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„Rationale behind the mask: What factors drive the kingdom of Saudi Arabia to militarily intervene into politics of other Middle Eastern countries?“

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Abstract

What are the reasons, that makes Saudi Arabia join an on-going conflict? Why does Saudi Arabia perceive some conflicts as threats to its interests and others not?

This study sets out to analyse Saudi Arabia's decision-making within the region of the Middle East. A lot of political decisions are taken every day concerning the Saudi relationship with their regional partners, however not all noticeable and representative of Saudi Arabia's thinking. There are two problems with the current talk about the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Firstly, politicians, and journalist do not think when they talk about the Middle East, instead only look at the religious side. However, the Arab politics is – like every other region and country as well – guided not by religion, but by state interests. Religion may be more important in the Middle East than in Europe and maybe the United States of America, but it is still not a political motivation. And secondly, there is a veil of ignorance about the region, especially about Saudi Arabia. The Saudis are a major regional actor and it is essential to understand the rationale behind their actions. What motivates them? What influences their regional motivation? Foreign military interventions are a well-researched quantitative and qualitative theoretical area, but there has not been a case study on Saudi Arabia and its reasons for intervening in other states. There are no political actions as cost-expensive and effective as military interventions. At the height of Saudi military spending in 1998 they invested as much as 41,2% of their total governmental spending into the military. Recently, the military share of the budget has climbed again to 32,6% in 2015. For European standards these numbers are astonishing, but for Saudi Arabia, military intervention play a big role. Decisions on them are not taken light-heartedly.

This study looks at nine different economic, ideological and security-related factors, which all more or less influence the decision to militarily intervene. It is clear that no political leader would militarily get involved in a conflict he does not think he will win. If this were the case, other non-military intervention would have been decided on.

On my honour as a student of the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, I submit this work in good faith and pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on it.

German abstract

Wieso greift Saudi Arabien in einem laufenden Konflikt ein? Warum sieht Saudi Arabien einige Konflikte als Bedrohungen für seine Interessen und andere nicht?

Diese Studie analysiert die Entscheidungsfindung Saudi Arabiens im Nahen Osten. Jeden Tag werden politische Entscheidungen über die saudische Beziehung zu ihren regionalen Partnern getroffen, allerdings nicht alle repräsentativ für Saudi-Arabiens Denken. Es gibt zwei Probleme mit dem aktuellen Gerede über das Königreich Saudi-Arabien. Erstens denken Politiker und Journalisten nicht richtig nach, wenn sie über den Mittleren Osten sprechen und fokussieren nur auf die religiösen Eigenschaft der Region. Allerdings ist die arabische Politik - wie jede andere Region und jedes Land - nicht von ihrer religiösen Ausrichtung geleitet, sondern von staatlichen Interessen. Religion mag in der Gesellschaft des im Mittleren Osten wichtiger sein als in Europa und in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika es ist immer noch die Basis von politischen Handlungen. Und zweitens, scheint es einen Schleier der Unwissenheit über die Region geben, vor allem über Saudi Arabien. Die Saudis sind ein zentraler regionaler Akteur und es ist wichtig, die Gründe hinter ihr Handeln zu verstehen. Was motiviert sie? Was beeinflusst ihre regionalen Ambitionen? Militärische Auslandseinsätze sind ein gut recherchiertes Gebiet, mit quantitativer und qualitativer Methoden, aber es gab keine Fallstudie über Saudi Arabien und die Beweggründe für Intervention in anderen Staaten. Es gibt keine anderen politischen Handlungen so kostspielig und wirksam wie militärische Interventionen. Auf dem Höhepunkt der saudischen Militärausgaben im Jahr 1998 investierten sie bis zu 41,2% ihres gesamten staatlichen Budget in das Militär. In jüngster Zeit ist der militärische Anteil des Staatsausgaben im Jahr 2015 auf 32,6% gestiegen. Für europäische Standards sind diese Zahlen erstaunlich, aber für Saudi Arabien spielen militärische Auslandseinsätze eine große Rolle. Entscheidungen über sie werden nicht leicht gemacht.

Dieser Studie betrachtet neun verschiedene ökonomische, ideologische und sicherheitsrelevante Faktoren, die die Entscheidung, militärisch zu intervenieren, mehr oder weniger beeinflussen. Es ist klar, dass kein politischer Führer sich militärisch in einen Konflikt verwickeln lassen würde, wenn er nicht glaubte, er würde gewinnen.

TABLE OF CONTENT

List of Tables	5
List of Figures	5
1. INTRODUCTION	6
1.1 Foreign Military Interventions	7
1.2 Definitions.....	8
1.3 Method.....	10
1.4 Case study.....	11
1.5 Overview of chapters	12
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	12
2.1 Majority of realist studies.....	13
2.2 Combination Approach.....	15
2.3 Limitations.....	17
3. THEORY	19
3.1 Modified Realism.....	19
3.2 Significance of conflicts.....	20
3.3 Hypotheses.....	21
3.3.1 Economic Factors	22
3.3.2 Ideological Factors.....	23
3.3.3 Security and Political Factors.....	25
4. RESEARCH DESIGN	27
4.1 Datasets.....	27
4.2 Instances of foreign military intervention.....	28
4.3 Dependent variable	33
4.3 Independent variables.....	34
4.3.1 Economy.....	35
4.3.2 Ideology.....	36
4.3.3 Security.....	38
5. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS	40
5.1 Economical Findings.....	40
5.1.1 Trade ties	40
5.1.3 Oil and gas resources.....	42
5.1.4 National Capabilities.....	43
5.2 Ideological Findings.....	45
5.2.1 Religion and type of conflict.....	45
5.2.2 Political Regime.....	47
5.3 Security Findings.....	48
5.3.1 Military Expenditure.....	48
5.3.3 Alliances	49
5.3.4 Contiguity	50
6. CONCLUSION	52
7. FUTURE RESEARCH.....	54
Bibliography	56

List of Tables

Table 4.1: Saudi Arabian military interventions according to the target side	34
Table 4.2: Types of Saudi Arabian Interventions in conflicts	37
Table 4.3: Border types between Saudi Arabia and Middle Eastern countries	39
Table 4.4: Hypotheses with their hypothesised results	39
Table 5.1: Religious denomination of intervention recipient	45
Table 5.2: Type of conflict and the corresponding religious denomination	46
Table 5.3: Types of political regimes	47
Table 5.4: Saudi Arabian intervention types, by types of political regimes	48
Table 5.5: Saudi Arabian alliances and their effect on interventions	49
Table 5.6: Border types between Saudi Arabia and Middle Eastern countries	50
Table 5.7: Saudi Arabia's foreign military interventions with the border types	50
Table 5.8: Border types of intervened and non-intervened Middle Eastern countries	51
Table 5.9: Summary of the hypotheses with their actual results	53

List of Figures

Figure 5.1: Saudi Arabia's volume of trade	41
Figure 5.2: Composite Indicator of National Capability (CINC) score	44
Figure 5.3: Saudi Arabia's military expenditure and interventions	49

1. INTRODUCTION

A leading scholar said about his long academic study of the Arab world, that the 'Middle East political process defy observation, discourage generalisation and resist explanation' and that 'political analysts often focus upon mere surface of Middle Eastern politics' (Bill 1996, 503). In recent years, this part of the world has been one of the most written about regions. A chain of unpredictable events in the last decades has made studies and theory extremely challenging. Events such as the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Iraq war, the Arab spring and the subsequent collapse of previously long-standing regimes, have made comprehending the modern Middle East a difficult task. The region is a confusing part of the world, which seems to never settle down. Outsiders fear the developments in the Arab world, as it is unknown. Iran and Saudi Arabia are the two poles of the region and they subtly dictate when and how the area moves forward. One way to lift the fear is to understand.

There are plenty of theories and opinions why Arab countries act in the way they do. But there is rarely any proper examination about whether the theories are true. It is well known and accepted, that the kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the most dominant actor in the Middle East. Since the Islamic Republic of Iran was welcomed back onto the international stage in 2015, after the nuclear deal with the United States of America, it has started to look outward towards the surrounding countries. The apparent abandonment of its old isolationist agenda is changing the future of the region, which is becoming less stable and less clear. However, this is a topic for a different study. Here the focus lies on Saudi Arabia and what motivates the country. What motivates the Saudi leader to become active and intervene militarily in other Middle Eastern countries? Is it historical ties, religious similarity, ideological ideas, economical interests, pure instinct?

Happenings in the modern Arab world have often developed in a certain way due to external influence. Examples are the gaining of independence from colonial powers in the mid-twentieth century, then the consistent support of the newly established State of Israel, the involvement in regional wars, such as the Iran-Iraq war, the Kuwait invasion, Iraq war again and more recently, the entanglements in the Libya, Yemen and Syria in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. The oil price and its ups and downs played an important role to foreign partners when intervening in the Middle Eastern.

Plenty of scholars have looked at the role and impact of foreign intervention, especially the American impact. The Middle East, as the name even still hints to, has in literature been defined through outside actors. However, there is a need and a gap in the literature, which focuses on the central and expanding nations of the Middle East. More studies need to focus on those states as states in their own right, without dependency. The Arab region has developed and acts without dependence on foreign actors. Iran and Saudi Arabia have evolved to the two great powers in the region. They act as opposite poles, around which the remaining states place themselves, or are placed.

This thesis is a response to the gap. By studying the probability of Saudi Arabian military intervention into the region, the driving factors of the kingdom become visible. Looking into the advantages, disadvantages for and against foreign interventions from Saudi Arabian own perspective is essential for the legitimacy of the results – as supposed to from a Western perspective.

1.1 Foreign Military Interventions

Foreign military interventions go back to ancient times of the Peloponnesian wars. One state decided to march into the internal affairs of another to support the opposition. Since then, intervention is the “ancient and well-established instrument of foreign policy” (Morgenthau 1967, 425). In our world today, where states and state business has evolved to nations, many democracies, human rights, the international fundamental principles of a state's sovereignty and non-intervention in internal conflicts seem to be not so fundamental. The International Military Intervention Dataset has counted 350 foreign military interventions between the years 1990 and 2005 (Pickering and Kisangani 2008). Interventions, by democratic and autocratic nations, by major, middle and small powers, have been present throughout ancient to modern times. They influence the duration, human costs, outcome, and consequences of the conflict. They influence the intervener as well as the recipient state politically, economically, and socially. They can last a few days to a few decades. The Saudi intervention into Bahrain lasted 4 days. The Syrian intervention into the Lebanese civil war lasted until the mid-2000s.

Even though the consequences, human costs, duration of conflicts have often been subject to analyses, the causes need to be more of a focus. If more case studies on seemingly unpredictable countries, like Saudi Arabia, are made, their decisions in foreign policy become

more transparent. Neighbours, other regional countries will be better prepared in case of intervention. Interventions might even be avoided, as conflict states can at times influence the possibility, strength and duration of military interventions. If Saudi Arabia's motivations of intervening in the past are known, theories and predictions will be easily constructed for the states' tendency of action in future regional events. The current state of increasing large-N studies on armed conflicts (UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset 2010; Correlates of War Project Datasets; Pickering and Kisangani 2008) facilitates these kinds of case studies.

1.2 Definitions

Foreign Military Interventions

Since the beginning of the state systems, there have been military interventions into other nations for the good of their people, for the good of the nation or for the good of the interveners's own nation. A foreign military intervention is seen as the ultimate action in case of a seemingly unsolvable conflict. Involvement from outside the conflict is one of the later choices. First come trade measures, diplomatic actions, arbitration or mediation. Neutral actors – mostly non-governmental organisations – such as the United Nations, the North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation or the European Union are again other possibilities. Third-party involvement can encourage for the fighting to stop, can stimulate the process for negotiations, can help overcome hindrances, and can help set up peace agreements.

Rosenau said 'the literature is pervaded with discussions of military interventions, propaganda interventions, economic interventions, diplomatic interventions, and ideological interventions, not to mention customs interventions and other highly specific actions through which one state experiences the impact of another.'¹ He very much empathised the differentiation of these involvements and actual foreign military intervention, which is relatively rare, but impactful on foreign policy. Interventions in this case include the supply of troops, military equipment, logistical and intelligence support, naval, land or air deployment to one side of the conflict.

¹ James N. Rosenau, "Intervention as a Scientific Concept," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 13, 2 (1969): 153.

Conflict

All the many kinds of interventions and conflicts make it difficult to develop models and variables. In most studies, one must choose a very specific and exact definition of intervention, as the research would very quickly become too overloaded and imprecise. Just like scholars differentiate between all the various kinds of conflicts. There are civil wars and uprisings, wars of independence, ethnic conflicts, invasions, succession wars, guerrilla wars, defensive wars, and territorial disputes. They all have different durations, intensities, and attributes, and therefore other motivations for outside interventions.

