

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL SETTING OF CONFLICT IN MIDDLE EAST; THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA AND REPUBLIC OF IRAN

In this chapter the author explains the conflicts that occurred in the Middle East, especially the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran is similar to the conflict scenario of the cold war. The conflict scenario of the Cold War is a proxy war that fight for influence in the region. Similarly, conflict between the Saudi Arabia and Iran, is that both states tried to spread their influence in the region in various ways. In the first sub-chapter the author explains the historical setting of conflict that occurred in the Middle East as a discussion of the background that caused the conflict. The second sub-chapter explains the escalation of conflict between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Iran.

A. Historical Setting of Conflict in Middle East

Middle East is a region which politically and culturally part of Asia continent, or Africa-Eurasia. The center of this region is the land between Mediterranean Sea and Persian Gulf and the region that extends from Anatolia, Arabian and Sinai Peninsula. Sometimes it's also mentioned as the area including the region of North Africa in the west to the Pakistan in the east and the Caucasus and Central Asia in the north. The media and some international organizations generally consider the Middle East region is a region of Southwest Asia (including Cyprus and Iran) plus Egypt.

The term "Middle East" is leading to the cultural area, so it does not have certain limits. So, there is still no agreement among the experts related to the definition about what or where the Middle East region. Since long

time ago, Middle East has become an attractive area for the international world. First, viewed from its geographical location, for centuries, Middle East has recognized as region that has very strategic position. Second, Middle East is the region that has the largest crude oil reserves in the world, which is more than 60% of world oil production and reserves. Crude oil is one of the world's major energy sources. Because of this, many states are trying to control the crude oil fields. Third, Middle East is the birthplace of three great religions in the world, the Jews (walls of lament in Jerusalem), Christians (Nazareth and Golgotha) and Islam (Mecca and Medina). As an area that consists of states with diverse cultures and have a high civilization, Middle East vulnerable to both internal conflicts and external conflicts.

Middle East is an area that strongly uses the religious culture in various aspects of life, including in the implementation of the political system. Viewed from a historical point, it makes sense because the Middle East is the birth area of the world's largest religion, Islam. Islam was established from the land of Saudi Arabia that brought by Prophet Muhammad, then applied by majority states in Middle East as the Government system until today.

Islam has brought a distinctive thinking pattern that spawns a different civilization, which spawned a several of life foundation. The Qur'an basically is a holy book that contains messages, guide, and moral commands for the benefit of human life on earth which implies the fundamental foundations of society that must be used as a guide to create an orderly society. Without a state, the existence of Islam as an ideology and life system will be faded, Islam is only as a ritual and morals ceremony. Therefore, most of Middle East states as the birth place of Islamic religion use the Islamic system as the Governmental system, to maintain the existence of Islam as a religion that covers all aspects of life. In line with the provision that the basis of state according to Islam is the

Qur'an and Sunnah, the goal of state is the implementation of Qur'an and the Sunnah teachings in social life (Adhayanto, 2001).

Every state cannot be separated from politic turbulence which is dynamic and constantly fluctuate from time to time. Islamic governance system, although believed to become the ideal Government system, also cannot be separated from the conflict. After the death of Prophet Muhammad some teachings became multi-interpretative which led to the differences in the Islamic teachings implementation. The misunderstanding occurs because people misinterpret the basic framework of Islamic teachings. People only describe the Islamic teachings partly instead of whole. This Islamic portrayal is often doing by the Muslims themselves, and with certain intentions performed by the orientalist. As the core of the world's religious development, Middle East has a very complex religious thought. But within some limits, the history of religious political development in the Middle East colored by conflicting phenomena, from constructive until destructive level.

The religious ideology that shows the symptoms of conflict in 20th century is the great Islamic teaching of Sunni and Shia. The tradition of Sunni and Shiite conflicts actually happened after the Prophet Muhammad died. The dispute started from the question of how to properly determine Muhammad's successor. In the selection of successors, the majority of Muslims believe that the important thing that “he must come from the Quraish tribe”, just like Muhammad. While other argue, the successor must come from Muhammad's family. It was based on argumentation that God had chosen a successor, and Muhammad had set it before he passed away. According to Shi'ite belief, the Sunnis then abolished the rule from the Qur'an. Thus, there arose allegations of counterfeiting the Quran by Sunnis. That incident marked the beginning of Muslims outbreak. This was what makes

some states in Middle East currently undergoing a political turbulence. Each teaching develops its influence on the surrounding states (Sihbudi, 1993).

In the period between 2010 and 2013, there was a conflict that was originally just an internal conflict between society and Governments in the states of Middle East region. But the conflict is spread because of the intervention of some states that feel to have interests in the conflict. Under the pretext of democracy and humanity, United States of America appears contributing to every effort of Middle Eastern society in action to demand the revolution and renewal of a dictatorial system into a more democratic system. The wave of democracy that occurred in the Middle East region also known as the Arab Spring. Arab Spring is a situation where there is an upheaval by the Arab society to demand the demise of a dictatorial ruling regime and wants a renewal in the system of Government as a whole.

