egypt, although declining the position of authoritarian discourse in the region, instead the discourses of Islamism and democracy or pluralism, in addition to having to reconsider the elements of their discourse, formed significant competition to achieve more hegemony with the support of the actors. Although these competitions are similar to religious competitions, the central part concerns how politics is organized in these countries. Islamism aims to regulate Shari'a in politics, and pluralism, which is more in line with liberal democracy, seeks to dominate the discourse of liberal democracy in the region; it is a discourse that does not play much of a role for Shari'a in politics. In the meantime, what is known today as Islamic discourse focuses on political Islam, which includes a variety of tendencies, including traditional conservative Islam, civil political Islam, ummah political Islam, and fundamentalist political Islam (Yazdanfam, 2013: p, 70). Saudi Arabia leads the traditional, conservative Islam. Turkey is a promoter of Brotherhood-oriented Islamic civil politics. The Islamic Republic of Iran also seeks political Islam. Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and takfiri groups have also promoted fundamentalist or jihadist political Islam. Each of these discourses has been active in the post-2011 developments in the Middle East, seeking hegemony and superior discourse. The rivalry between them has become an arena for regional conflicts and rivalries.

2.3.2.5. Competition of Regional Powers

One of the crucial effects of the developments in the Arab world in regional studies is their geopolitical and ideological effects on regional actors. Developments in the Arab world and their geopolitical implications have redefined the role of regional and trans-regional actors. Meanwhile, actors such as Iran, Turkey, and Saudi

Arabia entered the competitive Middle East game environment based on their geopolitical and ideological interests, and each tried to change or confiscate the rules and game environment in their favor. The views of the three regional powers on these developments led to a severe and essential competition for influence, hegemony, and the acquisition of dominant power in the region between them, so that each tried to move the path of change in a way that would satisfy their interests (Cooke et al., 2014: p, 3–14). This issue, which, according to some researchers, has become the main rule of the game in the Middle East after the Arab Spring, in addition to drawing the strategic horizon of the Middle East, has also brought a wave of instability and tension to the region (Treeill, 2012).

2.3.2.6. Regional Power Structure and Instability in the Middle East

In the Middle East, the power distribution process is one of the most important factors that has always determined the dynamics of insecurity and conflict. Sudden or very drastic changes in regional power distribution may have significant accelerating effects on regional order. Given the developments, some Middle Eastern scholars believe that another significant challenge is the lack of a desirable regional order; that can manage regional crises and prevent them from spreading.

Due to the type of structural features of the region, the best model of regional order management that has been able to be effective in the Middle East is the model of the balance of regional powers that has shown itself in different periods. Nevertheless, this pattern, too, has yet to bring order and security due to the frequent interventions of the great powers in the region. For this reason, Gause Gregory sees the best framework for understanding regional politics in the Middle East as a kind of regional "Cold War." In the years following the US invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia played a crucial role. According to him, the two actors do not enter into direct military conflict with each other. However, their rivalry for regional influence, which has manifested itself as influencing the domestic policies of vulnerable countries, has intensified ethnic-religious conflicts in these countries. For this reason, he does not limit the Iran-Saudi rivalry in Iraq after 2003 and then in Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain to purely religious rivalries but sees these religious rivalries as a continuation of the regional rivalries that result from the distribution of power in the Middle East (Gause III, 2014: p, 1-2).

Thus, if we want to analyze the new order of the Middle East region, we find that a particular pattern of behavior has prevailed in the countries located in this geographical area. Due to its geographical feature, i.e., its high permeability, along with the socio-political fragility of many countries in the region, as well as high foreign interference, the internal order is disturbed, and thus the structure of regional order is out of the ordinary. The combination of the two components, namely the fragility of regional governments and their vulnerability along with regional competition, has caused the Middle East, according to Buzan, always to have a conflicting and tense structure (Buzan, 2003).

In conclusion in 2010, Mohamed Bouazizi, a young Tunisian vegetable vendor, set himself on fire to protest unemployment and the high cost of living in Tunisia, setting the Arab world on fire. The massive protests in many Arab countries after this incident became known as the "Arab Spring". The Tunisian revolution won in less than a month. Zain al-Abidin bin Ali was deposed after several decades of power, and the political branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, Nahda, entered the ruling class decades later. In Egypt, the origins of the Arab Spring were civil society: women's rights organizations, trade unions, writers and intellectuals who were essential opponents of the former repressive government. They played an active role in the transition period, especially in drafting the Constitution and holding elections. Hosni Mubarak left power and was replaced by the Military Transitional Council. Islamists quickly came to power in the birthplace of the Muslim Brotherhood. However, the life of this elected Islamist government did not last more than one year. Morsi's numerous opponents, primarily supporters of the ousted Mubarak regime, ended democracy in Egypt with the support of the military.

The geopolitical and ideological developments of the Arab world have significantly affected regional actors and led to competition for influence, hegemony and dominant power in the region. Based on their geopolitical and ideological interests, Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia have entered the competitive environment of the Middle East game, and each of them is trying to change or confiscate the rules and game environment for their benefit. After the Arab Spring, this competition has become the main rule of the game in the Middle East and has drawn the strategic horizon of the region and caused instability and tension. The power distribution

process in the Middle East is a critical factor in determining the dynamics of insecurity and conflict. Sudden or drastic changes in regional power distribution can significantly accelerate regional order.

The lack of a hegemonic ideology in the Arab world has made it difficult to form a new government after the Arab Spring. This has led to transforming political systems into military or gang governments. A new round of regional competition has emerged between the dominant discourses in the Middle East: Islamic Revolution led by Iran, Salafi Islam led by Saudi Arabia, Muslim Brotherhood led by Turkey, and Radical Islam led by Takfiri groups. Each of these discourses claims that the leadership and the political atmosphere in the Middle East are in chaos, leading to more severe challenges and obstacles in forming a new government. Internal disputes during the transition to a new and democratic government with influential political parties and active social organizations involved in issues such as the philosophical and intellectual structure and foundations of government, the origin of sovereignty and legitimacy, the role of religion and Sharia in drafting the Constitution, and the position and degree of power. General Haftar in Libya is trying to create another model in Libya similar to what happened in Egypt under the pretext of Libya's deviation from the revolution. The formation of a national government in the Middle East, both before and after the Arab Spring, is still far from being institutionalized due to the problems mentioned earlier. State building in the Middle East is based on something other than compromise. Civil wars occurred immediately after the revolution in Arab countries such as Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Lebanon.

Conflict dynamics have plagued the Middle East due to religious elements, ethnicity, geopolitical and ideological issues, the confrontation between Iranians and Arabs or between Arabs and Turks, the problems of Kurdish insecurity, and the conflict between Palestinians and Israel. These factors have played a vital role in the recent instability in the region. The roots of many of the current national state dynamics and crises in the Middle East must be sought in the regional rivalries that have occurred at the national level since the Arab Spring. In general, great power, regional, religious, and ideological competitions are four important competitions that have plagued the Middle East since the Arab Spring. Religious rivalry is another area that has fueled instability in the region. This competition, especially between Iran and

Saudi Arabia, after the transformation of Iraq and the formation of the Shia government in this country, has been extended to the borders of Bahrain, Lebanon, and Yemen and has turned the Middle East into an arena of conflict. Overall, Arab countries have faced numerous challenges to achieve democratic changes, including overthrowing authoritarian regimes, the need for political reforms, and the ongoing struggle for stability and democracy. By addressing these issues and creating a more inclusive and diverse political landscape, the Arab world can work towards a fairer and more prosperous future.



THIRD CHAPTER

3. A LOOK AT THE HISTORY OF TURKISH-SAUDI RELATIONS

In order to better understand the topic of the present thesis, which is the regional convergence and divergence between Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring period, first of all, we must have a comprehensive understanding of the historical relations between the two nation-states. Examining the historical relations between the two countries and the ups and downs in the political, economic, and military relations helps us better understand the patterns of cooperation and competition between the two countries in the current and future relations.

Since the founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932, the two countries have had relations with regional situations in the Middle East and how each country reacts to them. In 2003, with the US invasion of Iraq and the rise of the pro-Islamic Justice and Development Party (AKP), Turkish-Saudi relations entered a new phase with a new approach to the Middle East. Bilateral relations (positively or negatively) are affected by different events that affect the Middle East policies of both countries and each country's approach to dealing with them. This chapter argues that regional events in the Middle East and how each country deals with them affect bilateral relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. After 2003, the profile of relations between the two countries in the number of high-level visits, the number of bilateral agreements, the trade balance, investment size, arms sales, and most importantly, an improved understanding of Turkey in Saudi Arabia and Saudi Arabia in Turkey has been achieved. Popular uprisings in some Arab countries had negative and positive effects on Turkish-Saudi relations, as both countries adopted different approaches to the uprisings following their regional interests. At first, Turkey saw the uprisings as an event that would lead to a harmonious relationship between the Arab communities and their new rulers and a step towards regional peace and security. In contrast, the Saudis saw the uprisings as an event that would lead to chaos and instability for a long time. The differences between the two countries' approaches were evident during the events in Egypt, either during the anti-Mubarak uprising in 2011 or in the political change in July 2013. Turkish-Saudi relations had lost their positive trend. The high level of official visits decreased, the

trade balance became similar to the previous period, and political relations deteriorated. In 2014, Saudi Arabia lobbied against Turkey in the UN Security Council elections.

However, "Riyadh and Ankara agreed in 2015 to establish a Strategic Cooperation Council to strengthen military, economic, and investment cooperation between the two countries." The purpose of the Strategic Cooperation Council was to counter Russian support for Bashar al-Assad and intervene in Syria if necessary. Turkey's hostility to Kurdish armed groups, Kurdish ideals in Syria, and Saudi Arabia's neutrality on the issue are other challenges between the two countries (Dergham, Huffington Post, 2016). This chapter analyzes the relationship between Turkey and Saudi Arabia at the regional level.

3.1.THE HISTORY OF TURKISH-SAUDI ARABIA RELATIONS

In this section, we tried to take a quick look at the history of relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. For this purpose, we will divide the relations between the two countries into several periods and describe them.

3.1.1. Turkish Saudi Relations from Late 19th

The history of Turkish-Saudi ties is covered in this chapter, from the late 19th century to birth of the Saudis, their struggles with the Ottoman Empire, early Saudi relations with the Republic of Turkey, their separation after the Second World War, and eventual convergence due to political and economic causes in the 1960s. The Ottomans and Ibn Saud had their first military interaction prior to the founding of the Saudi Kingdom in the framework of the cordial ties between the Ottomans and Ibn Rashid. In order to overcome Ibn Rashid, Ibn Saud requested the Ottomans' assistance. Ibn Saud developed cordial connections with the British, who were interested in the Persian Gulf region for its potential to defend trade routes, in order to win their support and ensure his conquests of Ottoman territory (Akarlı, 1979: p, 55). Ibn Saud focused on Al-Ahsa, an area in eastern Arabia, in 1913. He conquered it with minimal resistance from the Ottomans, who kept quiet to prevent him from becoming further allied with the British. Ibn Saud and the Ottoman Empire entered into a contract in 1914 that gave him control over Najd and the title of "pasha," allowing him practically

total independence except for foreign policy. The British recognized Saudi sovereignty by signing the Treaty of Darin in 1915. In 1916, Ottoman Sultan Mehmed Reshad sent priceless saddles as gifts to both Ibn Rashid and Ibn Saud to reassure them of their allegiance to the Ottoman Empire amid a wave of Arab uprisings armed and funded by the British. Ibn Saud congratulated Turkey on its triumph and showed his support for the Turkish government following the conclusion of World War I and the Turkish Independence War; however, he was taken aback by Turkey's renunciation of its claims in Arab areas. Hejaz's capture was ordered by him, demonstrating his intention to increase his sphere of influence (Bostancı, 2013: p, 56).

Sharif Hussein proclaimed himself the new caliph of Islam after the caliphate was abolished by the Turkish Grand National Assembly in 1924, giving Ibn Saud a chance to make his move. Ibn Saud had a reason to step in due to Sharif Hussein's tense relations with the British and his actions in blocking pilgrims from Najd from accessing Mecca. As a result, Sharif Hussein was compelled to renounce his crown, and Ibn Saud took control of Mecca. Due to their shared animosity for Sharif Hussein during World War I, Turkey was the first country to recognize Ibn Saud's nascent Kingdom of Hejaz and Najd as a sovereign state. Ibn Saud convened a convention in Mecca, and Edip Servet Bey, a representative of Turkey, attended. Despite disagreements over the congress's choices, Turkey used the occasion to show off its links to the Muslim world.

Further improvements in Turkish-Saudi relations led to the signing of a treaty of amity in 1929, reaffirming the two countries' political independence and territorial integrity (Harold et al., 2007: p, 196). Prince Faisal, the Saudi Arabian minister of foreign affairs, visited Turkey in 1932, which improved ties between the two nations. When Faisal traveled there, he met Iffat al-Thunayan, who would eventually rise to prominence in Saudi Arabia and become his future wife. Turkey helped safeguard the interests of Germany and France in Saudi Arabia during World War II because there were no longer any diplomatic ties between these two nations and Saudi Arabia. Turkish-Saudi relations were further cemented by Turkey's stance in defending its interests. Overall, shared interests and a unified position against common opponents, such as Sharif Hussein and certain European powers during World War II, helped

define the formation of Saudi Arabia as a kingdom and its favorable relations with Turkey during this time (Cihad et al., 1986: p, 296).

3.1.2. The Fall of Turkish Saudi Relations after The World War II

As the Arab League was founded after World War II, Turkish-Saudi relations experienced difficulties, which widened the gap between Turkey and the Arab world. As Turkey sought to build a Middle Eastern collective security organization, Arab nations, notably Saudi Arabia, objected, and the Baghdad Pact issue further strained relations. Turkey spearheaded the Baghdad Pact, which was intended to counteract Soviet influence in the area, but it divided the Arab world and created an unfavorable impression of Turkey's policy. Along with Egypt and Syria, Saudi Arabia rejected the treaty and worked to keep other Arab nations from signing it. During the 1950s, Saudi Arabia's anti-Hashemite stance also impacted its relations with Turkey. The Turkish-Syrian crisis has affected Turkish-Saudi relations. Syrian ties to the Soviet Union and US meddling in Syrian affairs exacerbated regional tensions. Saudi Arabia tried to mediate the dispute between Syria and Turkey. The Baghdad Pact issue and the Syrian crisis were two adverse developments in Turkey's relations with the Arab world that led to a decline in Turkish-Saudi relations in the years after World War II (Krimly, 1990: p, 185). Turkey's relations with Saudi Arabia and stance toward Arab nations underwent substantial shifts in the 1960s. Turkey revised its foreign policy after growing frustrated with the West's lack of commitment to the Cyprus problem. Positive changes in Turkish-Soviet relations also impacted Turkey's Middle Eastern strategy, making it more open to Arab nations.

As a counterbalance to Nasser's Arab nationalism, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia started the "Islamic Pact" project. Turkey expressed interest in Faisal's initiatives, and there were rumors that Turkey might participate in the project. Due to its favorable stance toward Arab nations during this time, Turkey refused to utilize NATO bases against Arab nations in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, supporting the Arab side instead. Additionally, Turkey actively pursued diplomatic initiatives at the UN to support the rights of Cypriot Muslims and end the war in Cyprus. Saudi Arabia assisted Turkey in these negotiations and worked with them to prioritize decisions that benefited Turkey. The 1960s saw a substantial improvement in Turkish-Saudi ties due to Turkey's new attitude toward Arab nations and its cordial connections with Saudi Arabia. During the

Turkish-Syrian war, King Saud served as a mediator between the two countries, demonstrating Saudi Arabia's desire to keep the region stable and cooperative. Turkey's inclination towards Arab nations and the improvement of Turkish-Saudi ties in the 1960s were signs of a change in Turkish foreign policy and a desire to interact with the Arab world (Melek et al., 2001: p, 630).

The visit of Saudi King Faisal to Turkey in the 1960s was a significant event for Muslim nations' alliances and cooperation. On the other hand, left-wing authors in Turkey viewed the Islamic Pact initiative with skepticism, viewing it as a result of the fight between conservatives and radicals in the Arab world and an effort by Faisal to seize control over Egyptian leader Nasser. King Faisal's visit to Turkey in August 1966 was notable despite the arguments and critiques. In the 20th century, he was the only Saudi king to travel to Turkey. The conversation between Faisal and Turkish President Cevdet Sunay during the visit focused on the spiritual ties and shared interests between the two countries peoples. A joint proclamation promoting economic, social, and cultural cooperation between the two nations was released due to the September 4, 1966 visit. The declaration did not refer to the Islamic Pact controversy, ending the discussions. Sunay accepted Faisal's invitation to travel to Saudi Arabia, making him the first Turkish president to visit the region since World War I. Turkey's newly established strategy toward the Arab world, which sought to support Arab nations on the international stage, improved relations with the Arab world throughout the 1960s (Kürkçüoğlu, 2010). This change in Turkey's foreign policy was reflected in its bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia, where both nations demonstrated a noticeably improved level of collaboration and support for one another's viewpoints on various topics. The reciprocal trips of senior leaders, such as King Faisal's trip to Turkey and President Sunay's trip to Saudi Arabia, were illustrative of the two countries' expanding ties in the 1960s.

Turkey's foreign policy changed in the 1970s as it turned away from the Soviet and Arab countries and toward the United States. This shift in strategy was noticeable during the period of technocratic governments that followed the military coup of March 12, 1971. However, Turkey pursued a multifaceted foreign policy and tried to strengthen ties with Arab nations after coalition governments led by Bülent Ecevit won the 1973 general elections. Turkey's strained ties with the West during the Cyprus

Peace Operation and the detrimental effects of increased oil prices on the Turkish economy following the 1973 oil shock impacted this choice. The Arab-Israeli conflict and using Arab oil as a political tool were two other significant foreign policy issues for Saudi Arabia in the 1970s when King Faisal governed it. Faisal cautioned against ongoing unqualified American support for Israel because he believed that a fair resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict was essential to preventing the radicalization of the Arab world (Demiriz, 2011).

During these changes, Turkey worked to strengthen its trade ties with Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations. Positive changes occurred in Turkish-Saudi ties during this time. The coalition government's deputy prime minister, Necmettin Erbakan, traveled to Saudi Arabia to discuss loans and oil. Even though the amount of loans asked was excessive, the two nations negotiated certain economic and cultural agreements. On the Cyprus problem the midst of these changes, Turkey worked to strengthen its trade ties with Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations. Positive changes occurred in Turkish-Saudi ties during this time. The coalition government's deputy prime minister, Necmettin Erbakan, traveled to Saudi Arabia to discuss loans and oil. Although the amount of loans asked was regarded as excessive, the two nations negotiated certain economic and cultural agreements. On the Cyprus problem, Saudi Arabia likewise backed Turkey, and the two nations demonstrated strong mutual interest at Islamic conferences and other diplomatic occasions. With the influx of Turkish workers and companies into Saudi Arabia, economic relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia increased. Turkish-Saudi ties improved in the 1970s, notably after Turkey changed its foreign policy strategy to seek support from Arab nations. The ups and downs in Turkish-Saudi relations during this time were impacted by the development of ties between Turkey and the Arab world (İlkin, 1979). Saudi Arabia likewise backed Turkey, and the two nations demonstrated strong mutual interest at Islamic conferences and other diplomatic occasions. With the influx of Turkish workers and companies into Saudi Arabia, economic relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia increased. Turkish-Saudi ties improved in the 1970s, notably after Turkey changed its foreign policy strategy to seek support from Arab nations. The ups and downs in Turkish-Saudi relations during this time were impacted by the development of ties between Turkey and the Arab world (İlkin, 1979).

Due to differences in foreign policy, ideology, and political systems, no attempt was made to develop bilateral relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia until the mid-1960s (Sharma, 2016). In the 1970s, Turkish-Saudi relations developed as a result of events. Turkey adopted a different approach to foreign policy in the early 1960s and 1970s, with widespread international support for its goals in Cyprus. Turkey sought to integrate with Muslim countries. It joined the OIC in 1969 and established formal relations with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1975 (Arkan, 1993: 102). In response to this change of attitude, Saudi Arabia reacted positively and did not oppose Turkish military intervention in Cyprus in 1974. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia was one of the leading destinations sought by Turkish immigrants in the 1970s and 1980s. With the implementation of the economic liberalization program by the government of Turgut Ozal in Turkey and the start of infrastructure projects in the 1980s, Saudi Islamic banks flourished in the Turkish economy, and many Islamic NGOs were established in Turkey. Saudi Arabia established economic ties with politicians and pro-Islamic business people from SSM, widely known as Milli Görüş in Turkey (Koni, 2012: p, 98-99). Changes in previous Turkish policies were accompanied by internal changes and the emergence of Islamic political figures, which in the mid-1980s encouraged Saudi Arabia to invest in the Turkish market. In 1985, three big Saudi Islamic financial institutions: Albaraka Turk Özel Finans, Faisal Finans (owned by Prince Mohamed Al-Faisal Al-Saud), and Family Finans were opened in Turkey (Uras, May 2011: Milliyet). Korkut Ozal (brother of President Turgut Ozal) and Aymen Topbaş were on the founding committee of Albaraka Turk Ozal Finance, while Prince Mohammed Faisal elected Salih Özcan and Tefvik Pakso Pakso to establish Faisal Finance.

In the Persian Gulf in 1991, both countries sided with the US-led international coalition against Saddam Hussein, and Saudi Arabia provided loans to Turkey to help alleviate the negative effects of the war on the Turkish economy (Fiker Center for Studies, April 2015). However, relations between the two countries in the late 1990s were cold and tense due to the deterioration of Turkish-Syrian relations, Syria's support for the terrorist organization (PKK), and differences over the use of the Euphrates River. so much so that Saudi Arabia opposed Turkey's loan request to the World Bank to finance the construction of dams on the Euphrates River (Altunişik, 2012). Saudi

Arabia's understanding of Turkey is more influenced by conservative Islamic and Arab worldviews. According to the Saudi Wahhabi discourse, secularism is a non-Islamic discourse, and the Turkish government is not considered an Islamic state. From the point of view of Arab discourse, Saudi Arabia opposed Ankara's high-level cooperation with Israel in the late 1990s, as well as Turkey's policy toward Syria on the Euphrates River, which strained relations between the two countries. Changes in previous Turkish policies were accompanied by internal changes and the emergence of Islamic political figures, which in the mid-1980s encouraged Saudi Arabia to invest in the Turkish market. In 1985, three big Saudi Islamic financial institutions: Albaraka Turk Özel Finans, Faisal Finans (owned by Prince Mohamed Al-Faisal Al-Saud), and Family Finans, were opened in Turkey (Uras, May 2011: Milliyet). Saudi Arabia has established economic ties with key figures in the Anna Watan Party (ANAP) or pro-Islamic political figures through financial institutions. Korkut Ozal (brother of President Turgut Ozal) and Aymen Topbaş were on the founding committee of Albaraka Turk Ozal Finance. At the same time, Prince Mohammed Faisal elected Salih Özcan and Tefik Paksu Pakso to establish Faisal Finance.

The conservative Islamic and Arab worldviews influence Saudi Arabia's understanding of Turkey. According to the Saudi Wahhabi discourse, secularism is non-Islamic, and the Turkish government is not considered an Islamic state. From the point of view of Arab discourse, Saudi Arabia opposed Ankara's high-level cooperation with Israel in the late 1990s, as well as Turkey's policy toward Syria on the Euphrates River, which strained relations between the two countries. The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 undeniably affected the Arab regional system. It showed the factors that led to the inefficiency of the main parts of the system: the inability of the Arab states and the Arab League to counter foreign intervention by great powers like the United States and regional powers (such as Iran and Turkey) in the internal affairs of Arab countries; the inability to take joint action inside or outside the Arab League to prevent such interference; is a sign of a shift to a new Middle East based on US dominance (Salem, June 2008). The Arab states' response to the 2003 invasion of Iraq and their foreign policy signaled their acceptance of the new situation in the region and, ultimately, the expansion of relations with non-Arab countries such as Turkey or Iran (mainly Syria). Unlike previous cases such as the 1967 war and the Palestinian

Intifada in 1988 and 2001, and its charter calling on member states to convene an urgent meeting when Arab national security is threatened, the Arab League has not been able to meet to discuss the consequences of the US invasion (Salem, Opcit).

Saudi Arabia agreed to US military operations in Iraq and cooperated with the United States at a low level militarily (Gause, 2009: p, 295), while Saudi Arabia allowed the United States to use the prince Sultan base as a command-and-control center for its aircraft. Air refueling tanks, reconnaissance aircraft, and other US civilian aircraft were allowed to land and take off. Saudi Arabia supported the Sunnis against the Shiites with Wahhabi-Salafi slogans and supported Arab nationalism in Iraq with a strategy of unrest (Gause, 2007: p, 3–4). This policy of sectarian strife did not materialize, which ultimately backfired. However, it did help mobilize Iraqi Sunni Arabs to take all acceptable measures to ensure their existence in the country. Turkey sent different and contradictory signals about its decision to participate in the US war. On the one hand, it was concerned about the consequences of the war against the territorial integrity of Iraq, the emergence of the Kurds and their demands, and the impact of those achievements on neighboring countries. Turkey, on the other hand, has begun talks with the United States on its conditions for military action. Turkey has called for more troops in northern Iraq instead of Turkey to house refugees and counter any possible PKK violence.