In the case of this case study, however, the timeframe and geographical area are limited. Saudi Arabia has rarely intervened militarily in other Middle Eastern conflicts. Therefore, this piece will not focus on the type of conflict. Any occasion where the kingdom mobilised, or made use of its armed forces into another Middle Eastern country, will be called an intervention. Every move of military equipment or personnel is a cost. Hence, every kind of conflict, Saudi Arabia intervened in since 1990, must be of importance to the decision-makers.

Middle East

For purposes of this project, the Middle East included countries from Turkey, Iran, and Israel via the Gulf to Morocco. There are many definitions of the Middle East: some include Mali, Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia and Pakistan and Afghanistan. Here those nations are excluded from the study. The reason being that they do not belong to the historic Arab world. In the 8th century, the Umayyad Caliphate reached up until Spain (only for a few hundred years), then the Abbasids took over the same area. After episodes of losing and regaining, the Ottoman Empire held together those regions. They were united in history and in a political system. With the exception of Israel and Iran, they share a common history and traditions. These are the core Middle Eastern countries.

1.3 Method

The thesis will follow an inductive line of examination, generating assumptions through systematic analysis of history, reactions, and reasoning. First, it will look at historical events, and then identify its causes for each military involvement. Then it will attempt to find a line of action, which can be applied to all the events. If the variables are well chosen and there is indeed a statistically proven linkage, the conclusion will produce a theory for Saudi Arabia's rationale of intervention. Ideally, the finding will produce an underlying ideology, policy or direction, no matter the superficial actions different Saudi kings take when in term.

Previous studies are often of qualitative nature. They respond to existing theory and create their own aspect of the theory, a trend, or an opinion. It is reliable when the researcher is skilful and rigorous. Yet, it is less generalizable and less stable when it comes to the Middle East. They are made up of foreign scholars building analysis on previous foreign literature and therefore more subjective. The language is a barrier and the small amount of English-translated Arab research is the big issue. A quantitative case study of Saudi Arabia however, enables me to blend out the subjectivity of previous research and focus on observations, data records, proven effects. It must be interpreted in a certain way, and the choice of numbers can influence the results, thus not hundred-per cent objective. However, with constant description of the choices and careful variable selection allows a broader breath of information in a longer time frame. In the current case, there are so many theories about why Saudi Arabia acts this way or that. Nearly all theories give a religious reason, or a political reaction to fear, of Iran. But is it that simple? This thesis will prove, or disprove, the simplicity of the kingdom's foreign policy rationale.

Secondary literature, in English language, is widely available and accessible and a mix of books, journal articles, theoretical and empirical work of current, classical and historical nature will be used. Primary sources, such as policy papers, state publications, statistical records to the extent that is feasible, will be used in English as well as in Arabic language.

The following work is a combination of the two disciplines: International Relations and International History. The former will dominate the theoretical framework, as well as the actual analysis of the empirical cases. The latter will carry more weight in the literature review, case study and the description of conflicts. The study also involves a great deal of Economics, as the statistical analysis uses a lot of economic variables.

1.4 Case study

As explained above, there is a need for case studies – and scholarly research in general – for the Middle East and the interregional relations. Historical events, such as invasions, wars, conflicts have been written about, yet with a foreign element: “How does the 1990 intervention of Kuwait benefit the U.S. and has it prevented Iraq from becoming too oil-powerful?,” “European fault in the continuous crisis in Iraq”, or “U.S. – Saudi military relations and one-way dependence.”

There is barely any Western research about non-Western topics or interests in the Arab region. The research community can learn from excluding all Middle Eastern influence from the region and see whether it makes a difference. What are the driving factors, when they stand alone? Or are there none? Will there still be a pattern for Saudi Arabian rationale behind military interventions? Was their support in the Kuwait intervention, or in the Syrian war against Islamic State, purely based on external factors?

Saudi Arabia is an excellent case to start with. It is a regional major power and therefore has the political power to influence the region. The kingdom is rich on natural resources – oil and gas – which is needed on the international and regional market. Its financial reserves, as well as investments in the region are growing, enough to be worth military protection? The regional power status comes with obligations: Saudi Arabia perceives Iran as a clear threat with regional objectives.

Before moving on to the overview of the chapters, I will explain the time frame of 1990 to 2015. In order to avoid the pre-Cold War and post-Cold War effect on the conflicts, the year 1990 is the starting date. The aim of the study is to look at the Middle East without external influence. Before the end of the Cold War, conflicts could be used as proxy war for global bipolar crisis between the East and West. The Soviet-Afghan War is such a case. The Soviet Union fought on the side of the Republic of Afghanistan against the Sunni mujahedeen fighters, which were supported by Iran and the United States. It is well known as to be one of the arms of the Cold War. Another aspect is the difficulty of finding enough historical data to go back further than 1990 without too many holes in the data.

1.5 Overview of chapters

The aim of this research is explanation of Middle Eastern regional relations and to create a stringent line of action up to today, with the help of evaluation of historical events. Which factors define regional activity? Can parallels be drawn between the motivational factors of Middle Eastern actors? To what extent are there similarities between the regional foreign policies of the most influential Arab states?

This thesis is built up as follows: Chapter 2 reviews the history of literature in foreign military interventions, up until current literature, on the causes of interventions. Major works are mentioned and how they advanced intervention studies in the theoretical and methodological field. Limitations of the current research will be described as well. Chapter 3 moves on to the theoretical framework and discusses the theories behind realism in intervention politics and the benefits of modified realism. Afterwards, the theory proceeds on to the linkage of actor-orientated and conflict-orientated approaches in studying interventions. Hypotheses about the economics, ideological and political factors that determine foreign policy decisions of Saudi Arabian kings will be derived from the previous theory. Chapter 4 describes the research design with the data and variables, collected for the empirical part of the study. Chapter 4.2 narrates the observed conflicts before the methodology for the hypothesis testing is explained in the next part of the chapter. Chapter 5 displays the empirical findings and the interpretation of results. The different relevance of the hypothesis and factors will be ranked. Last chapter 6 concludes with a summary of the empirical results, as well as their validity. Possibilities for future research will be suggested at the very end.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The existing literature on foreign military interventions focuses greatly on intervention in civil conflicts, rather than inter-state conflicts. As most of the cases of this study are civil wars as well, the following literature is relevant. The aim is to display important empirical and theoretical contribution to the topic, as well as the weaknesses. The review provides an overview on literature starting in the 1960s leading up to contemporary works.

2.1 Majority of realist studies

Among the first scholars during Cold War times to publish about the theory of foreign military interventions were Rosenau (1964), Kaplan (1964), Morgenthau (1967), Mitchell (1970) and Pearson (1974). Rosenau uses the domestic characteristics of civil conflict to explain the international expansion and their effect on the state system. He argued that interventions depend on the type, scope and duration of the conflict.² Kaplan focuses more on the type on conflict and comes to the conclusion that a bipolar state system leads to more intervention incentives.³ Morgenthau concentrated on the intervener's national interests as main driver for intervention, often fought out in competition between the US and the Soviet Union.⁴ A few years later, Rosenau criticised the lack of intense detailed research and he set a definition of intervention, as not just intervention into another state's affairs, but 'convention-breaking', 'authority-orientated' and 'finite and temporary'.⁵ Another important point was that he ignored societal variables from the equation, claiming that the public is rarely interested in foreign policy, as well as the government type. His reason was, that previously both democratic and autocratic regimes had intervened numerously in other states, even though democratic state theoretically needed to legitimise their action before the public and parliament. For Rosenau, the most important factors explaining why a leader joins a conflict were the stability of the international system, the amount of ideological rivalry and the structure of the state system. He took a realist approach to explaining intervention behaviour.

Other scholars after Rosenau conducted the empirical analysis following his theoretical example and use his operational definition. As this study partly does too. Many researchers still see him as the foundation of modern-day intervention analysis. A year later, Mitchell published his work on the probability of military intervention in civil conflicts. He agreed with Rosenau's assessment that one needs to use internal aspects of both states, aspects of the international system and connections between the states as groundwork for analysis. He took the state of research further by focusing more intensely on the linkages between the intervener and the conflict state, i.e. the political, educational, military, economic, religious, ideological and ethnic relations. He describes intervention as 'an extension of an already existing

² James N. Rosenau, ed., *International Aspects of Civil Strife* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), 61 ff.

³ Morton A. Kaplan, "Intervention in Internal War: Some Systemic Sources," *International Aspects of Civil Strife*, ed. James N. Rosenau. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press: 1964), 92 ff.

⁴ Hans Morgenthau, "To Intervene or Not to Intervene," *Foreign Affairs*, vol xlv, no. 3 (1967): 428.

⁵ Hans Morgenthau, "To Intervene or Not to Intervene," *Foreign Affairs*, vol xlv, no. 3 (1967): 161-2.

commitment.’⁶ After Mitchell’s focus on ethnic importance, various scholars empirically examined the impact of ethnic and ideological ties between states, as well as the role domestic factors play. Works in theoretical, as well as empirical analysis, around the topic increased and were partly sparked through parallel international political developments. The Cold War and the bipolar order between East and West continued, as did the scholarly writings on deterrence versus probability of actual intervention. A wave of research about superpowers and their influence, rivalry and ideology emerged in the 1970s and 1980s.⁷

However, quantitative research progressed slower due to the simple reason, that there were few data on conflicts and intervention. Pearson was one of the early scholars of the quantitative school. He created a dataset on nonviolent and violent civil conflicts in the 1960s and concluded that foreign states intervene more often in violent ones, but also consequently prolong the conflicts.⁸ Pearson’s second dataset and study in the same year, advanced the analysis of the link between interventions and geographical proximity. Interestingly, he saw that large powers were more likely to intervene in conflicts further away to their border, than in nearby ones. Whereas the observation was the opposite for small and middle powers: they intervened more likely in nearby conflicts. Another observation he made was, that proximity led to a higher likelihood to intervention than continuity.⁹

An essential tool to today’s research is the ‘International Military Intervention Dataset’ of all military interventions between 1946 and 1988. Pearson and Baumann published the collected data in 1993. A central observation was that small powers intervene in civil conflicts mostly in opposition to the government, while major powers intervene pro-government. It had become so useful for more detailed study, that Kisangani and Pickering updated the dataset until 2005¹⁰, which this study uses for parts of the empirical analysis as well.

The 1983 Empirical analysis by Duner looked at different levels of military interventions in the 1970s. He came to a similar conclusion, that less developed countries intervened more often than industrialized nations. Additionally, more than half of the interventions happened in neighbouring states. Simultaneous foreign interventions on both sides of the conflict,

⁶ C. R. Mitchell, "Civil Strife and the Involvement of External Parties," *International Studies Quarterly* vol 14, no. 2 (June 1970) 186ff.

⁷ Melvin Gurtov, *The United States Against the Third World: Anti-Nationalism and Intervention* (New York: Praeger, 1974) and Stanley Hoffmann, "The Problem of Intervention," *Intervention in World Politics*, ed. Hedley Bull (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

⁸ Frederick S. Pearson, "Foreign Military Interventions and Domestic Disputes," *International Studies Quarterly* 18, 3 (1974a): 285-6.

⁹ Frederic Pearson, "Geographic Proximity and Foreign Military Intervention," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 18, 3 (1974b): 432.

¹⁰ Kisangani and Pickering "International Military Intervention," (2008).

usually led to a longer and more intense conflict.¹¹ Duner's study was significant as it added the aspect of multiple interveners to the research field.

Research around interventions stayed in the realist school of thought, as societal and institutional criteria were not given much room and importance. Suhrke and Noble (1977) continued Mitchell's exploration of domestic elements to the decision to intervene. They showed that ethnic ties between the countries, were necessary factors of the multiple layers of interests.¹²

Except the above-mentioned, quantitative studies and a few other research pieces, case studies were still the norm. So generalisations with empirical proof were rarely possible. With the emergence of more and more large-N datasets in the 1990s, the gaps in such studies were filled. Here the study will move on the next part of the literature review. The end of the Cold War coincided with a new surge in the amount of civil conflicts.¹³ Scholarly interest in interventions was guided by case studies and more datasets.

2.2 Combination Approach

As the literature moves more towards the last three decades, it also becomes more relevant for this study. This part of the second chapter looks at the previous works on the causes of foreign military interventions. The other large research field of intervention studies is the academic work about the consequences of interventions. Yet, that is a topic for further research.

Concerning the reasons motivating leaders to intervene militarily, there are three theoretical groups: the conflict-orientated approach, the actor-orientated approach and the combination approach. The first one focuses on the characteristics of the conflict, how its development increases probability of intervention. Prominent scholars are Carment and James (1996) and Regan (1998), Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2004), and more recent Koga (2011). The second method analyses the state and international level of the intervener and looks at intervention as a foreign policy tool. Works placing the intervener at the centre are by Feste (1992), Yoon

¹¹ Bertil Duner, "The Many-Pronged Spear: External Military Intervention in Civil Wars in the 1970s," *Journal of Peace Research* 20, 1 (1983): 59-72.