After the invasion of America and its allies in Iraq and the fall of Saddam Husaen, people's power movement grew in various group of Middle East states. Arab Spring first time hit the state of Tunisia which was marked by the fall of Ben Ali in 2010, the ruler of Tunisia who has been in power for 23 years. The success of the revolution that toppled Ben Ali's leadership, inspired people in other Middle Eastern states such as Egypt, Bahrain, Syria, Libya, Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Maroco, Oman, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and West Sahara. The majority of Middle Eastern states at that time were ruled by an undemocratic dictatorship regime (Hartati, 2010).

Some of the conflicts that occurred in the Middle East became prolonged conflicts, such as in Iraq, and Syria. In contrast to other conflicts, the conflicts in Iraq and Syria have special due to many factors. However, too many interests involved from other parties. Among other are Israel's interest from the Hezbollah's threat which is

supported by the Assad Government, also the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia interests who regard themselves as Sunni leader against Republic of Iran which is regarded as the leader of Shia. Both of these great powers fight to control the region, at least to be able to build influence. This systemic problem makes the conflict in Iraq and Syria prolonged, sadistic and cause many victims. It is almost difficult to identify who the opponent or friend, and the causal relationship (Ali, 2016).

The conflicts that occurred in the Middle East region cannot be separated from the problem of ideological differences. Islamic society today is divided into various teachings, including Sunni and Shia. Both of these teachings are the biggest and often involved in a dispute. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Iran are the two actors that mostly involved in the conflict. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which is a state with Islamic Government system strongly opposes the existence of Shiites on earth and elaborate. So, based on this, conflicts often occur in the form of opened or closed conflicts.

Conflicts that occur between states in Middle East region have given shocks to the global economy, it can be seen directly on the conditions of capital markets by the index joint indicators that are rise and fall of the all bourse stock trading in the world. The impact of the conflict in the Middle East to the global economy of course made a very reasonable fear. The turbulence in the Middle East and North Africa could push up the commodity prices in global markets, especially for food and energy. This means that the Middle East crisis increases the risk for global goods trade traffic, including Indonesia. This region is a very strategic region in the world as a trade traffic including the oil. Middle East region compared to the others, in setting of modern history, has a strategic position in terms of geographical that connects the European continent as a stream of modern civilization and

the Asian continent as a market. In addition, Middle East region is still believed as a major influence on the world industry with petroleum assets. So, it is not exaggeration, if the Middle East region is understood of having a high publicity, it can be seen that the mass media almost constantly informed about the development of economy, politics, culture in the Middle East all the time.

B. The Escalation of Conflict between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Republic of Iran

Saudi Arabia is a state with an absolute monarchy Governmental system that uses the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad as the legal law basis. So, it can be said that Saudi Arabia builds its state legitimacy using the Islamic ideology. The head of Government is led by a king who has absolute power, that given from the descent of royal family. As the implementation of the Governmental system, the king of Saudi Arabia is accompanied by the *Mufti* who is a royal religious advisor, it aims so that the Government in line with the Islamic Sharia Law. The Government of Saudi Arabia wants the Islamic teachings to purely return in accordance with the teachings of Prophet Muhammad. This teaching is called as *Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah* or Sunni with the spirit of restoring the teachings of Islam to the pure teachings.

Clerics or sheikhs in Saudi Arabia have very important position and become a vital part of Government policy covering the domestic and foreign aspects. They have an official institution called as Senior Clerical Councils, led by a Mufti, this institution was founded by Saudi's Government as a forum to bridge the consultations between scholar and Government and a forum to formulate *fatwa* (Rules in Islamic teaching) to respond the domestic or international conditions. The relationship between the two entities, clerics and rulers of Saudi Arabia historically has been established since the 18th century. When Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab, a Sunni cleric who

was worried to see the condition of society in Najd that was mixed their religious practice with Bid'ah (new religious teaching in Islam) and polytheism, formed a coalition with Muhammad Ibn Saud the chief of the Dir'iyyah tribe. This coalition made expansion into many areas of the Arabian Peninsula such as Hijaz, Mecca, Medina, Najd and Riyadh. With the spirit of Islamic teachings purification, this hereditary coalition finally succeeded declaring the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932 (Toth, 2008).