Turkey also called for more foreign troops in northern Iraq to limit the political future of the Kurds in Iraq and to consider the situation in Mosul and Kirkuk. Turkey also called for a US economic aid package to decrease the possible negative consequences of the war on this economy (Altunişik, 2006: p, 185). Ankara played the role of mediator in Iraq to prevent the exacerbation of the internal competition between Sunnis and Shiites, which led to the division of Iraq. The collapse of Iraq could increase the possibility of establishing a Kurdish independent state in the north, which would have negative consequences for Turkish national security. This was part of the Turkish regional mediation policy to increase its credibility and combine it with regional political influence. However, this policy of mediation by Turkey did not prevent these countries from supporting their preferred candidate in the 2010 Iraqi elections. Reports indicate that Turkey has demanded the victory of Iyad Allawi as Iraqi Prime Minister in the March 2010 elections by pressuring the Kurds to side with

it (Taha, 2010). Allawi's pre-election visit to Turkey and Saudi Arabia was a sign of this support. Turkey's support for Iraqi Sunnis was not for sectarian reasons. In fact, sectarianism can damage Turkey's relations with its Shiite partners and undermine its credibility as a mediator in the region. In addition, this policy could harm Turkey's economic interests in the Shiite-dominated areas of Iraq.

Turkey and Arab nations worked together against Saddam Hussein's Iraq in the 1990s, sparking the Gulf War in 1991. Syria, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia became irritated by the invasion of Kuwait and started working with the West and Turkey. Although discussions continued until 1997, Turkey leaned toward delivering Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates F-16 airplanes and armored vehicles. Turkish foreign policy had issues with the Euphrates and Tigris rivers following the Gulf War, which prompted the Damascus Declaration in 1995. A further issue was the Turkish-Israeli alliance, with which Turkey entered into a military cooperation deal in 1996. Turkey's February 28 process had a detrimental effect on its relations with the Arab world as well. Saudi Arabia's foreign policy was centered on the danger posed by Iraq, which resulted in financial backing for the coalition fighting Iraq in the Gulf War. When Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Egypt, and Iran joined forces to the Gulf War. Turkey played a critical role in the Gulf crisis by amassing soldiers along the Turkish-Iraqi border and allowing the US to attack Iraq from Turkish territory (Oya benli, 2001).

Kuwait and Saudi Arabia thanked Turkey for helping them recover their losses from the embargo on Iraq. To compensate for Turkey's financial losses during the Gulf War, the Saudis sent the Turkish government 1.2 billion dollars in aid and the Turkish defense fund 1 billion dollars. However, the assistance was less than anticipated, leaving Turkey with the impression that its efforts had yet to be appreciated. The sanctions on Iraq also hurt Turkey's comparative advantage over Saudi Arabia and Gulf nations in exporting agricultural products in their processed and raw forms. Before the Gulf War, the Middle East accounted for 23% of Turkey's overall exports, but by 1996, that percentage had fallen to around 14%. Turkish-Saudi ties improved in 1993 when Prime Minister of Turkey Süleyman Demirel went to Saudi Arabia. After 1996, the Turkish-Israeli alliance harmed Turkey's relations with the Arab world and its connections with Saudi Arabia.

However, Turkish-Saudi ties saw ups and downs in the 1990s due to political unrest in Turkey. Reports from government agencies, such as the "Report of reactionarism" and the "Western Concept of Operations," identified Saudi Arabia as the outside force driving antisecular actions in Turkey. The state of Turkey's ties with the Arab world declined as a result of these papers (Kirişçi, 2002).

3.1.3. Turkish Saudi Relations between 1980 and 2002

Under Prime Minister Turgut Ozal, Turkey's foreign policy underwent substantial changes in the 1980s. Turkey's multifaceted and progressive foreign policy has facilitated economic, cultural, religious, and tourism convergence with the Islamic world. It enhanced communication with nations such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Libya, Iran, and Iraq. Turkey has also sided with Arab nations on significant issues like the 1986 American airstrike on Libya and the 1988 Palestinian National Council recognition of Palestine. Turkish-Arab ties have improved due to global events like the Iranian Revolution 1979 and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Turkey's economic assistance from Saudi Arabia in the 1980s helped bind Turkey to the Western alliance. Through increased official visits and business ties, Turkish-Saudi bilateral relations greatly strengthened in the 1980s. Implementing an export-oriented economic strategy and assuring its oil demand were two reasons Turkey improved ties with Muslim nations and adopted a favorable outlook toward Saudi Arabia (Quandt, 1981). By including Turkey in its preparations, the US ensured that bases there were strengthened and accessible to US troops. Turkish foreign policy underwent a change in this period, and ties with Saudi Arabia significantly improved. The troops of the Gulf states were significantly strengthened and trained by Turkey. King Khalid of Saudi Arabia met with Turkish Prime Minister Kenan Evren after the military coup in 1980, and he voiced worry over the Iran-Iraq War. Between February 21 and February 24, 1984, Evren traveled to Saudi Arabia and spoke about the Palestinians, the Lebanese Civil War, and the Iran-Iraq War. Both nations acknowledged their good intentions and desire for regional peace and stability. Vahit Halefolu, the foreign minister of Turkey, stated that the stability of the area and the Iran-Iraq War were addressed. He even told King Fahd he could go to Iran to help end the Iran-Iraq War.

Participants in the Turkish private sector negotiations were Kaya Erdem, who spoke about public initiatives, and Turkish businesses, who expressed their worries.

The Saudi army's training was to be aided by the Turkish and Saudi military training pact. The first deputy prime minister of Saudi Arabia and head of the national guard, Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, visited Ankara in 1984. Turkey, meanwhile, continued to follow a neutral stance throughout the dispute. Military leaders from both nations also exchanged visits, emphasizing the expanding defense collaboration between Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Turkish-Saudi relations saw a considerable upswing in the 1980s as both nations' foreign policy converged and their economic and political links deepened

Turkey started purchasing crude oil from Saudi Arabia in the 1980s and got two million metric tons in August. Additionally, Saudi Arabia offered financial assistance and asked Turkey to sever ties with Israel. Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Kuwait were the primary sources of investment as Turkey's liberal economic movement gained traction after 1980. Saudi businesses like Faisal Finance and Hlas Holding greatly aided Turkey's development of the Islamic finance industry. The Turkish-Saudi Investment Company was founded in 1984 by Saudi Arabia and Turkey with a 250 million dollar starting capital. Saudi-origin money was a significant funding source for Turkey, supplying loans for various industries like building, transportation, and labor. With 109 active contractor businesses in Saudi Arabia, Turkish contractors have influenced Turkish-Saudi ties. (Hasgüler, &Uludag, 2004: p, 84).

3.1.4. Turkish Saudi Relations between 2002 and 2015

This title explores the bilateral ties between Saudi Arabia and Turkey, emphasizing their development under the AKP's (Justice and Development Party) government after 2002. A proactive, dynamic, and multifaceted foreign policy focused on fostering mutual trust and collaboration with Arab nations was adopted by the AKP. Turkey was allowed to engage more actively in the Arab world due to the crises in Lebanon, Palestine, and Iraq. The US encouraged expanding Turkish effectiveness in the area, and AKP's proactive foreign policy vision contributed to improving bilateral ties between Saudi Arabia and Turkey. The country's foreign policy was affected by Saudi foreign policy following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, ushering in a new phase of Turkish-Saudi ties regarded as the "golden age" of Turkish-Saudi relations. The relationship between Saudi Arabia and Turkey was impacted by the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the fall of Saddam Hussein's government, the terror attacks carried out

by Al Qaeda against Saudi Arabia and Turkey, and the beginning of a new era of instability in the Middle East. Both nations shared a concern for the fight against transnational terrorism, which caused them to acknowledge their political differences.

Turkey was a tempting alternative when Saudi Arabia sought other nations for investment and economic cooperation. They saw Turkey as a military force in the area that could counterbalance regional threats and avert instability (Muhittin Ataman, 2009). Saudi officials countered that excluding Turkey from the Middle East would make Ankara more inclined to align itself with the West and Israel, which would be detrimental to Arab interests. Turkish-Saudi ties were optimized and improved throughout the AKP era and other internal and foreign advancements. Iran, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia sent delegations to a conference of six Middle Eastern foreign ministers that Turkey hosted in 2003. With the visits of Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz in April 2004 and Turkish Prime Minister Abdullah Gül to Saudi Arabia on January 11, 2003, bilateral travel grew. As the first Saudi monarch to visit Turkey in 40 years, Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz's trip there in 2006 was a notable step during the AKP regime. The visit was well received by Saudi and Turkish officials, who said Turkey's secularism would not prevent Riyadh and Ankara from forming a strategic alliance.

King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia paid a 300-person delegation, led by Crown Prince Sultan Bandar bin Abdulaziz, Prince Muhammad bin Navaf, and Prince Abdullah bin Fahd, a visit to Ankara in 2006. Six agreements were struck between Turkey and Saudi Arabia due to discussions between King Abdullah and Gül. The visit stressed the necessity of strengthening bilateral coordination between the two nations and emphasized the significance of Turkish-Saudi collaboration in tackling the Middle East's concerns. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the then Turkish prime minister, visited Saudi Arabia in 2007 and met with King Abdullah. The visit emphasized the significance of strengthening bilateral collaboration for resolving issues in the Middle East. The signing of a memorandum of understanding for enhancing political and economic cooperation between Turkey and Saudi Arabia and a convention on the avoidance of double taxation during the visit further underscored the need for diversification and development in relations. During a four-nation trip to Europe in 2007, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia visited Turkey. He congratulated the newly elected Turkish president,

Abdullah Gül, on his election, and they also discussed the Middle East peace process. Three hundred individuals, including government officials, royal family members, bureaucrats, businesspeople, and advisers, made up his delegation when he landed in Ankara. The main issue in the area, the necessity of defusing the nuclear tension with Iran without resorting to force, and the necessity of waging war against terrorism and extremism were all emphasized in the joint declaration signed by seven nations in Islamabad, Pakistan in 2007. Abdullah Gül stressed the need for improved communication while expressing concern over polarization in the Islamic world (Yeşilyurt, 2013).

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the then prime minister of Turkey, has preserved good ties with Saudi Arabia by emphasizing multilateral and international policies. Admiral Fahd bin Abdullah Mohammed al-Saud, the head of the Saudi Consultative Assembly, visited Turkey in 2009. The two nations have influenced one another to work together on regional and bilateral matters. Prince Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, the head of the Saudi Arabian Security Council, and Prince Abdulaziz bin Mohammed bin Fahd al-Saud spent their holiday with their families in Turkey in the same year in addition to official engagements.

To participate in the inaugural ministerial conference of the High-Level Strategic Dialogue Mechanism between Turkey and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations, Turkish Foreign Affairs Minister Ali Babacan traveled to Jeddah in September 2008 with a delegation. During a one-day trip to Saudi Arabia in 2009, the then Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan met with King Abdullah and hosted a dinner in his honor. The first official trip to Saudi Arabia by a Turkish president in 19 years was made by Gül in February 2009. He praised Saudi Arabia for its proactive approach to maintaining regional peace and security and opposed radical terrorist operations. Prince Saud al-Faisal, the Saudi foreign minister, invited Ahmet Davutoglu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Türkiye at the time, to visit Saudi Arabia in 2010. He met with Prince Saud al-Faisal, the OIC's secretary general and the head of the Islamic Development Bank. According to Erdogan, boundaries between regional nations cannot keep them from becoming brothers because they share the same history, creed, culture, tradition, destiny, and ideals. He also expressed gratitude for Saudi contributions to regional peace and stability (Ataman, 2012: p, 125).

Turkey and Saudi Arabia saw a resurgence in their economic ties during the AKP administration. To encourage private and public investments from Gulf nations, the Turkish-Saudi Business Council was founded in 2003, and an investment fund was established in 2005. After signing multiple business agreements during King Abdullah's 2006 trip to Turkey, Saudi institutions invested \$25 billion in energy, finance, tourism, and petroleum chemicals. In Saudi Arabia, Turkish businesspeople and organizations managed \$30 billion in projects. Before the global financial crisis, bilateral commerce between Saudi Arabia and Turkey reached a high of \$5.5 billion. Leading businesses from Turkey and Saudi Arabia formed partnerships, strengthening their economic ties. 173 Saudi companies were operating in Turkey in 2010, with a direct investment of \$1.3 million (Ataman, 2015).

3.1.5. Effects of The Arab Spring on Turkish Saudi Relations

Turkey and, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations sustained agreement in their approaches to Libya and Syria during the Arab Spring. However, Turkey responded differently to anti-regime demonstrations in Bahrain, the Arab Spring's hardest-hit nation. Turkey's response to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates military intervention in March 2011 was muted. Turkey, therefore, settled on counseling Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Iran to prevent them from escalating the conflict.

Turkey and Saudi Arabia did not always concur with one another throughout the Arab Spring. Nevertheless, recent developments in Syria and Libya have shown how peacefully the two nations coexist. 2013 saw Saudi Crown Prince Salman travel to Turkey, where they discussed military ties and the most recent Middle Eastern issues. Ankara and Riyadh were able to work together in some areas during the Arab Spring. However, a rift developed after General Abdul Fatah al-Sisi toppled Egypt's first democratically elected president Mohamed Morsi in the Middle of 2013. Although Saudi Arabia supported the military coup against the Muslim Brotherhood, the Turkish position supported a territory governed by Muslim Brotherhood parties (Al Qassemi, 2015).

Despite their differences, Turkey and Saudi Arabia remained united in their hostility toward Iran in the Syrian crisis and supported various Syrian opposition factions. Saudi Arabia's Prince Saud al-Faisal met with his Turkish colleague Ahmet

Davutoglu during a recent round of bilateral visits to discuss the situation in Syria. On October 12, 2013, the then Turkish President Abdullah Gül departed for Saudi Arabia to undertake the hajj. While there, he visited with representatives at the airport in Madinah, the Prophet's Mosque, and Mecca. Additionally, he paid a visit to the Turkish frigate TCG Gökusu and commended Turkish navy personnel for their efforts in thwarting piracy in the Gulf of Aden. After Muammar Gaddafi was overthrown in 2011, Libya's central government weakened. In May 2014, General Khalifa Haftar launched an offensive against the Islamist Ansar al-Sharia, sparking the creation of the "Dawn of Libya" alliance. The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia supported the airstrikes against Libyan Islamists. Qatar backed the Libya Dawn Coalition, whereas, Egypt, and the Emirates supported Haftar. In reaction, Haftar charged that Qatar and Turkey were funding "terrorists" and urged people to leave Libya immediately.

Saudi Arabia opposed Muslim Brotherhood groups in the Middle East during King Abdullah's tenure out of concern that an Islamist democratic model might come to dominate the area. Following the passing of King Abdullah, the new Saudi government concentrated on countering Iranian influence in the region, which would strengthen ties with Turkey. President Erdogan thanked Abdullah for his efforts in resolving issues in the Islamic world in a condolence letter delivered to Saudi Arabia. He traveled through Somalia, Djibouti, and Riyadh before going to Mecca. Erdogan then traveled to Saudi Arabia to discuss bilateral cooperation, shared interests, and world events. Iran's growing power causes the convergence of Turks and Saudis. In March 2015, Erdogan declared his support for Saudi Arabia's participation in Yemen and said that, depending on the situation, Turkey would think about offering the Saudis logistical support. In addition, he declared that it was intolerable for Iran to try to rule the region (Cengiz, 2015).

3.2. THE UPS AND DOWNS OF RELATIONS BETWEEN SAUDI ARABIA AND TURKEY DURING THE REIGN OF BIN SALMAN

Relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia have faced various ups and downs between 2011 and 2016. In the shadow of conflicting interests between Riyadh and Ankara during the time of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia went through many ups and downs; it even led to the

termination of their relations. However, after the death of King Abdullah, there were changes in these relations. In such a way, King Salman, the current king of Saudi Arabia, who was in charge of the Turkey-Saudi case when he was a crown prince, is taking steps to improve relations between the two countries. After the election of Salman to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the relationship between the two countries has been improving, especially since Salman signed military contracts between Saudi Arabia and Turkey during his visit to Ankara in 2013 (Kohkan, & Tajariy, 2014). The dissension between the countries regarding regional political cases, especially regarding the Muslim Brotherhood, has been the leading cause of the past dissension between Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Saudi Arabia's policy against Egypt has been to support Sisi's efforts to destroy the Muslim Brotherhood, but Turkey called this act a coup. Nevertheless, after some time, in the shadow of developments in the region and Arab countries, Saudi Arabia seeks to establish a relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood because it believes that with their cooperation, it will succeed in managing these cases. In addition, Saudi Arabia wants more relations with Qatar because this country is called the "father of the Muslim Brotherhood." On the other hand, Turkey is considered a strong ally of Qatar, so the visit of Tamim Bin Hamad, Emir of Qatar, from Saudi Arabia, and then the President of Turkey from this country is essential (Fevzi, 2011). Saudi Arabia interests in Yemen, especially after Ansarullah came to power in this country and after the defeat of the Yemeni Reform Party, which is affiliated with the Brotherhood, were tied with Turkey.

Regional conditions have allowed Saudi Arabia to revive its role, especially since this country has not been successful in diminishing Iran's regional and international role, and Iran's negotiations with Western countries and the United States have led Saudi Arabia to reconsider its foreign policy. In the meantime, Saudi Arabia has been left alone, looking for a power like Turkey to achieve its interests in Yemen under the shadow of the Muslim Brotherhood. In this regard, the new king of Saudi Arabia has prioritized relations with Turkey because these relations can significantly impact the cases of Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. In addition, Turkey is also seeking to regain its regional role. On the other hand, this country wants to establish a relationship with Saudi Arabia, and by using this relationship, it wants to prevent the destruction of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Therefore, the common interests of Turkey and

Saudi Arabia have gathered together in such a way that they are trying to compensate for their wrong policies and ultimately reduce Iran's influence in the region.

3.2.1. The Accelerated Process of Saudi-Turkish Cooperation and Coordination

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited Saudi Arabia for the third time in 2015 and met with King Salman bin Abdulaziz. Then the two sides announced the formation of the "Strategic Cooperation Council" to develop joint military, investment, and economic cooperation. Erdogan's consecutive trips to Saudi Arabia in recent years indicate the acceleration of cooperation and coordination between Turkey and Saudi Arabia regarding regional issues, especially the Syrian crisis. Relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia were strained in 2013 and 2014 after the late King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia condemned Erdogan's aid to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. However, at the beginning of 2015, after King Salman ascended the throne, the priority of Saudi Arabia changed from the fight against terrorism to the formation of the "Grand Coalition of Sunni Religion" with the presence of Turkey. Saudi Arabia's goal in forming this alliance was to confront Iran and its regional alliance.

3.3. POLITICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN SAUDI ARABIA AND TURKEY IN THE NEW ERA

After the US-Iraq war and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime, the relations between Saudi Arabia and Turkey have improved daily due to the Iraq power vacuum crisis, and Saudi leaders have made numerous trips to Turkey. On the other hand, Turkey has changed its policy and entered into regional conflicts. In these conflicts, Turkey has supported Saudi Arabia in some positions (Iraq and Syria crisis). In some cases, it has taken steps against the interests of Saudi Arabia (Egypt and Qatar crisis).

The occurrence of revolutionary developments in the Arab countries of the Middle East as a turning point has not only changed the internal interactions of the Justice and Development Party but also brought Turkey's foreign policy strategies and approaches to a new stage. The Government of Justice and Development, which had

become one of the most successful governments in the history of Turkey in terms of economic, welfare, and human rights indicators in a decade of its rule, was considered a successful model for the countries of the region at the beginning of these developments. The new strategic attitudes based on the zero-problem strategy with neighbors and the priority of economic diplomacy in Turkey's foreign policy faced a challenging and dramatic test of how to respond to the revolutionary developments in the neighboring environment of this country (Burnell, 2006). After the Justice and Development Party came to power in 2002, relations between Saudi Arabia and Turkey have always had ups and downs. In other words, these relations fluctuate between convergence and divergence and have never been able to lead to solid relations between the parties. Fundamental conflicts between Ankara and Riyadh have made the rival model rule in their relations. Turkey has a multidimensional identity with a European dimension, a Turkish dimension, and an Islamic dimension, which has become more prominent after the effectiveness of the Justice and Development Party.

In another dimension, Turkey defends moderate Islam of the Muslim Brotherhood type and, in other words, represents this movement. This issue is entirely in conflict with the religious and Arabic identities of Saudi Arabia. By promoting Wahhabism and leading the Arab world, the Saudis consider themselves conflicted with the Turks regarding their worldview toward society, politics, and religion. Turkey has sought to revive Ottomanism and the leadership of the Islamic world to revive its historical and cultural depth. Turkey is the claimant of the model of modern Islamic civilization in such a way that it presents itself as an ideal model for Islamic countries. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia is trying to spread its Salafist Islam in Asia and Africa to instill its reading of Islam in Muslims in all Arab and Islamic countries. Another issue is related to the Turkish-Arab confrontation; Turkey is trying to show itself as the heir of the Ottoman Empire by strengthening the Turkish identity structures, while Saudi Arabia considers itself the leader of the Arab world. After the Justice and Development Party came to power, Turkey tried to become a top regional actor in political and economic equations. In other words, Turkey's strategic goals were determined so that Turkey would be recognized as an influential player in the region by 2023. On the other hand, neo-Ottomanism, emphasizing the moderation of

secularist tendencies, seeks a more active foreign policy in the form of soft power in Turkey's political, economic, and cultural influence in the former Ottoman Empire countries. Saudi Arabia, which considers itself to be the leader of the Arab world and the Islamic Ummah al-Qura, does not understand this issue (Karmi, 2011). After the developments in West Asia in 2011, Riyadh-Ankara relations experienced more turbulence. In recent years, Turkey has made semantic changes in the definition of national identity. That is, based on the Islamic dimension of his identity with the Arab world, he thinks that he is the same as the Arab world, so he tried to play an active and influential role in the course of these developments. In other words, Turkey was trying to show the Turkish model under the rule of justice and development party as a successful example of the combination of Islam, democracy, and an efficient economy; for this reason, it encouraged the Egyptian revolutionaries to adopt a model similar to Turkey. Therefore, another reason for the conflict between Turkey and Saudi Arabia is Ankara's support for the Muslim Brotherhood. Saudi Arabia strongly protested this issue.

Besides challenging traditional political structures such as, Erdogan's support for Egyptian revolutionaries also marginalizes Saudi Arabia's role in regional developments. Turkey supports the moderate approach of the Muslim Brotherhood, which is in opposition to the Salafist approach of Saudi Arabia, because the spread of the Brotherhood's ideas can marginalize Saudi Arabia. In the meantime, two events took place that reduced the conflicts between Turkey and Saudi Arabia regarding Egypt. the death of King Abdullah and the El-Sisi coup in Egypt. With the death of King Abdullah, who had adopted extreme positions towards Turkey after the Egyptian revolution, but after the coming of Salman, who had made trips to Turkey during the crown prince's tenure, these positions were moderated. On the other hand, Turkey's policy towards Egypt collapsed with the fall of Morsi.

3.3.1. Economic Relations between Saudi Arabia and Turkey in The New Era

With the establishment of the Justice and Development Party and the adoption of a new foreign policy based on strategic depth, playing the role of a bridge and having a more significant presence and influence in peripheral regions, including the Middle

East, the relationship with regional powers such as Saudi Arabia found a special place in Turkey's foreign policy. Like the Özal period, it is more understandable with the visible improvement of Turkey's economic situation and the export requirements of Turkish goods in the region, especially the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council countries. The bilateral visits of the King of Saudi Arabia to Ankara and Abdullah Gül and Erdogan to Riyadh in 2006 and 2007–2010 indicate that relations between the two countries have become more serious. In the continuation of the Arab revolutions and especially the Syrian crisis, it played an irreplaceable role in the economic rapprochement of Ankara and Riyadh due to the purchase of military equipment and tools (Cheginizadeh, & Khoshandam, 2009). In energy, trade, investment, and tourism, there have been opportunities for cooperation between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Turkey is seeking to supply a part of its energy needs from Saudi Arabia to reduce its energy dependence on Iran and to replace Iran with Saudi Arabia in case of increased pressure on Iran by the United States and Europe (Afrasiabi, 2011). The volume of trade relations between the two countries was about 5 billion dollars until 2010, and this amount reached 10 billion dollars in 2015. Mutual investment increased to 75 billion dollars by 2017. In addition, both countries are members of the World Trade Organization and the G20. Saudi Arabia can provide Turkey with more access to the economic markets of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council member countries. Also, Turkey is pleased with Saudi investment in the tourism and garment industries, especially in the economic crisis caused by the Syrian crisis on the Turkish economy. Saudi Arabia can also help Turkey in the field of energy supply. On the other hand, Turkey can use its influence among the Muslim Brotherhood to bring Saudi Arabia closer to them.