¹² Astri Suhrke, and Lela Garner Noble, eds, *Ethnic Conflict and International Relations* (New York: Praeger, 1977).

¹³ UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset 2010.

(1997) and Findley and Teo (2006). Both have evolved in the 1990s and 2000s, whereas the former is the dominant in quantitative literature. The third is a combination of both, taking into account relations between the conflict-orientated and actor-orientated methods. Wolak calls it the combination approach in his dissertation.¹⁴ This last theoretical approach is the only one, which includes all necessary variables, to analyse Saudi Arabia's reasons for intervening militarily in other Middle Eastern conflicts. Saudi Arabia is the centre of examination and attributes of certain conflicts weigh into the balance of whether to intervene or not. It is the newest approach in intervention politics and has fewer previous studies to build up on. Developed as a mixture of conflict-orientated and actor-orientated methods, it has become the newest quantitative tool to study the causes of interventions. In practice, scholars do not stick to purely one single approach, but one approach is usually dominant in theoretical and empirical execution.

Regan is one the best examples for conflict-orientated studies (Regan 1996). A few years later, he incorporated criticism into his approach in his newer work with Lemke. They re-evaluated the conditions for a successful intervention. The new combined actor-orientated and conflict-orientated framework used, differentiated variables for determining the probability of intervention. Strategic variables, such as colonial history, alliances, contiguity and power status raise the likelihood of intervention. Another reoccurring finding was, that minor powers were less likely to join civil conflict, than major powers.¹⁵

Findley and Teo created a central scholarly piece to the actor-orientated study, but also to the combination approach. Very few scholars link the strategic relations of intervener and conflict, as well as their dyadic relations, to the prediction of choosing sides. Interestingly, they observe that military intervention by an ally state supporting one side in the conflict, does not induce the potential intervener to intervene. Yet, if a rival intervenes in the conflict, the probability of the potential intervener to join the conflict on the opposite side, does increase. The findings go even further and say that interveners are more inclined to intervene on the government side, if the ally joins the opposition. There is a difference in behaviour if the conflict state is a rival or ally.¹⁶ Same as Lemke and Regan, casualties and refugees influence military joining. Missing from the study is a more inclusive evaluation of domestic

¹⁴ Pelin Wolak, *Foreign Military Interventions in Civil Conflicts, 1946-2002* (University of Maryland, College Park, 2014): 50.

¹⁵ Douglas Lemke and Patrick Regan, "Interventions as Influence," *The Scourge of War: New Extensions on an Old Problem*, ed. Paul F. Diehl (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004): 155-6.

¹⁶ Michael G. Findley and Tze Kwang Teo, "Rethinking Third-Party Interventions into Civil Wars: An Actor-Centric Approach," *Journal of Politics* 68, 4 (2006): 834-6.

attributes.

Kathman is the third scholar worth mentioning here. His works (2010 and 2011) focus on geography and the intervener's regional interests. Neighbours to civil conflicts are worried about the contagious impact and therefore are likely to intervene to prevent spillovers. He names this impact the "risk of hostility infection": The higher the risk, the higher the probability of intervention.¹⁷ Kathman applied a similar infection risk system for entire regions and measured the importance of each region for the potential intervener. Trade relations, alliances and proximity represent the latter.¹⁸ Problematic with her study is the missing factor of rivalry, especially as it seems to be more defining than the alliance variable. As mentioned above, Findley and Teo (2006) observed that rivalry is a reason to choose on or the other side in a civil war, whereas being in alliance with one side does not put as much weight into the decision-making process.

The combination approach has proven to be a good method for the causes of military interventions. They have the possibility to include the most variables in the analysis and therefore are able to inspect an intervention from as many angles as possible. Where is more development needed? In what direction can contemporary literature evolve?

2.3 Limitations

Within the field on intervention politics, the study of the causes has made slow progress. What the current state of research lacks, are more quantitative scholarly examinations. Knowing the causes is essential to the consequences. Different motivations lead to different outcomes and different effects. Finding empirical patterns of intervention's origins enables predictions. More studies, using a mixture of actor-centred method and of contextual factors, will set in motion theory building, which the combination approach needs. Another area empirical works about biased military interventions, often leave out is the question on whose side the intervention happens and how that decision is taken.

This study aims at reacting to a few of the limitations of previous works. Which side Saudi Arabia chose to support in the past, will add into the end picture of the Saudi foreign policy

¹⁷ Jacob D. Kathmann, "Civil War Contagion and Neighboring Interventions," *International Studies Quarterly* 54, 4 (2010): 996-7.

¹⁸ Jacob D. Kathmann, "Civil War Diffusion and Regional Motivations for Intervention," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 55, 6 (2011): 854.

rationale. Past research has focused too much on foreign interventions, without differentiating between democratic and autocratic interventions. Before setting up a theory for autocratic regimes in general, it is necessary to pick a case study of an autocratic example, Saudi Arabia in this case, and to empirically deduce a pattern and a theory.

Another limitation in this field of research is the amount of case studies of the Middle Eastern region. Some works on smaller powers and their interventions focus on the Syrian intervention in Lebanon starting in 1975 and its effect on the economy and politics of both countries (Rabinovich 1979; Rasler 1983). Research on territorial disputes in the Middle East is few and mostly qualitative. One example is Al-Ghamdi on the Saudi-Yemeni dispute, however it does not focus on the factors of intervention, but instead on the history and the political problematic of the border. Okruhlik and Conge (1999) generally published on the long-lasting border conflicts on the Arabian Peninsula.

A useful study is by Strüver and Wegenast. They show that oil-producing countries in the Middle East tend to more likely start militarized interstate disputes than non-oil producing ones. They make the connection in the case of Iraq's invasion into Kuwait of 1990.¹⁹ As the oil-producing countries have more resources to purchase larger amounts of high-quality arms, like Saudi Arabia. Also, until the recent Saudi oil crisis, the oil export was a useful shield of protection against those dependent on oil imports. There are more studies on the Middle East, but no works on the reasons for intervention of specific countries. General theories only take the observer that far: to generalisations. But as with every region and every conflict, they have their specifics. That is why this case study takes the quantitative approach. The current state of research needs more progress in a region so fought after, at the moment. Saudi Arabia is the biggest – but also one of the subtlest – player in the Middle East. The following chapter on the theory of military interventions will explain with which theoretical background, the actual analysis will be done on Saudi Arabia.

¹⁹ Georg Strüver and Tim Wegenast. "Ex Oleo Bellare? The Impact of Oil on the Outbreak of Militarized Interstate Disputes." GIGA Working Paper 162 (April 12, 2011): 6, available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1807924>.

3. THEORY

This chapter presents the theoretical framework, using both the conflict-orientated and actor-orientated method, as explained in the last chapter. In order to understand the rationale behind interventions, one must focus on the conflict as well as the decision-maker. Every intervener thinks differently, for different reasons. Democratic leaders act differently than Saudi Arabian kings due to the closed and not transparent way of doing politics, on the international, as well as domestic sphere. Hence, this study uses the theory of foreign policy analysis and analyses the domestic and international sources for foreign policy. In combination, with looking at the contextual attributes of the conflict as well as the factors, one will see why Saudi Arabia intervened in a certain conflict, but not in a different one. Solely the actor-orientated approach would produce one-sided results, as the conflict's characteristics are always included in a decision before intervention.

Hence, the chosen theoretical framework needs to fit the combination method. Firstly, it must accommodate both international and domestic sources of foreign policy analysis. And secondly, it must also take into consideration that decision-makers might be reacting to the conflict state and to the conflict's contextual elements. So, this chapter concentrated on a unified framework to determine the rationale behind policy decisions. In the last part of the chapter, the chosen variables are explained as well as the resulting hypotheses.

3.1 Modified Realism

Foreign policy analysis focuses on the main worries of foreign policy decision-makers. They are rational and wish to stay in power. Consequently, foreign policy aims to benefit the country as well as themselves. As Putnam, a scholar studying foreign policy decisions, writes, 'central decision-makers strive to reconcile domestic and international imperatives simultaneously.'²⁰ The expected utility of foreign operations is compared in both questions to see whether the operation would serve both. The theory of foreign policy analysis looks at the cost-benefit calculation and makes out the factors leading to military intervention.

This paper employs a certain type of realist framework on top of that. Traditional realism

²⁰ Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games," *International Organization* 42, 3 (1988): 460.

focuses on states as actors in the international system, driven by the balance of power and security. Additionally, it concentrates on the leaders and how they fulfil the interests, often with the use of force. Yet, realism's weakness is its complete neglect of domestic politics. Paul Huth in his essay 'Major Power Intervention in International Crises, 1918-1988', developed "modified realism" which uses domestic political determinants of foreign policies. The theory describes, how internal issues affect the costs of foreign actions. He says that "the simultaneous pursuit by state leaders of domestic political and international security, may create potential trade-offs between the resources available [...] to support both sets of goals" of domestic and systematic survival.²¹

The connection between domestic and international politics is a better approach to analyse foreign policies. One must not ignore the importance of internal affairs in the decision-making of military interventions. Thus, this study uses modified realism as the basis for the hypotheses.

Before coming to the aspects important for the causes of intervention and their effect, can modified realism also explain why conflicts and especially civil conflict have a great impact on international politics? Where does their significance come from? How significant are they to foreign leaders?

3.2 Significance of conflicts

Next to the tragic humanitarian consequences of civil conflicts, these conflicts have potential impact on international politics and therefore are significant to states. 1969 Rosenau explains that foreign leaders are continuously 'alert to any sudden changes that may alter the personnel and orientations of foreign governments' because 'changes in authority structures' can create 'radical transformations in the international system'.²² Hence, stability in foreign countries, especially close ones, is important for foreign affairs. Spillovers, reshuffling of power constellations, new economic and security opportunities are some possible consequences. One country's economic opportunity in a civil conflict, might be another country's disastrous security threat.

²¹ Paul K. Huth, "Major Power Intervention in International Crises, 1918-1988," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42, 6 (1998): 747.

²² James N. Rosenau, "Intervention as a Scientific Concept," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 13, 2 (1969): 168.

Realism would look at the conflict's threat to the international position of a certain nation. The impact it would have to the nation internally is not relevant to the realist theorists. The little different modified realism, also allows an economic opportunity to be a possible consequence of foreign military intervention. It leaves room for more detailed examination and explanation. Other scholars, such as Findley and Teo, used this less purely realist approach with the addition of interests, costs, benefits in domestic terms. They shift the focus of motivation for third-party intervention away from the conflict, but to the intervener.²³ Focusing on Saudi Arabia – as the intervener – and drawing up hypotheses about their domestic and international motivations to intervene for or against a government, will come first in the study. Only the later hypotheses will look at the recipient conflict of intervention, its impact in the state system. This framework will display how conflicts and its consequences are significant for states from not only international reasons.

This piece takes the “eagle eye” view onto Saudi Arabia with its economy, security concerns, religious past, ideological ideas, political standing and surroundings. Conflicts and their past military involvements since 1985, will be scrutinised with the same “eagle view”. Is there a visible pattern to its actions, to its interventions? We will find out in the next three parts of chapter 3 whether the kingdom chooses to intervene because of economic, ideological reasons or because of security-based factors.

3.3 Hypotheses

The following section will set up the hypotheses for the critical factors likely to affect decision-making prior to a foreign military intervention. They are a mix of international factors, domestic factors and context-related factors. However, they are not grouped into the three categories. Instead, the analysis will follow the following categories: Economy, Ideology, and Security.

Foreign leaders are particularly invested in the strategic aspect of their foreign policy. Huth said about the significance of conflicts that the ‘strategic value [of the state in conflict is] critical in determining whether important security interests are at stake’²⁴. Threats and opportunities due to civil conflicts and interstate wars are a big factor when considering

²³ Findley and Teo, „Rethinking Third-Party Intervention,“ 828.

²⁴ Paul K. Huth, “Major Power Intervention in International Crises, 1918-1988,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42, 6 (1998): 750.

intervention. Saudi Arabia wants to pursue policies, which on the one hand protect the kingdom from security threats and on the other hand are advantageous for their standing on the international political stage. Domestic support of political decisions is more important for democracies and their parliaments than in Saudi Arabia's case. Yet, Bueno de Mesquita came to the conclusion in his study that even autocratic states – like Saudi Arabia – need to seek approval from their “winning coalition”. It might be much smaller than in a democratic country, but nonetheless they also depend on the support of a small proportion of society.²⁵ In Saudi Arabia's case it is the political circle around the king and the big influential companies. Even a Saudi king can be toppled if he does not follow the general political direction and does not have an eye on the economic growth of the country, the ideological position or security status quo.