The economy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is supported by rich oil production, so that Saudi Arabia became the largest state oil producer in the world. In the early of its establishment, the Saudi kingdom was one of the poorest states in the world, depended on their limited farm and pilgrimage income. However, these conditions began to change when in 1938 crude oil reserves are discovered in the region of Al-Ahsa, throughout the Persian Gulf coast, and the exploration began in 1941 under the "Aramco" (Arabian American Oil Company). Oil-rich showering Saudi Arabia with economic prosperity and great political influence internationally. It is used by the Saudi Arabian Government to give prosperity to its people and prevent the crisis of legitimacy. The Saudi Arabian monarchy Government improves the education services, health care, and social services every year.

Oil wealth makes Saudi Arabia an influential state in the international world, Saudi Arabia's policy on oil greatly affects the stability of the world economy. In 1973, Saudi Arabia led an oil boycott toward Western states that support Israel in the Yom Kippur War against Egypt and Syria. The impact of the oil boycott is that the oil price has increased fourfold, many states that depend their oil from Middle Eastern states experiencing the economic crisis, especially the Western states.

Saudi Arabia's close relationship with the United States began since the discovery of the petroleum field

there. The United States is a state that has special relation toward Saudi Arabia, because they need oil inventory for their economic activities. In return, the United States provides various assistance to the Saudi Arabian Government and supports the policies that made.

As the world's largest oil producer, Saudi Arabia competes with the Iranian Republic, which is also an oil producer state. Iran is a state in the form of Islamic republic that located in Southwest Asia. Most of Iran's population is Muslim, consists of those who have the Shia ideology as much as 90%, while the Sunni ideology embraced by 8% of the population. Since the Safavid dynasty, Iran was known as the main stronghold of Shi'ism. It makes Iran become one of the five predominantly Shiite majority states also the state with the world's highest Shi'ite belief. Shia as the Iran official madhhab became a national identity and a source of political legitimacy (Esposito, Voll, 1996).

Iran is a state that was formerly known as Persia. Persia was a great kingdom in which the majority of the population believe in Magi religion. In the end of 15th until early of 16th century, a tribe from Turkey gained control over several region of Iran and established the Safavi dynasty. The rise of the Safavi dynasty resulted in the end of Persian history as a source of autodoxy Sunni thought. Since then, the national identity of the Persian society has been heavily influenced by the teachings of Shia, especially Shia Isna Ash'riya or Shia Imammiyah. Shia which had been considered violate the purity of teaching in Islamic history turned into a mainstream teaching in a political area within Safavi dynasty kingdom.

After the Safavid dynasty, Iran experienced various revolutionary movements that began in the 19th century. In 1921, Reza Khan took over the power from Qajar Dynasty that was weakened. Then Reza Khan began the modernization of Iran. As an initiator of modernization, Reza Khan started the development of

modern industry, railroads, and the establishment of education system in Iran. Unfortunately, Reza's Government was too autocratic. The modernization program that initiated by Reza Khan since his rise to the pinnacle of power ultimately cannot be said as succeed (Borthwick, 1980). In the decade of the 1960s and 1970s, the opposition movement was widespread. The Shi'a teachings then grew as the most active means which firmly rooted in the people to mobilize among effective masses. It offers a shared awareness of history, identity, symbols, and values. In 1979, protests against the Reza Regime raised, and finally there was the Iranian Revolution. Khomeini then took power, then held a vote to form an Islamic Republic. The decision of voting showed more than 98% of Iranians agree with the establishment of Islamic Republic. The new system of Government established under Islamic law. The Iranian revolution that happened contains a global meaning or influence. For the first time in the modern era, religious figures (*ulama*) are able and successful against a modern regime and took over the state power (Hartono, 2013).

In aspect of economy, Iran's economy is a mixed of the Central Planning economy, with the oil as the main resources, and the main companies owned by the Government, as well as several private companies. The main support of Iranian economy comes from petroleum production, although not as much as Saudi Arabia, but Iranian oil production can be quite large. Republic of Iran was affected by the economic sanctions in the form of oil embargo that resulted in the weakening economy. But on the other hand, it creates an independence of the Iranian republic and reduces the dependence on the western states. The state that become the main supporter of Iranian republic is Russia, the closeness between the two states due to the similarity of interests, including the supply of petroleum to Russia and the feud with western countries (IRIB Indonesia, 2014). The economic sanctions that

imposed by western states provoked the Iranian Government's hatred against the West. On the basis of similar feelings, Iran forms an alliance with the Russia and other states that have feelings of hatred against western states.