3.3.2. Military Relations between Saudi Arabia and Turkey in The New Era

After the US entered Iraq and occupied that country, and after the Syrian crisis, extensive military cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Turkey was established. Military relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Syrian civil war have increased so significantly that the two countries' armies have conducted four joint military exercises.

In May 2016, the Saudi Arabian Army participated in the "EFES 2016" exercise in Ankara and Izmir and a month later in the "Anatolian Eagle 2016" exercise. On the other hand, the Turkish military forces also participated in the multinational "North Thunder" exercise from February 11 to March 11 with 150 thousand soldiers from 20 countries in Saudi Arabia. On February 21, 2016, Turkey's "ASELSAN" Electronic Military Industries Company and Saudi Arabia's "TAGNIEH" State Technical Development and Investment Company signed a memorandum of understanding to establish a joint electronic defense industries company. The share of the parties in establishing the advanced electronic defense industry company in Saudi Arabia to manufacture and design radars and electronic warfare equipment and meet the needs of Saudi Arabia and the region in the field of such equipment will be 50%.

3.4. NEW POTENTIALS OF TURKISH-SAUDI RELATIONS

The potential of bilateral relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia changed after the Justice and Development Party came to power in Turkey in 2002 because the secular-military approach of Turkish leaders decreased and the new government wanted to interact more with Middle East issues. At that time, Saudi Arabia also strengthened its policies towards Turkey to confront its regional rival, Iran, by relying on its "position among the Sunnis" after the US occupation of Iraq in 2003. On the other hand, Turkey saw Saudi Arabia as a profitable trading partner and strengthened its political relations with Riyadh (Karabat, 2011). The "Turkish-Saudi Business Council" was established in 2003, at the same time as the occupation of Iraq by the United States, and after that, the two parties formed the "Turkish-Saudi Investment Fund" in 2005. After that, the relationship between Turkey and Saudi Arabia peaked in 2006 and 2007 with King Abdulaziz's visit to Turkey, even though this trip took place 40 years after King Faisal visited Turkey in 1966. However, due to the extensive economic cooperation between Turkey and Iran and Turkey's unwillingness to cut ties with Iran for economic, political, and strategic reasons, Saudi Arabia's hope to attract Turkey to its regional front was accompanied by ups and downs. In this way, Saudi Arabia's hopes for Turkey did not materialize between the coming to power of the Justice and Development Party in 2002 and the popular uprising in the Arab countries in 2011. However, trade and investment exchanges between Riyadh and Ankara were

continuously improving. In other words, rather than Saudi Arabia taking advantage of the political benefits of its relations with Turkey, Ankara took advantage of these relations economically.

3.4.1. Turkey's Distance from Saudi Arabia and Getting Closer to The Muslim Brotherhood

With the flare-up of the "Arab Spring" in some Arab countries, Turkey seized the opportunity to lead the region. This means that he moved away from Saudi Arabia and supported the Muslim Brotherhood because he saw it as a profitable option for him in the first wave of popular uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. There was a controversy between Saudi Arabia and this group. Saudi Arabia, in turn, supported the Muslim Brotherhood for several decades against socialism to consolidate its Islamic legitimacy. However, this time, with the Muslim Brotherhood gaining power in Tunisia and Egypt, the situation was different because of the legitimacy of the Brotherhood. In the meantime, the Turkish-Ikhwani alliance was worrying for Saudi Arabia because this new alliance marginalized Riyadh's regional role. This was the point where relations between Riyadh and Ankara diverged, which was emphasized by King Abdullah's statements condemning Erdogan's support for the Muslim Brotherhood and Turkey's open support for the new Egyptian government in 2013 (Duran, & Yilmaz, 2011).

3.4.2. Changing Saudi Priorities and Re-Improving Relations with Turkey

However, after King Abdullah's death and King Salman's rise to power, the situation changed because Saudi Arabia's priorities changed from "fighting terrorism" to fighting Iran. In addition, the regional confrontation between the two in Syria caused Turkey to become a suitable partner for Saudi Arabia again. Saudi Arabia tried to strengthen Turkish-Egyptian relations to form a sizeable regional coalition with the presence of Turkey and to use Turkey's neighborhood with Syria and Iraq to narrow the field against Iran and its regional coalitions.

3.4.3. Re-Approaching Turkish-Saudi Relations

The regional developments forced Riyadh and Ankara to reconsider their calculations toward each other to speed up achieving the desired goals in Syria and

Iraq. On the one hand, the rapprochement of relations with Riyadh as a prominent government in the region was in line with Erdogan's calculations, especially since he suffered after the failure of his calculations towards the region. Also, the Russian-Turkish confrontation in Syria and the flare-up of Kurds' demands have caused Ankara to fear and worry that it might come out of the circle of conflict in Syria as a failure. On the other hand, Turkey needs Arab support for its military operations in Syria to confront the Kurds along the coast of the Euphrates River, and this is something that Saudi Arabia and the Arabs of the Persian Gulf can provide for Ankara. Also, Erdogan did not ignore the fact that Saudi Arabia's short-term bank deposits in Turkish banks have a significant effect on curbing the decline of the lira rate against other foreign currencies, and as a result, it is considered a support for his popularity inside Turkey.

3.4.4. Saudi Deposits in Turkish Banks Backed the Lira

Turkey's economy needs to secure its share in the booming markets of Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, and this is a goal that is realized through closer relations with Riyadh. Another critical point is that Saudi Arabia knows that providing economic support for Turkish companies and providing support for military intervention in Syria can attract Turkey's attention to the "broad Sunni-religious coalition" to confront Iran and especially its Syrian ally. In this regard, Riyadh hopes to soften the opinions of Ankara and Cairo and bring them closer together because it will be easier to deal with Iran. Saudi Arabia also knows that the experience of 2002–2010, which caused Turkey to gain more economic benefits in relations with Saudi Arabia than political concessions, should not be repeated (Bastaoros, 2015). In any case, the difference in the way of governance in Riyadh and Ankara and the difference between the two sides about the future of Syria after Bashar al- Assad, as well as the historical competition over the leadership of the Sunni Muslim world, will cause the relations between the two sides to be accompanied by ups and downs soon. It is noteworthy that confronting Iran in Syria is like a thermometer that can be used to measure the temperature of relations between Riyadh and Ankara.

3.5. REGIONAL BACKGROUND

When Israel launched a long military operation against Lebanon in 2006, Saudi Arabia opposed Hezbollah (Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, June 2006). Saudi Arabia's position on Hezbollah has not changed since the 2006 or May 2008 civil wars. Saudi Arabia supported the Lebanese government and was critical of Hezbollah and Iran. Lebanon's internal conflict in the summer of 2008 between the March 8 and March 14 Alliances. When the risk of a Lebanese civil war and instability in the region increased, Turkey was concerned that its economic interests in Lebanon and neighboring countries would be harmed. Turkey mediated directly with Qatar to reach an agreement in Doha between the Lebanese government and the March 14 and March 8 Alliance, known as the Lebanese presidential election crisis. The Lebanese government called on Turkey to intervene in the crisis and mediate the dialogue between opposition groups. Unlike Saudi Arabia, Turkey had no problem with the role of Syria and Iran in Lebanon as long as its economic interests were secure. Accordingly, Turkey considered its entry into the negotiations to find a political solution in Lebanon a necessity for reaching an agreement. Turkey used its good relations with Syria and Iran, and the then Prime Minister Erdogan used his good relations with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and Iranian President Ahmadinejad to put more pressure on the March 8 alliance (Daily Star, May 2008). Erdogan attended the inauguration of President Michel Suleiman, who was invited to Turkey in 2008 to become the first Lebanese president to visit Turkey in 54 years (ORSAM, Report No: 5, August 2009).

The outcome of internal events in Iraq and Lebanon has affected both Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Turkey and Saudi Arabia had regionally convergent interests in Iraq because both feared the consequences of the 2003 US invasion. The Turks and Saudis shared fears about Iraq's territorial integrity and saw Iran's growing influence in Iraq as problematic. However, in the case of Lebanon, their position was different, as Saudi Arabia continued to support the March 14 alliance, while Turkey preferred to mediate between the March 14 and March 8 alliances because Turkey sought to avoid direct conflict with Iran. The perception of the regional role has changed for both countries, which has positively impacted the development of bilateral political, economic, and military relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. There was a consensus in Saudi Arabia that accepting Turkey as a regional ally (a NATO member, a candidate for EU

membership, and with significant economic growth) could play a vital role in a primary regional strategy against Iran and could help the Saudi policy to prevent Iran's growing influence and restore the balance of power in the region. On the other hand, various Turkish political groups (secular liberals, Islamists, and conservatives) have increasingly supported Turkey's new foreign policy, which emphasizes its openness to the Middle East so that the country can play an active role in mediating regional conflicts. Turkish political groups believe that establishing good relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia is a crucial step because Saudi Arabia has a considerable influence and presence in the region. Bilateral economic relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia received more attention than Saudi Arabia in Turkey. In comments at press conferences when visiting Riyadh or welcoming Saudi officials, Turkish officials (the president, prime minister, and foreign minister) often paid more attention to the volume of bilateral trade than the Saudis. They reassure Saudi investors that Turkey is an excellent place to invest. Turkey's exports to Saudi Arabia more than tripled from 2005 to 2013, according to Figure 1. The trade volume between the two countries in this period has increased seven times more than in 2001, as shown in Figure 2.

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
962,156	983,226	1,486,917	2,201,875	1,768,216	2,217,645	2,763,475	3,676,611	3,191,481

(Figure 1) Turkish Exports to Saudi Arabia in USD Thousand

(Source : www.turkstat.gov.tr)

2003	2005	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
1.7	2.8	3.9	5.5	3.3	4.6	6.2	8	7.3

(Figure 2) Trade Volume between Turkey and Saudi Arabia in USD Billion

(Source : www.turkstat.gov.tr)

The US invasion of Iraq created a new political structure in Iraq, and the aftermath of this war spread to Middle Eastern countries such as Lebanon. Turkey and Saudi Arabia understand these consequences and see them as a threat to their national and regional interests. They were on one front on issues such as maintaining Iraq's

territorial integrity, fearing Iran's growing influence, supporting Ayad Allawi in the 2010 elections, and restoring stability to Lebanon after the June 2006 Israeli war.

	Iraq	Lebanon
Convergences	Territorial integrity of Iraq. Fear of Iranian Rising Influence. Support Sunni in the 2010 Elections.	Keeping Lebanon stable and curbing the Crises of the Israeli attack in 2006 and the domestic clashes in 2008 so they do not escalate regionally.
Divergences	Securitization and desecuritization of Shia. Different agendas behind supporting Iraqi Sunnis. Different approach to Iran's rising influence.	Different Approaches to the Crisis. Different rhetoric. Different approaches to Hizballah, Iran, and Syria.

(Table 2) convergence and divergence between Turkey and Saudi Arabia in developments in Iraq and Lebanon.

On the other hand, the degree of proximity resulting from the new regional conditions has helped both countries discover their potential for advancing bilateral relations at the political, economic, and military levels. The same is true of Saudi Arabia. Turkey has benefited from good political and regional relations with Saudi Arabia. Turkey began to attract Saudi capital to its market, and Saudi Arabia used Turkish construction companies in its infrastructure projects. The Saudis also benefited from Turkish military productions and participated in the Anatolian Eagle Exercise, held annually in Turkey. This section attempts to examine the developments

of the Arab uprisings in late 2010 and their regional perspective, as well as the regional dimension of the Egyptian uprisings in 2011 and 2013 and the Syrian uprising in 2011, which affected the foreign policies of Turkey and Saudi Arabia. The Arab uprisings took place in December 2010. The political geography of the Arab Spring countries underwent fundamental changes that kept the region in a state of uncertainty, such as the return of old problems in a new field, the rise of non-state actors versus state actors, and the existence of some problems in regional structures, mainly in the Arab regional system (Aras, & Folk, 2015: p, 327). The uprising in Egypt, the most populous Arab country and the traditional leader of the Arab world, can be considered the most essential starting point for the uprisings in other countries. The Arab uprisings coincided with a decline in Saudi regional power relative to Iran and the weakness of its Arab and Sunni nationalist allies in Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine. Saudi Arabia saw its allies fall one after another in the first half of 2011 due to popular uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia. The uprising in Yemen, which the Saudis believe is their backyard, forced Riyadh to transfer power from Ali Abdullah Saleh to his deputy, Mansour Hady (a Saudi ally) (Rieger, 2014).

If the protests in Bahrain against the Al-Khalifa dynasty ended, it would be the starting point for an uprising in the eastern Shiite provinces of Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries. After the fall of Mubarak, Saudi Arabia sought to regain its regional leadership and strengthen its power over the new Egypt through its growing financial power and Salafi allies. Riyadh has allocated \$4 billion in aid to the Egyptian economy under "soft loans, deposits, and grants" (Razzouk, May 21, 2011). With the coming to power of Mohamed Morsi in Egypt, Saudi Arabia was concerned about a change in Egypt's regional position toward Iran. Saudi Arabia was also concerned that Egypt, in alliance with Turkey, would inspire the Brotherhood. Thus, Saudi Arabia, unlike other GCC countries such as the United Arab Emirates, which considered Morsi a threat, established contact with Egypt during the Morsi era and kept the channels open. Saudi Arabia signed a \$500 million loan agreement with Egypt on June 24, 2013, and also paid \$750 million as credit for oil imports to Egypt.

Saudi Arabia was the first country Mohamed Morsi visited on July 12, 2012, to reassure Saudi Arabia that Egypt would not seek peace with Iran because of the strained relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran and to ensure that Egypt supported

Saudi Arabia's position against Bashar al-Assad. However, Saudi Arabia did not respond positively to Morsi's initiative at the Mecca summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation over Syria in August 2012, and the Saudi representative did not attend (Farouk, 2014: pp 20–22). After the military coup against Mohamed Morsi, Saudi Arabia was the first to congratulate interim President Adly Mansour. Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal traveled to Paris in August 2013 (Al-Shaq Al-Awsaat, August 2013), where he met with President Francois Hollande, British Foreign Secretary William Hague, and the advisor of the German Chancellor, Cristopher Hisken. Saudi Arabia called on the European Union to reduce pressure on Egypt. The Saudi government has announced that it will compensate for any US and Western aid cuts to Egypt. When Washington decided to suspend military aid to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates signed a \$2 billion contract to import weapons from Russia to Egypt (Egypt Independent, February 2014).

After a policy of zero problems with neighbors, Turkey launched a plan to strengthen democracy at home, which led to strong economic, political, and military ties with Arab countries. Turkish decision-makers talked about the second version of the zero-problem policy. "Turkey will maintain its relations with these regimes because they were not at war with their people at that time," said the then Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu. However, when they chose to suppress the demands of their citizens, we sided with the people and remained committed to the same democratic vision for our region (Davutoglu, 2012: p, 3–4). In addition, Turkish foreign policy circles began to launch another vital zero-problem policy with neighbors, such as achieving a balance between security and freedom. According to Ahmet Davutoglu, "We advised governments not to ignore the efforts of their people for democracy and called on them to strike a balance between freedom and security. If security is sacrificed for freedom, it will lead to chaos, while if freedom is sacrificed for security, it will lead to dictatorial regimes."

Turkey's vision for the region, apart from the term "balance between freedom and security," was to create a stable regional order in which the new regimes would be in harmony with their communities after abandoning the stability approach based on authoritarian regimes (Kardas, 2012: p, 6). After the fall of Hosni Mubarak, Turkey used its soft power and public diplomacy to establish strong ties with the Muslim

Brotherhood, whose ideological background is consistent with that of the ruling Justice and Development Party in Turkey. Since mid-2011, relations between Turkey and the Egyptian Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) (a Muslim Brotherhood political party) have developed significantly. The Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP) saw the fall of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt as a threat to its power in Turkey. Istanbul witnessed widespread protests in May 2013 against the government's plan to rebuild the famous Taksim Square, which have spread widely throughout Turkey and are known as the Gezi Park protests (Akyol, Al-Monitor, May 2013). Ahmet Davutoglu, who became prime minister in August 2014, said, "The opposition in Turkey failed to do so." "But they came to power in Egypt under General al-Sisi" (Sabah Newspaper, May 2015). The Turkish movement, which had begun with the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, weakened. Turkey severed diplomatic relations with Egypt, jeopardized its warm relations with Riyadh, and lost good political relations with Syria, Iran, and Israel (with the Mavi Marmara incident in 2010). Prime Minister Erdogan's foreign policy adviser, Ibrahim Kalin, called it "precious loneliness" (TV24, August 2013).

Syria has been an essential line of Arab politics for decades, especially during intense ideological rivalries in the Arab world. This is due to its strategic position between the two traditional centers of power in the Arab world, Egypt and Iraq, and the perception that it sees Syria as the heart of Arab nationalism (Ayoob, 2012: p, 48–47). The uprising against Bashar al-Assad in Syria was an opportunity for Saudi Arabia to regain its regional balance, which had shifted in Iran's favor as a result of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and developments in Lebanon after the 2005 assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri (Gause, 2011: p, 16). In addition, any political change in the Syrian government will allow Riyadh to bring Syria back into the Arab and Sunni countries under its influence after a long period of proximity to Iran. The Assad regime's fall will destroy Hezbollah's power in Lebanon, which receives financial and military support from Iran through Syria. Saudi Arabia sought to increase its influence among other Syrian opposition groups instead of the Muslim Brotherhood, which Turkey and Qatar backed. Saudi Arabia used its influence to prevent the Muslim Brotherhood from gaining complete control of the Syrian opposition within the coalition, and the first two leaders of the Syrian opposition coalition, Sheikh Moaz Al-Khatib and Sheikh

Ahmed Al-Jurba (who have close ties to King Abdullah), were elected under Saudi pressure. Moreover, within the coalition against the figures of the Muslim Brotherhood, they were widely supported by Riyadh. Turkey thought that the Syrian regime would be overthrown in a short time by the people (such as Tunisia and Egypt) or through foreign intervention (such as Libya), so from the beginning, it wanted a strong and clear position so that it could later play an active role in the Syrian political process (Altunisik, 2013). Turkey participated in the international platform of the "Group of Friends of Syria" and held its second meeting in Istanbul in April 2012, calling for the suspension of the diplomatic relations of the participating countries with the Assad regime.

	Egyptian Uprising	Syrian Uprising
Convergences		Supporting the uprising. Supporting Refugees. Opposing Assad regime on the international level. Supporting the Anti-Assad military and political opposition groups.
Divergences	Muslim brotherhood Vs. Army. The different foreign policy toward Egypt after the coup.	Diverging on Musli Brotherhood in Syrian opposition. Supporting Different groups and no coordination.

(Table 3)convergence and divergence between Turkey and Saudi Arabia in developments in Egypt and Syria.

Turkey's interference in the Syrian crisis after Assad remained in power posed unprecedented challenges for the government. Assad began to pose a serious threat to Turkey's national security. The Kurdish issue is one of the most crucial security

measures in the security relations between Turkey and Syria because the PKK continues to be Assad's card of pressure to persecute Turkey.

The cases of Egypt and Syria have shown how popular uprisings in the Arab world have had complex consequences in the Middle East, and the approaches of Turkey and Saudi Arabia to these events have seen points of divergence and convergence. Turkey and Saudi Arabia used various tools to deal with the consequences of the uprisings and adopted various programs to pursue their regional interests and ambitions. The Egyptian uprising was an excellent example of the divergence in the policies of Turkey and Saudi Arabia, how their interests overlap, and the perception of the two countries of the events of the Egyptian uprising as a threat to their interests. In the case of Syria, the positions of Turkey and Saudi Arabia witnessed stations of convergence and cooperation.

3.6. IMPLICATION ON IRAN

Iran's role in the region and increasing Iran's influence are two of the main issues considered in Turkish-Saudi relations. The balance of power in the region, which is in Iran's favor, is essential to the development and closeness of Turkish-Saudi relations. The issues of Palestine, Syria, Iran's nuclear program, and instability in Iraq bring the two countries closer together. Iran's regional growth did not force Turkey and Saudi Arabia to reconcile their differences of opinion that emerged during and after the July 3, 2013, political change in Egypt. Turkey wants to balance Iran's power in the region through soft power. By approaching these countries, Ankara specifically seeks to weaken Tehran's influence in Palestine and its dominance in Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria, while Saudi Arabia, at the beginning of the US invasion of Iraq, began to form a "Sunni-centric" alliance with Egypt, Jordan, and Turkey. Tehran emerged as a significant player in Iraq after 2003, during the Israeli invasion of Hezbollah and the Israeli invasion of Gaza in 2009. The rise to power of the Shiites in the Iraqi government with solid ties to Iran had a psychological impact on the Arab world. Arab leaders were concerned about regional power, which had shifted to a non-Arab regional order for the first time.

The Saudis want Turkey as a balancer of Iranian power because they do not trust US intentions toward Iran. Nevertheless, this expectation of Riyadh will be unreasonable. Turkey has a robust economic relationship with Iran. Turkey is dependent on Iranian energy. For Turkey to exercise its power in the region, it needs close relations with Iran to increase its political and trade power in Iraq. The Turks have concluded that the best situation for them is a balance between the Gulf states and Tehran, and that they need to be fully committed to both sides and seek economic benefits from both sides. Iran's policy has clearly shown how the Arab regional system reacts passively to Iran's influence in Iraq (Korany, 2013: p, 37). While Saudi Arabia considered Iran a source of regional instability alongside Syria, Turkey moved closer to Iran and Syria to form an anti-Kurdish coalition (because they share a common fear of the Iraqi Kurdistan Autonomous Region).

The High-Security Commission was set up between Ankara and Tehran to discuss the activities of Kurdish armed parties in their countries, which have set up training camps in the Kandil Mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan (Oguzlu, 2008: p, 10). Unlike Iran, Turkey has rapid and unusual foreign policy reactions. Ankara's list of challenging regional issues is long, and this foreign policy makes it unstable. Conversely, Tehran refrains from reacting abruptly in foreign policy, a significant difference that may give Iran an advantage. Iranian decision-makers may have a historic opportunity (since the revolution) to return to the international system through legal mechanisms. Tehran wants to take advantage of this opportunity; even in significant cases, it acts calmly. An examination of Iranian officials' statements on regional issues shows Iran is not too concerned about Turkey's capacity to harm its interests. As a result, Iran will be a more tolerant partner for Turkey.

Overall, in this chapter, I looked at the history of Turkish-Saudi relations from the end of the 19th century to the period known as the Arab Spring. In this chapter, the evolution of the relationship between the two nations from the birth of the Saudi government, their struggles with the Ottoman Empire, the early relations between Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Turkey after the First World War, the separation after the Second World War and finally the convergence for political and economic reasons in the 1960s investigated.

The Ottomans and Ibn Saud had their first military interaction before establishing the Saudi Kingdom in the context of cordial relations between the Ottomans and Ibn Rashid. Ibn Saud established cordial relations with the British, who were interested in the Persian Gulf region for its potential to defend trade routes to gain their support and secure the conquest of Ottoman territory. The British recognized Saudi sovereignty by signing the Treaty of Darien in 1915. In 1916, Sultan Muhammad Rashad sent precious saddles as gifts to Ibn Rashid and Ibn Saud to reassure them of their loyalty to the Ottoman Empire amid a wave of armed Arab uprisings. Britain funded them. Sharif Hussein, after the abolition of the caliphate by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in 1924, announced himself as the new caliph of Islam and gave Ibn Saud time to make his move. He took control of Mecca and established the Kingdom of Hijaz and Najd as an independent country.

Since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932, these two countries have had relations with regional positions in the Middle East. During World War II, Turkey helped protect German and French interests in Saudi Arabia as there were no longer any diplomatic relations between the two countries and Saudi Arabia. Turkish-Saudi relations were further strengthened by Turkey's position in defending its interests. Overall, shared interests and a united stance against common opponents, such as Sharif Hussein and some European powers during World War II, helped define the formation of Saudi Arabia as a kingdom and its favorable relations with Turkey during this era.

In 2003, the American invasion of Iraq and the emergence of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) entered a new phase with a new approach to the Middle East. Bilateral relations are affected by various events that affect the Middle East policies of both countries and each country's approach to dealing with them. This chapter argued that regional events in the Middle East and how each country deals with them affect Turkey-Saudi Arabia bilateral relations. After 2003, the profile of relations between the two countries changed, and a better understanding of Turkey in Saudi Arabia and Saudi Arabia in Turkey was obtained. Popular uprisings in some Arab countries had negative and positive effects on the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia because they adopted different approaches to the uprisings in pursuit of their regional interests. Initially, Turkey saw these uprisings as an event that would

establish a harmonious relationship between the Arab communities and their new rulers and a step towards peace and security in the region. In contrast, the Saudis saw the uprisings as an event that would lead to chaos and instability for a long time. The difference in the two countries' approaches was evident during the events in Egypt, both during the anti-Mubarak uprising in 2011 and the political change in July 2013.