3.3.1 Economic Factors

This section describes the economic factors, which the Saudi king needs to count into his cost-benefit calculation. To understand the whole economic picture from the most angles, various hypotheses will be proven or disproven. They are the trade ties with the conflict state – with emphasis on the export and import of energy, the change of the oil price, the Saudi Arabian economic status, official development aid to the conflict state, national capacities of Saudi Arabia and national capacities of the conflict state as well as the existence of oil and gas resources.

Trade ties

Trade ties are a good measurement for economic interdependence between Saudi Arabia and the conflict state. High economics exchange is considered an indicator for more peaceful relations between states. Hence, if Saudi Arabia is actively trading with a country, it is in the kingdom's interest to protect the stability of that country's government – meaning protection of Saudi Arabia's imports and exports – and to intervene on the side of the government in case of a crisis.

H1: The likelihood of foreign military intervention on the government's side increases as Saudi trade tries with the conflict state increase.

²⁵ Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, Alastair Smith, Randolph M. Siverson, and James D. Marrow, *The Logic of Political Survival* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2003), 51-5.

Oil and gas resources

Traditionally, existence and accessibility of natural resources play a role in foreign military interventions. Military involvement is also an opportunity to loot at the same time. Many cases on the African continent show that foreign powers tend to intervene in nations with some kind of natural resources. In the case of Saudi Arabia, they play a lesser role. The countries in the study have natural oil and gas resources. Yet Saudi Arabia has large oil and gas resource wealth within its own borders. So plundering the conflict state's resources is secondary. The kingdom's focus is more on protecting the conflict state's natural reservoirs of oil and gas from other actors and/or states, which could threaten the Saudi dominance in the energy export. For example, one possible reason why Saudi Arabia joined the U.S. intervention to Kuwait was just that. They helped force Iraq out of Kuwait in order to prevent Iraq from occupying the Kuwaiti oil and gas fields. Iraq, who has large natural oil and gas resources as well, could increase its output onto the oil market, due to additional oil fields and take over some of the kingdom's exports.

H2: The likelihood of foreign military intervention increases if the conflict state has natural oil and gas resources.

National capabilities

National capabilities and the ratio of the capabilities between countries play a big role. They represent how powerful the countries are in relation to each other. Saudi Arabia would be less likely to intervene against a government, which is relatively more powerful. Realists often use power capabilities to explain the use force or the failure to use it.

H3: The likelihood of foreign military intervention increases as Saudi Arabia's ratio of national capabilities to the conflict state increases.

3.3.2 Ideological Factors

Religious similarity

Ideology and religion is the typical element when trying to make sense of the Middle East and

when attempting to look for reasons for Saudi Arabian motivations to do anything in the region. The central topic has always been the bipolar nature of the relationship between the Shiite Islamic Republic of Iran and the Sunni Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Their regional competition is often based on the fact that they represent the two opposite spectrums of the Muslim religion. The following two hypotheses are extremely important, as they will prove or disprove whether all the theories about Saudi Arabia are really that simple: Do they only support Sunni countries and oppose Shia countries/governments?

H4: The likelihood of foreign military intervention increases if the recipient of the intervention is Sunni.

Conflict type

Another contextual factor is the type of conflict. It can be discussed whether certain types of conflicts are more prone to draw in military interventions. As already laid out in the literature review, ethnic conflicts do indeed attract interventions. Can one make out a difference when a conflict is fought over the government or territory? Theoretically, fighting over the government should be more likely to attract outside intervention than over territory. A change of the government would influence Saudi Arabia's own politics more than a shift in territory. The kingdom should be more interested in keeping other autocracies in the region stable, so that their own un-democratic ways do not attract too much desire for civil uprisings.

H5: The likelihood of foreign military intervention increases if the conflict is fought over the government.

Regime type

Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy with a hereditary system, which suppresses minorities not in line with their Sunni Wahabi way of leading the country and their politics. When it comes to policy regimes of potential conflict states, they have a strong interest of supporting similar policy regimes. They worry that if some of the Gulf States fall into revolution and uprising, similar like many Arab countries during the Arab Spring, that their own population could become more courageous in revolting against the Al-Saud royal family. Some literature supports this notion. Huth argues in his 1998 book that similar authoritarian regimes 'are less likely to view one another as security threats because they share common interests in preserving political stability at home that, in turn, should lead these states to adopt less conflictual foreign policies toward another. The legitimacy and survival of regimes at home

can be enhanced by political allies abroad supporting one another.²⁶

H6: The likelihood of foreign military intervention increases if the conflict state also is an absolute monarchy.

3.3.3 Security and Political Factors

Military expenditure

Saudi Arabia's military expenditure has been becoming more and more interesting in the last years. The latest publication from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) about the world trends in military spending say that Saudi Arabia has the fourth highest military expenditure in 2016, following after USA, China and Russia. Their military spending is ten per cent of GDP and amounts to a total of about 63.7 billion U.S. dollar.²⁷ The military budget is partially included in the national capabilities category, but important enough to set up an own hypothesis and see how much the changes in Saudi Arabia's military budget affect its willingness to intervene in other countries.

H7: The likelihood of foreign military intervention increases as Saudi Arabia's military expenditure budget increases.

Alliances

Alliance ties are also an important security aspect. If the stability of an ally were threatened, Saudi Arabia would want to prevent the removal of the government in order to protect its formal diplomatic pact. But moreover, it needs to protect its reputation. In case of non-intervention, other formal alliances or even rivalries will not be credible.

H8: The likelihood of foreign military intervention increases when there is an alliance between Saudi Arabia and the conflict state.

²⁶ Paul K. Huth, "Major Power Intervention in International Crises, 1918-1988," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42, 6 (1998): 751.

²⁷ Aude Fleurant, Pieter Wezeman, Siemon Wezeman and Nan Tian, „Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2016," SIPRI Fact Sheet, April 2017, 2.

Contiguity

As already shown in the literature review above, the stability of all continuous states to Saudi Arabia are crucial to Saudi Arabia's secureness. Previous scholars have shown that states often intervene into neighbouring states for fear of spillovers, large amount of refugees or border conflicts. A conflict in a border state is a valid security threat.

Geographical proximity in general is not such a useful indicator in this case. Most conflicts Saudi Arabia intervened in between 1990 and 2015 were contiguous states. Proximity would be an interesting indicator, if the study were to be expanded to include conflicts the kingdom decided to not intervene into.

H9: The likelihood of foreign military intervention increases if the conflict state is contiguous to Saudi Arabia.

There are a few other typical variables used for analysis for foreign military interventions. Not relevant are the typical variables such as power status. Saudi Arabia is not considered a major power and neither are the other countries they intervened in. The number of refugees resulting from a neighbouring country is not too relevant either. Saudi Arabia is not considered a very social state and would not feel the responsibility to take care of them properly. In Saudi Arabia there are, every now and then, terrorist attacks on public institutions, businesses, infrastructure, government property or military/police buildings. Incidents happen all over the country and at the borders. Border attacks are signs for increasing pressure from outside groups, which could provoke a Saudi intervention if the attacks become more frequent. Looking at the effect of terrorism would be interesting, as the number of attacks has been rising recently.²⁸ However, there is not enough historical data to produce credible results.

The hypotheses in this chapter will be tested against all Saudi Arabian foreign interventions during the time frame of the years 1990 to 2015. Hopefully the result will reveal a pattern of the kingdom's reasons to intervene in Middle Eastern countries in distress. This chapter presented the reader with the theory behind the research, from the theoretical framework to the idea behind the applied variables. The combination of actor-orientated (domestic) and

²⁸ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), "Global Terrorism Database," 2017, data available online at <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>.

conflict-orientated (international and contextual) in the fields of economy, security and ideology paint a picture of Saudi Arabia, which will be explained in chapter 5.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter lays out the research design applied in the case. Part 4.1 will describe the various datasets used for the empirical part. It will explain how the data was collected and coded. Part 4.2 describes the fourteen conflicts used for the analysis. The last part of chapter 4 explains the data used for the economical, ideological and security variables.

4.1 Datasets

The data for this study is a mixture of different datasets for conflicts, interventions and militarised disputes. They include all conflicts Saudi Arabia militarily intervened in, between 1990 and 2015. All datasets on military disputes and conflicts go up until the year 2010 at latest.

The main data source is the Correlates of War (COW) Project – more precisely from the Militarized Interstate Disputes (MID) version 4.1 Data. Jones, Bremer and Singer originally created the dataset in 1996. It aimed to serve international conflict research in facilitating the study of causes of conflicts. Through transforming collected real-world events into usable data, it can be reused by scholars to examine the features of war and peace.²⁹ The definition for militarised interstate disputes are ‘cases of conflict in which the threat, display or use of military force short of war by one member state is explicitly directed towards the government, official representatives, official forces, property, or territory of another state. Disputes are composed of incidents that range in intensity from threats to use force to actual combat short of war.’³⁰ Yet, they only cover civil conflicts. So to fill the gaps of the MID data, there is the COW War Data, 1816 – 2007 (version 4). It has two sub-datasets: the Intra-State War Data (version 4.1) and the Interstate Wars Data (version 4.0). They expand the range of conflicts.

²⁹ Glenn Palmer, Vito D'Orazio, Michael Kenwick, and Matthew Lane, "The MID4 Data Set: Procedures, Coding Rules, and Description," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 32, 2 (2015): 222.

³⁰ D. Jonas, S. Bremer and JD. Singer, "Militarized interstate disputes, 1816–1992: Rationale, coding rules, and empirical patterns," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 15, 2 (1996): 163.

For the case study of Saudi Arabia, the different definitions of conflict is irrelevant, as the aim is to analyse all instance of foreign military deployment, not simply deployment to civil conflicts.

Next to the COW data, Kisangani and Pickering (2008)'s International Military Intervention (IMI) Database between 1989 and 2005 was used, which is the updated version of Pearson and Baumann (1993) earlier version of the IMI. The dataset covers 'all cases of military interventions across international boundaries by regular armed forces of independent states.'³¹

Because of different formats, rules and definition, the data needed to be made compatible with each other. The sets were crosschecked, to make sure no conflict was left out. The Centre for Systematic Peace released the "Major Episodes of Political Violence, 1946 – 2016" data of 1999, compiled by Monty G. Marshall. It lists annual, cross-national data on interstate, societal, and regional warfare magnitude scores for all independent countries. It includes data on neighbouring countries and the regional influence. It gives a more overall picture and was a useful tool to double-check the other databases.³²

Unfortunately, similar literature often produced contradictory results, due to the partly incompatible nature of the data collections. The dispute and conflict data use different definitions of conflicts, interventions, and military force, so that a combination could construct mixed theories. The divergent definitions often pose a challenge to the large-N studies out there. This paper also uses a mixture of data. However, it looks at all uses of military forces by Saudi Arabia outside its own borders, but within the borders of the Middle East. The simple fact that Saudi Arabia is spending financial resources on military actions in another country is what already is at the core of analysis. Every military action will be analysed, so the different definitions of conflicts, disputes, interventions or crises are irrelevant. There are not many of them, so all of them are included in the study.

4.2 Instances of foreign military intervention

This part of the thesis describes all the fourteen times the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia militarily

³¹ Frederic S. Pearson and Robert A. Baumann, Pearson. "International Military Intervention, 1946-1988," *Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, Data Collection 6035*. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (1993), 1.

³² Monty G. Marshall, „Major Episodes of Political Violence (MEPV) and Conflicts Regions, 1945-2016 Codebook,“ (Centre for Systematic Peace, 2017), 2-3.

intervened into another Middle Eastern country, between the years 1990 to 2015. With help of the analysis, one will understand what role Saudi Arabia played in each of them. The circumstances of the conflicts help build up some of the hypotheses, e.g. the conflict type, necessary for the empirical analysis. Brief descriptions of the interventions were put together with the help of the COW data, the IMI data, and some Internet sources.

Iraqi invasion of Kuwait

Iraq under Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait on 2nd December 1990 and annexed the country. As a response, the U.S. deployed troops into Saudi Arabia, at the border to Iraq, where the Saudi oil fields are. U.S. President Bush urged countries to join the coalition "Operation Desert Storm" and succeeded with 34 countries, including Saudi Arabia. Aerial and naval bombardment of Iraqi civilian and military infrastructure in Kuwait began on 17th January 1991, lasting for five weeks. After missiles hit locations in Israel and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Qatar, Iraqi forces occupied the Saudi border town of Khafji for two days on 29th January 1991. On 24th February 1991, a ground attack followed with a victory for the coalition forces. Iraq was expelled from Kuwait and the monarchy was restored on 11th April 1991. Saudi Arabia was involved in the invasion from 16th January 1991 until 11th April 1991.