Diplomatic relations between the Iranian republic and the kingdom of Saudi Arabia have always experienced fluctuation. There are many factors behind the conflict; Ideological differences in Islam, the spread of ideological influences, the competition of the petroleum market, the economy, the influence of states that involved in the cold war, etc. Saudi Arabia claim itself as the leader of Sunnis in the world. On the contrary, Iran is the world's largest Shia population and since the Iranian revolution in 1979 become the leader of Shia in the world. Iran depends their economic power on oil production as well as Saudi Arabia, but Saudi has bigger oil production that have ability to control the oil price. Iran has a close relation with Russia and other states that have bad relation toward western state, and Saudi Arabia has a close relation with United State. Both states have a long story of conflict, in this undergraduate thesis, the writer explains several backgrounds behind the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Republic of Iran.

a. Sunni-Shiite Ideological Conflict

The conflict between two ideologies in Islam, Sunni and Shi'a, cannot be separated from the scenario of conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The conflict between these two steams began with the death of Muhammad as the last Prophet in Islam. As long as the Prophet Muhammad was alive, he became the only leader of Muslims around the world. After his death there was a debate over who would become the Muslim leader to replace him. At that time most of Muslims agreed to appoint Abu Bakr Ash Shidiq as the successor of Islamic leadership, this agreement

based on a joint deliberation in accordance with the Shari'a law taught by the Prophet Muhammad. But some other groups consider that Ali ibn Abu Talib was worthier of being a leader of Islam after the Prophet Muhammad. This assumption is based on the closeness of Ali with the Prophet Muhammad who still has a family relationship. In addition, this group also assumed that the Prophet Muhammad has given explanation that the next Islamic leader should be Ali Ibn Abu Talib. The group that supported Ali ibn Abu Talib has to disappoint with the decision of the Muslims majority at that time who still appoint Abu Bakr Ash Shidiq as the Muslims leader after the Prophet Muhammad.

The group that supported Ali ibn Abu Talib was led by Ibn Saba' who was a former of Jews that then converted to Islam. Some people still doubt and even deny the existence of Ibn Saba' at the beginning of Islamic Caliphate under the leadership of Khulafaur Rashidin. But the experts of hadith, the experts of *Al-Jarh Wat Ja'dil*, *Ahlitarikh*, also the author of the books *Al-Milal Wan Nihal* And *Firaq* make agreement (Ijtima') about the existence of Ibn Saba'. Ibn Saba' known as an aggressive figure of slandering within Muslims which aims to divide Muslims inside. During the reign of Ali Ibn Abu Thalib as the last Caliph of the Prophet Companions, Ibn Saba' will be given the death penalty for his incessant act of spreading slander against Muslims, but on some advice of Caliphate advisors, Ali Ibn Abu Talib only exiled Ibn Saba' to the Persian region.

The existence of Ibn Saba' in the Persian region became the beginning of Shia teachings development. Ibn Saba' incessantly preaches da'wah which more prioritizes Ali Ibn Abu Talib from the other companions of the Prophet Muhammad, even more noble than the Prophet Muhammad himself. The

death of Ali Ibn Abu Thalib who was killed after dawn prayer and the death of Hassan and Hussein who were the son of Ali Ibn Abu Talib in the Land of Karbala became the main trigger to divide the Muslims. The Shia group incessantly spread the slander against the Muslims in the land of Saudi Arabia and made new teachings that deviate from the teachings of Islam. In Shi'ism is approvable to make some fake confession (*taqiya*) in case of spreading its teachings, so that in its development the Shi'ite movement becomes very subtle.

The Shi'ite development in Persian land began since the entry of Safavi dynasty from Turkey in accordance with the exile of Ibn Saba' by the Caliph Ali Ibn Abu Talib. The movement of Ibn Saba' was so intense that it made Shaykh Ismail; the leader of the Savafi dynasty declaring that the Shia is the official ideology of the Savafi dynasty. The use of Shi'ite ideology was intended to unite the Safavi nation and foster the spirit of nationalism. Shia which is originally minority teachings then became the official ideology that thrived on the land of Persia and its surroundings. Persia later developed into an Iranian state today.

The Shiite development was not as fast as its eternal rival; the Sunnis teaching. When Shiism can become a major ideology in the Persian region, the development of Sunni has almost reached the whole world. Sunni is another name of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* or *Ahlus-Sunnah wal Jama'ah* which is a group that always stand upright on Islam based on Al Qur'an and hadits that saheeh with the understanding of the Companions, Tabi'in, and Tabi'ut Tabi'in. About 90% of the world's Muslims are Sunnis, and 10% are Shi'a. The development of Sunni Islamic Religion originated from Saudi Arabia which was the birthplace of Islam.

Saudi Arabia as the largest Islamic state in the world with the spirit of carrying the stand of Tauhid and Sunnah in this modern civilization, cannot be separated from the figure of Shaykh al-Imam al-Mujaddid Muhammad bin 'Abdul Wahhab at-Tamimi an-Najdi and al-Amir Muhammad ibn Su'ud in the 17th century. In the early 17th century, the condition of Saudis was divided into various groups with different beliefs about Islam. All steams are rampant, shirk, bid'ah become a common sight. They which were concerned about the situation established the kingdom of Saudi Arabia with the spirit of restoring the teachings of Islam to pure teachings. This pure teaching of Islam in accordance with the teachings of *Ahlus-Sunnah wal Jama'ah* or Sunni. Muhammad ibn Su'ud became the head of the kingdom and 'Abdul Wahab as *Mufti* or religious adviser in the execution of the Government. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia succeeded in implementing the pure Islamic teachings as the basis of the royal law to this day. The teachings of Islam from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by some people are often called as the teachings of "Wahabi" because this doctrine based on 'Abdul Wahhab or also often called "Salafi" because 'Abdul Wahhab was a cleric who studied to the earlier Salaf clerics.