In 2014, Saudi Arabia lobbied against Turkey in the UN Security Council elections. However, in 2015, Riyadh and Ankara agreed to establish a strategic cooperation council to strengthen the two countries' military, economic, and investment cooperation. The purpose of the Strategic Cooperation Council was to counter Russia's support for Bashar al-Assad and to intervene in Syria if necessary.



FOURTH CHAPTER

4.REGIONAL COMPONENTS IN THE CONVERGENCE OF TURKEY AND SAUDI ARABIA DURING THE ARAB SPRING

In this chapter, which is the fourth chapter of the present thesis, titled regional Convergence and Divergence between Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring period, we will examine and analyze the factors of convergence and closeness of the foreign policy of these two countries through the lens of neoclassical realism theory. The theory of neoclassical realism provides valuable insights into the convergence of Saudi Arabia and Turkey at the beginning of the events of the Arab Spring by taking into account both systemic and domestic factors that influenced their foreign policy choices. By examining the interplay of systemic pressures, leaders' perceptions, and domestic political dynamics, neoclassical realism helps us better understand the underlying reasons behind their alignment during this critical period.

According to the theory of neoclassical realism, the convergence factors in the relations between Saudi Arabia and Turkey during the Arab Spring period can be expressed as follows:

Balance of Interests and Common Objectives

Neoclassical realism emphasizes the importance of balancing state interests and objectives in shaping foreign policy decisions. At the beginning of the Arab Spring, both Saudi Arabia and Turkey recognized the need to address common regional challenges posed by Iran's expanding influence. Their shared interests in countering Iran's rise as a dominant regional power fueled their convergence. Turkey, with its aspirations for regional leadership, sought to prevent the consolidation of Iran's geopolitical and ideological influence, while Saudi Arabia, as a regional heavyweight, aimed to protect its interests and maintain its position. Neoclassical realism highlights the significance of these balance of interests in fostering cooperation between the two countries during the early stages of the Arab Spring.

Common Perceptions Toward Regional Developments

Leaders' perceptions play a crucial role in neoclassical realism, as they shape their responses to international developments. During the Arab Spring, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Saudi Arabian King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud perceived the fall of the Syrian government and the emergence of pro-democracy movements as an opportunity to advance their interests and reduce Iran's influence in the region. This shared perception of the regional implications of the Arab Spring strengthened their alignment in supporting the opposition in Syria and uniting Iraq's Sunnis to counterbalance Iran. Neoclassical realism's focus on leaders' perceptions helps us comprehend the role of their common understanding in driving the convergence between Saudi Arabia and Turkey during this transformative period.

Domestic Political Consensus

Another advantage of neoclassical realism in analyzing the convergence of Saudi Arabia and Turkey is its consideration of domestic political dynamics. The theory recognizes that state actions are influenced not only by external pressures but also by domestic factors, such as the consensus among political elites. During the Arab Spring, both Turkey and Saudi Arabia demonstrated a domestic political consensus in their responses to the regional developments. This unity among their political elites further facilitated their convergence in addressing common challenges and opportunities presented by the Arab Spring. Neoclassical realism's inclusion of domestic political dynamics allows for a comprehensive analysis of the convergence between the two countries.

Consideration of Systemic Pressures

Neoclassical realism incorporates the influence of systemic pressures, such as the balance of power and geopolitical competition, in shaping foreign policy choices. It acknowledges that states are not merely passive actors but respond strategically to the changing international environment. In the context of the Arab Spring, Turkey and Saudi Arabia both perceived the developments as a regional competition with Iran. This systemic pressure further motivated their alignment in supporting the opposition in Syria and countering Iran's influence in the wider Middle East. Neoclassical

realism's focus on systemic pressures enriches our understanding of the broader geopolitical context driving the convergence between the two countries.

finally, the theory of neoclassical realism provides a comprehensive framework to analyze the convergence of Saudi Arabia and Turkey at the beginning of the Arab Spring events. Its emphasis on the balance of interests, leaders' perceptions, domestic political dynamics, and systemic pressures helps us gain a deeper understanding of the factors that fostered their alignment during this transformative period. Neoclassical realism's nuanced approach to analyzing the complexities of international relations enriches our comprehension of the convergence and its broader implications in the Middle East.

These regional developments have led to the alignment and strengthening of relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, which we can refer to as the "crisis in Syria and Iraq." Also, Turkey needs Saudi Arabia in terms of energy and economy, and Saudi Arabia needs Turkish military force to balance its power in the region. In addition, Turkey and Saudi Arabia have opposed Shiism because they are Sunnis, and ultimately both want to reduce Iran's power and influence in the region. In the rest of the chapter, we point out in detail the factors of the convergence of Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring period.

4.1. CONVERGING FACTORS IN TURKISH-SAUDI RELATIONS

4.1.1. Syria Crisis

In 2011, the wave of widespread protests from the Arab revolutions reached Syria. It spread over time due to a series of internal and external factors, turning into a crisis that is still ongoing. Although factors such as an authoritarian system, discrimination, sectarianism, economic stagnation, financial and administrative corruption are the root causes of the Syrian crisis, external factors have intensified and deepened the crisis to the extent that Syria's internal problems are an opportunity for exploitation and competition from regional and international players. The foreign actors involved in the Syrian crisis are very diverse and numerous. The Arab League (Qatar, Saudi Arabia) and the European Union, England, Turkey, Israel, America, Russia, China, and Iran are influential players in the Syrian crisis. In general, the role

of foreign actors in the Syrian crisis can be seen in the form of a confrontation between two blocs in the Middle East (Yazdani, & Sheikhon, 2013: p, 54). Due to its opposition to Israel, Syria is in the resistance bloc. Therefore, the crisis in Syria has become a stage of competition and confrontation between the resistance bloc and the Western bloc. Turkey and Saudi Arabia are among the countries that play a vital role in the Syrian crisis. The presence of these two countries on the same front shows that Turkey and Saudi Arabia share the same opinion regarding the Syrian crisis.

Saudi Arabia has an absolute monarchy with Islamic religious leaders, and Turkey as a country has been able to create a reasonable balance between Islam and democracy. Nevertheless, the interests of these two countries in Syria have reached a level of overlap. Saudi Arabia seeks to expand its role and prevent Iran's geopolitical and ideological influence in the region. Turkey wants to increase its influence in the Middle East and restore its historical past. In this regard, to increase influence in the Middle East region, Saudi Arabia and Turkey see their interests in the coming to power of an aligned government in Syria, not a government that is an ally of Russia and Iran (Yazdani, & Falahi, 2016: p, 170–171). As mentioned, Turkey and Saudi Arabia are two regional powers located on the western axis. Therefore, in the Syrian crisis, they have the most strategic similarities with each other, which has caused the convergence of the two countries in the Syrian crisis.

4.1.1.1. The Strategic Similarities between Turkey and Saudi Arabia in The Syrian Crisis

4.1.1.1.1. Riyadh and Ankara's Logistical Support for The Opposition

Saudi Arabia lacks the military and security power to intervene directly in Syria, using its wealth and oil revenues to arm the Syrian armed opposition. While trying to change the Syrian regime, Saudi Arabia is trying to form a government in Syria that is aligned with itself in this country (Asadi, 2012:158). Before 2013, Saudi Arabia's support for Syrian opposition groups was usually done secretly. Nevertheless, in 2013, Saudi Arabia officially announced its support for the Free Syrian Army. Accordingly, for the first time in 2012, the first consignment of Saudi weapons reached the hands of the Syrian opposition at the border between Turkey and Syria. After the Free Army's weakening and the radical groups' success, Saudi Arabia sent more aid to

ISIS, the Al-Nusra Front, and other radical groups. The Saudi lobby in the United States was able to obtain the United States' agreement to end the arms embargo and send weapons to the war in Syria (Phillips, 2015: p, 4). In addition, Saudi Arabia strengthened the sectarian conflicts in Syria, and substantial financial support is given to any group that opposes Bashar al-Assad (Reese, 2013: p, 14–19). However, Saudi Arabia continues to support the Free Syrian Army. Of course, most of these groups are Sunni opponents of the Syrian regime. Saudi media supports the opposition, and negative propaganda against Assad is also significant. Turkey and NATO have recruited many volunteers in Middle Eastern countries to fight alongside the Syrian opposition. Since 2011, the Turkish headquarters have recruited many fighters to send them to Syria. The Syrian Liberation Army accommodates these volunteers and trains them to enter Syrian territory and fight with government forces. In cooperation with Saudi Arabia and Qatar, Turkey has created a secret base through which it provides communication and military assistance to the Syrian opposition (Chasadaewski, 2012: p, 26). Turkey has played an essential role in the siege of Syria, and without the presence of Turkey, the operation in Syria has a low percentage of success. From the beginning, the Free Syrian Army established its strongholds along the borders of Turkey and Syria, next to the province of Hatay. When the Syrian soldiers stationed themselves near the Turkish border, the American and NATO military aircraft violated Syrian airspace, and this military aircraft entered Syria through the border of Turkey's Incirlik base (Altiaminia, 2013: p, 75).

These cases were only a part of Turkey's logistical support for Assad's opponents before the crisis became a full-scale war. When the Syrian uprising turned into a civil war and Bashar al-Assad took action against the opposition, Turkey began to expand its relations with Saudi Arabia. In the Syrian crisis, Turkey has played an essential role in strengthening radical armed groups by sending weapons and providing training facilities inside its country. In addition, Turkey allowed these groups to move freely along its borders with Syria and provided financial aid by buying oil from them (Hinnebusch, 2015: p, 18).

4.1.1.1.2. Participating in Alliance with The West

With the beginning of the crisis in Syria, America and Saudi Arabia decided to overthrow the Syrian political regime by supporting the opposition of Bashar al-Assad. By destroying the Alawite government close to Iran and installing the aligned Sunni government, the relationship between Iran and Hezbollah would be cut off. For this reason, America and Saudi Arabia started their all-out support for Bashar al-Assad's opponents. America needed allies in the region to fight the axis of resistance so that it could cause severe damage to its body (Karami, 2011: p, 94). In the meantime, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, as America's allies, had the same attitude that the fall of the Assad government and the coming to power of the Sunni government would also help their regional interests, because the policy of weakening Hezbollah and Iran's relations with Syria is one of the main demands of America, and has supported the actions of Turkey and Saudi Arabia. In the meantime, Saudi Arabia is also a catalyst for intensifying the Syrian crisis. Saudi Arabia aims to limit Iran's power in the region (Givechi, 2012: p, 44). Saudi Arabia is trying to counter Iran's regional power by expanding its regional influence. Therefore, in foreign policy, it has always had close relations with the West; in other words, Saudi Arabia's foreign policy is in the framework of an alliance with the West.

Turkey can be seen as a bridge between East and West; it is considered a strategic country, providing access to the East for Western countries. Turkey is one of the vital security components of NATO. At first, Turkey opposed establishing a missile defense system on its territory. However, after Iran supported Bashar al-Assad in Syria, Turkey agreed to this (Hadley, & Albright, 2012: p, 3). Turkey is still essential to the West in terms of security. Therefore, it has security obligations towards the West and the United States of America (Briec, 2013: p, 5). Turkey has tried to be closer to the positions of the United States and Saudi Arabia in the developments of the region's countries, especially Syria. Turkey's entry into the Syrian conflict and supporting the opposition of Bashar al-Assad made the opposition glorify Turkey as a country with real democracy in the region (Sharifi, & Daraimanash, 2013: p, 42). Turkey's way of dealing with the Syrian crisis has come from the motivation to develop democracy as Turkey's soft power, and this is related to the policy that America and the West pursue in the region, especially concerning Syria (Qolizadeh, & Kaffash, 2012: p, 126–127).

4.1.1.1.3. The Overthrow of Bashar al-Assad's Regime

In 2014, Turkey refused to join the anti-ISIS coalition under the pretext of endangering the lives of Turkish hostages at the hands of this group. Turkey was worried that the anti-ISIS operation could change the balance of power in the region in favor of its regional rivals, i.e., Iran, the Assad regime, and Iraq, and that the Assad regime would be strengthened with the destruction of ISIS. Erdogan announced that until the issue of Assad in Syria is resolved, the issue of ISIS will not be resolved. Erdogan also claimed that the formation of ISIS was part of Bashar al-Assad's policies and that as long as Bashar al-Assad is in power, the threats of this terrorist group cannot be dealt with. Turkey's support for the anti-ISIS coalition was conditional on removing the Syrian regime. Turkey wanted to establish a no-fly zone inside Syria to protect Syrian refugees. The coming to power of a united Turkish government in Syria means promoting Turkey's position in the regional power balance. While America is worried about the rise of ISIS power after the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime, Turkey still believes that a friendly Sunni government will come to power after Bashar al-Assad's regime (Hinnebusch, 2015: p, 18–19). Therefore, as a result of regime change in Syria, in addition to reducing the role of Iran and the axis of resistance, Turkey's role in the region will increase, which will establish a new and essential regional position for Turkey in the Middle East (Asadi, 2012:160–161). Saudi Arabia, like Turkey, seeks to remove Bashar al-Assad from power and has used all its efforts in this direction.

As Erdogan has said, Syria is Turkey's gateway to the Arab Middle East, so it can increase its regional power and influence through changes in Syria. In other words, Turkey's most important reason is to eliminate a severe geographic bottleneck along its southern borders (Niakoui, & Bahmanesh, 2012: p, 128). Saudi Arabia has always accused Syria of supporting resistance groups, which they consider to endanger the current status quo and politics. It sees it as a threat to its interests and conservative policy. Saudi Arabia hopes that the possible fall of the Assad government will have a more significant impact on the political processes in Lebanon and Iraq in favor of the Sunnis of these countries and remove the Shiites allied with Iran from power. Saudi Arabia especially considers Bashar Assad's government remaining in power as a kind of victory for Iran; therefore, it is trying to overthrow this government with all kinds of measures. With the start of unrest in Syria, Saudi Arabia concluded that now was a

golden opportunity to weaken Iran in the region. In this way, it can achieve an achievement against Iran in the Middle East region (Nejat, 2014: p, 640). Saudi Arabia is trying to weaken the axis of resistance with various measures and policies in Syria, which, in addition to removing Syria's regional role, will create a regional balance with Iran. Saudi Arabia thinks that with the overthrow of the Assad regime, Iran's regional allies will be hit, and it can stop Iran's influence in the region. Suppose the regime of Bashar al-Assad is overthrown and a Sunni government takes power. In that case, the position of Saudi Arabia in the region will improve, and the region will be at the forefront of Arab conservative policies more than before. Therefore, if these propositions are implemented, Saudi Arabia's actions will continue more than in the past. It will significantly help to revive the role of Saudi Arabia, which has been marginalized in recent years, especially after the developments in the Arab world (Simon, 2014).

4.1.2. Economic Relations

The increase in multiple and mutual trips of high-ranking officials, primarily economic, commercial, and military delegations of Turkey and Saudi Arabia, and the conclusion of cooperation agreements for investment in the joint defense and military industries in recent years show the growing expansion and close view of these two countries on regional issues. Turkey has given the development of trade relations more attention than Saudi Arabia. Turkey has always tried to mediate the volume of trade relations between the two countries. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia emphasized more the political aspects of regional relations and issues. Saad Ughur Company, owned by Saad Hariri, the former Prime Minister of Lebanon, was one of the essential Saudi investors who entered the Turkish market by purchasing 55% of the shares of the operator of Turkish Communications Industries worth 6.5 billion in 2005, and 81% of the shares of AVEA, one of the Turkish telephone operators, played a significant role in the Turkish market. This company has capital worth 15.6 billion dollars in the Turkish market. In 2008, Saudi Arabia experienced a food crisis, and the Saudi government asked investors to focus on agricultural projects and land restoration in countries close to Saudi Arabia. Tabuk's company, Planet Based Foods Global Company, invested in the organic food sector. These two companies invested about 20 billion dollars in the city of Kilis. In 2008, with the approval of the Regulatory

Organization, the shares of Turkish Finance Bank were transferred to The National Commercial Bank, which is headquartered in Saudi Arabia and also bought 60 percent of Boydak and Ülker companies worth 1.08 billion dollars. In addition, more than 50 percent of AK Bank shares belong to Saudi Arabia.

In 2009, Abdul Latif Jameel, the owner of the largest Toyota car distribution company, bought 65% of the shares of Toyota SABANCI Company, worth 49 million dollars. Abdul Latif also invested about one billion dollars in the energy, tourism, and real estate sectors (Purebrahim, 2016: p, 86–87). Turkish contractors have done many projects in Saudi Arabia. According to the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA), Turkish investment in Saudi Arabia is worth about 660 million dollars, and more than 200 Turkish companies operate in this country. In this context, Turkish contracting companies have completed more than 100 projects in Saudi Arabia. The value of Saudi investments in Turkey is estimated at 2 billion dollars. In 2017, Saudi citizens bought many properties in Turkey. Turkey's export goods to Saudi Arabia include refined petroleum products, electrical panels, construction iron, and furniture, and Turkey's import goods from Saudi Arabia are petroleum and chemical products. On October 11, 2003, these two countries established the Turkish-Saudi Trade Council, headquartered in Jeddah.

In addition, members of the Executive Committee of the Council visited Riyadh on February 25, 2018 (www.mfa.gov, 2017). With the coming of the Justice and Development Party, which played the role of a bridge and had more presence and influence in the peripheral regions, especially in the Middle East, the relationship with regional powers such as Saudi Arabia found a special place in Turkey's foreign policy. Like the Ozal period, it is more understandable with the visible improvement of the economic situation and the need to export Turkish goods in the region, especially to the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council countries. The bilateral meetings between Turkey and Saudi Arabia from 2006 to 2010 show that relations between the two countries have become more serious. In addition, the Arab revolutions and especially the Syrian crisis played a fundamental role in the economic closeness of Turkey and Saudi Arabia due to the purchase of military equipment and tools. In the fields of trade, tourism, energy, and investment, there are also opportunities for cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Turkey is seeking to source a part of its energy needs from

Saudi Arabia to reduce its energy dependence on Iran and find an alternative for its energy supply in case of increased pressure on Iran from the United States and Europe. The volume of trade relations between the two countries was about 5 billion dollars until 2010, reaching 10 billion dollars in 2015. By 2017, the mutual investment between the two countries had increased to 75 billion dollars.

Export in millions of dollars	import in millions of dollars	Level in millions of dollars	Balance In millions of dollars	Year
123,1	354	769	415	2004
549.1	587	962	375	2005
606.1	623	983	360	2006
222.2	736	486.1	750	2007
110.3	909	202.2	292.1	2008
544.2	776	767.1	992	2009
597.3	380.1	217.2	837	2010
765.4	1.2	764.2	763	2011
847.5	171.2	673.3	505.1	2012
206.5	15.2	191.3	176.1	2013
390.5	343.2	0.43.3	704	2014
865.5	337.3	582.2	306	2014
443.5	568.2	874.2	306	2015
501	184	317	133	2016
485	211	274	63	2017
496	232	264	33	2018

(Figure 3) Trade relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. The statistics are for the first ten months of 2014 (<http://www.ekonomi.gov.tr>)

In addition, both countries are members of the World Trade Organization and the Group of 20. Turkey has welcomed Saudi investment in the tourism sector, especially in light of the economic crisis caused by the Syrian crisis. Also, Saudi Arabia can increase Turkey's access to the markets of the member countries of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council and help Turkey in the field of energy. On the other hand, Turkey can use its influence on the Muslim Brotherhood. It should not be forgotten that the Justice and Development Party, which is in power in Turkey, owes its success and continuity more than anything to the economic growth of the last two decades, and by considering this category, the role of this mutual relationship and its greater importance become apparent.

From the Saudi side, although the issue of trade relations with Turkey is not as crucial for Ankara, they also benefit from the economic relationship and interaction with Turkey in purchasing industrial goods and military equipment. Therefore, the economy plays a significant role in Turkey. However, on the part of Saudi Arabia, political issues and competition with Iran, Iraq, and Syria are more important, and both countries are taking steps towards more relations for the benefits they get from trade relations. Investors from Saudi Arabia have occupied a privileged economic position in Turkey, and Turkish employers have undertaken projects related to infrastructure in Saudi Arabia. All the mentioned cases show that both sides benefit from these contracts, which can become one of the most critical factors for the convergence between Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

4.1.3. Military Cooperation

Conflicts in the Middle East have led to confusion about the future of the security and stability of this region and even the formation of some intra-regional coalitions and blocs in the political, security, and military fields. The formation of the Turkey-Arabia cooperation strategic council and the Ankara-Riyadh axis are evaluated in this regard (Hoshisadat, 2015: p, 2). In April 2016, the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia and Turkey drafted a plan to establish a strategic council between the two countries, including eight main axes for cooperation in political fields, diplomacy, security, maritime and shipping, industry, energy, culture, and the military, which was signed in the presence of the leaders of the two countries. Military relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia have also increased significantly, so much so that only in 2015, the two countries' armies conducted four joint military exercises. In 2016, the Saudi army participated in the "EFES 2016" exercise in Ankara and Izmir, and a month later in the "Anatolian Eagle 2016" exercise, as well as the international "2016 Uluslararası Işık" exercise in Turkey (www.tccb.gov.tr, 2016). On the other hand, Turkish military forces also participated in the multinational exercise "Raad al-Shamal" from February 11 to March 11, 2016, with the presence of 150 thousand soldiers from 20 countries around the world in Saudi Arabia (www.aljazeera.net, 2016).

On February 21, 2016, Turkey's "ASELSAN" Electronic Military Industries Company and Saudi Arabia's "TAGNIEH" State Technical Development and Investment Company signed a memorandum of understanding to establish a joint electronic defense industries company. The share of the parties in establishing the advanced electronic defense industry company in Saudi Arabia to manufacture and design radars and electronic warfare equipment and meet the needs of Saudi Arabia and the region in the field of such equipment will be 50%. The above contract has been signed for five years and can be automatically renewed for the following five years. In addition, in 2012, the two countries signed an agreement for military equipment.

According to Ankara's military experts, these contracts can increase Turkey's ability to sell and export military products to Saudi Arabia, including ships, attack boats, armored vehicles, and electronic equipment. "ASELSAN" Company is a specialist in military-electronic affairs and has been ranked 58 in the list of the top 100 military companies worldwide (www.trt.net.tr). The development in political relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia has positively affected military relations between the two countries. According to the Turkish Industrial and Chemical Organization, responsible for the production and supply of Turkey's military equipment and weapons, Saudi Arabia is at the top of the list of buyers of military weapons from Turkey. After the SS30 rocket launcher system was delivered to Saudi Arabia in 2011, it increased to 44.5 million lire. Saudi Arabia hosts FNSS, an aviation and defense company that is a joint company between Britain, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey and operates in the defense and security industries. The business volume of this company is one billion dollars, and since 2004, it has been responsible for supplying industries and ground defense. From 2013 to 2014, this business increased by 48%. In 2007, this company became responsible for managing defense industries in Al-Khalij (a defense factory established in 1953 in Saudi Arabia to produce ammunition and light weapons). It concluded a contract worth 200 million dollars. In 2011, Saudi Arabia concluded a cooperation agreement with "ASELSAN" to purchase the SK24700 telecommunication system, which was supposed to be delivered in 2013. Turkey has also offered to buy the attack helicopter T-129 for Saudi Arabia, but there has been no news of its finalization (Purebrahim, 2016: p, 90).

4.1.4. Cooperation Between Turkey and Saudi Arabia to Counter Iran's Regional Influence

The strategic and military-security approach in the relations between Saudi Arabia and Turkey is a new issue, primarily related to the last few years and directly influenced by the developments in the Arab Middle East. Both countries have become more aware of their ability to influence regional developments and seek to organize their resources to address strategic issues (Qanati, 2014: p, 4). Today, the views of Saudi Arabia and Turkey concerning the current trends in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen are aligned on a large scale, contrasting with Iran's regional policies. Turkey and Saudi Arabia believe Iran has too much influence in the region, and this issue should be prevented. In other words, Turkey and Saudi Arabia will deal with it wherever there is capacity for the power pole led by Iran. For example, Turkey and Saudi Arabia view the Syrian crisis as a regional competition with Iran. In the following, we discuss examples of cooperation between Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the Middle East to curb Iran's influence.

4.1.4.1. Conflict between The Interests of Turkey and Saudi Arabia with Iran in Iraq

One of the factors that caused instability in the region can be considered the former Baath regime of Iraq. However, regardless of the performance of this regime towards Arab countries during the past decades, due to the rule of the Sunni Arab minority and the small role of the Shiites as the majority of the population, it was considered one of the leading governments in Arab society. It has often played a role as a barrier and deterrent to Iran from the perspective of the Arabs. However, with the coming to power of the Shiite majority in Iraq, major transformations occurred in the redefinition of the country's regional identity and role. Therefore, most of the leaders, especially the Saudis, believe that the changes in Iraq will weaken its role as a buffer against Iran. As a result, Iran's power and influence in the region will increase (Asadi, 2007). The close relations between Iran and the current government of Iraq can be one reason for forming new regional cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Turkey. One of the fields that encourages Turkey and Saudi Arabia to expand relations is military cooperation.