Violation of the Iraqi no-fly zone

From the end the Gulf War until 2003, the *Operation Southern Watch* (U.S., UK, France, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia) set up a no-fly zone above Iraqi airspace on 27th July 1992. After the UN voted to continue sanctions against Iraq, Iraqi air force activity increased in December 1992. On 13th January 1993, coalition aircrafts attacked Iraqi missiles sites as a consequence of Iraq ignoring the U.S. demand for their missile withdrawal. In June and July US missiles destroyed Iraqi radars and the no-fly zone violations ended on 23rd December 1993. Saudi Arabia participated with their aircrafts from 1st until 4th July 1993.

Saudi – Qatari border clash

A border agreement of 1965 set the border between Saudi Arabia and Qatar. On 30th

September 1992, Saudi troops clashed with Qatari border military. The incident resulted in two dead Qatari soldiers and one Saudi citizen dead, one injured. The clash ended on 23rd October 1992.

Bahraini uprising

The Bahraini uprising began in June 1994 with demonstrations being forcefully dispersed. Saudi Arabia was convinced the uprising was a Shiite unrest, threatening the monarchy in the country. Instead of deploying troops to support the al-Khalifa regime, the kingdom sent security personnel to simply advise and assist.

Saudi – Yemeni border clash

Saudi Arabia and Yemen have been involved in a long border dispute. On 23rd October 1994, Saudi warplanes intercepted a Yemeni aircraft. On 7th December 1994, Yemeni troops clashed with Saudi border forces after they moved into the disputed region of Saada, previously claimed by Yemen. A month later, the Saudis attacked a border town in the same area and consequently, fighting broke out between the forces. Saudi Arabia deployed further troops. On 15th January 1995, a Saudi plane enters the Yemeni airspace and Yemen opens fire on the aircrafts. Until the end of January, Saudi Arabia mobilised more troops along the border. During the clashes, which ended on 27th January 1995, 40 Saudi Arabian soldiers died as well as 17 Yemeni soldiers.

Qatari coup

After the bloodless coup of 27th June 1995, Qatari Emir's son Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Tani took over the rule from his father. Qatar feared Saudi Arabia would take advantage of the country in a situation of chaos. To avoid possible occupation, Qatar moved forces to the mutual border. No clash between the two countries occurred.

Continued Saudi – Yemeni border issues

The border dispute between Yemen and Saudi Arabia continued. In the last dispute in 1995, Yemen had given up the three border provinces of Aassir, Naifan and Jizan. However, other regions remained contested, especially as Saudi Arabia would have liked access through Yemen or Oman to the Arabian Sea. Additionally, some of the areas were reported to have oil resources. From June 1997, numerous clashes occurred, with mostly Saudi Arabia initiating them. Some fighting started from Saudi naval bases. The whole incident resulted in the death of 12 Yemeni soldiers in battle. The conflict ended 19th July 1998.

Expulsion of UN inspectors in Iraq

From 7th October 1997 on, Iraq more frequently violated the no-fly zones, threatened to shoot down U.S. planes and refused UN inspections. The U.S. and the UK responded with threats if an American plane should go down. Kuwait mobilised its forces. On 13th November 1997, Iraq expelled American arms inspectors, but revoked their actions after more U.S. and UK threats and instead restricted access to certain areas. After a year of pressures and continued Iraqi non-cooperation with the UN inspection teams, *Operation Desert Fox* began with four-day bombing attacks on 16th November 1998. Israel placed its troops on alert fearing an Iraqi attack. The offensive did not soften Iraq, who continuously challenged the no-fly zones in the northern and southern parts of the country. Until October 2001, clashes between American, British and Iraqi planes happened on a weekly – even daily – basis. On 15th February 1999, Iraq threatened to strike Turkey if it kept on allowing U.S. aircrafts using its bases. On 22nd October 1999, Egypt, the Emirates, Kuwait, Jordan, Greece, France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands joined in a joint military exercises preparing for a coalition. The attacks peaked in August and October 2001. In May and August 2001, Iraqi forces entered Saudi Arabia and shot at a border control in order to signal its disapproval of Saudi aid to the U.S. In retaliation, Saudi troops seized an Iraqi pipeline in November. Saudi Arabia intervened into Iraqi airspace from 4th September 2000 until 24th August 2001.

Israel training activities

For one day on 23th April 2002, the kingdom of Saudi Arabia deployed additional troops to its border with Israel, in response to their air force training activities.

Kidnapping of military officer

A Saudi military officer was seized by border troops on 17th September 2005, after following smugglers into foreign Yemeni territory. The Saudi rescue operation initiated a clash between the two countries. There is no information on whether the officer was successfully rescued or is still in Yemeni hands. The hostilities stopped on 17th March 2006.

Begin of Houthi insurgency

In August 2009, Yemeni government intensified their battle against the Houthi rebels in the northern province. On 4th November, the rebels clashed with Saudi border forces as they seized two Saudi villages accusing Saudi Arabia of supporting the government in the fighting against them. A day later, heavy Saudi air strikes began, troops were mobilised to the border with Yemen and the village was recaptured. The U.S. joined in the air strikes on 14th December 2009 with the *Operation Scorched Earth*. On-ground fighting continued until January 2010. The same month, Houthis asked an Iraqi cleric to mediate between them and the Yemeni government. However, Yemeni military continued to recapture Sa'dah city until the Houthis offered a truce on 25th January 2010 if the Saudi intervention ceased as well. After some more fighting, the truce was accepted on 30th January 2010.

Short uprising in Bahrain

In February 2011, the Shia population of Bahrain began protests against their government. A month later, on 14th March 2011, Saudi Arabia led an intervention to help the government suppress the uprising. Upon invitation from the ruling family, the UAE and Kuwait sent troops into Bahrain and Kuwait deployed additional naval forces to patrol the sea borders. Four days later, the coalition had successfully crushed the opposition demonstrators. Until today, Saudi, Emirati and US troops stayed positioned in Bahrain's capital Manama.

Collective coalition against Islamic State

Due to territorial gains, human rights abuses and the possible spillovers, many nations formed coalitions to fight back Islamic State in mid 2014. Starting on 14th June 2014, Iranian aircrafts and ground troops entered Islamic State's territory. In August, the U.S. began their bombing campaign and on 5th September 2014, nine countries agreed to support the American coalition and in December, another 18 countries joined. Parallel, France convinced additional 20 countries, including Saudi Arabia, to join the fight against Islamic State. Saudi Arabia joined the coalition with four F-15s and a Eurofighter on 15th September 2014. With the permission of the Syrian government, Russia started air raids against Islamic State and other Islamic groups in September 2015. Late 2015, 34 Arab countries joined together in the Islamic Military Alliance, based in Riyadh. The fighting and the intervention has not ceased.

New surge of Houthi insurgency

After a Houthi commander threatened to invade Saudi Arabia on 26th March 2015, the kingdom began the military intervention *Operation Decisive Storm* against the rebels with support of the Americans. The GCC countries, except Oman, decided to join the coalition against the Houthi insurgency at the government's request. Saudi forces took over Yemeni airspace and prevented the rebels' advance towards the south. The manoeuvre ended on 21st May 2015, but with a continuation into the next manoeuvre *Operation Restoring Hope*. Air strikes continued. On 15th March 2015, the Saudi proposed cease-fire was accepted so that humanitarian aid could be delivered into the conflicted areas. The truce was cut short by two days, as fighting broke out again in southern Yemen.

4.3 Dependent variable

This thesis examines the factors that affect the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's decisions regarding on whether to intervene militarily in conflicts of the region of the Middle East. There is one dependent variable in this study and is dichotomous. The situations for potential intervention and where the decision-makers decided against it for some reason are an opportunity for further research.

The variable in this case is always positive. Only the situations where Saudi Arabia actually intervened in a conflict are in the study. The preceding chapter 4.2 elaborates on which conflicts. It measures the counts the years where a foreign military intervention took place. Multiple interventions occasionally did happen in one year, like the intervention in Yemen and Bahrain in 1994. Interventions can last for longer than one year, like the no-fly zone in Iraq, but are still only counted in the first year. Here the study is limited to looking at why Saudi Arabia decided to intervene. No decisions after that will be analysed, e.g. how long the intervention took place, how the amount of troops and/or equipment increased or decreased, or when the foreign policy decision maker chose to end the intervention.

The second dependent variable is on whose side Saudi Arabia intervenes: whether in support of the government or against it. According to Table 1.2, six of fourteen interventions were in support of the government. In eight cases out of fourteen, Saudi Arabia decided to intervene against the government.

Table 4.1: Saudi Arabian military interventions according to the target side

Military interventions in support of the government	6
Military interventions against the government	8
Total number of interventions	14

Consequently, Saudi Arabia had three decisions: (1) the kingdom could intervene in the Middle Eastern country in support of the government, (2) the kingdom could intervene against the government or (3) the kingdom could choose to abstain. Only the first two options will be analysed. The first decision leaves the option of the threat of military force, mobilisation of military force, the use of military forces.

4.3 Independent variables

The independent variables are the factors causing or influencing the two discussed dependent variables, independently from each other. They will be discussed in the three subsections of this chapter. Each hypothesis set up in chapter 3.3, will be tested by one independent variable, which can alter the dependent variable 'intervention'. The empirical results will display which hypotheses are true and which are not.

4.3.1 Economy

This subsection explains the economic factors potentially influential to whether the Saudi Arabian decision-makers decide on intervening into the region.

For the effect of trade relations between Saudi Arabia and the conflict country, a variable of the dyadic trade is used. The trade data is from the Saudi Arabian General Authority for Statistics. The statistical office accumulated its own data from the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources and from Saudi customs for non-oil commodity exports and imports.³³ It tracks all exports and imports from and to the kingdom. After counting these two numbers together, there is the variable for the total amount of trade between the two. Problematic with the trade between Saudi Arabia and its Middle Eastern counterparts was that three different datasets gave three different numbers for annual exports and imports. Simoes and Hidalgo's data "The Observatory of Economic Complexity" is a very good tool showing exports, imports, trade balances, product destinations, product origins, and more. The data is historically available, but shows different numbers for bilateral trade with Saudi Arabia. They use a combination of the UN Comtrade Database and the Center for International Trade Data from Robert Feenstra (2005).³⁴ The COW Dyadic Trade Dataset version 4.0 tracks the national and bilateral trade between all independent countries. It codes the trade flows into and out of a country, for the period of 1870 and 2014. Both the COW data and the Observatory Data are used for the occasional check, but chosen data is the Saudi Arabian source. It is more consistent and clearer.

Saudi Arabia's power – the nation's ability to resist and exercise influence – versus other Middle Eastern countries is represented with the national capabilities variable. The COW National Material Capabilities version 5.0 data comprises of six demographic, industrial, and military indicators for power: military expenditure, military personnel, energy consumption, iron and steel production, urban population and total population. It covers the period of 1816 to 2012. The dataset is the foundation for the global indicator Composite Indicator of National Capability (CINC). The CINC calculates a score for a country's hard power. All independent

³³ Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, „General Authority for Statistics“, data available online at <https://www.stats.gov.sa/en/217>.

³⁴ A.J.G. Simoes and C.A. Hidalgo, „The Economic Complexity Observatory: An Analytical Tool for Understanding the Dynamics of Economic Development,“ Workshops at the Twenty-Fifth AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence, 2011.

states have an annual CINC score, which facilitates the comparison of countries. The analysis will take the ratio of Saudi Arabia and ratio of the corresponding conflict state and evaluate.

The only natural resources, which really count for a lot in the Middle Eastern world are oil and gas. Enerdata traces oil and gas fields around the globe. They publish the results annually in the Global Energy Statistical Yearbook. Included are geographic locations – onshore and offshore locations – type of hydrocarbon reserve, discovery information, extraction history, and country profiles. The amount of gas and oil is counted by country in billion cubic of meters and in million of tons.

4.3.2 Ideology

Ideology is the most obvious category, as it is to present in qualitative research. When analysing relations between countries in the Middle East, religious ties is given great importance. To measure how important it actually is for Saudi Arabian decision-making, the category 'ideology' is included. The variable contains two parts. Firstly, it registers the Muslim denomination of the side the intervention supports. Secondly, it looks at the opposing side of the conflict and what religious denomination they belong to. There are the possibilities of the parties being secular, Sunni or Shiite. The data is taken from the Correlates of War Project: World Religion Data version 1.1. The project aims at giving very detailed information on the religious numbers and followers all over the globe since 1945. The data is not on an annual, but five-annual basis. It is divided into the numbers of people belonging to every religion and denomination, as well as the percentage of total population.