The relationship between the two entities, clerics and rulers of Saudi Arabia historically has been established since the 17th century. The teachings that were taught by 'Abdul Wahab are certainly very contradictory to the Shia teachings that are considered to deviate the teachings of Islam. 'Abdul Wahhab tried to purify the teachings of Islam according to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, while the Shi'ah made Islam a revolutionary religion with developments in its teachings. The difference between the two sides is not limited only in branches, but has

come to a fundamental difference, so the Sunnis feel that the Shia is not part of the Islam religion.

From this point the beginning of conflict between the two states occurred, ideological differences in Islam became the main trigger. Saudi Arabia with its enthusiasm to purify the religious teachings of Islam is at odds with the Republic of Iran with Shi'ite ideology that considered contrary to the true teachings of Islam. The Iranian republic who feels Shi'ite teaching is still a minority tries to spreading its influence to the rest of the world by trying to eliminate their main rival, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Both parties feel that what they are carrying the true teaching and trying to spread its influence throughout the world. As a result of these ideological differences, two sides experienced a long tide of disputes to this day.

b. Proxy War

Since the end of the Second World War in 1949, human civilization began to grow rapidly. Awareness of violence, human rights and equality began to grow, resulting in the creation of international organizations aimed at maintaining the world peace, such as the UN, UNICEF, WHO. So, any forms of open conflict will be an action that can damage the image of states and affect relationships with other states. However, the form of conflict actually turns into a more closed conflict by trying to collect alliances and disseminate ideological ideology. The first cold war conflict that occurred after the Second World War was between the United States and the Soviet Union (Russia). Both sides try to spread its influence to different regions and establish an alliance of forces from various fields; economic, politics, military, resources, etc.

The conflict between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Iran is similar to the conflict scenario that occurred in the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union (Russia). Both sides have very basic ideological differences and try to spread their influence to different regions to gather strength. Although the conflict is not in the form of open conflict, but Saudi Arabia and Iran are involved in other states conflicts as influential third parties. Some observers stated that Iran and Saudi Arabia are involved in a proxy war. Both states did not fight directly but involved in region states conflicts. Proxy war is a war that occurs when a dispute party uses a third party as a medium to weaken either party. Proxy war takes advantage of external or third party in disputes to attack the interests or territorial ownership of their opponents. The Proxy War is part of the asymmetric warfare mode, making it different from conventional wars. Asymmetric warfare is irregular and not limited by the magnitude of combat strength or battlefield area.

In bilateral relations, Saudi Arabia has a fairly complicated relationship with Iran. Although these two states are Islamic states, but the relationship between them are built in forms of tension and conflict. The Riyadh Government clashed with the interests Tehran on many issues, ranging from geopolitics, oil politics, closeness toward the West, and the ambition over the baton of Islamic leadership. As discussed earlier, Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy state that embraces Sunni as the state of official law and legitimacy. While Iran is a predominantly Shia state with the form of Presidential Islamic Republic. These differences of aspiration and attitude placed them in a fierce rivalry.

Diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran were built since 1928. In 1966, King Faisal,

the leader of Saudi Arabia, made a state visit to Iran to strengthen the states relations. The visit was immediately repaid by the Shah of Iran which is also led to a peaceful resolution of Farsi and Arabi islands dispute case (Afrasiab, 2006). Entering the era of 1970s Saudi and Iranian relations began to warm due to the Iran's military modernization policy that strengthens the Iran's power and raises concerns on the Saudi side. After Iran entered the period of the Islamic Revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini, practically Saudi Arabia and Iranian relations heavily influenced by tension and conflict. After the revolution, Iran experienced many fundamental changes that contribute to foreign policy approaches (Fanani, 2016). Saudi Arabia's concern over the revolution in Iran related to the growing influence of Shiites in line with the modernization.

A new period of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran began in the raise of conflict between Iran and Iraq in 1980s. Although the Saudi Arabia Government has a poor relationship with the Baath party, the party that controlled Iraq at that time, the Saudi Government still poured more than USD 25 million to help the Saddam Hussein Government to stop the Iran movement. The Saudis even encouraged other Gulf States, including Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, to help disburse funds to Iraq (Fanani, 2016).