Considering the problem of the Arab countries around the Persian Gulf in military matters, Turkey's military power as a member of NATO in the Middle East, which has a powerful army and a coherent military organization, can be effective in creating a balance for the Arab countries of the region against Iran. Containing Iran as the primary challenger to the security systems of the Persian Gulf countries is the main priority of Saudi Arabia and its allies in the region (Karami, 2013). Turkey is unhappy with Iran's increasing influence in Iraq, the growth of fundamentalism that it considers Iran to be the cause of, the strengthening of Shiites in the political structure of Iraq, and Iran's economic and construction activities in this country. Saudi Arabia, which is another competitor of Iran in Iraq, is against the increase of Iran's role in this country and is pursuing its strategy due to the concern of changing the power structure in Iraq (Qanati, 2014: p, 21). By changing its foreign policy from a realist point of view to a liberal approach, Turkey sought to expand its economic cooperation with neighboring countries. In this regard, Turkey established a consulate in Basra in 2009. In this way, Turkey seeks to increase the volume of foreign trade and investment in Iraq. Another goal of Turkey's consulate in Iraq is to curb the influence of Iran as a regional rival in this country (Bahrami, 2011).

On the other hand, it can be said that the occurrence of the Arab uprisings caused a change in the regional strategies of Saudi Arabia, which are based on external balancing. In this framework, Saudi Arabia is trying to create a regional balance through an alliance with a significant regional player such as Turkey to balance the developments caused by the Arab Spring. Saudi Arabia is interested in maintaining its hegemony in the Arabian Peninsula and balancing the radical groups in the region. Since the Syrian crisis has put Turkey's economy in financial trouble and the financial power of Saudi Arabia can solve this issue, this country believes that Turkey should stand by them in confronting Iran (Gause III, 2014). In addition, Saudi Arabia is willing to cooperate more with Turkey, which has military and economic power, to prevent the threats of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Saudi hegemonic system in the south of the Persian Gulf. This way, it can form a bloc of Sunni countries against Iran. The region's countries, including Saudi Arabia and Turkey, are worried about Shiite Iraq because this country will leave Iran's power-balancing position in the region and will be placed next to Iran in strategic plans. In other words, a new opportunity is

provided for Iran to redefine its regional role as a regional power (GauseIII, 2011). Finally, Turkey seems to believe that in the Arab developments, the Shiite Axis, led by Iran, is trying to expand from Iraq to Syria. This point of view has caused Turkey to look for allies, including the Iraqi Sunni Arabs, the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government, and the Sunni countries of the region, to deal with this axis.

4.1.4.2. Turkey and Saudi Policy Towards Unrests in Bahrain

Bahrain is a small country located on the southern edge of the Persian Gulf. At the same time as popular uprisings in the Arab world began, the people of Bahrain, especially the Shiite citizens, began to protest, and the scope of these street protests increased daily. Although there are claims about the small number of protesters in this country, their number is significant compared to the entire population, and their demands are also apparent. At first, the protesters demanded political reforms in the existing system, but with the government's insistence on the status quo, they demanded the overthrow of the monarchy. With the increase in protests, the government of Bahrain, in addition to suppressing the protesters, agreed to the entry of Saudi military forces into this country. The suppression of protestors and the lack of international support have caused protestors to fail (Noorani et al., 2014: p, 622). Although Bahrain is a small archipelago in terms of geopolitics and has fewer resources than its neighbors, it has a strategic position. Bahrain is located in the neighborhood of Saudi Arabia. It has territorial and cultural continuity with the Shiite areas of Saudi Arabia, such as Al-Ahsa and Qatif, the critical cities of the Sharqiya region (Parsapur, 2012: p, 36), an oil-rich region that contains most of Saudi Arabia's oil and gas. On the other hand, four Arab countries in Bahrain's neighborhood have monarchical and undemocratic systems, which influence Bahrain's unwillingness to carry out political reforms in its country. Bahrain is currently one of the critical points of political tension between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The ruling political elites in Bahrain are Sunnis, constituting only 35% of the country's population. Due to its proximity to Bahrain, Saudi Arabia has paid particular attention to the developments in this country because this unrest may spread from Bahrain to Saudi Arabia. The rulers of Bahrain have always welcomed the support of Saudi Arabia. Bahrain has unique relations with Saudi Arabia in the region. The

government of this island has always relied on Saudi Arabia regarding its economy and security. The Al Khalifa family is one of the tribes living in Najd, Saudi Arabia. This tribal bond has brought the relationship between Al Khalifa and Al Saud to a peak. The approaches of Saudi Arabia and Iran toward the Bahrain crisis are opposite. From the very beginning, Iran supported the Bahraini protesters, emphasized that the government should pay attention to the rights and demands of the Bahraini people, and also strongly protested the entry of UAE and Saudi Arabian forces into Bahrain.

After the protests started in Bahrain, Iran supported the protesters. In addition to summoning the ambassadors of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain several times in letters to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and the Secretary-General of the Arab League, Iran expressed its concern about the military presence of some countries in Bahrain (Goli, 2016: p, 126). As soon as Saudi Arabia entered Bahrain, it started negative propaganda against Iran and accused this country of disrupting the internal order and supporting the opponents of the ruling regime. Part of this propaganda was created after Iran's nuclear crisis, and another part was due to the increase of Iran's military power and the development of missile weapons (Goli, 2016: p, 129). On the other hand, the developments in the Arab world provided an opportunity for Turkish diplomacy to act with a hegemonic nature. The first country where popular uprisings started was Tunisia, which led to the victory of the revolutionary forces. Turkey did not play a unique role in the Tunisian Revolution by not supporting both sides; only after the overthrow of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali announce its readiness to support the democratic demands of the people. In the Bahrain crisis, Turkey tried to take a position so that, while maintaining its interests in the region, it would not hurt relations with various actors in the crisis. Turkey claims that the disintegration of the security system of the Persian Gulf and the sectarianizing of conflicts are contrary to Turkey's regional interests, and based on this claim, Turkey warned against any escalation of sectarian tensions as a result of the developments in Bahrain (Karr, & Toby, 2011: p, 6).

Due to the presence of rich resources in Bahrain, this country is politically significant for Turkey. Due to the need for oil resources and the existence of these resources in Bahrain, Turkey wants to maintain the status quo and opposes changes in the governmental structure of Bahrain. As mentioned before, Bahrain has a Shiite

majority. However, the government is in the hands of the Sunnis, and this issue has caused differences between the Sunnis and the Shiites of Bahrain. Since Turkey is also Sunni, it is against the change in Bahrain's governmental structure but only emphasizes making reforms (Waazi, 2014: p, 85). Although some positions of the Turkish authorities and the emphasis on the necessity of reconciliation with the protesters have caused some resentment among the Bahraini government officials, on the whole, the members of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council are satisfied with Turkey's approach regarding the developments in Bahrain, and Sheikh Khalid, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain, visited Ankara and appreciated Turkey's positions.

These positions of Al Khalifa and Turkey's efforts to maintain political interactions with the countries of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council indicate that Turkey, despite adopting a balancing approach, is emphasizing reforms, dialogue, and avoiding tension with the Islamic Republic of Iran, while at the same time maintaining its relations with the Arab countries and not wanting the developments in Bahrain to overshadow these relations. Accordingly, Turkey seeks to adopt an approach towards developments in Bahrain that does not harm Ankara's relations and strategic interests in the Gulf. For this purpose, it wants to maintain its relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council countries despite some criticism regarding Bahrain. For this purpose, the Prime Minister of Turkey stated that the intervention of the Gulf Cooperation Council in Bahrain could not be considered a foreign intervention because the Island Shield forces are a regional force that is internationally recognized. In general, Turkey cooperates with Saudi Arabia in the Bahrain crisis. Since the beginning of the Bahrain crisis, Saudi Arabia has intervened in this country, and Turkey does not want any change in Bahrain (Merdan, & Erdogan, 2021). In sum, Turkey does not want to suddenly change the regional status quo and challenge its strategic relations with these governments by seriously supporting the Bahraini opposition, considering the pursuit of commercial and economic interests in its relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council.

4.1.4.3. Foreign Policy of Turkey and Saudi Arabia Toward Unrests in Yemen

In 2004, with the beginning of the tension and war between the Houthis and the Shiites of the north and the government, we again saw the distance between Iran and Yemen and the closer proximity of Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The Yemeni government accused the Houthis of trying to establish a government in the north and Iran of supporting them. Due to ideological and geopolitical considerations, the tension between the Houthis and the Yemeni government simultaneously attracted Iran's and Saudi Arabia's attention. In addition, the activity of Al-Qaeda in Yemen attracted more attention from the US and Western powers to this country due to security considerations. Despite the fluctuating relations between Iran and Yemen and the support of Abdullah Saleh as one of the Arab leaders for Iran's right to obtain peaceful nuclear technology, the conflict between the Houthis and the central government and the start of unrest since 2011 have strongly caused confrontation between Yemen and Iran and a close relationship between Yemen and Saudi Arabia as well (Alikhani, 2015). According to many experts, this issue has turned this country into a new field of confrontation and competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The main reason for the rivalry and enmity between Saudi Arabia and Iran in Yemen is the strategic issues and regional competition between the Persian Gulf and the Middle East, creating a zero-sum game between these two countries. Considering the history of the Houthis, since the beginning, the Yemeni government has claimed Iran's religious and military support for the Houthis. This accusation was due to the closeness of the Houthi rebels to the Shiites and their opposition to the Wahhabis. The Houthis are followers of Zaydia, so the Yemeni government accuses them of trying to establish a Shia regime in this country. Further, these conflicts caused a military clash between Saudi Arabia, Houthis and Yemen's government due to Saudi Arabia's support for the Yemeni government, and also due to the proximity of Yemen's Saada province to Saudi borders. One of the other reasons for Saudi Arabia's intervention was concern about the spread of rebellions in the Shiite areas of the country. Saudi intervention in Yemen was accompanied by Iran's strong reaction (Kazemi, & Mousavi, 2015: p, 157).

The strong disagreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia in the Yemen crisis caused many analysts to call it a "proxy war." According to them, Iran seeks to take

advantage of the developments in Yemen to spread political Shiism along the southern borders of Saudi Arabia and then infiltrate this issue into Saudi Arabia. This claim was due to Iran's support for Hezbollah and Hamas in the region. Under these conditions, to control the crisis, Saudi Arabia, with the support of the United States and the Gulf Cooperation Council, put the power transfer program on the agenda in this country, and with Saleh's resignation, his deputy became the president. The new officials of Yemen praised the role of Saudi Arabia in establishing stability in this country. They accused the Islamic Republic of Iran of interfering in the internal affairs of Yemen (Dalacoura, 2013).

The failure of the new rulers of Yemen to control the country's situation, the spread of internal protests, the entry of Ansarullah into the capital, and finally the control of Sana'a by the Houthi forces led to a dramatic change in the internal and regional situation, which was accompanied by sharp criticism from Saudi Arabia. The presence of the delegation of Ansarullah in Tehran and the political and economic talks for the development of relations coincided with the presence of Mansour Alhadi in Aden and the withdrawal of his resignation, the sending of a representative from Saudi Arabia to Aden, and the closure of some Arab embassies in Sana'a. In this way, the crisis in Yemen, which, like the developments in Syria, Iraq, Bahrain, and Lebanon, has identity and ideological characteristics for Iran and Saudi Arabia, shows that this country will remain one of the areas of competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia (Ahmadian, & Zare, 2013: p, 91). Regarding Turkey's foreign policy in the Yemen crisis, it should be stated that the most critical element in the possibility of Turkey's tactical cooperation with Saudi Arabia in the attack on Yemen is Turkey's concern about the growing influence of Iran and Shiite groups in the region. This concern for Turkey is rooted in the Sunni Islam identity of this country.

In addition, Iran and Turkey have severe differences regarding the institutions of the new regional order after the Arab Spring developments. Another factor that is effective in Turkey's cooperation with Saudi Arabia is the worrying outlook in Turkey's economy, which forces this country to use Saudi Arabia's financial capital to revive its economy. Another goal of Turkey's tactical cooperation with the coalition led by Saudi Arabia should be sought in Turkey's attempt to change Saudi Arabia's anti-Muslim Brotherhood policies and to associate this country with its strategies in

Syria, including the creation of a no-fly zone (Kouskouvelis, 2013). Ankara attempts to enter the Yemen case is the positive approach of Turkey's foreign policy towards the Muslim Brotherhood. Experience has shown that wherever Turkey felt that Brotherhood groups had the "ability and capacity" to play an influential role in the internal equations of a country or region, it earnestly supported them, even if it required presence in the fields of regional chaos. From this point of view, Turkey's attempt to enter the Yemen case is related to the support of the Muslim Brotherhood group "The Yemeni Congregation for Reform," which previously played an essential role in Mansour Al-Hadi's government. The al-Islah group in "Marib province," considered the traditional base and social origin of the Brotherhoods, has had a dispute with the Saudis and Mansour al-Hadi so has faced a "dead end" in Yemeni developments. The trend of Ikhwani al-Islah, which needs foreign support to maintain its political position, can be a serious platform and the main reason for Turkey's entry and presence in Yemen. From this point of view, the al-Islah group also determines the extent and scope of Turkey's role in Yemen (www.scfr.ir/fa/2017).

4.1.4.4. The Approach of Turkey and Saudi Arabia Toward Palestine, Hamas, and Lebanon

During the last decade, we witnessed developments in Palestine and Lebanon. Saudi Arabia interprets these developments from the perspective of Iran's influence in Palestine and Lebanon and has taken measures to counter this influence. In 2006, we saw the war between Hezbollah and Israel in the region, and in 2008, the Gaza war happened. These developments went in the direction that ultimately strengthened the axis of resistance in the region and caused the opponents of the resistance front's role to weaken relatively. In this area, the Saudis took various measures in Palestine and Lebanon to create a counterbalance against Iran (Barzegar, 2013: p, 191). Iran intends to project an image of a superior power that supports the rights of the Palestinian people and opposes Israel through various means, including providing weapons and money to Palestine. Saudi Arabia also has tried to help Palestine using financial resources and political influence. However, in reality, Saudi Arabia has appeared to support the Arab League's peace plan, which is moving toward the Israeli leaders' desire.

Saudi Arabia maintains political relations with the Palestinian parties Fatah and Hamas, while the United States has included the latter party on its list of terrorist organizations. The influence of Saudi Arabia has decreased in recent years, and Iran has taken its place. On the other hand, in Lebanon, many Shiites consider Iran a vital ally that supports them in resisting the aggression of the Israeli regime. In recent years, Turkey has set the agenda of becoming a central power and model and has used all the opportunities available in the region to achieve this goal (Masoudnia, 2012: p, 94). Davutoglu argued that Turkey should not limit itself to a regional role in the Balkans or the Middle East because it is a significant country and not a regional one and should play a leadership role in several areas (Esmaili et al., 2016: p, 4). By criticizing the Kemalists, he said that they had prevented Turkey from playing the correct role in responding to the changes in its surrounding environment for 70 years. Based on Oglu's ideas, Turkey redefined its role in the Middle East. Nevertheless, in the new foreign policy that Taspinar refers to as "Neo-Ottomanism," Turkey aims to use soft power and political, economic, and cultural influence in the former territories of the Ottoman Empire (Taspinar, 2012: p, 127–140). Therefore, the Middle East was the best field for Turkey to implement its macro politics. The definition of neo-Ottomanism as a macro and progressive model was more important for the Middle East and North African Islamic countries.

Erdogan said about this *“they ask us what Turkey is doing in Palestine. What is the reason that Turkey is interested in the Palestinian issue? They need to be made aware of the responsibility that we have to fulfill, which has been given to us by the history of Turkey and the will of the Turkish people”* (Ovali, 2013: p, 6-7). The Ottoman legacy as the "guardian of the holy areas" can be seen in this role, as Erdogan says: *"We cannot turn our backs on Palestine and Gaza."* Therefore, Iran's role as a "supporter of Palestine" has been attacked by Turkey in recent years, and Turkey intends to monopolize this role by controlling Hamas. Moreover, this issue has caused competition between Iran and Turkey. Turkey brought Hamas to its side at a critical moment and put it in front of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Turkey has succeeded to some extent in this field. One of its signs is the new identity of Hamas. In one letter, Hamas stated that this group is not an interventionist revolutionary force. Also, while

not accepting the existence of Israel, Hamas accepted the formation of a government within the 1967 borders (The Guardian, 2017).

It can be said that Turkey does not intend to cooperate and align with Iran in the Palestine issue but rather wants to replace Iran in the field of supporting Palestine and become the leader of the "Sunni resistance axis" (Noi, 2013: p, 105). However, the differences between Turkey and Iran over Hamas and Palestine are an example of the role of the defender of the Islamic world, which both are trying to monopolize. The Turkish government has also concluded that the discourse of resistance in the Middle East has attracted many fans among the masses of the Islamic world. Therefore, it is trying to challenge the centrality of Iran in the discourse of resistance (Fallah, 2012: p, 4). Turkey's attempt to increase its influence in Lebanon is a phenomenon that has been around for several decades. In 2006, Ankara sent the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Organization (TIKA), which operates in various countries, to Lebanon to use it to expand its control and influence in this country. Also, with the same intention, the Turkish government has established close relations with the Turks living in Lebanon and the politicians close to Saad Hariri.

Aside from geopolitical factors, Turkey also seeks to expand its influence in Lebanon based on economic geography. Turkey is always trying to turn Lebanon into a market for the sale and consumption of its export products and to expand the scope of its influence in this country. In addition to what was mentioned, Ankara is doing many activities to influence the Sunni religions of northern Lebanon to compete with Riyadh and Abu Dhabi for the leadership of the Sunni world. Providing scholarships for students in this region by the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Organization (TIKA) is part of these activities. So far, ten thousand students in northern Lebanon have benefited from these scholarships. On the other hand, Ankara's aid to the "Muslim Brotherhood" organization in Lebanon is another way to expand Turkey's influence in Lebanon. By adopting this policy, Ankara will be able to attract many organizations following the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood in the coming years, which will influence regional equations (www.independentpersian.com).

4.1.4.5. Sunni and Shiite Discourse between Turkey and Saudi Arabia with Iran

After the beginning of the Arab Spring, both Saudi Arabia and Turkey emphasized gaining or maintaining Sunni power in the region. As seen, the effort of these two countries was to balance the influence of Iran as the leading Shiite power in the region. This issue led to polarization between Shiites and Sunnis in the region. On the one hand, Iran supported the Shiite groups in the region; on the other hand, Saudi Arabia and Turkey supported the Sunnis. The result was nothing but increased conflict and decreased security in the region. The anarchic and Hobbesian order of the Middle East after the Arab Spring, on the one hand, strengthened the ideological policies of Saudi Salafism, and on the other hand, intensified the confrontation of Salafist and Takfiri groups with Shiites in different geographical areas (Weiss, & Stuart, 2011). As a result, the rival governments of the region moved towards more self-help. Regional divergence and Iran's anti-Western policies made Saudi Arabia closer to its Western allies regarding regional developments and Iran's policies. Meanwhile, the developments in Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain are significant for Saudi Arabia because they are considered a direct and indirect geopolitical threat to its sovereignty. Iran's opposition to Al-Khalifa and its support for the Shiites of Bahrain, the Houthis of Yemen, and the Shiite government of Syria led to a strong stance by the rulers of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia's actions in Bahrain, as well as support for Takfiri groups in Syria and the military attack on Yemen to suppress the Houthis, were not only a security measure but also an ideological mechanism to confront Shiism in the region led by the Islamic Republic of Iran (Khatib L, 2014), so that we are currently witnessing a direct conflict between the interests and policies of Iran and Saudi Arabia (Berti, & Guzansky, 2014: p, 25).

On the other hand, for Turkey, with the developments of the Arab Spring, the model and order of the Brotherhood under the guidance of this country have become more critical. The Brotherhood model in the region's new conditions, especially in the Syrian crisis, led by the Justice and Development Party, calls for a simultaneous balance between the Shiite order and the Salafi order (Berti, & Guzansky, 2014: p, 25). As mentioned earlier, Iran's regional policy is focused on strengthening the alliance with friendly groups and governments known as the Axis of Resistance or the Shiite

Crescent. On the other hand, Turkey is trying to use the new conditions in the Middle East to change the regional balance and order of the Middle East by presenting the Brotherhood model in its favor (Fallah, 2012: p, 91). For this reason, Turkey, together with Saudi Arabia, opposes Shiism. Now it should be seen whether the roles that the leaders of Turkey and Iran assign to themselves in the new Middle East system are complementary or conflicting. The bilateral relations between Iran and Turkey have little tension. Before the uprisings in the region, relations between the parties had reached their highest level since the Islamic revolution. In 2008, Erdogan warmly welcomed Ahmadinejad, who called Ahmadinejad "my dear brother."

This issue shows that the kind of approach they have to the events in the Middle East countries causes tension in the relations between the parties (Akbarzadeh, & Barry, 2016: p, 3). After the 2009 Iranian elections, Erdogan and Abdullah Gul immediately sent congratulatory messages to Iran. However, after the unrest in the Middle East countries, Iran and Turkey tried to be influential in these events and create their desired model in the countries, to transform and somehow assume the role of leadership in these developments, and it was from this point that the tensions became very serious. Regarding the leadership of the Islamic world, there is still a belief based on the culture of "Caliph" or "Imam" that, finally, a country and a person should undertake the role of Muslim leadership. There has been a dispute over this position between countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Libya for decades. The fact is that Turkey considers itself the leader of the Islamic world, and its activities have spread to the extent that some call Erdogan the "new Nasser" (Atimes, 2017). For example, after the announcement of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the transfer of the American embassy to it, Turkey took the leadership of the Muslim protests and called the Islamic countries to Turkey to protest this action in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The representative of Turkey stated in this regard that "the Islamic world will unite under the leadership of Turkey" (Anadolu Agency, 2017).

In conclusion during the Arab Spring period, Turkey and Saudi Arabia experienced a notable convergence in their foreign policy orientations, driven by a careful balance of interests, shared objectives, and a common perception of regional developments. Drawing on the theory of neoclassical realism, this analysis delves into the factors that

facilitated this convergence between the two regional powers during this transformative period in the Middle East. The convergence between Saudi Arabia and Turkey during the Arab Spring period can be effectively analyzed through the lens of neoclassical realism, which takes into account both systemic and domestic factors that shaped their foreign policy choices. At the outset of the Arab Spring, both countries recognized the need to address common challenges, particularly in countering Iran's expanding influence in the region. Neoclassical realism highlights the importance of balancing state interests and objectives, and Saudi Arabia's desire to protect its position as a regional heavyweight and Turkey's aspirations for leadership provided a foundation for cooperation.

At the onset of the Arab Spring, both Turkey and Saudi Arabia perceived an opportunity to advance their interests in the region as they witnessed the fall of the Syrian government and sought to reduce Iran's influence. This shared perception of the potential for a power shift in favor of their regional rivals led to a common understanding between the leaders of the two countries. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey and King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia recognized the importance of uniting Iraq's Sunnis to counterbalance Iran's influence in the country, reflecting their shared objectives in confronting Iran's expanding regional power. In the wake of the Arab Spring, Turkey and Saudi Arabia found common ground in their perception of the Syrian crisis as a regional competition with Iran. Both countries sought to expand their roles and prevent Iran's geopolitical and ideological influence in the region. As a result, Turkey and Saudi Arabia began recruiting volunteers to support the Syrian opposition and training them to engage with government forces, demonstrating their shared interests in countering Iran's influence and maintaining their strategic positions in the Middle East.

Furthermore, the developments in Bahrain, Lebanon, and Yemen presented another area of convergence for Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Both countries shared a common understanding of the regional implications of these events and sought to bolster Sunni influence in the face of growing Shia empowerment. This mutual perception of the challenges posed by Iran's influence in the region further solidified their alignment in responding to the Arab Spring. In light of these shared interests and perceptions, Turkey and Saudi Arabia enhanced their military and economic

cooperation during the Arab Spring period. Strengthening their ties, high-ranking officials and economic, commercial, and military delegations exchanged visits, culminating in cooperation agreements in joint defense and military industries. This increased collaboration signified a concerted effort to consolidate their positions in the face of regional uncertainties.

Turkey's foreign policy in the Yemen crisis is based on the country's concern about the growing influence of Iran and Shiite groups in the region, which is rooted in the country's Sunni Islam identity. After the Arab Spring, Saudi Arabia and Turkey prioritized gaining or maintaining Sunni power in the region to counterbalance Iran's influence as the leading Shiite power. This led to a polarization between Shia and Sunni, with Iran supporting Shia groups and Saudi Arabia and Turkey supporting Sunnis. Regional uprisings have increased tensions between countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Libya. Over the past decade, developments in Palestine and Lebanon have influenced the approach of Turkey and Saudi Arabia towards Iran's influence. Saudi Arabia and Turkey have countered Iran's influence in the Middle East by focusing on neo-Ottomanism and promoting Sunni religions in northern Lebanon.