Political ideology will be included to this category as well. The Polity IV Project, Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2016 is an annual, cross-national dataset, which monitors regime changes and democratic as well as autocratic "patterns of authority" in independent countries.³⁵ It looks at the political or governmental organisation and its regime legitimacy. The data for polity executive recruitment, responsiveness of executive and participation are grouped into different variables. For the case of Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern States, the autocratic variables are of more importance than the democratic ones. Polity IV rated the autocracies and democracies on a scale of -10 to 10 for the fields of

³⁵ Ted Robert Gurr and Harry Eckstein, *Patterns of Authority: A Structural Basis for Political Inquiry* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1975), 25.

competitiveness and openness of executive recruitment, constraint on executive and ease of participation. This set of data makes the comparison of political regimes simple and the results will be described in the next chapter.

A third and fourth type of ideological relation is generally the ethnicity and the history. Ethnic conflicts play a central role in the world of foreign interventions. There is a connection between a potential intervener and his fellow ethnic people in conflict abroad. Yet both of these variables are not included in the analysis. In the case of the Middle East, religious affiliation is compatible with the ethnicity. They are variables very alike and therefore just the religion will be analysed. History and colonial history is another typical factor for conflicts and the causes of foreign involvement. However, it is more relevant for major powers and their former colonies, to which they are historically attached, as well as financially invested in. This is neither the case with Saudi Arabia nor any other observed countries in the region of the Middle East.

For the variable of conflict type, no dataset was used. Looking at the MID and IMI data, as well as the description and more secondary sources, the observed conflicts were classified into following categories: Territorial dispute, civil conflict, support for U.S. interventions, and defensive conflicts.

Table 4.2: Types of Saudi Arabian Interventions in conflicts

Territorial disputes	6
Civil conflicts	5
Defensive conflicts	1
Support of U.S. interventions	2
Total of conflicts	14

Table 4.2 shows the amount and the distribution of the conflicts, which involved Saudi Arabian military intervention at some point in the course of its history.

4.3.3 Security

The section discusses the independent security variables and explains which dataset were used to test which hypothesis of intervention policy.

The sources behind the military expenditure variable are SIPRI Military Expenditure Database 1949-2016. They have the variables by country as percentage of gross domestic product, and by country in millions of current US dollars. The data is based on open sources and state reporting only. The figures are derived from the NATO definition, which include all current and capital expenditures on the armed forces, including peacekeeping forces; defence ministries and other government agencies engaged in defence projects; paramilitary forces, if these are judged to be trained and equipped for military operations; and military space activities.³⁶

Alliance with the country in conflict is the second security variable. The Correlates of War data is again the best dataset: The COW Formal Alliances version 4.1 tracks all formal alliances between 1816 and 2012. It ranks each dyadic alliance according to three types of alliances with each a different strength. The strongest bond between two countries is the defence pact, then followed by the neutrality or non-aggression pact. The weakest formal alliance is the entente, which only requires consultation between countries in case of a crisis, but not action. Alliances between Saudi Arabia and every Middle Eastern country is recorded and grouped in whether the kingdom chose to intervene or not. The results will follow in the next chapter.

The last variable, which plays a role for the security aspect for Saudi Arabian military intervention is the geographical proximity to conflict state. Here not distance will be used, but contiguity. Saudi Arabia has many neighbours and border problems. Hence, political stability should be an important factor. The data for contiguity – especially for sea borders – is taken from the Correlates of War Direct Contiguity, version 3.2. It groups all countries bordering Saudi Arabia into five categories, from direct contiguity to separation by 400 sea miles or less.³⁷

³⁶ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database," data available online at <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>.

³⁷ Douglas M. Stinnett, Jaroslav Tir, Philip Schafer, Paul F. Diehl, and Charles Gochman, "The Correlates of War Project Direct Contiguity Data, Version 3," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 19, 2 (2002): 59.

Table 4.3: Border types between Saudi Arabia and Middle Eastern countries

Type of border	
No contiguity	8
Continuity of 12 sea miles or less	2
Continuity of 150 sea miles or less	1
Direct contiguity	8
Total number of Middle Eastern countries	19

Table 4.3 shows that all but three countries in the Middle East share a land, river or sea border. The three countries in between are separated through the Red Sea (Egypt and Israel) by less than 12 sea miles and by the Persian Gulf (Iran) by less than 150 sea miles.

A summary of all hypotheses with their variables and expected results are listed below in Table 4.4. The analytical results will be presented in the next chapter. Chapter 6 concludes with a summary of the study and explain the significance of the results in respect to the literature review and the theoretical framework.

Table 4.4: Hypotheses with their hypothesised results

Hypothesis	Independent variables	Dependent variables	
	<i>Economy</i>	<i>Intervention</i>	<i>Pro-government</i>
H1	Trade ties	yes	yes
H2	Oil and gas resources	yes	na
H3	National capabilities	yes	yes
	<i>Ideology</i>		
H4	Religious denomination	yes	na
H5	Civil conflict	yes	yes
H6	Regime type	yes	yes
	<i>Security</i>		
H7	Military expenditure	yes	na
H8	Alliances	yes	yes
H9	Contiguity	yes	yes

5. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

This chapter is divided into three parts: The results from the economic factors, the ideological factors and the security factors. Chapter 5 is the main section of the study. After the literature preparation and the theoretical background, the analysis discovers which factors weigh into Saudi Arabian foreign policy decision-making. Assumptions mostly focus on the ideological importance when considering intervention into the politics of another Middle Eastern country, but the ideological connection with another country cannot buy military equipment for an intervention. The theory already suspected that economical factors and security-related factors are just as significant.

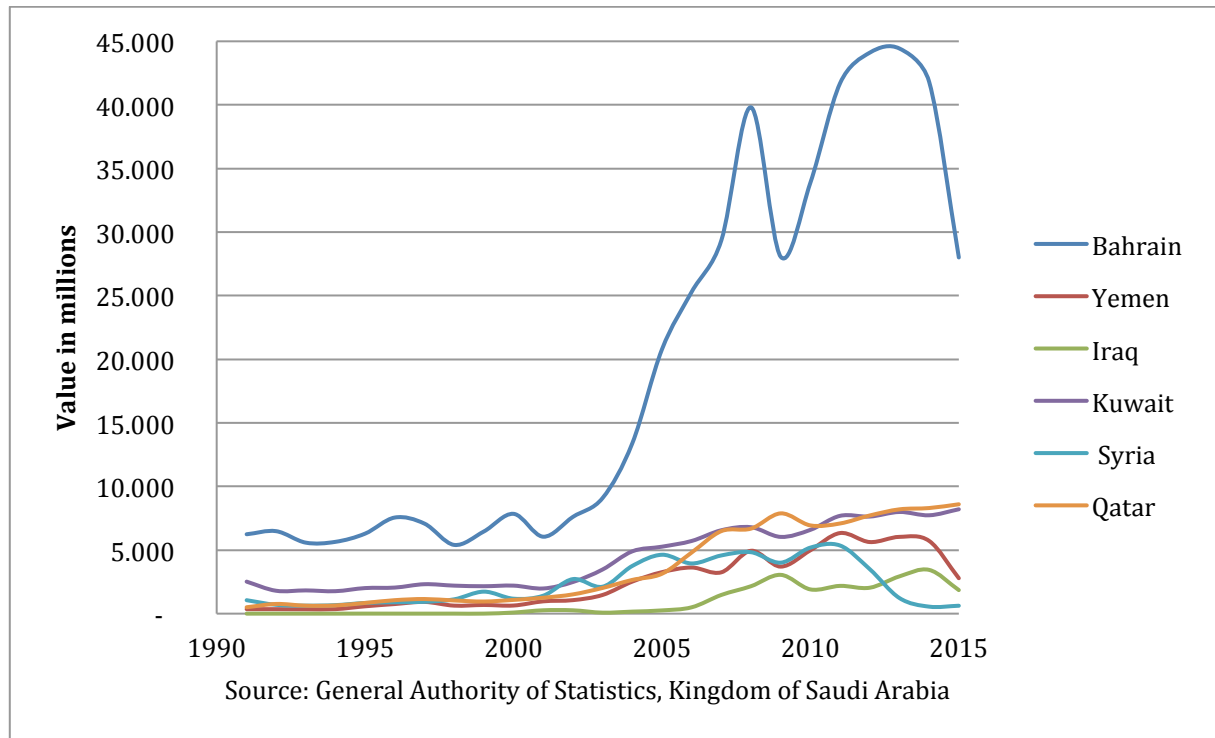
5.1 Economical Findings

5.1.1 Trade ties

Trade ties are essential when analysing the relations between two countries. Figure 4.1 shows the volume of trade between Saudi Arabia and the conflict states. Volume of trade is the total of exports and imports between two countries. The findings do clearly show correlation between Saudi Arabia's intervention and the trade with the country in conflict.

Looking at each country one by one, Bahrain is first. Bahrain has the most trade with Saudi Arabia, with a very high peak around 2012/2013. A year earlier, Saudi Arabia helped Bahrain suppress a civil uprising in the capital. Until today, some Saudi forces remain in the capital to help Bahraini keep order and peace. With such a visible volume of trade, the kingdom needs to ensure Bahrain's stability. Already in 1994, Saudi Arabia intervened in Bahrain to support the government with a civil uprising. Already in 1994, Bahrain's trade was higher than the other countries. Since then, the trade has increased a lot, which leads to the idea, that in the future, Saudi Arabia will be extremely protective of their investment in that specific Gulf country.

Figure 5.1: Saudi Arabia's volume of trade



Kuwait started out in 1990 with the second highest volume of trade with Saudi Arabia. The same year, Saudi Arabia joined the U.S. intervention into the country to expel Iraq out, which had recently occupied Kuwait. Their trade continues relatively stable, but no second intervention happens later on.

Qatar started off with a low volume of trade with the Saudis. In 1992, they had a territorial dispute with the kingdom and again in 1995. These two incidents are not surprising, as nor Saudi Arabia or Qatar had an economic reasons to “keep their hands off each other”. The same is true for Iraq. There were two disputes with Iraq. Both concerned the aftermath of the Gulf War and the U.S. attempt to keep the country in check. 1992, Saudi Arabia helped enforce the no-fly zone in Iraqi airspace. Between 1992 and 1995 there was no trade between the countries. 1995 Iraq attacked a Saudi border town and the kingdom retaliated by attacking an Iraqi oil field. The trade stayed non-existent and then low until 1999, when it slowly began to rise – only to drop again as consequence of Islamic State’s rise in the country.

A similar story is Syria. Trade volume between the Levantine country and the Sunni kingdom is very low. However, due to the distance between them, there are no conflicts and reasons to intervene. Around 2003, trade with Syria starts to rise and is on third place behind Bahrain

and Kuwait. But then, exports and imports sharply drop in 2011 with the start of the Syrian Civil War. The volume of trade has stayed low since then. In 2014, Saudi Arabia supported the fight against Islamic State in Syria. Here there is no correlation to trade, as there is barely any trade between states. Yet, the reason may be that the Islamic State branch started to grow in Yemen and Saudi Arabia around that time. Also, the kingdom wants to keep its good relations with the U.S., especially as the U.S. president Obama threatened various times to politically pull out of the Middle East completely.

Yemen has a special relationship. Saudi Arabia has a lot of influence in its southern neighbour. In 1990s and 2000s, Saudi Arabia had three border clashes with Yemen. 1994, 1997 and 2005 the kingdom militarily intervened against the government. There was very little trade until 2004. The volume of trade rose with a little bump in 2009, as that year the Houthi insurgency started and Saudi Arabia got militarily involved to support the Sunni government against the rebels. From 2014 on, trade dropped again and is continuing to decrease. When in early 2015, the Houthis took over the government, the Saudis started a coalition to fight the Shia group. Here too there is a close relationship between interventions and trade. The last two interventions in 2009 and 2014 happened as there was relatively much trade between the two countries. Saudi Arabia intervened to protect its investment. The findings point in the direction that the heavy Saudi airstrikes over Houthi areas will not cease until they are defeated. Today, in 2017, the fight is still going and a lot of military resources has been invested.

Israel is missing from the graph, as the trade is barely there. 2013 it made up about 0,000015% of Saudi Arabia's trade and for many years, there has been no data at all.³⁸ Saudi Arabia's incident with Israel was in 2005, when the Israeli army did an unexpected training activity at the border. The reaction was the kingdom's mobilisation of troops, but there was no clash.