Iran economic dependence on oil production is an opportunity for Saudi Arabia to weaken the Iran's economy. Crude oil is a source of energy and becomes goods that can affect state domestic and foreign policy. As a state with the largest oil production in the world, Saudi Arabia has the ability to regulate the world oil prices. By the decreased of world oil prices, the Iran's revenue from petroleum also decreased. Therefore, the two states compete each other to

improve their influence in many regions, especially in the Middle East.

The dispute between the two sides was seen in King Abdullah's strong statement who said that *"in this world there are two unworthy states, Iran and Israel"*. The statement was said by King Abdullah to Harve Morin, Former Secretary of Defense of France. The former Saudi supreme leader also called on the United States to attack Iran and stopped its nuclear weapons program. In a sarcastic tone, Abdullah called Iran the head of a snake that had to be cut (BBC, 2010). From the Iranian side, Ayatollah Khomeini, the Iranian Revolutionary Father once said in not less severe tone that the Saudi is a traitor of the Muslims, Khomeini stated that "...these vile and ungodly Wahhabis, are like daggers which have always pierced the heart of the "Muslims" from the back," and announced that Mecca was in the hands of "a band of heretics." This statement triggered the termination of diplomatic relations between 1987 and 1991 (Fanani, 2016).

After 1991, Saudi Arabia's relations with Iran began to improve marked by an agreement of economic cooperation in crude oil production to raise world oil prices so that Iran could rise from the economic downturn during the reign of Rafsanjani president. Over time, the two countries often make state visits to strengthen cooperative ties, the result of several visits is the lifting of import ban from Saudi Arabia to Iran and the addition of 120,000 hajj quota. Then in July 1997, the flight route from Saudi Arabia to Iran was reopened. The relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran until 2010 continues increased from various fields covering the economy and security. Both states have the same interest to cooperate in order to achieve national interest. But, the situation

began to heat up when the Arab Spring wave began in early 2011.

Arab Spring that occurred in the Middle East presents a wide gap for the feud between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Both states recalled the "old wounds" and began to pursue their hidden interests. Political configuration changes in the states that affected by Arab Spring also affect the interests of the two states in pursuing their foreign policy priorities in the region, especially in spreading the influence of ideology. The Saudi Arabian Government tries to prevent a revolution in Middle Eastern states which will be an opportunity for Iran to instill its influence through a new Governmental system. The revolution in the name of Islam is the main strength of the Iranian Government to spread Shiism ideology in conflicting states, because the Iranian revolution in the name of Islam has inspired many turbulences in Middle East.

For almost seven years the Arab Spring occurred from late 2010, Saudi and Iran have been engaged in conflict of interests in the various conflicting state. The clashes occurred in various patterns and intensities. The series of conflicts in Arab Spring involving Saudi Arabia and Iran include:

c. Bahrain Conflict

The conflict began when the state was trapped in the Arab Spring, a revolutionary wave of demonstrations and civil wars in the Arab world, at the beginning of 2011. They wanted to create the democracy system in a state that has been ruled by the authoritarian Al-Khalifa family for more than 200 years (Law, 2013). Social movement during Arab Spring has led to political uprising in Middle East. Started from Tunisia, the revolt spread to neighboring states such as Egypt, Libya, also Syria. Influenced by religion and strong Islamic tradition, protestors

demand the presence of democracy within political system which had held autocracy as ruling system for decades. Although the royal Government was dominated by the Sunni group, the demography of Bahrain predominantly by Shia belief, around almost 60 percent. Shia discrimination is a fact of life in Bahrain. In the political naturalization issue, the Bahrain Government reportedly pursuing the policies to alter the demographic balance of island, such as granting non-Bahrain Arab citizenship especially for Sunnis from across the region to reduce Shiite dominance.

Inspired by the developments in Tunisia and Egypt, Bahrain's opposition also hopes to replace the leadership of Hamad bin Al Khalifa. Then the conflict broke out in February 2011 with a massive demonstration in the capital city of Bahrain that was driven by Shiite activists. Initially this was not a sectarian protest, it was a protest for political reform and decentralization in parliament that directly avoided criticism for ruling regime. In an effort to pursue the protests, the security forces of Bahrain attacked the opposition base, destroying Shia religious structures and at least 38 Shia mosques. But the biggest threat to the ruling regime was Shia clerics who wrote a letter to Khomeini (Iran religious leader) to help Bahrain's Shia population, the letter was signed by followers of Ayatollah Khomeini in Bahrain and widely publicized in the media (Mabon, 2012). Iran's support for a demonstration in Bahrain can be seen in the provocative Iranian Government's statement that "the Bahraini Government should be respects to the rights of people and condemn the repressive actions by the Government toward protester".