Additionally, neoclassical realism considers domestic political dynamics, and the consensus among political elites in both Saudi Arabia and Turkey further facilitated their convergence. This unity allowed for a concerted response to the regional challenges and opportunities presented by the Arab Spring. Moreover, neoclassical realism's recognition of systemic pressures, such as the balance of power and geopolitical competition, sheds light on how Turkey and Saudi Arabia perceived the developments in the region as a competition with Iran. This systemic pressure further motivated their alignment in countering Iran's influence and maintaining their strategic positions in the Middle East.

Crucially, the convergence between Turkey and Saudi Arabia was not limited to the perceptions and actions of their leaders alone. Domestic political elites in both countries also displayed consensus in their responses to the Arab Spring. This unity among the domestic elites further facilitated their alignment and cooperation in addressing the challenges and opportunities presented by the regional upheavals. Overall, neoclassical realism provides a comprehensive framework to analyze the

convergence between Saudi Arabia and Turkey during the Arab Spring. By considering the balance of interests, leaders' perceptions, domestic political dynamics, and systemic pressures, we gain a deeper understanding of the underlying reasons that fostered their alignment. The theory offers valuable insights into the complexities of international relations and the broader implications of their convergence in shaping the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East during this transformative period.



FIFTH CHAPTER

5. REGIONAL COMPONENTS IN THE DIVERGENCE OF TURKEY AND SAUDI ARABIA DURING THE ARAB SPRING

In the last chapter of this thesis, titled Regional Convergence and Divergence between Saudi Arabia and Turkey during the Arab Spring period, we point out the factors of divergence between these two states using the theory of neoclassical realism.

The divergence between Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the Middle East during the Arab Spring is a complex phenomenon that can be better understood through the theoretical lens of neoclassical realism. Neoclassical realism is a prominent framework in the field of international relations that builds upon the foundation of classical realism while incorporating insights from other disciplines, such as psychology and sociology. At its core, neoclassical realism seeks to explain states' foreign policy behavior by considering a combination of systemic pressures and domestic variables, with a specific focus on the role of leaders and their perceptions in shaping state actions. Unlike classical realism, which primarily emphasizes systemic factors, neoclassical realism recognizes that domestic attributes and characteristics of states also play a significant role in shaping foreign policy decisions. It posits that while the international system's structure and distribution of power influence states' behaviors, the interpretation and responses to these systemic pressures are filtered through the lenses of leaders' perceptions, ideologies, and the political context within their respective countries. In the following analysis, we will apply the neoclassical realism theory to explore in-depth the specific factors that contributed to the divergence between Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring, including the Kurdish issues in Syria, differences after the coup in Egypt, the Qatar crisis, their views and relationship with Iran, competition over the leadership of the Islamic world, their divergent approaches to the Libyan crisis, and the underlying differences in their governance systems of religious monarchy and secular republic. Through this analysis, we will gain a deeper understanding of the complex interplay of systemic and domestic factors, as well as leaders' perceptions, that shaped their divergent foreign policy choices during this critical period in the Middle East.

In the context of Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring, neoclassical realism provides a robust analytical framework to unravel the factors behind their divergence. By considering systemic pressures such as the dynamics of regional competition, the balance of power, and ideological influences, and delving into domestic variables, including political structures and societal influences, neoclassical realism sheds light on how these two states formulated their foreign policy orientations during this transformative period. The divergence between Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring is a complex interplay of perceptions, power dynamics, and revisionist aspirations, best understood through the lens of neoclassical realism. In this analysis, we will delve into the perceptions of leaders in both countries about regional developments and the balance of power, as well as their concerted efforts to expand their regional influence and power as revisionist governments dissatisfied with their current positions. By examining these critical factors, we will gain a deeper understanding of how these states navigated the uncertainties of the Arab Spring, leading to significant divergence and competition in the Middle East.

Leaders' Perceptions and Regional Developments

In the neoclassical realism framework, leaders' perceptions are instrumental in guiding a state's foreign policy choices. During the Arab Spring, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Saudi Arabian King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud held divergent perceptions about the implications of the uprisings in the region. President Erdogan saw the Arab Spring as an opportunity to enhance Turkey's influence and establish itself as a model of democratic governance and moderate Islam. He believed that Turkey's regional leadership was on the rise, positioning the country as a prominent player in shaping the post-revolutionary order. In contrast, King Abdullah viewed the Arab Spring as a challenge to the conservative ruling structure and regional dominance of Saudi Arabia. The uprisings posed a potential threat to the monarchy's stability, with the rise of Islamist movements and calls for political reform. These differing perceptions influenced their respective foreign policy responses, driving Turkey and Saudi Arabia further apart in their approaches to regional developments.

Efforts to Increase Regional Influence and Power

As revisionist governments seeking to increase their power and influence in the region, both Turkey and Saudi Arabia pursued assertive foreign policies during the Arab Spring. Turkey actively supported Islamist movements and political transitions in countries like Egypt and Tunisia, aligning with the Muslim Brotherhood and other like-minded groups. President Erdogan saw this as an opportunity to project Turkey's soft power and promote its vision of democratic governance, aiming to bolster its regional standing and leadership role. Similarly, Saudi Arabia, in response to perceived challenges from the Arab Spring, adopted a counter-revolutionary approach. It sought to preserve the conservative ruling structure and actively opposed the rise of Islamist movements, especially the Muslim Brotherhood. This assertive foreign policy was aimed at maintaining Saudi Arabia's leadership position in the region and countering the potential threat posed by the uprisings.

Aspirations to Create a Desired Regional Order

Both Turkey and Saudi Arabia aspired to shape a regional order that aligned with their interests and values. As revisionist governments dissatisfied with their current positions, they sought to influence the outcomes of the Arab Spring and establish a new order that favored their respective visions. This aspiration for regional dominance and a desired order led to competition and divergence in their foreign policy choices. In other word, neoclassical realism provides valuable insights into the divergence between Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring. By examining the leaders' perceptions about regional developments and the balance of power, as well as their concerted efforts to increase regional influence and shape a desired order, we gain a deeper understanding of how these revisionist governments responded to the challenges of the Arab Spring. These factors drove Turkey and Saudi Arabia further apart, creating a complex web of competition and divergent foreign policy choices in the Middle East.

Distrust among actors is one of the main assumptions of the realism theory; in other words, distrust in the intentions and motivation of actors is a permanent feature of the international system. Even if the current intentions of the actors are favorable, there is no assurance of the stability of this situation; therefore, worrying about the future intentions of the actors will intensify mistrust, deception, and the fragility of

cooperation. Turkey and Saudi Arabia are no exceptions to this principle. Despite the steps taken for understanding between Saudi Arabia and Turkey in recent years, the areas of conflict, competition, and mistrust between them are profound, and this issue causes a crisis in their relations. One of these divergence factors is the Qatar crisis. Saudi Arabia cut off its political and economic relations with this country and accused Qatar of supporting terrorism, while Turkey supported this country. Despite their convergence in the Syrian crisis, these two countries have differences of opinion regarding the Kurds of Syria and Iraq. Unlike Saudi Arabia, Turkey vehemently opposes the independence of the Kurds. On the other hand, Turkey's support of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt has strained relations between the two countries. In addition to the different priorities of Turkey and Saudi Arabia regarding the issues of Egypt, Qatar, and Libya, these two countries also differ in how they view Iran. Finally, the competition over the leadership of the Islamic world and the type of political government has caused the divergence between the two countries. Next, we will examine these divergent factors in the relations between the two countries.

5.1. DIVERGENT FACTORS IN TURKISH-SAUDI RELATIONS DURING THE ARAB SPRING

5.1.1. The Difference in The Way of Looking at The Kurds of Syria and Iraq

It is estimated that there are about 2 million Kurds in Syria. This is 10% of the 21 million population of Syria. The Kurds of this country live in northern Syria, an area bordering Iraqi Kurdistan in the west and Turkey in the north and west. There are also areas in Damascus and Aleppo that Kurds mainly inhabit(www.meforum.org). The history of the Syrian Kurdish movement dates back to the 1950s, when the first political party, the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Party, was formed by a group of Kurds who escaped from Turkey. The Syrian Democratic Party was also an arm of the Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party, which Mustafa Barzani led to organize the Kurdish national movement under the umbrella of a solid and effective movement. At that time, Barzani's attempt to unite the Kurds was unsuccessful. The reasons for this failure were:

- the violent policy of the Syrian and Iraqi governments against the Kurdish ethnic group,
- the intolerance of the Kurds' presence in Syria,
- and the disagreement over the leadership of the party

From the time the Baath Party came to power until the Syrian civil war, Kurdish parties were active underground (Hevian, 2013: p, 12). In general, the Syrian Kurdish parties are divided into two main groups: the first is the Democratic Union Party, which is the Syrian branch of the PKK terrorist organization, and the second is the Kurdish National Council, which is a pyramid organization and is supported by the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government. Inside Syria, the Democratic Union Party is much stronger and more politically radical (Abramowitz, & Edelman, 2013: p, 11). Turkey's position towards the Syrian crisis is primarily influenced by its approach towards the Kurdish issue (Tziarras, 2012: p, 138). Turkey has the largest Kurdish population in the region. Therefore, its competitors can use the Kurdish card to weaken Turkey. On the other hand, Syria, due to its complex ethnic and religious composition and the possibility of its disintegration, has worried Turkey about forming a situation similar to Iraqi Kurdistan, that is, an autonomous region in Syria, because this issue will provoke more Kurds in Turkey and will double Turkey's security problems (Walker, 2012: p, 1-2). Therefore, Turkey uses regional negotiations outside the framework of NATO to reduce insecurity and achieve its goals (Tziarras, 2012: p, 138).

The discussion of the self-government of the Syrian Kurds has seriously threatened the Turkish authorities. Due to the connection between Turkish and Syrian Kurds, the declaration of autonomy can make the process of solving the Kurdish problem difficult and also intensify the activity of Kurds opposing Turkey in Syrian cities. Establishing joint camps between the Kurds of northern Syria and the PKK can challenge Erdogan's political future due to his adopting wrong policies towards Damascus. By supporting the Syrian opposition, Erdogan created a favorable environment for the unity of Kurdish parties in both countries, and this issue can provoke even more opposition from Turkish parties against Erdogan. For this reason, Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been forced to change his position towards Syria to contain the Kurds (Cook, 2014: p, 2). At first, Erdogan supported radical Salafist groups due

to increasing tensions with Kurdish parties and threats to national security. However, finally, under the pressure of other countries, he joined the ranks of their opponents.

Despite this, Turkey's refusal to help Kobani (A Kurdish city in northeastern Syria) and prevent the massacre of the people of Kobani by ISIS angered America and Europe, which resulted in the West's opposition to offering Turkey a seat in the Security Council (Hinnebusch, 2015: p, 19). The main goal of Turkey in Syria is to contain the Kurds of this country and prevent the division of Syria and the formation of the Kurdish state. Therefore, the guiding light of Turkey's foreign policy towards Syria is to confront the Syrian Kurds. Turkey considers any action by the Syrian Kurds for the independence of these regions a threat to its security. Creating an independent region in northern Syria will increase the strategic power of the Kurds from western Syria to eastern Iraq. In this case, it will upset the balance of power between Turkey and the Kurds. Therefore, Turkey is vehemently opposed to any Kurdish autonomy in Syria, so it has taken military action against the Kurds in northern Syria.

However, although Saudi Arabia has yet to take a clear position regarding Kurdish autonomy, it can be indirectly concluded that, unlike Turkey, Saudi Arabia is not very sensitive about forming a Kurdish region or an autonomous Kurdish government in Syria. Saudi Arabia played a destructive role in the Syrian crisis by Military support for radical opposition in this country and does not have an independent and individual policy. Saudi Arabia plays a role on behalf of America in the region and Syria, and the danger of Syria's disintegration is not so much for this country. Saudi Arabia only thinks about its interests in the Syrian crisis, and the shape and size of the Syrian government and the position of the Kurds are not crucial to Saudi Arabia (Yazdani et al., 2016: p, 180–181).

Saudi General Anwar Majid Eshki announced Saudi Arabia's desire to create an independent Iraqi Kurdistan in an unprecedented joint meeting with an Israeli official. Analysts consider supporting such a Kurdish republic a blow to Iraq and Syria, which Riyadh sees as Iran's Shiite allies (www.middleeasteye.net). Of course, Turkey will also suffer in the meantime because the largest population of Kurds lives in Turkey, and the Kurds have the most opposition to the central government in Ankara. If Iraqi Kurdistan gains independence, the demands of Turkish Kurds for independence will cause civil war in Turkey. Riyadh's goals of creating the Kurdistan state can be

related to the developments in Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussein and the rise of Shiites in Iraq—a process in which a Sunni minority government gave way to a Shiite majority. According to the Saudi authorities, this situation has led to the marginalization of the Sunni minority and the influence of Iran in the field of developments in Iraq. In this process, what is essential for the Saudis is not to support the Kurds but to tear Iraq apart, remove the Shiites from the majority, and counter Iran's influence. According to the authorities of Riyadh, when it is impossible to provide the grounds for the realization of a moderate Sunni government in Iraq, this Shia structure should form in Iraq and be divided into three identity structures: Kurdish, Shia, and Sunni. A divided and weakened Iraq with a Shiite government will have less ability to create chaos and confrontation with the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf and Saudi Arabia. Although this situation is not desirable for the Saudis, when the Middle East developments are going in favor of the rival front, especially in strategic areas, this plan can serve the interests of Saudi Arabia in conflicting spaces.

Besides the pressure on Tehran, analysts emphasize Saudi pressure on the Turkish government through the support plan for independent Kurdistan. Especially the doubts of the Turkish government in the project of overthrowing Assad in the Syrian crisis have made Riyadh see itself alone in the meantime. Therefore, realizing such a plan as an available option and pressure lever can realize a part of the benefits envisioned in the minds of the Saudis. However, the mere desire and tendency of Saudi Arabia to support such a plan can only sometimes lead to its realization because many of the areas of realization of the Kurdish state are rooted in regions where Saudi Arabia has less influence than other influential actors. This is one of the most considerable divergences between Saudi Arabia and Turkey because Turkey vehemently opposes creating an independent Kurdish state. Turkish officials have repeatedly stated that they will never allow Iraq to be divided (Cengiz, 2022).

5.1.2. The Difference Between Turkey and Saudi Arabia on The Issue of Egypt

The developments in Egypt in the last few years have led to differences and conflicts between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. In 2011, with the resignation of Hosni Mubarak, the president of Egypt, Mohamed Morsi, a member of the Muslim

Brotherhood, came to power. On the other hand, the most important influencing factor in the relations between Saudi Arabia and Egypt can be considered the political and social nature of the Muslim Brotherhood, which has caused various sensitivities and reactions in Saudi Arabia since the beginning of this movement in Egypt and then its expansion in the Islamic world. The main reason for the conflict between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Saudis is the different view and vision of the Brotherhood towards the socio-political nature of Islam compared to the attitude of the Saudi Wahhabi rulers (Homayunpur, 1984: p, 54). Saudi Arabia seeks to lead the Arab world and the Islamic world. Meanwhile, the Muslim Brotherhood movement in the Arab world is considered the main ideological rival of Saudi Arabia. It challenges their legitimacy inside and outside, so the Muslim Brotherhood has branches in many countries today. The fact is that the Islam supported by the Saudis is more reminiscent of the thoughts of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, which Westerners have a very negative view of. However, on the other hand, they prefer Brotherhood Islam as a model similar to Islamism in Turkey over the Salafi narrative (Parsai, 2011).

In the Middle East, Egypt is the center of political Islam, which means that political Islam, with its different tendencies, is produced in Egypt and exported to other countries. As a result, Islamism in Egypt has different tendencies, from the most radical jihadist tendencies to the Muslim Brotherhood, which can be said to follow a kind of religious democracy. Therefore, the Brotherhood is the most democratic Islamist group in the Middle East and Egypt, which means that if the society is to move towards democracy, Islamic societies prefer an attitude similar to the Brotherhood's (Hosseinzadeh, 2013).

In the ideology of Wahhabism, opposing the ruler is strictly prohibited. At the same time, the political Islam of the Muslim Brotherhood emphasizes the legitimacy of the government resulting from democratic elections, which is considered an existential threat to the legitimacy of the absolute power of the Saudi king (Alisa, 2013). Accordingly, in 2002, Saudi Interior Minister Bin Nayef called the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist group. Based on this, Saudi Arabia, by equipping all its facilities, acted in three directions in Egypt. Firstly, it supported the survivors of the Mubarak regime and the Egyptian army. It strengthened the aligned Salafists and took advantage of them to gain power, which gathered in the Al-Nour Salafist party and

finally started fueling ethnic-religious conflicts, specially creating severe tension with Shiites and Copts of Egypt, which led to a sense of distrust in the revolutionary government (Farazmand, 2012). With the establishment of the Brotherhood in Egypt, the discussion of the formation of the Brotherhood axis in the region was raised; Turkey strongly supported this issue at this time; the issue of nationalism was discussed; and the Justice and Development Party presented Turkey as a pioneer model of the new Islamists.

The Brotherhood axis led to more sensitivity from the Saudis regarding strengthening the Brotherhood in the region and the competition between the two countries in Egypt. The competition over the Brotherhood in Egypt was the starting point of the difference between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. The Saudis watched the extensive relations between Turkey and Egypt, but this situation did not last long. After one year, the presidency of Mohamed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood government were overthrown by an army coup led by the then-Egyptian defense minister, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, and relations between Turkey and Egypt entered a new phase. With Erdogan's stance as the Prime Minister of Turkey at the time, the country's ambassador was expelled from Egypt, and the level of relations between the two sides decreased. Since the beginning of the military coup in Egypt, Ankara has supported the Muslim Brotherhood. It took a stand against the Egyptian army, and Erdogan called this action a military coup and criticized the supporters of this action, such as Saudi Arabia.

In other words, Turkey, which, after the fall of Hosni Mubarak in 2011, became one of the prominent supporters of the Egyptian revolution in the region, changed its position with the removal of Mohamed Morsi from the presidency in 2013 and became one of the main enemies of Egypt with the coup of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi (Islamic Republic News Agency, 2018). On the other hand, Saudi Arabia was the first country to send a congratulatory message to Adli Mansour, the interim president of this country, after the fall of the Morsi government and pledged to provide economic aid worth 12 billion dollars to the Egyptian army. Also, the King of Saudi Arabia announced that he would supply oil to Egypt and also announced his support for Saudi investment in Egypt. Finally, these different actions of Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the developments in Egypt strongly led to coldness in their relations (Mashreq News, 2018).

5.1.3. The Difference Between Turkey and Saudi Arabia in Qatar

The Qatar issue is one factor that has hurt relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Qatar is a small, rich, peninsular country located in the southern part of the Persian Gulf. This peninsula is located in the heart of the Persian Gulf region, which has made it easily accessible to both sides of this region. Also, the neighborhood with Saudi Arabia, the proximity to Iran, and the benefit of abundant gas reserves have made it politically and economically significant (Galenosi et al., 2015: p, 96). In the beginning, Saudi Arabia and Qatar started to implement their policies with apparent unity in issues such as Syria and the fight against the Assad regime, Iraq and the political fragmentation of this country, the suppression of the Houthis in Yemen, and the challenge with Iran. Nevertheless, gradually, with the formation of the "axis of resistance" and, of course, the formation and increasing consistency of Shiites in the region, not only the policies proposed by Riyadh-Doha were not realized in the region, but also an apparent discontinuity emerged in the attitudes, policies, and goals of Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Such a dispute led to a severe challenge in the relations between Saudi Arabia and Qatar to the extent that on June 5, 2017, Saudi Arabia, along with Egypt, the UAE, and Bahrain, sanctioned Qatar for supporting terrorism and being an ally with Iran and cut off its diplomatic relations with this country (Alishahi, & Mohammaddoost, 2016: p, 6). They presented thirteen conditions for the re-establishment of relations, one of which was to close the joint military bases of Doha and Ankara in Qatar (Cafiero, 2018).

In a situation where Saudi Arabia and its allies are trying to isolate Qatar even more, Erdogan has signed a bill that allows this country to send up to 5,000 military advisers to Qatar. On the other hand, Turkey strongly opposed Saudi Arabia's actions and declared that isolating Qatar contradicts Islamic values. Turkey and Qatar have established close relations in the past decade, especially after the Arab Spring. By supporting the Muslim Brotherhood, both countries have common positions on regional issues, including conflicts in Libya, tensions in Egypt, and developments in Syria. In addition, Turkey and Qatar have extensive cooperation in the economic and military fields. In this way, Turkey and Saudi Arabia had profound differences over the issue of Qatar, which is an influential factor in the divergence between the two countries (Islamic Republic News Agency, 2016).

5.1.3.1. Riyadh's Threat from Doha's Alliance with Ankara

From the second half of the 1990s until now, Qatar's perception in the field of foreign relations has been based on independence from Saudi Arabia's attitude, which was formed with the coming to power of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey in 2003 and the events of the Arab Spring in 2011. The Brotherhood alliance was formed against the axis of Saudi Salafism. Signs of the alliance's stability between Doha and Ankara can be seen in the trade exchange of 1.9 billion dollars between these two countries in 2020. However, what has caused Saudi Arabia to feel threatened in Turkey-Qatar relations are issues such as coordination and cooperation between Ankara and Doha regarding the strengthening of Brotherhood actors and groups in the region and the presence of Turkish military forces in Qatar (Mohammadi, & Ahmadi, 2018). The quantitative and qualitative development strategy of the Turkish military forces in Qatar has caused Saudi Arabia to consider it a threat to the regional security of the Arabian Peninsula. The beginning of military cooperation between Doha and Ankara dates back to 2007. However, on December 19, 2014, an agreement named "Cooperation between Qatar and Turkey in the Field of Military Training, Defense Industries, and Deployment of Turkish Military Forces in Qatar" was signed to expand military cooperation between the two countries. This agreement brought the number of Turkish military forces in Qatar to 5,000 (Suleiman, 2015: p, 6). In the same way, Turkey having the military bases "Tareq bin Ziyad" (it was renamed to the joint command of Turkey and Qatar in 2017) and "Khalid bin Walid" in Qatar has caused more concern to The Saudis than its eastern neighbor (Shurrab, & Monzer, 2016).

5.1.3.2. Coordination in Regional Brotherhood

According to the common perception of Doha and Ankara, in expanding the tendency of brotherhood and preventing the influence of Riyadh and Abu Dhabi in the region of West Asia and North Africa, Turkey and Qatar are trying to coordinate with each other and adopt a joint strategy against their rivals in numerous meetings. Accordingly, in 2014, they established a joint strategic committee to coordinate and cooperate in the face of regional developments. Among the actual examples of coordination between the two countries, we can mention Qatar's support for Turkey's interventions in northern Syria (Roberts, 2014: p, 88). Qatar's financial support for Saleh Al-Jabwani (a front close to Turkey in Yemen) and the establishment of a

tripartite coordination center with the military participation of Turkey, Qatar, and the Libyan Government of National Accord (Krista, 2014)

The developments in Qatar have tremendously impacted the number of Saudi tourists visiting Turkey, and their number has dramatically decreased. In addition, after Saudi Arabia closed Qatar's only land border, which was the country's primary source of food imports, Turkey sent surplus dairy product supplies to the Qatari capital. Therefore, severing Saudi relations with Qatar was the essential conflict and divergence between Saudi Arabia and Turkey in 2017. The tension in Qatar's relations with Saudi Arabia and its allies once again revealed the dispute between Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Relations between Riyadh and Ankara have been strained since the Arab Spring because Turkey supported the Muslim Brotherhood. Although after the death of King Abdullah, there were changes in the relations between the two countries, so King Salman, the current king of Saudi Arabia, who was in charge of Turkey and Saudi Arabia's affairs during his time as a crown prince, took steps towards improving relations between the two countries, this improvement in relations did not last forever. "Temporary interests" could not bring them together forever.

The two countries always tried to make the relations between them normal and cover up these differences. Ankara first stood by Qatar and supported this country, and even the parliament of this country permitted a military presence and the deployment of more forces in Qatar. However, Turkey appeared as a mediator after a few days, which did not please the Saudis. During the trip to Saudi Arabia and meetings with the officials of this country, Turkish officials tried to show themselves as neutral mediators. They announced that Turkey's support for Qatar does not mean taking on another country. In this context, they requested the establishment of a base like Doha in Saudi Arabia. It faced strong opposition from the Saudis, and even the Saudi media took a strong stance against Turkey.