5.1.3 Oil and gas resources

Are oil and gas resources a reason to intervene in another country? As the thesis elaborated before, oil seemed to be an essential reason, why the U.S. and Saudi Arabia decided to drive Iraq out of Kuwait in 1990. After looking at the data for oil and gas resources and production,

³⁸ A.J.G. Simoes and C.A. Hidalgo, „The Economic Complexity Observatory: An Analytical Tool for Understanding the Dynamics of Economic Development,“ Workshops at the Twenty-Fifth AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence, 2011.

it is clear that the availability does not play an important role when deciding to intervene militarily into another Middle Eastern conflict. Of the countries where Saudi Arabia intervened, only Kuwait has an oil and gas production.³⁹

Hence, the hypothesis in chapter 3 that existence of oil and/or gas resources increases the probability of Saudi foreign intervention is not supported.

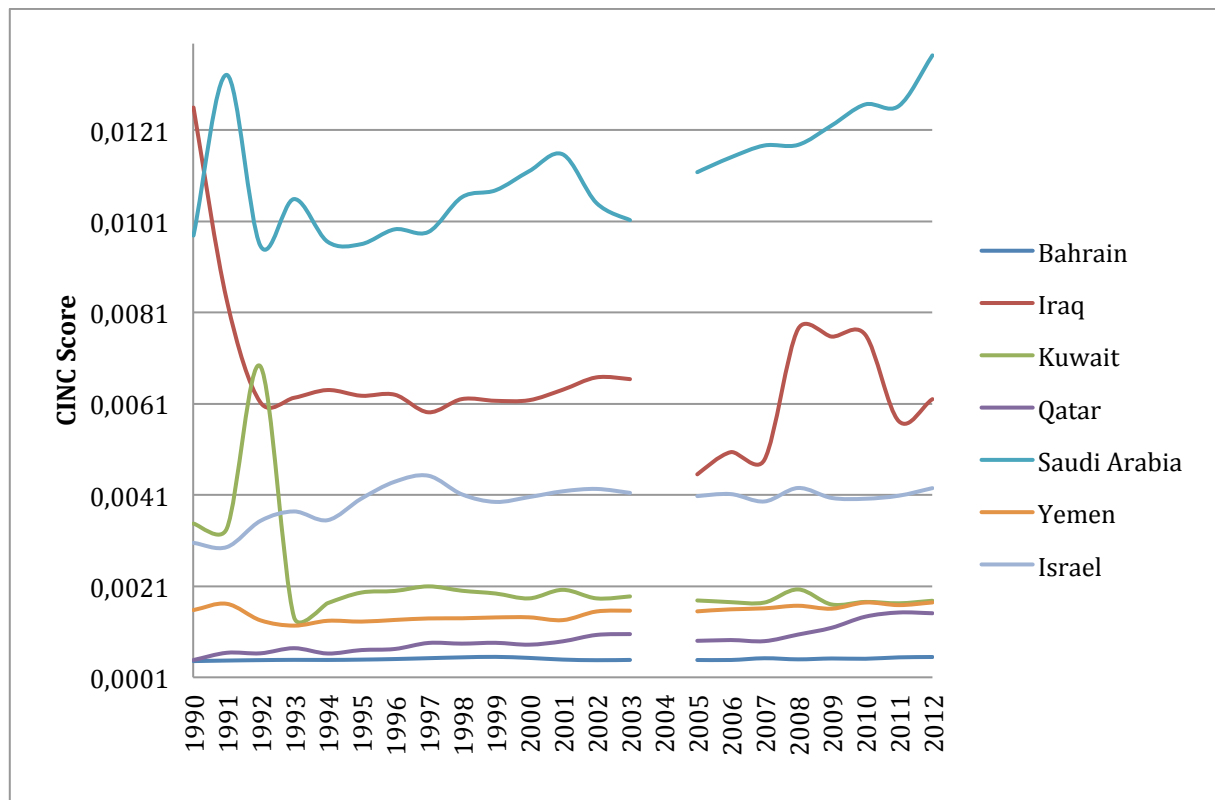
5.1.4 National Capabilities

The results from the National Capabilities variables are similar to trade ties, only a little clearer. Figure 5.2 below shows the CINC score. For the year 2004 the data is missing for all countries. Whereas the volume of trade only focuses on imports and exports, the CINC score incorporates more variables within one indicator. Comparing all seven countries, Saudi Arabia has by far the highest scores. Only in 1990 Iraq was higher, which maybe explain the antagonism towards each other, and then dropped to a far lower level, probably due to the aftershocks of the Gulf War.

A lot can be read out of the graphs. Right after the failed Iraqi invasion into Kuwait, the Kuwaiti and Saudi score peak. The first aspect is that the hypothesis seems to be true. Saudi Arabia does only intervene when its national capabilities are higher than the conflict state. Iraq is the second highest. The kingdom was never militarily involved on its own in Iraq due to Iraqi strength. The two times was, first in 1992: air support in the U.S. operation of the no-fly zone and the second was a defensive attack after Iraqi military occupied a Saudi border village in 1997. In both years, one can see a dent in the Iraqi CINC curve. Kuwait's score starts on third place in 1990, but then drops radically after 1992 and stays low.

³⁹ See Enerdata, „Global Energy Statistical Yearbook 2017,“ data available online at www.yearbook.enerdata.net/crude-oil/world-production-statistics.html.

Figure 5.2: Composite Indicator of National Capability (CINC) score



Source: Correlates of War Project: National Material Capabilities Dataset version 5.0

One can see the slight dents in Qatar's curve when Saudi Arabia and the Gulf state had two territory disputes in 1992 and 1995. Israel's national capability ratio is quite high compared to Saudi Arabia's. Here the testing proved true as well. Israel seems too powerful for the kingdom to pick a fight with. The little border fight is not even visible in Israel's line in 2002.

The hypothesis does not prove true with some states with a low CINC score. Theoretically, foreign intervention would increase, if the score is low, meaning Saudi Arabia's chances for success are high. Yet, they did not intervene against the Bahraini government, even though their capabilities are continuously low. Here the trade variable connects. Due to a very high trade value, Saudi Arabia does intervene on the government's side. Qatar, Yemen, Kuwait and Bahrain would all be easy target due to low ratio to Saudi Arabia. Yet, they supported Yemen and Bahrain and ignored Qatar and Kuwait in the 2000s and early 2010s.

Hence, the hypothesis is true in the way that a similar CINC score acts as deterrence for the kingdom, but it is false in the aspect that a low CINC score would also mean easy target.

5.2 Ideological Findings

5.2.1 Religion and type of conflict

As mentioned a few times in previous chapters, religion is the most interesting variable in the study. The Middle East is very often explained with religion. Newspapers, scholars, and politicians talk about the region in Sunni and Shia terms: Decisions taken by a Muslim leader must be subconsciously guided by their intrinsic Shia or Sunni origins. To get a general overview of the region, it seemed a good characteristic. From a “bird’s view” – a long way away – some relationships in the Middle East can be explained that way. However, when one looks at foreign policy, it is not the case. Looking at Saudi Arabia, the ultimate Sunni kingdom, and their former foreign military interventions, one realises that Muslim denominations of the countries do not play a role. Of the fourteen interventions, between 1990 and 2015, the kingdom intervened five times into a Sunni country, seven times into a Shia country and twice into a secular conflict (see Table 5.1). There seems to be no correlation between religion and the decision to intervene militarily.

Table 5.1: Religious denomination of intervention recipient

Same denomination: Sunni	5
Opposite denomination: Shia	7
Secular	2
Total number of interventions	14

When having a closer look at the type of conflict, there are more detailed results. All Saudi foreign interventions fall into one of the four types: Territorial dispute over a border region, a civil conflict or uprising against the government, supportive intervention in a U.S. coalition, and one defensive conflict against the Iraqi invasion. Table 5.2 shows the distribution of Saudi support. The six territorial conflicts were all with Sunni governments (Qatar and Yemen), except one short dispute with Jewish Israel. Four of the five civil conflicts were fought on the side of a Sunni government. Saudi Arabia supported Bahrain in the short civil uprising in 1994 and once again after the bloodless coup, leading in the change of emir – but not regime change – in 2011. In 2009 the Houthi insurgency began in Yemen and Saudi Arabia intervened on the side of the Sunni government in 2009 and in 2015. The 2015 air and

land intervention is still on-going, today in 2017. Three years ago, Saudi Arabia joined the coalition in the Syria civil war – on the side of the Shia government – against the terrorist group Islamic State.

Twice the kingdom supported an U.S. intervention. The first time occurred after Iraq occupied Kuwait and threatened to invade Saudi Arabia as well. They supplied the U.S. led coalition with military equipment and locations to help the restoration of the Kuwaiti Sunni monarchy in 1990. Two years later, Saudi Arabia once again joined the U.S. operation against Iraq. This time, the no-fly zone over Iraq had been violated and the then secular Iraq under Saddam Hussein needed to be suppressed. The last version of an intervention is the defensive conflict. In 1997, Iraq occupied a Saudi village at the border and the kingdom responded with airstrikes and occupation of an Iraqi oil field. By 1997, Iraqi government was not per se Sunni, but slowly taking on more Sunni actions, like discriminating Shia areas. Whether that intervention was thus against a secular or Sunni government is questionable.

Table 5.2: Type of conflict and the corresponding religious denomination

Type of conflict	Support towards		
	Sunni	Non-Sunni	Secular
Territorial dispute		6	
Civil conflict	4	1	
Support for U.S. intervention	1		1
Defensive conflict			1
Total number of interventions	5	7	2

The data clearly states, that in civil conflicts, ideology plays a role and Saudi Arabia will support the Sunni autocracies, but in territorial questions, religion has no importance whatsoever. There are no coherent results for larger coalitions in the regions and in defensive conflicts. Muslim denomination is of no significance. The hypothesis from chapter 3 wanted to test whether the conflict type influences the likelihood of a foreign intervention. This is true, as we can see in combination with the type of religious denomination. Yet, to properly test the hypothesis, one needs a larger scope of data – more conflict where Saudi Arabia did not intervene.

5.2.2 Political Regime

Supporting or opposing a political regime is partly an ideological question, partly political question of security. Here is treated as a ideological factors.

Saudi Arabia militarily assisted eight autocratic regimes, five semi-autocratic regimes and one democratic Israel (see Table 5.3). This study counts all states between the Polity IV score of -10 to -4 as autocratic. All states with scores between -4 and +4 are semi-democratic regimes and above that until +10 are democratic countries. Of all Middle Eastern countries, ten are considered autocratic, three are semi-democratic and five are democratic. The classification is made up of the average Polity IV score 1990-2015. So given, that there are not too many democratic countries in the region and that the democratic ones (Turkey, Israel, Lebanon, and Jordan) are relatively far away – excluding Jordan – it makes at least a little sense why Saudi Arabia does not support any conflicts in democratic countries.

Table 5.3: Types of political regimes

Type of political regime	
Autocratic	8
Semi-democratic	5
Democratic	1
Total number of interventions	14

The political regime variable can also be combined with the conflict type. However, there are too little conflict cases to come to a significant result. In Table 5.4 one can see that Saudi Arabia did in two instances support a regime, which was semi-democratic, namely Yemen. This could show that the kingdom does not exclusively come to the aid of absolute monarchies as themselves.

So yes, the hypothesis is supported here. Yet the results are problematic, as nearly all neighbouring countries to Saudi Arabia are autocratic regimes and the semi-democratic and democratic countries are further away, by distance. Here one can not say what the reason of non-intervention is, distance or regime type.