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, then became involved in the conflict as a supporter of a legitimate

Government. Saudi Arabia is the most dominant state that support Bahrain legitimate Government, Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz stressed that Saudi Arabia stood with Bahrain and urged the people in Bahrain to maintain their security, stability and national unity. Even, to ease the conflict, the Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister stated that the Kingdom provides support for Bahrain and Oman for USD 20 billion with USD 2 billion for an economic support package of more than 10 years, each state would receive USD 10 billion for Economic development (SaudiEmbassy, 2011). At the heightened intensity of the conflict in mid-March 2011, Saudi sent troops in number of 1.200 army, 150 vehicles, including wheeled, light-armored vehicles with roof-mounted heavy machine guns to protect strategic places, and to reduce rebellion tension between Sunni ruling regime and Shiite demonstrators due to the request for assistance from neighboring states that have been undergoing demonstrations from February 15 to mid-March 2011 (TheGuardian, 2015).

Related to Saudi Arabia's intervention in Bahrain, Iranian foreign ministry's spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast, stated that the presence of foreign troops and interference in Bahrain internal affairs is unacceptable and further would confuse the matters (Will Fulton, 2010). Thus, the Saudi Arabian Government declared that Iran provoked the riots in Bahrain. The attempts to ignite the riots in Bahrain have actually been done during the early Arab Spring through 2011 (Henderson, 2011).

Behind the conflict scenario, if the revolutionary group succeeds in overthrowing the Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa's Government regime, the system of Government will change from Constituent Monarchy to Constitutional Democracy as desired by the Revolutionary movements. The Principle of Constitutional Democracy is the democratic elections

of state leaders that provide a great opportunity for the ruling regime guided by the Shiites and potentially will threaten the integrity of Saudi Arabia Kingdom. Shia's leadership will obviously influence the direction of Bahrain's foreign policy which leads to the pro-Iranian the major rival of Saudi Arabia. Bahrain was the spot of competition between Sunni and Shiite ideology.

d. Syria Conflict

In contrast to the wave of revolutions that occurred in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya are considered "finished" from the wave of revolution. In the conflict of Syria, Bashyar al-Assad's regime as the state's leader still fluctuates through the pressure of the opposition who wants the fall of Basyyar regime. The victims continue to fall to this day including from civilians. Since the second election of Bashar al-Assad's president, Syria has become an isolated state by the western and Arab "moderate" states (Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, Kuwait, and United Arab Emirates) because Bashar regime supports the Hezbollah group in Lebanon and Hamas in Damascus. The Hizbullah and Hamas groups are considered as terrorists' group.

The Syrian protest increased on March 15, 2011. The demonstration was influenced by the Arab Spring wave that hit the Middle East region at the time. The protesters' demands are the resignation of President Bashar al-Ashad which limits their political freedom, the press, opinion and assembly. President Bashar responded to protests with such intimidate act; abduction, torture and arrest. The conflicts in Syria made the world condemn the violence, especially from western states. In the conflict of Syria, some states are suspected for providing weapons and funds to support both sides. Saudi Arabia and Qatar are the states

greatly supply weapon for the Syrian Liberation Army and pay the soldiers salaries. Meanwhile, Iran and Russia provide the weapons to Bashar al-Assad's regime. The war of interest in the Syrian conflict cannot be separated from the efforts to expand the influence of each party involved. (Sugiri, 2012)

Saudi Arabia wants to strengthen its influence in Syria, the region that now becomes a battleground for the major powers in the region. Two big states are fighting for influence: Saudi Arabia with the teaching of Sunni wants to reinforce the influence. While the Iranians with the Shi'ite teaching also wants to strengthen its influence in the region to form a Shia axis in the Middle East. The regime in Saudi Arabia feels threatened by an alternative Islamic ideology represented by Iran. They feared that the opposition groups who inspired by this ideology shook the power of Al Saud's royal family. Since the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, Saudi Arabia did want to stem the influence of Iran.

For Iran, if the civil war in Syria succeeds in overthrowing Assad's Government, it will become bad news. This will hamper access to Hezbollah, the spread of Islamic revolutionary beliefs and the reach of Iran in the area of Sham. Without Assad, the second line of Hezbollah and Hamas defense will be destroyed.

e. Yemen Conflict

Yemen's revolution as part of Arab Spring took place after the Tunisian Revolution and coincided with the Egyptian Revolution and several other mass protests in the Middle East and Africa in 2011. International Religious Freedom data released in 2012 shows the majority of Muslims in Yemen are broadly divided into two main groups, namely Sunnis and Shiites with a Sunni composition of 60% while the

Shia is 40%. The issues that have impacted Yemen were: the ineffective central Government, the strong tribes, the rebellion in the north by the Houthis, the desire for secession in the south, and the emergence of al-Qaeda branches in several provinces of the state. In the initial phase, protests in Yemen were linked about unemployment, economic conditions, corruption and demand to modify the Yemeni constitution. The demands of the demonstrators then developed to the resign of Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

On the conflict in Yemen, Saudi Arabia supports the ruling Government, while Iran supports the Shia rebellion group. In March 2015, the Saudi authorities initiated the air strikes in Yemen to fight the Houthi rebels; which is an ally of Iran and wants to take over the Government. Saudi Arabia launched the massive military attack in Yemen to fight the Shiite Houthi rebels. Houthi is a Zaidi Shiite movement founded by Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi in Sa'dah. The Houthi mass base mainly comes from the tribes of Shi'ite in the North Yemen (Almasmari, 2010). The Houthi rebellion aims to destabilize the Government, overthrow the regime and replace it with Zaidi's religious law.