5.1.4. The Difference in The Way of Looking at Iran

Although it was stated in the last chapter that Turkey and Saudi Arabia worked together to curb Iran's influence in the region, they still have differences in this regard, and the approaches of Turkey and Saudi Arabia are opposite to each other in the matter of Iran. Unlike Saudi Arabia, which has been openly hostile toward and confronting

Iran, Turkey has maintained diplomatic relations with Iran and does not believe Iran is a direct threat to its internal security. Saudi Arabia seeks all-out enmity with Iran, but Turkey has adopted a pattern of competition and cooperation with Iran, which causes Saudi resentment. For several reasons, Turkey has adopted a different approach to Iran than Saudi Arabia, which we will discuss below.

1- Economic and transportation factors: Due to Iran's regional weight and the fact that Iran has become a significant energy producer, Turkey has taken its relations with Iran seriously, which is one of the most critical aspects of these relations in terms of commercial and economic relations. Based on this, the ECO Economic Cooperation Organization has particular importance in the relations between the two countries and in ensuring regional stability and security. Regarding its geopolitical position and understanding the importance of this regional position, Turkey is aware of the need to maintain close relations with its neighbors, especially Iran, and considers the ECO Economic Cooperation Organization a suitable format for implementing this policy. Turkey is trying to establish its role in the ECO organization as a link between the ECO organization, the European community, and other regional agreements (Cetinsaya, 2007: p, 18).

2- Kurdish issue: Security is an inseparable component of regional strategic partnership. In fact, the security of the entire region is considered the security of all units and cannot be separated, and any damage to one of the countries will cause damage to the entire region. Therefore, the region's countries should strive for the region's security with cooperation such as information exchange, border control, extradition of criminals, and bilateral security agreements; cooperation between Iran and Turkey is one of them. One of Turkey's most critical challenges in the past three decades has been the Kurdish crisis, which the current Turkish government finds impossible to solve without Iran's cooperation. On the other hand, considering the possibility of establishing a Kurdish government, Turkey considers any attempt to create instability in Iran against its interests and national security and supports the stability and sovereignty of Iran (Aras B. & Karakaya Polat, 2007:89). Based on this, the issue of Kurds has been the most important factor shaping the security relations between Iran and Turkey from the past until now (Cetinsaya, 2007: p, 183).

3- Two non-Arab countries in the region: Although Iran and Turkey have many identity differences, they are similar and different from most of the countries in the region in one aspect, and that is being non-Arab and having historical problems with the Arabs, who in times past have preferred trusting each other over relying on Arab countries (Derakhsheh, Divsalar, 2013: p, 113).

4- Cooperation in regional and international organizations: ECO organizations are a clear example of regional cooperation. Although this organization has had ups and downs at times, it has remained strong since 1985 in the political, economic, and cultural fields, and it has been a factor in increasing regional understanding that Turkey and Iran are trying to achieve a central role in this organization. In addition, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, as an institution in which both countries are active members, has dramatically impacted deepening relations. Also, Turkey and Iran are the founding members of the D-8 group, have extensive relations, have much capacity to promote common collective interests, and can play an influential role in the world economy.

5-Turkey's membership process in the European Union: Iran considers Turkey's membership in the European Union an opportunity because positive relations with a member of the European Union that is located in Iran's neighborhood can create favorable conditions for economic and political cooperation between the European Union and Iran. Based on this, Iran has always supported Turkey's membership process in the European Union, and Turkey has also been satisfied with Iran's attitude.

6- Turkish public opinion: Another factor in the expansion of Turkish-Iranian relations is Turkish public opinion, which is opposed to any cooperation between Turkey and America in a possible attack that is always talked about and always believes in maintaining Turkey's neutrality. The history of America's activities in the region shows Turkey's loss from the point of view of Turkish public opinion. That is why this country's public opinion is against military operations and economic sanctions against Iran (Aras, 2007: p, 77–79).

5.1.5. The Dispute Over the Leadership of The Islamic World and Ideological Difference

Turkey has a multi-dimensional identity with a European dimension, a Turkish dimension, and an Islamic dimension, which has become more prominent since the Justice and Development Party came to power. Turkey defends moderate Islam of the Muslim Brotherhood type and, in other words, represents this trend. This issue is entirely in conflict with the religious and Arabic identities of Saudi Arabia. By promoting Wahhabism and leading the Arab world, the Saudis are conflicted with the Turks regarding their worldview towards society, politics, and religion. There are millions of Muslims living in Saudi Arabia and Turkey; most of them are Sunnis, but there is a question as to why, despite the claimant governments in the Sunni world, there is never a positive convergence in the form of new structures and institutions to strengthen the unity among Muslims. Undoubtedly, one of the main reasons is the political conflicts and rivalries between Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Moreover, on the other hand, each of the two countries, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, claims to be the leader of the Sunni world and tries to define itself in this position. Each considers itself superior to the other in order to gain this position. In recent years, there has been an idea that Turkey is trying to lead the Islamic world to revive its historical and cultural depth.

Considering its political and social infrastructure and being a democratic country compared to Saudi Arabia, Turkey is trying to show itself as a model of modern Islamic civilization. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia, considering its position among the Arab countries and also considering that the Arabs do not have good memories of the Ottomans, considers itself worthy of the leadership of the Sunnis and is trying to expand its interpretation of Islam by spreading Salafi Islam in Asia and Africa (Hashemi, 2017: p, 141).

Islam in Saudi Arabia is based on Wahhabism. Wahhabism is the term used for the movement of Salafism in Saudi Arabia. This word is derived from the name of Muhammad bin Abd al-Wahab, who lived in the Arabian Peninsula in the 18th century. Today, Wahhabism is widely used by Sunni Islamic movements looking for authentic Islam and far from any innovation or deviation from the teachings of Prophet Muhammad and his companions (Hedayati, & Safari, 2017: p, 41). Another issue goes

back to the Turkish-Arab conflict. In other words, by strengthening Turkish identity structures, Turkey is trying to show itself as the heir to the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia considers itself the leader of the Arab world, and this issue can threaten the interests of Turkey and Saudi Arabia as competitors to achieve the leadership of the Islamic world. Since the Justice and Development Party came to power, Turkey has been trying to become a top regional actor in political and economic equations. In other words, Turkey's strategic goals were determined so that this country would be recognized as an influential actor in the region by 2023.

Turkey is looking for a more active foreign policy in the form of soft power and the expansion of political, economic, and cultural influence in the countries of the former Ottoman Empire by emphasizing the amendment of secularist tendencies. However, Saudi Arabia, which considers itself the leader of the Arab world and the Islamic Umm al-Qura, will not tolerate this issue (Hashemi, 2017: p, 141). It is clear that Turkey's policy in the two regions of the Arab and Islamic worlds is based on the Arab countries losing their trust in the role of Saudi Arabia to highlight its role, and at the same time, Erdogan uses religious speeches and conferences to unite Muslims. The Kuala Lumpur¹ Summit exemplifies the conflict between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia did not oppose it only because Turkey participated in this meeting. However, it knows very well that Turkey's participation means weakening the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which it manages, and the condition of this country to hold this meeting under the name of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation shows the concern and fear of Saudi Arabia about the success of such conferences. It can be said that this shows the collapse of Saudi Arabia's role and the advancement of Turkey's role, and this conflict will undoubtedly intensify because both sides are pushing for the implementation of their views with all political, religious, and even military means. The developments in Libya showed that the competition for the leadership of the Islamic world between Saudi Arabia and Turkey

¹ The Kuala Lumpur (KL) Summit, held in December 2019, saw high-level participation from Malaysia, Turkey, Qatar, and Iran. Dignitaries included Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani. Politicians, diplomats, academics, religious leaders, and activists from a number of other Muslim countries were also invited. The objective of the summit was to provide a platform for various Muslim leaders to address social, political, and economic issues in the Muslim world.

had entered the stage of forcing equations (Asr Diplomacy, 2018). One of the challenges facing Saudi Arabia in recent years, especially with the rise of moderate Islamists in Turkey and the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in the region, is the challenge facing Salafist Islam. On the other hand, because moderate Islamists emphasize governance based on new teachings such as civil society, freedom of speech, parties, and new ideas in general, the Salafists emphasize returning to the orders of "Salaf Salih"² and generally avoiding the manifestations of the new civilization and its forms.

The financial and spiritual support of Saudi Arabia to Islamic centers and schools in the region in the past years has been aimed at strengthening the Salafi discourse, and they are active in many countries, including Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. Therefore, moderate Islamists gaining power and expanding their influence among regional governments can seriously challenge Salafist ideas (Moghadam arasbari, 2012). With Turkey's military attack on northern Syria on October 9, 2019, the foreign ministers of the Arab League, in a statement condemning Turkey's military aggression on Syrian territory, called for a reduction in the level of Arab countries' diplomatic relations with Turkey and the termination of military cooperation with Ankara. In this statement, the members of the Arab League considered Turkey's aggression on Syrian territory to be in apparent contradiction with the United Nations Charter and Security Council Resolution 2254 and a direct threat to the security of the Arab world and world peace. This statement called any attempt or action by Syria to counter Turkish aggression the country's right to legitimate self-defense based on Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. In this statement, the foreign ministers of the Arab League demanded an immediate end to Turkey's aggression and the unconditional withdrawal of its military forces from Syria. The foreign ministers emphasized the unity and independence of Syria and the importance of political dialogue under the supervision of the United Nations, especially the pursuit

² The collective noun "*salaf*" means "ancestors" or "predecessors," whereas the singular masculine adjective "*salafī*" identifies anyone who follows the salaf. These predecessors are also often referred to with the honorific expression of "*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*" or "the righteous predecessors." They are often taken to be the first three generations of Muslims, that is the generations of the Prophet and his Companions (*ṣaḥāba*), their Successors (*tābi'īn*), and the Successors of the Successors (*tābi'īn al-tābi'īn*).

of the Syrian Constitutional Committee to achieve a comprehensive political solution to end the crisis.

It was not because of Syria that Saudi Arabia and Egypt condemned Turkey's attack on Syria by accusing Erdogan. This action by the Arab countries is because Turkey is constantly competing with Saudi Arabia for the leadership of the Islamic world (Islamic Republic News Agency, 2018). To strengthen their influence and increase soft power, these two countries allocate colossal capital to build mosques in different countries. This approach has led to the formation of a new diplomacy known as "Mosque Diplomacy." In the meantime, the two countries of Turkey and Saudi Arabia have entered into a more serious competition to develop and strengthen their desired discourse. Saudi Arabia, which owes a significant part of its influence in Islamic societies to supporting the teachings of "Wahhabi discourse," spends between two and three billion dollars annually to build mosques in Asia, Europe, and Africa. From Kosovo to Indonesia, England to the United States of America, and African and European countries, Saudi schools and mosques are busy spreading "Wahhabi teachings" and publishing Saudi printed books.

Turkey also took a big step with the Justice and Development Party to compete in the "Mosque Diplomacy" arena and, by reforming the mechanisms of the "Diyanet"³ organization, strengthened and supported its activities in different regions of Europe, Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Translating the Holy Quran into the local language of each region, organizing Hajj caravans, training preachers, missionaries, and speakers, publishing religious books based on moderate Islam, and providing scholarships to Muslims in Africa, the Balkans, Central Asia, and Latin America to study in Islamic fields in Turkey are some of the functions of the "Diyanet" organization.

³ Türkiye Diyanet Foundation, which was established to support the activities of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, delivering religious services to a wider audience and raising the next generation who will take part in religious services, has become a significant civil society movement in Turkey today with 1,003 branches and a wide range of activities and international aid activities in 149 countries around the world, from education to culture, social and charitable services to supporting religious services.

"Turkey Cooperation and Coordination Agency" is another organization that has increased its international presence significantly during the rule of the Justice and Development Party and works to strengthen the soft power of Turkey by restoring historical monuments of the Ottoman Empire period in different countries. By promoting moderate secularism and religious democracy within the framework of the Brotherhood discourse, Turkey competes with the Saudi Wahhabism discourse and considers the construction of modern mosques for the Muslims of the world as an influential factor in the public opinion of Islamic nations. Strengthening his soft power, Turkey even approved a specific budget line for hiring imams and paying their salaries (Shamsi, 2018). Another attempt by Turkey and Saudi Arabia to lead in the Islamic world is to influence Indian Muslims. With a population of 180 million, this country has the most significant number of Muslims after Indonesia, more than the populations of Turkey and Saudi Arabia. To lead the Islamic world, Turkey seeks to dominate the Muslim countries of the Middle East and to develop its influence on South Asian countries, including Pakistan, Bangladesh, and small Balkan countries. Turkey is competing with Saudi Arabia for influence in India because, in recent years, Saudi Arabia has started a massive effort to promote the extremist ideology of Wahhabism in India (Tabnak, 2017). According to the arguments mentioned, the leadership of the Islamic world is one of the essential factors in the process of divergence between the two countries.

5.1.6. Conflict And Competition in Libya

Since 2011, Libya has witnessed many political tensions and military conflicts following the popular uprising and the military attack of NATO forces to oust Muammar Gaddafi. This country was finally divided into two eastern and western parts. In the western part, centered in Tripoli, a government known as the "Government of National Accord" headed by "Fayez al-Siraj" has come to power, which is approved and supported by the United Nations, and in the eastern part, "Khalifa Haftar," a retired army general, has taken control of affairs. Fayez al-Siraj has the support of Turkey, Qatar, and some European countries. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE, and others support General Haftar. Although the developments in Libya are in the hands of General Haftar and Fayez al-Siraj, in addition to internal variables, the strengthening of alignments and positions of regional countries and world powers has added to the

complexity and unpredictability of Libyan equations. In this situation, the intervention of foreign countries and their support for one of these two sides have practically turned Libya into a proxy battlefield of regional and extra-regional countries (Hacaoglu, & Kuzov, 2019).

Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, America, Russia, and France are among the countries on one of the two sides of this front and are trying to win over the rival. Turkey, as one of the leading players in the developments in Libya, especially during the last 2 decades after the "Justice and Development" party came to power, has the strengthening of relations with African countries on its agenda, and the country's public and private investments in Libya cannot be ignored. As an important regional player in Libya, Turkey even approved the bill to send its troops to this country in the parliament.

Turkey has sent some of the forces of the armed groups that took action in Syria to Tripoli to defend their relations with the Muslim Brotherhood and the Government of National Accord headed by Fayez al-Siraj. The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, among other actors in the Libyan civil war, widely provide financial and military aid to Haftar and pursue their goals seriously in this country. According to the Tunisian "Center for Strategic Studies on Tunisia" website, the positions of Saudi Arabia and the UAE regarding Libya can be somewhat similar. Saudi Arabia opposes political Islam (especially the Brotherhood type) and tries to control it because political Islam threatens Saudi leadership over the Muslim world (www.tunisiacenter.org).

Also, Saudi Arabia fears from the future of the Arab Spring's developments. The UAE also fears that with the establishment of stability in Libya, this country will become an economic competitor of the UAE due to foreign investments, and the vital interests of the UAE will be threatened. Also, the leaders of this country are worried about the spread of democracy in the Arab world and consider it a threat to their future. Opposition to the regional policies of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, as well as the ambitions of these two countries, has been one of the driving factors behind Ankara's decision to send troops to Libya. The tactics adopted by Turkey to send troops to Libya indicate the intensification of Turkey's regional competition with Saudi Arabia and its allies on a broad level in various fields. In the shadow of these competitions, the

continuation of developments in Libya can affect security and power equations in the region (www.irna.ir).

On November 27, 2019, the Government of Turkey and the Government of National Accord signed an agreement to delimit the maritime areas in the Mediterranean Sea because the Eastern Mediterranean Sea has enormous oil and gas reserves and has often been the subject of dispute between regional players. This issue shows that Turkey's goal in the internal affairs of Libya, and control of the Mediterranean is on its agenda. Erdogan and Siraj also signed a security cooperation memorandum, which includes anti-terrorism military training, cooperation in dealing with illegal immigration, logistical support, military planning, and the transfer of training and expertise. (www.DohaInstitute.org).

However, apart from the security issues, it should be said that such memoranda between Turkey and Libya are an attempt to deal with the East Mediterranean gas forum, which ignored Turkey, Lebanon, and Syria. This proxy war in Libya should be evaluated in the geopolitical framework of the Eastern Mediterranean, which has doubled with the discovery of gas in this area. According to the data from American geological studies, this area has 122 trillion cubic feet of recoverable natural gas resources. The dispute over the distribution of gas resources and the control over the transmission lines of these resources to the European consumer markets is one of the challenges facing the countries involved in this sector (Tekir, 2005: p, 205).

5.1.7. Internal Factors :Differences In the Type of Political Regime

Since establishing the Saudi monarchy in 1932, this country has had an absolute monarchy. There is no political party, parliament, or elections in this country. Religion is one of society's most powerful institutions, and the judicial system is dependent on the government. The royal family has demanded complete political dominance over Saudi Arabia. Currently, the power in Saudi Arabia is concentrated in two poles: Kibar al-Ulama and the king. The type of government in this country is a monarchy in the hands of the Saudi family. The king must get the country's religious leaders' approval for most of his decisions. The king is responsible for maintaining and guarding Masjid al-Haram in Mecca and Masjid al-Nabi in Medina (known as the Two Holy Mosques). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a conservative, traditional political

system, and the king has much power and highly centralized structure (Rahmanian, 2015: p, 145).

Article 5 of the Saudi Constitution states that this country's political system is a monarchy, and this position belongs to the children of Abdul Aziz, the founder of Saudi Arabia, and the children of his children. The king must earn allegiance to this position. The king can appoint a crown prince to become the king after his death or removal by obtaining allegiance (Saudi Arabia Constitution, 1993). Although, according to the fundamental laws of Saudi Arabia, the king is considered the head of the government, the prime minister, and the head of the executive branch, and has the authority of all three powers, all dismissals and installations are done with his opinion. However, there is also the fact that the king alone and without the consensus of the princes, religious scholars, and technocrats cannot decide (Naderi, 2009:805) because, in this case, it may be faced with internal opposition, making it challenging to implement the decisions.

But about Turkey, Turkey's government is a democratic republic. This structure consists of three powers: executive, legislative, and judicial. The president is elected by the direct vote of the people for five years, which can be extended for another five years. The president is the head of the governing board, and the government advisory council, with thirty members, advises him.

The executive power is composed of the President, the National Security Council members, and the government delegation. The members of the National Security Council are the President, the Chief of the Joint Staff of the Army, the Minister of National Defense, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the commanders of the three land, air, and sea forces, and finally, the Commander of the Gendarmerie. The President heads this council (Adar, & Seufert, 2021). In the political structure of Turkey, the army is the guardian of the principles of Kamalism, especially the principle of laicity (separation of religion from politics). Among the duties of the President, we can mention the appointment of high-ranking members of the judiciary, the appointment of the head of the central bank, and the appointment of the head of government radio and television (TRT). The President can dissolve the parliament,

exercise strict control over labor unions, commercial and press unions, political parties, and declare an emergency (Akman et al., 2021).

Since the establishment of the republic, twelve presidents from different parties have ruled Turkey. Due to political instabilities and internal problems caused by party conflicts and economic disturbances during the last 80 years, 54 governments, most of which were formed as coalitions, have come to power in this country, which means permanent political instability. When the Justice and Development Party came to power, this process stopped, and Turkey experienced one of its stable governments. But before that, in 1997, when the Welfare Party led by Najmuddin Erbakan challenged the policies of the Turkish secular government and, for the first time, a religiously oriented person became the prime minister of Turkey, the fourth coup of the Turkish government was implemented, but in a different way.

This coup was known as a "post-modern" or "white coup" in Turkish political terminology because the army did not use military force in the street like previous coups. Rather, the army generals, through the National Security Council and the Constitutional Court, removed Erbakan from power, forced him to resign, and dissolved the Welfare Party (Serdar, 2019). According to the mentioned points, the two countries of Saudi Arabia and Turkey are governed in a completely different way, and each presents themselves as a model for the region's countries to follow. During the Arab Spring, Western countries promoted Turkey's model to other countries. But Turkey's model was weakened by Turkey's entry into regional crises. However, Saudi Arabia seeks to become an example in the Islamic world by spending vast amounts of money on Wahhabi teachings. Therefore, the difference in the type of political system is another aspect of the divergence in relations between the two countries.

5.1.8. Relations Between Turkey and Saudi Arabia After the Murder of Jamal Khashoggi

In this section, we will not go into the details of the murder of the critical Saudi journalist. However, we will only discuss the impact and reflection of this murder on the regional rivalry between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Although the place of Jamal Khashoggi's murder was the Consulate General of Saudi Arabia, this murder took place in Turkey. This incident, in particular, called into question the credibility of

Turkey, which has become an option for dissidents fleeing repressive regimes in the Arab world (Numan, 2018). Having damaged its international image, Turkey carefully investigated the murder of Khashoggi and intended to share the burden of this case with the international public opinion. Nevertheless, it seems that an opposing figure was chosen for this murder in order to damage its regional and global image, given Saudi Arabia's anti-Turkish policies in recent years. Because as it turned out, the alliance of Egypt, UAE, and Bahrain wanted to remove Turkey from the regional power balance (Muharrem hilmi, 2018). The face of the country and the crown prince who introduced himself to the world as a reformist was greatly shaken, and the "Vision 2030" reform and development project faced a significant obstacle at the beginning of the journey. Investors stopped investing in the country, and the country's stock market was affected by this negative situation (Bouoiyour, 2018).

In particular, the fact that the Turkish authorities received permission to investigate the consulate too late and possible evidence was lost not only made the murder more mysterious but also affected Turkish-Saudi relations. So that after this incident, the political relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia entered an agitated period. These two countries, on opposite sides in the Qatar crisis and the Mediterranean issue, were also on opposite sides of each other in many political issues after Khashoggi's murder. The Saudis criticized or condemned almost all of Turkey's international actions and policies during this period. On October 9, 2019, the Turkish armed forces and the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army launched Operation Peace Spring in northern Syria against the PKK/YPG terrorist organizations that threaten Turkey's national security. A safe zone in Syria near the Turkish border (T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, 31.08.2021). This operation was condemned by the Arab League, which convened an emergency meeting on October 12. The statement issued described this operation as an "occupation and attack on Syrian sovereignty." Also, in this meeting, Adel al-Jubeir, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia, while condemning the "occupation of Turkey," called on the international community to take immediate action against this occupation (Arab News, 31.08.2021).

The most important event that happened under the influence of Khashoggi's murder but was not officially discussed and affected the economic relations between the two countries was the Saudi Arabia embargo on Turkey. Ajlan bin Abdulaziz Al-

Ajlan, the head of the Council of Chambers of Commerce of Saudi Arabia, in a post he shared on his Twitter account on October 2, 2020, started encouraging the Saudi people to boycott Turkey regarding imports, tourism, and investment. The request for sanctions came after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in a speech in October 2020 that some Gulf countries targeted Turkey and questioned the existence of these countries (Saudi Gazette, 01.09.2021). The issue erupted on social media and escalated on October 2, 2020, the anniversary of Khashoggi's death. Turkey questioned the validity of the Saudi court's September 1 decision and called on Saudi authorities to cooperate in the case. Ismail Güle, the head of the Turkish Exporters Association (TİM), wrote a letter to the Saudi Arabian embassy after Al-Ajlan's call for sanctions on October 5, saying that this problem significantly harmed the trade relations between the two countries and demanded that the two countries Find a standard solution to this problem (Anadolu Ajansı, 01.09.2021). The press office of the government of Saudi Arabia announced that they had not imposed any restrictions on Turkish goods. Despite this, there were reports of signs in some stores in Riyadh asking people not to buy Turkish goods. Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) Statement on October 10; said that many Saudi companies that supply goods from Turkish companies have been forced to sign an undertaking not to import from Turkey. Global logistics companies have again warned their customers about the barriers imposed against Turkish products in Saudi Arabia and announced that only products from Turkey would have to wait a long time at Saudi customs and may not even be imported from Turkey (Hürriyet, 03.09.2021).

In a statement on November 21, 2020, Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud stated that Saudi Arabia has "friendly" relations with Turkey and claimed that he had "no information about the unofficial embargo on Turkish products" (Reuters, 01.09.2021). On the other hand, the Turkish Exporters Forum announced that Saudi Arabia officially suspended the import of meat, eggs, and other products from Turkey in early November 2020 after a month-long unofficial embargo due to political tensions between the two countries. Also, his report announced a 16% decrease in exports to Saudi Arabia in the first ten months of the year and a decrease of 2.3 billion dollars. Nevertheless, Ruhsar Pekcn, the Minister of Commerce of Turkey, announced that Riyadh insists on not embargoing Turkish goods, and his colleagues said that this decision is not official. There are only some problems

(Reuters, 02.09.2021). Although there has been no official acknowledgment from Saudi Arabia, when we look at the export figures from Turkey to Saudi Arabia, we see that in September 2020, which is claimed to be the date when the boycott of Turkish goods started, exports were 223 million dollars, while this figure was 207 million dollars in October, 109 million dollars in November and 56 million dollars in December (TÜİK İş Zekâsı, 04.09.2021). As can be seen, there was a significant decrease in export figures in October by 7%, in November by 51%, and in December by 74% compared to September.