Table 5.4: Saudi Arabian intervention types, by types of political regimes

Type of conflict	Regime type		
	Autocratic	Semi-democratic	Democratic
Territorial dispute	2	3	1
Civil conflict	3	2	
Support for U.S. intervention	2		
Defensive conflict	1		
Total number of interventions	8	5	1

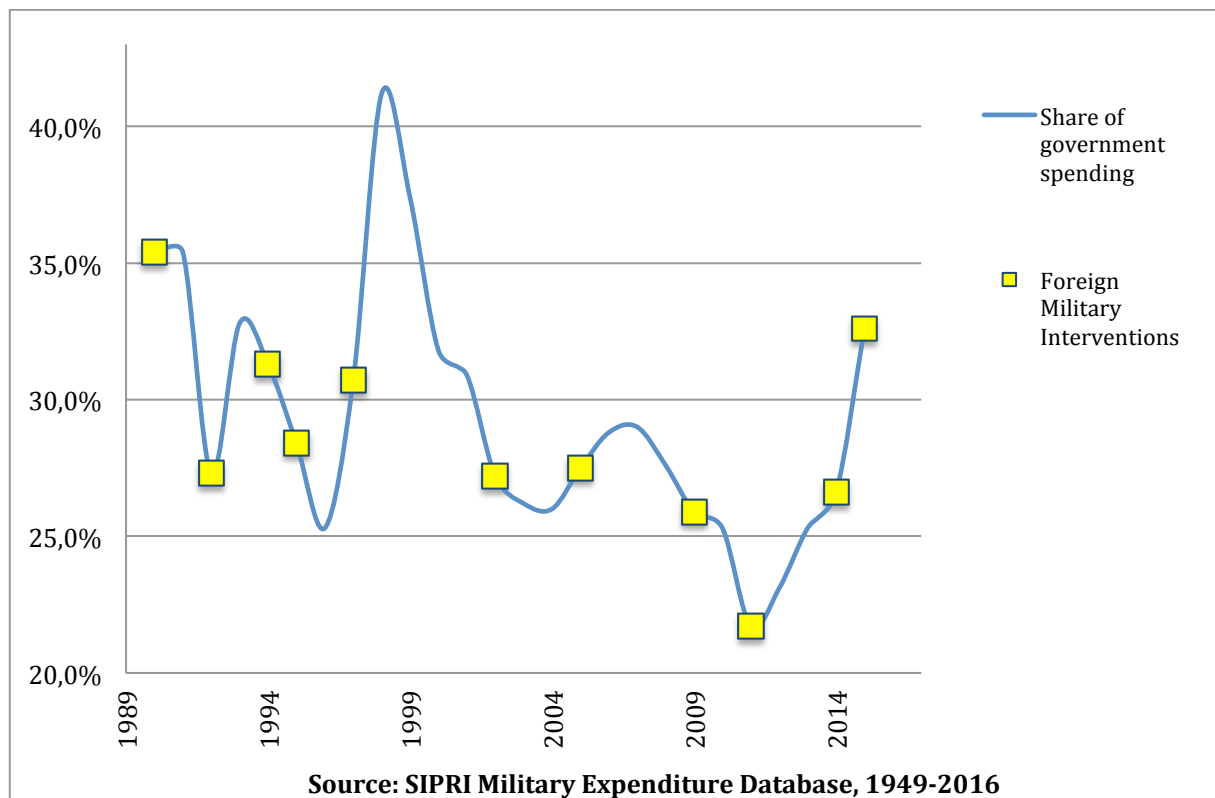
5.3 Security Findings

5.3.1 Military Expenditure

There is no clear correlation between military expenditure and Saudi Arabia's willingness to militarily intervene in other Middle Eastern countries. Military spending is shown in Figure 5.3 as the share of government spending. There are four peaks in military expenditure. The first high is 1993. It could be interpreted as a reaction to the end of the Gulf War, but Iraq's continuous creation of tension within the region and the establishment of the no-fly zone. Then five conflicts follow until the highest peak in 1998, which are quite many interventions in five years. Until the third peak in 2007, Saudi Arabia takes part in two small interventions, one in Israel and one in Yemen. Falling expenditure means fewer interventions. 2011 the military budget is at its lowest, only to rise again. Higher expenditure became useful for the Syrian Civil War and later Yemeni civil war, where the kingdom is still intervening.

The hypothesis that the likelihood of foreign military intervention increases as Saudi military expenditure increases can weakly be supported. To better support the hypothesis, more interventions as well as the potential – but then not acted on – interventions would have to be analysed as well.

Figure 5.3: Saudi Arabia's military expenditure and interventions



5.3.3 Alliances

The results from collecting Saudi Arabian alliances to other Middle Eastern neighbours countries show that the hypothesis cannot be supported. The research says that the kingdom's alliances to the nations they were militarily involved in do not have an effect on whether the country intervenes or not.

Table 5.5: Saudi Arabian alliances and their effect on interventions

Alliances	# Interventions
Defence pact	11
Intervention in support of government	6
Intervention against government	5
Neutrality/Non-aggression pact	-
No formal alliance	3
Intervention in support of government	-
Intervention against government	3
	14

Table 5.5 shows that in eleven of fourteen cases, Saudi Arabia had a defence pact with the conflict country. But in five of those cases, they still were involved in military action against the allied government. All of the cases were territorial disputes at the borders of Yemen, Qatar and Bahrain. The kingdom fought six conflicts on the side of the government and was therefore upholding their defence pact. Five times the kingdom intervened in civil uprisings or conflicts to help the government overcome the fighting on the streets: 1994 and 2011 in Bahrain, 2009 and 2015 in Yemen and 2014 in Syria. In 1990, the Saudi forces fulfilled their defence pact with Kuwait by joining the U.S. intervention to kick out the Iraqi army.

In the 25 years, there was no intervention the two countries Saudi Arabia has a neutrality or non-aggression pact with (the United Arab Emirates and Tunisia). There were no existing pacts with Iraq or Israel. Three times, Saudi troops interfered militarily in their politics: once was retaliation against Iraq, once a U.S. coalition in Iraq and once territorial issues with Israel.

5.3.4 Contiguity

The results for contiguity when analysing Saudi Arabian foreign military interventions are significant.

Table 5.6 gives an overview about the distances between Middle Eastern countries and Saudi Arabia. Eight countries share no border with the kingdom; another eight countries do share a land or river border. Two countries are less than twelve sea miles away and Iran is less than 150 sea miles across the Persian Gulf.

Table 5.6: Border types between Saudi Arabia and Middle Eastern countries

Type of border	
No contiguity	8
Continuity of 12 sea miles or less	2
Continuity of 150 sea miles or less	1
Direct contiguity	8
Total number of Middle Eastern countries	19

When looking at where Saudi Arabia intervened, twelve of fourteen intervention conflicts happened in neighbouring states. Only one conflict happened in Israel and one in far away Syria. These are very straightforward results.

Table 5.7: Saudi Arabia's foreign military interventions with the border types

Type of border	
Direct contiguity	12
Continuity of 12 miles or less	1
No contiguity	1
Total number of interventions	14

The significance of the contiguity factor is enforced when including the countries, where Saudi Arabia did not militarily intervene. The next table show that the Saudi forces were sent to five out of eight neighbouring countries. Contrarily, Saudi troops intervened only into one country out of ten countries, which had neither land, river nor sea border.

Table 5.8: Border types of intervened and non-intervened Middle Eastern countries

	No intervention	Intervention
Direct contiguity	3	5
Continuity of 12 miles or less	1	1
Continuity of 150 miles or less	1	
No contiguity	9	1
Total number of Middle Eastern countries	12	7

Typical explanation would be that it costs the sending country more money, when the conflict is far away. Transport, accommodation, and military bases are cost-intensive.

These results are consistent with previous literature. Crises in neighbouring countries are more important to third parties, as the possibilities or spillovers, refugees and possibly uprisings are an issue. Globally, research has noticed that intervening countries, especially in civil wars, are often regional actors. If the conflict becomes too intense, it is very probable that they join it. One such example is the conflict with Qatar: Qatari troops were mobilised to the border after short uprisings. The Qatari emir was worried that Saudi forces might cross the border to suppress the revolutionary forces, which eventually did not happen.

6. CONCLUSION

This study set out to analyse Saudi Arabia's decision-making within the region of the Middle East. A lot of political decisions are taken every day concerning the Saudi relationship with their regional partners, however not all noticeable and representative of Saudi Arabia's thinking. I was concerned about two things. Firstly, that researchers, politicians, and journalist do not think when they talk about the Middle East, but only look at the religious attribute. However, Arab politics are – like every other region and country as well – guided not by religion, but by state interests. Religion may be more important in the Middle East than in Europe and maybe the United States of America, but it is still not a political motivation. And secondly, that there is an accepted cloud of ignorance about the region, especially about the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Saudis are a major regional actor and it is essential to understand the rationale behind their actions. What motivates them? What influences their regional motivation? Foreign military interventions are a well-researched quantitative and qualitative theoretical area, but there has not been a case study on Saudi Arabia and its reasons for intervening in other states. There are no political actions as cost-expensive and effective as military interventions. At the height of Saudi military spending in 1998 they invested as much as 41,2% of their total governmental spending into the military. Recently, the military share of the budget has climbed again to 32,6% in 2015. For European standards these numbers are astonishing, but for Saudi Arabia, military intervention play a big role. Decisions on them are not taken light-heartedly.

This study looked at different economic, ideological and security-related factors, which all more or less influenced the decision to intervene. It is obvious that no political leader would militarily get involved in a conflict he does not think he will win. If this were the case, other non-military intervention would have been decided on. The aim was also to keep all foreign non-Middle Eastern aspect out of the calculations and take simple variables, which should theoretically have influenced the Saudi foreign policy leader.

Table 5.9 again lists the hypotheses from chapter 3.3 with the all the results. Parts of the testing proved the hypotheses, some disproved them and some results are only partly useable, as more data would be needed.

Table 5.9: Summary of the hypotheses with their results

Hypothesis	Independent variables	Dependent variables	
	<i>Economy</i>	<i>Intervention</i>	<i>Pro-government</i>
H1	Trade ties	supported	supported
H2	Oil and gas resources	not supported	na
H3	National capabilities	weakly supported	weakly supported
	<i>Ideology</i>		
H4	Religious denomination	weakly supported	na
H5	Civil conflict	weakly supported	supported
H6	Regime type	supported	weakly supported
	<i>Security</i>		
H7	Military expenditure	weakly supported	na
H8	Alliances	weakly supported	not supported
H9	Contiguity	supported	na

Economy

Trade ties are indeed a defining factor for foreign policy decisions. High volume of trade is a kind of investment for Saudi Arabia, which needs to be protected when attacked. Hence, when a civil conflict breaks out in a country with strong trade ties, Saudi Arabia will very likely militarily support that country. Surprisingly, there was no visible effect of oil and gas reserves in the Middle East. A large part of the reserves are in the North African countries, which are too far away for Saudi Arabia – politically and location wise – to actively be involved with their military.

National capability is an interesting variable and there is a link between the national capabilities of the conflict state and the possibility to intervene. Countries with high capabilities – like Iraq and Israel – were not touched. And if they did intervene, then only with support of the U.S. or to follow little border disputes.

Ideology

Religious denomination did not play an influencing role when looking at all conflict together. Both Sunni and Shia sides were supported. When taking a closer view on the types of

conflicts, then there is a tendency - in civil conflicts - to support the Sunni governments. However, there were not enough interventions between 1990 and 2015 to fully support the hypothesis.

Saudi Arabia mostly came to the rescue of autocratic states. It is not clear whether the reason is the fact that they are all absolute monarchies. The reason may also be that the majority of the neighbouring Middle Eastern countries around Saudi Arabia are autocracies and the choice of democracies one could help in the Arab region is very small.

Security

From the data, there is no clear relationship between Saudi Arabia's military expenditure and their willingness to intervene in other countries. There is a slight tendency in that direction, but a larger sample would be needed to be sure. As previous scholars have said before, formal alliances are irrelevant for the decision-making process. The only correlation is that if there is no formal alliance between Saudi Arabia and the conflict state, they are not likely to support the side of the government.

The last hypothesis tested is geographical distance. There is clear correlation between contiguity and intervention. Saudi Arabia intervened into three out of five neighbouring countries, but did only intervene in one out of nine Middle East countries with no land, river or sea border.

All these nine variables try and place the puzzle pieces of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia together. With each hypothesis, it will be easier to judge how the Saudi kings will react in the future. The last chapter will elaborate on difficulties with this studies and how further research would complement and perfect it.

7. FUTURE RESEARCH

Saudi Arabia's motives to intervene into a country have been laid out. One can take current conflicts, compare the conflict's context, the state and Saudi Arabia's condition and see how probable an intervention would theoretically be.

What is missing from the study is the inclusion of conflicts, interstate wars or civil wars, where Saudi Arabia refrained from joining. The next step would be to complete the case by showing that the opposite is true as well. If it should be true, that in the following situation,

Saudi Arabia has no interest in joining the conflict militarily, the case would be substantially more accurate.

Another area for future research is expansion into the region. What are highly interesting and relevant in today's time are the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Turkey and the State of Israel. Iran is still a little tricky, as the republic has undergone such a great transformation due to the nuclear deal with the United States, the uplifting of part of the sanctions and the increase of foreign investment and consequently financial resources. However, it is nevertheless essential to have a better picture of the country, especially in light of the growing tensions with Saudi Arabia. Turkey, as well, is undergoing change and is striving for more regional as well as international power. For similar reasons, scholars, politicians, potential investors need to know how Turkey reacted in the past, in order to be prepared for the future. Israel is a completely different case and the only non-Islamic country in the region. But should the large amount of foreign support to the state decrease in the future, what President Obama forecasted, they would see the need to improve their relations with the Arab countries. By applying a similar case to Israel, one could predict towards which countries Israel would lean towards and for what reasons.

With the expansion of the data to other kinds of intervention, future research could draw an even more complete picture of Saudi Arabian politics. Political influence, religious influence and economic influence via businesses is growing and maybe those influences are becoming so strong that there is no need for military involvement?

A last aspect, which is worth looking into, is to what extent non-regional actions influence Saudi Arabia's foreign policy. How important are the U.S. relations for Saudi Arabia and to what extent do they intervene in other countries to support their relationship with the States.

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