In sum the divergence between Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the Middle East is a result of their differing priorities, leadership, and political systems. Distrust among actors is a permanent feature of the international system, and even if current intentions are favorable, there is no assurance of stability. Worries about future intentions intensify mistrust, deception, and the fragility of cooperation. The divergence between Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring period can be comprehensively analyzed through the lens of neoclassical realism. This theoretical framework highlights the interplay of systemic pressures, domestic factors, and leaders' perceptions in shaping their foreign policy decisions, leading to significant differences and conflicts between the two states.

The Kurdish issues in Syria played a pivotal role in driving divergence between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Turkey, with its significant Kurdish population, viewed the possibility of an autonomous Kurdish region in Syria as a potential security threat, as it could embolden Kurdish separatist sentiments within Turkey. This concern drove Turkey to adopt regional negotiations outside the framework of NATO to address its security concerns, highlighting the role of domestic politics in shaping foreign policy choices. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia, not being as sensitive to the Kurdish issue, held different priorities in Syria. The differences in their responses after the coup in Egypt further exacerbated the divergence. Turkey, strongly supporting the Muslim Brotherhood, championed the formation of a Brotherhood axis in the region, while Saudi Arabia took a counter-revolutionary approach to counteract the rise of Islamist movements. This ideological divergence and conflicting priorities marked a turning point in their relations during the Arab Spring.

The Qatar issue further deepened the divide between the two states. Turkey and Qatar established close relations, particularly after the Arab Spring, through their support for the Muslim Brotherhood and shared positions on regional issues. However, Saudi Arabia perceived this alliance as a threat, leading to the imposition of an embargo on Turkish goods, severely impacting their economic relations and reflecting the complex dynamics of regional competition and alliances. Their divergent views and relationship with Iran added another layer of tension. While Turkey adopted a pattern of competition and cooperation with Iran, Saudi Arabia sought all-out enmity with the country. This contrasting approach further intensified Saudi Arabia's resentment towards Turkey, exacerbating their rivalry over the leadership of the Islamic world. One main reason for the dispute over the leadership of the Islamic world is the ideological difference between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Turkey is trying to lead the Islamic world to revive its historical and cultural depth by showing itself as a model of modern Islamic civilization, while Saudi Arabia considers itself worthy of the leadership of the Sunnis and is spreading Salafi Islam in Asia and Africa.

The developments in Libya show that the competition for the leadership of the Islamic world between Saudi Arabia and Turkey has entered the stage of forcing equations. One of the challenges facing Saudi Arabia in recent years, especially with the rise of moderate Islamists in Turkey and the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in the region, is the challenge facing Salafist Islam. Moderate Islamists emphasize governance based on new teachings such as civil society, freedom of speech, parties, and ideas, while Salafists emphasize returning to the orders of "Salaf Salih" and generally avoiding the manifestations of the new civilization and its forms.

The differences in their governance systems - the religious monarchy in Saudi Arabia and the secular republic in Turkey also contributed to the divergence. Their differing political structures, ideologies, and approaches to governance shaped their foreign policy orientations and stances on regional issues. Saudi Arabia has a monarchy system since 1932, with power concentrated in two poles: the king and the king's family. The king must obtain the approval of the country's religious leaders for most of his decisions and is responsible for maintaining and guarding Masjid al-Haram in Mecca and Masjid al-Nabi in Medina. The Turkish government is a democratic republic with three powers: executive, legislative, and judicial. The president can

dissolve the parliament, exercise strict control over labor unions, commercial and press unions, and political parties, and declare an emergency.

Overall, the neoclassical realism theory provides valuable insights into the factors driving divergence between Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring. By analyzing the interplay of systemic pressures, domestic variables, and leaders' perceptions, we can understand the complex dynamics that have shaped their foreign policy decisions and led to significant conflicts and divergences between these two regional powers.



CONCLUSION

In 2010, Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in Tunisia to protest unemployment and high living costs, sparking the Arab Spring. The revolution in Tunisia was successful, leading to the Muslim Brotherhood's offshoot, Nahda, becoming the ruling class. In Egypt, civil society played a significant role in the transition era, particularly in the writing of the Constitution and holding elections. The Military Transitional Council took over after Hosni Mubarak stepped down, and Islamists quickly seized control. However, this elected Islamist administration did not last more than a year, and Morsi's opponents used the military to end Egypt's democracy. General Haftar in Libya is attempting to replicate Egypt's diversion from the revolution, but the development of a national government in the Middle East remains far from institutionalization.

The Arab world's geopolitical and ideological changes have led to rivalry for influence, hegemony, and dominating power in the region. Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia have entered the competitive atmosphere of the Middle East game, each attempting to modify or confiscate the rules for their own benefit. Internal conflicts arose during the transition to a new and democratic government, with influential political parties and social organizations involved in issues such as the philosophical and intellectual structure of government, sovereignty and legitimacy, religion and Sharia in the Constitution's drafting, and power positions.

The Middle East's recent volatility can be attributed to regional rivalry since the Arab Spring, which has led to four major contests: great power, regional, religious, and ideological conflicts. Religious rivalry has spread to the borders of Bahrain, Lebanon, and Yemen, turning the region into a battlefield. Arab nations have faced challenges in achieving democratic transformations, such as the removal of authoritarian governments, the necessity for political reforms, and the continuous battle for stability and democracy. Popular uprisings in some Arab countries have had both negative and positive effects on Turkish-Saudi relations. Understanding the Arab Spring uprisings' impact on Turkey-Saudi relations requires examining the history of the two countries.

The relationship between the Ottomans and Ibn Saud began with cordial ties, and the establishment of the Arab League widened the gap between Turkey and the

Arab world. Arab nations, particularly Saudi Arabia, objected to Turkey's efforts to build a Middle Eastern collective security organization, leading to the Baghdad Pact issue. In the 1960s, Turkey revised its foreign policy after growing frustrated with the West's lack of commitment to the Cyprus problem. Positive changes in Turkish-Soviet relations also impacted Turkey's Middle Eastern strategy, making it more open to Arab nations. King Faisal of Saudi Arabia initiated the "Islamic Pact" project, which improved relations with the Arab world throughout the 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s, Turkish-Saudi relations evolved due to events such as Turkey adopting a different foreign policy approach, joining the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in 1969, and establishing formal relations with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

However, relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia deteriorated in the late 1990s due to deteriorating Turkish-Syrian relations, Syria's support for the PKK terrorist organization, and differences over the use of the Euphrates River. The Gulf War and sanctions on Iraq impacted Turkey's agricultural exports, reducing the Middle East's share to around 14%. Turkey's foreign policy under Prime Minister Turgut Ozal improved ties with Saudi Arabia in 1993, but the Turkish-Israeli alliance in 1996 harmed its relations with the Arab world and Saudi Arabia.

From 2002 on, Turkey's foreign policy under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) led to significant changes in economic, cultural, religious, and tourism convergence with the Islamic world. Turkey-Saudi relations were characterized by a proactive, dynamic, and multifaceted foreign policy between 2002 and 2015. The US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the fall of Saddam Hussein's government, Al Qaeda terror attacks, and the beginning of instability in the Middle East impacted the relationship. Both nations shared concerns for the fight against transnational terrorism, leading to political differences.

Turkey was seen as a potential alternative for Saudi Arabia seeking investment and economic cooperation, as they saw Turkey as a military force in the area that could counterbalance regional threats and avert instability but Saudi officials argued that excluding Turkey from the Middle East would lead to alignment with the West and Israel, damaging Arab interests as well. Throughout the AKP era, Turkey-Saudi ties improved, with agreements struck between Turkey and Saudi Arabia in 2006.

However, in the period known as the Arab Spring, Turkey and Saudi Arabia's relations became more complicated than in the previous periods. In some areas, they agreed and shared opinions, while in some other areas, they had different views. Therefore, a pattern consisting of cooperation and competition or convergence and divergence was created. We witnessed the relationship between these two countries during the Arab Spring and analyzed these relationships from the point of view of the theory of neoclassical realism.

Neoclassical realism is a theoretical framework that emerged in the field of international relations, building upon the foundation of classical realism while incorporating insights from other disciplines, such as psychology and sociology. At its core, neoclassical realism seeks to explain states' foreign policy behavior by considering a combination of systemic pressures and domestic variables, with a specific focus on the role of leaders and their perceptions in shaping state actions.

In neoclassical realism, the international system is acknowledged as a significant factor influencing states' behaviors, much like in classical realism. However, it goes beyond this by recognizing that domestic factors, such as a state's political system, bureaucratic processes, and societal influences, also play a crucial role in shaping a state's foreign policy decisions. This incorporation of unit-level variables distinguishes neoclassical realism from traditional realism. One of the central tenets of neoclassical realism is its emphasis on leaders' perceptions. Individual leaders, with their beliefs, experiences, and cognitive biases, are seen as key actors in the decision-making process. Their interpretations of the international system, threats, opportunities, and constraints impact how they navigate global affairs. This focus on leaders' perceptions provides a more nuanced understanding of foreign policy outcomes, as it recognizes that state actions are not solely driven by objective conditions, but also by subjective interpretations.

The theory of neoclassical realism offers valuable insights into the convergence and divergence between Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring by highlighting the interplay between systemic pressures, domestic factors, and leaders' perceptions in shaping their foreign policy decisions. During the Arab Spring, both Turkey and Saudi Arabia found themselves confronting the transformative forces of popular uprisings in the Arab world. While they initially seemed to converge in their

support for the ousting of autocratic leaders in Tunisia and Egypt, the subsequent unfolding events revealed fundamental divergences in their approaches.

Neoclassical realism suggests that systemic pressures, such as the changing balance of power and regional dynamics, influence states' behavior. As the Arab Spring swept across the Middle East, both Turkey and Saudi Arabia recognized the need to adapt to the shifting landscape to protect their interests and maintain influence in the region. Turkey, under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP), saw an opportunity to project itself as a model of moderate Islam and democracy. It aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood and supported the political transitions in Tunisia and Egypt, as it perceived these movements as an avenue to promote its brand of soft power and strengthen its regional standing.

On the other hand, Saudi Arabia, led by King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, perceived the Arab Spring as a threat to its established conservative monarchy and regional dominance. It saw the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood as a challenge to its traditionalist interpretation of Islam and feared potential spillover effects of the uprisings on its own population. As a result, Saudi Arabia took a more cautious approach and supported the counter-revolutionary forces in Egypt, seeking to contain the spread of democratic movements. Domestic factors also played a crucial role in shaping their divergent responses. In Turkey, the ruling AKP's Islamist roots and Erdogan's personal convictions propelled the government to support the rise of Islamist movements in the region. Conversely, Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi religious establishment and traditional ruling elites viewed the Arab Spring with suspicion, fearing its implications for domestic stability and their hold on power.

Leaders' perceptions of the balance of power further contributed to the divergence. Turkey, buoyed by its growing economy and increasing regional clout, saw itself as a rising power capable of shaping events in the Middle East. In contrast, Saudi Arabia, while possessing considerable wealth and influence, was wary of challenges to its leadership and sought to preserve the status quo. Neoclassical realism suggests that these differing perceptions and responses were not only influenced by objective conditions but also by leaders' cognitive biases and subjective

interpretations. As events unfolded, their responses evolved, leading to a complex web of converging and diverging interests.

As mentioned before the neoclassical realism theory offers a comprehensive framework to analyze the convergence and divergence between Saudi Arabia and Turkey during the Arab Spring by examining the interplay of systemic pressures, domestic variables, and leaders' perceptions in shaping their foreign policy decisions. Let's delve into the key aspects of neoclassical realism analysis .Factors involved in determining the foreign policy of these two countries at all three structural level, unit level and domestic policy:

Systemic Pressures: Neoclassical realism recognizes that the international system's structure and distribution of power influence states' behaviors. During the Arab Spring, both Saudi Arabia and Turkey faced the systemic pressure of popular uprisings sweeping across the Arab world. The wave of protests posed challenges to the established regional order, compelling both countries to respond strategically to protect their interests and influence.

Power Vacuum: The Arab Spring created a power vacuum in the Middle East, allowing regional powers like Turkey and Saudi Arabia to assert their influence more assertively.

Distribution of Power: Neoclassical realism suggests that states' behavior is influenced by their relative power and the distribution of power in the international system. Turkey and Saudi Arabia, as regional powers, sought to protect their interests and increase their power in the region during the Arab Spring.

Regional Competition: Neoclassical realism recognizes that regional powers, such as Turkey, are motivated to protect their interests and increase their influence in the face of systemic changes. The Arab Spring presented an opportunity for Turkey to expand its regional role and shape the outcomes of the uprisings.

Balancing against Rivals: Neoclassical realism suggests that states engage in balancing behavior to counter the influence of rival powers. In the context of the Arab Spring, Turkey sought to balance against other regional actors, including Saudi Arabia, to protect its interests and maintain its position in the changing regional dynamics.

Seeking New Alliances: Neoclassical realism argues that states may seek new alliances or partnerships in response to systemic pressures. During the Arab Spring, Turkey pursued closer relations with certain actors, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, as part of its efforts to shape the post-uprising landscape in the Middle East.

Domestic Factors: In addition, according to the neoclassical realism, the domestic attributes and characteristics of states also play a significant role in shaping foreign policy decisions. In the case of Turkey, the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) led by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had Islamist roots and sought to promote a democratic and moderate Islamic identity. This influenced Turkey's support for the Arab Spring movements, particularly those associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, which shared similar ideologies.

Political Elites: Domestic political elites in both Turkey and Saudi Arabia played a significant role in shaping their countries' responses to the Arab Spring. They faced pressure to align their foreign policies with their interests and the demands of their domestic constituencies.

Societal Groups: Societal groups, such as religious and conservative forces, also influenced the foreign policy decisions of Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring. These groups had their own interests and preferences, which affected the countries' approaches.

Policy Responses: Turkey, under the leadership of President Erdogan, sought to promote its model of political Islam and support the Muslim Brotherhood in countries like Egypt. This approach aligned with Turkey's domestic political dynamics and its aspirations to be a regional power. Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, aimed to counter Turkey's influence and support more conservative forces in the region. This approach reflected Saudi Arabia's concerns about the rise of political Islam and its own regional ambitions.

Conversely, Saudi Arabia's domestic dynamics were rooted in its conservative monarchy and the influence of its Wahhabi religious establishment. The Arab Spring's call for political change and potential rise of Islamist movements threatened Saudi Arabia's traditional ruling structure, leading to a more cautious and counter-revolutionary approach. Neoclassical realism explains Turkish-Saudi relations during

the Arab Spring by considering the power dynamics in the international system and the domestic factors that influenced their behavior. The power vacuum created by the Arab Spring allowed both countries to assert their influence, while domestic political elites and societal groups shaped their policy responses.

Leaders' Perceptions: Undoubtedly in the context of neoclassical realism, the perception of leaders in Turkey and Saudi Arabia about the Arab Spring revolutions played a crucial role in shaping their foreign policy responses. Let's examine their perceptions from a neoclassical realism perspective.

Perception of Turkish Leaders: Turkish leaders, particularly President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP), perceived the Arab Spring as an opportunity to advance Turkey's interests and enhance its regional influence. They saw the uprisings as a chance to promote Turkey's vision of democratic governance and moderate Islam, aligning with the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist movements in the region. From a neoclassical realism standpoint, President Erdogan's perception of Turkey as a rising power played a significant role in shaping his approach. He viewed the Arab Spring as a chance for Turkey to assert itself as a regional leader, aligning with the forces of change and presenting itself as a model for other countries undergoing transitions. Moreover, President Erdogan's Islamist background and ideology influenced his perception of the Arab Spring as an opportunity for Turkey to support like-minded political groups and promote a political order that resonated with Turkey's domestic politics. The AKP's emphasis on democratic principles and its Islamic identity further motivated Turkey's active support for the Arab Spring movements.

Perception of Saudi Arabian Leaders: In contrast, Saudi Arabian leaders, led by King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, perceived the Arab Spring as a direct threat to their established leadership and regional dominance. From a neoclassical realism perspective, Saudi leaders' perception was shaped by their conservative monarchy's vulnerability to political change and the potential rise of Islamist movements that could challenge their traditional authority. Saudi leaders viewed the Arab Spring as a risk to the stability of the monarchy and the prevailing political order, as calls for political reform and democratic governance could potentially spread to Saudi Arabia itself. Their perception was colored by the fear of losing control over domestic politics and

the possibility of destabilizing the conservative ruling structure. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia's leaders saw the Arab Spring as an opportunity for Iran to increase its influence in the region. They were concerned about the potential for the uprisings to empower Shia communities and political groups, thereby expanding Iran's regional footprint. This perception further drove Saudi Arabia's cautious and counter-revolutionary approach to the Arab Spring movements.

Moreover, neoclassical realism, with its dual emphasis on systemic pressures and unit-level variables, including the concept of revisionism, offers a powerful lens to analyze Turkey and Saudi Arabia's foreign policy during the Arab Spring as two revisionist states seeking to increase their power and influence in the region and shape their desired regional order.

Turkey as a Revisionist State: During the Arab Spring, Turkey, under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP), pursued a revisionist foreign policy. Neoclassical realism highlights that Turkey, as a rising power in the region, sought to enhance its position and assert itself as a regional leader, departing from traditional realist theories that suggest states only pursue survival and balance of power. Turkey's revisionist stance can be understood through its active support for Islamist movements and political transitions in countries like Tunisia and Egypt. By aligning with the Muslim Brotherhood and other like-minded groups, Turkey aimed to project its soft power and promote its vision of democratic governance and moderate Islam. This strategic approach allowed Turkey to enhance its influence and establish itself as a model for political change in the region. Furthermore, Turkey's revisionist foreign policy was driven by its ambition to play a more significant role in regional and international affairs. Neoclassical realism suggests that Turkey's leadership perceived the Arab Spring as an opportunity to elevate its status as a major regional player and shape a regional order that aligned with its interests and values.

Saudi Arabia as a Revisionist State: While Saudi Arabia is traditionally seen as a conservative monarchy, neoclassical realism unveils its revisionist aspirations during the Arab Spring. Saudi leaders, led by King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, perceived the uprisings as a direct challenge to their established leadership and regional dominance, prompting a revisionist foreign policy response. As a revisionist

state, Saudi Arabia aimed to counter the Arab Spring movements and prevent the spread of democratic change and Islamist influences in the region. The fear of losing control over domestic politics and the potential rise of Islamist movements threatened the conservative ruling structure, prompting a counter-revolutionary approach. Additionally, Saudi Arabia's revisionist foreign policy was shaped by its competition with Iran for regional influence. The Arab Spring presented an opportunity for Iran to expand its footprint, particularly through support for Shia communities and political groups. To counter Iran's influence, Saudi Arabia sought to bolster conservative and authoritarian regimes in the region, further emphasizing its revisionist stance so neoclassical realism provides a comprehensive framework to analyze Turkey and Saudi Arabia's foreign policy during the Arab Spring as two revisionist states seeking to increase their power and influence in the region and shape their desired regional order. By acknowledging their aspirations to project power and establish a regional leadership role, neoclassical realism enriches our understanding of the complexities underlying their actions and responses during this transformative period in the Middle East.

Convergence and Divergence Factors in the Context of Saudi Arabia and Turkey during the Arab Spring:

During the Arab Spring, Saudi Arabia and Turkey's interests, policies, and actions converged and diverged as they responded to the wave of demonstrations and political upheavals sweeping the Middle East and North Africa. In international relations, convergence and divergence refer to the alignment or divergence of interests, aims, and actions of two or more states. During the Arab Spring, these elements had a vital influence in influencing Saudi Arabia's and Turkey's responses to the regional upheaval.

Convergence Factors: Balance of Power and Regional Influence: The Arab Spring created a unique opportunity for both Saudi Arabia and Turkey to expand their influence in the region. Both countries perceived a power vacuum resulting from the weakening of established regimes and sought to fill the void with their own influence, thereby enhancing their regional stature.

Common Concerns about Iran: Saudi Arabia and Turkey both expressed alarm over Iran's expanding regional influence. The Arab Spring provided an opportunity to

counterbalance Iran's growing clout, pushing both nations to look for methods to limit Tehran's reach and regional aspirations. Saudi Arabia and Turkey both expressed alarm over Iran's expanding regional influence.

Support for Opposition Movements: During the Arab Spring, both Saudi Arabia and Turkey backed opposition movements in a number of countries, most notably Syria. They hoped to take advantage of the uprisings' potential to further their interests by assisting parties with similar goals.

Stability: Despite their differences, Saudi Arabia and Turkey both want regional stability. The threat of widespread unrest in the aftermath of the Arab Spring spurred both nations to work toward preserving some level of stability in order to prevent anarchy from spreading.

Divergence Factors:

Internal Political Dynamics: Saudi Arabia's and Turkey's domestic political dynamics influenced their responses to the Arab Spring. Saudi Arabia's monarchy and conservative beliefs influenced its cautious approach to change, emphasizing stability and existing ties. Turkey's leadership, led by the Justice and Development Party (AKP), adopted a more active stance, pushing political Islam and its own style of governance.

Regional Alliances: During the Arab Spring, Saudi Arabia's historical alliances with other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members and the West affected its objectives. The kingdom's alliance with other conservative Gulf monarchs and Western powers affected its reaction to the region's uprisings and regime transitions. Turkey, on the other hand, sought a more autonomous and forceful regional posture in order to increase its own influence.

Change Perceptions: While both nations recognized the changes brought about by the Arab Spring, their perspectives on the ramifications differed. Saudi Arabia frequently viewed the revolutions with mistrust, seeing potential for instability and the development of Islamist forces that may jeopardize its interests. Turkey, on the other hand, saw potential for its moderate political Islam model to gain popularity in the area.

Economic and trade interests: Economic and trade interests also had a role in the divide. The oil-dependent economy of Saudi Arabia, as well as its status as a major oil exporter, defined its goals and interests. With a more diverse economy, Turkey's economic motivations and trade links shaped its responses to the Arab Spring.

Regional Power Struggle: Turkey and Saudi Arabia were vying for influence and leadership in the region. They had different visions for the post-Arab Spring Middle East, which led to competition and divergence in their policies.

Role of Political Islam: Turkey, under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, supported Islamist movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood. Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, viewed these movements as a threat to its own stability and supported more conservative actors. This ideological difference contributed to divergence in their approaches.

Sectarian Dynamics: Turkey is a predominantly Sunni Muslim country, while Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam and has a significant influence as the custodian of the two holy mosques in Mecca and Medina. The sectarian dynamics in the region, particularly the Sunni-Shia divide, influenced their relations and contributed to divergence. It is important to note that the Arab Spring was a complex and dynamic period, and the convergence and divergence of Turkish-Saudi Arabia relations cannot be fully captured in a single analysis. Multiple factors, including geopolitical considerations, domestic politics, and regional dynamics, shaped their interactions during this time.

The differences in their governance systems: the religious monarchy in Saudi Arabia and the secular republic in Turkey - also contributed to the divergence. Their differing political structures, ideologies, and approaches to governance shaped their foreign policy orientations and stances on regional issues.

Different regional policy: Another divergent factor is the different priorities of the two countries, which has led to cold relations, like the difference between Turkey and Arabia in Egypt, Qatar, and Libya and how Iran is viewed. In the Egyptian issue, Turkey strongly supports the Muslim Brotherhood, and Saudi Arabia considers the Muslim Brotherhood its ideological rival and is trying to destroy the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. In Qatar, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia issue, they faced

each other. Because Saudi Arabia accused Qatar of supporting terrorism and imposed many sanctions against this country. On the other hand, Turkey took a strong position against these actions of Saudi Arabia and signed a bill that allows this country to send 5,000 military advisers to Qatar. Turkey and Qatar established close relations after the Arab Spring developments. By supporting the Muslim Brotherhood, both countries have common positions on regional issues, including conflicts in Libya, tensions in Egypt, and developments in Syria. Therefore, Turkey supported Qatar against this action of Saudi Arabia and stood before Saudi Arabia.

The difference in the way of looking at Iran: Another divergent factor is the difference between Turkey and Saudi Arabia in their view of Iran. Although these two countries established close relations to curb Iran's influence in the region, they still have differences in this field. Unlike Saudi Arabia, which was against any relations with Iran, Turkey still maintains diplomatic relations with Iran and does not believe that Iran is a direct threat to that country's security.

Competition over the leadership of the Islamic world: Finally, we discussed the dispute between Turkey and Saudi Arabia over the leadership of the Islamic world. Since Turkey and Saudi Arabia claim to be the leaders of the Sunni world and compete to win this position, it resulted in conflict in the relations between the two countries.

According to the reasons mentioned in this research, it can be said that despite the closeness and convergences, the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia also have differences and divergences, and these ups and downs have always existed in the relations between these two powerful countries in the region. Briefly, the neoclassical realist approach suggests that the convergence and divergence of Turkish-Saudi Arabia relations during the Arab Spring can be attributed to a combination of systemic pressures and domestic politics. Factors such as their differing visions for the region, leaders' perceptions, ideological differences, and competition for regional leadership influenced their policies and led to both convergence and divergence.

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