Houthi also has an attachment to outside support forces, in this case the Iranian Government. The rise of Houthi has changed the political configuration within the Yemeni state where the Shi'ah gained momentum to gain access to power. Houthi who has ideological closeness and affiliation with Iran, will reduce the radius of Saudi influence on one side, and expand the area of Iranian influence on the other.

Saudi Arabia's foreign policy has always been promoting the peace efforts but related to the conflict in Yemen, Saudi Arabia is one of the outsiders that aggressively involved in internal Yemeni conflicts. At

that time, the Saudi accused Iran of deliberately exploiting the Yemen's Houthi for coup the Government which at that time led by Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi. And again, Iran also accused the Saudi air attacks targeting the civilians in Yemen. If it is ignored, this change of Yemeni political configuration has the potential to change the map of Saudi and Iranian influence rivalry in the region. Considering this, the Saudi's aggressive reaction to the conflict in Yemen can be understood.

Saudi and Iranian rivalry is competition for influence in the region. This rivalry extends and involves other states as a battleground. In the study of international relations, the concept of "sphere of influence" defined as the claim by a state to exclusive or predominantly control over a foreign area or territory. The term may refer to a political claim to exclusive control, which other nations may or may not recognize as a matter of fact, or it may refer to a legal agreement by which another state or states pledge themselves to refrain from interference within the sphere of influence (Deudney, 2017). Many observers see the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran tend influenced by the differences between them, which include: Sectarianism, nationalism, revolutionary ideology, competition over regional hegemony, oil trade politics, policy toward US presence in the Gulf, and hajj disputes.

C. The Termination of Diplomatic Relation

The peak Saudi Arabia and Iran disputes was the termination of diplomatic relation by the Saudi's Government in early January, 2016. Even the Saudi Arabian Government banned flights from and headed to Iran and "expelled" the Iranian ambassador in Saudi Arabia. This action was done as a reaction of attack that carried out by the Iranian population toward Saudi

embassy in Tehran, Iran. That incident was seen as a failure of the Iranian Government to guard the other states embassies in its territory from various forms of attacks and threats. The attack was a violation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia sovereignty as stated in the Vienna Convention of Diplomatic Relation 1961 article 22 (The Associated Press, 2016) which is;

The premises of the mission shall be inviolable. The agents of the receiving State may not enter them, except with the consent of the head of the mission.

- a. The receiving State is under a special duty to take all appropriate steps to protect the premises of the mission against any intrusion or damage and to prevent any disturbance of the peace of the mission or impairment of its dignity.
- b. The premises of the mission, their furnishings and other property thereon and the means of transport of the mission shall be immune from search, requisition, attachment or execution.

The attacks by the Iranian population were the disappointment result of the Saudi Kingdom execution against Sheikh Nimr Bakr al-Nimr. Al-Nimr was a Shiite figure in Saudi Arabia who was made many protests against the monarchy system in the Saudi Arabia. The protest movement carried out by al-Nimr considered as a threat to the royal legitimacy that can affect the Saudi's Governmental system. Before being sentenced to death, al-Nimr has been arrested several times, the last in 2012 with a couple of shots in the thigh. The death sentence was granted on October 15, 2014 and the execution took place on 2 January 2016 as a suspect in a terrorism case. Al-Nimr was executed along with 46 others who were charged as Al-Qaeda terrorist members, 45 of them were the Saudi Arabia citizens. The Saudi Arabian Government has never tolerated with any form of threat against the Government of any class and group. Because the resistance against the ruling Government is prohibited, in

accordance with the orders of the Qur'an and Sunnah which became the basis of Saudi Arabian Government law (Saudi Arabia Ministry of Foreign Policy, 2009).

The death penalty in Saudi Arabia often gets criticism from various circles of the world community because it feels too excessive and violate human rights. But the Saudi Arabian Government remains adamant that the death penalty is indeed feasible to apply in their state, in accordance with the Islamic Shari'a described in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Based on Global Amnesty International report, by 2016 the Saudi Government has conducted more than 105 executions. The death penalty in Islamic law is permissible, even in some cases it is required. However, the death penalty should be based on the decision of a legitimate leader or ruler.

The death penalty against one of the Shi'ite leaders in Saudi Arabia; Al-Nimr and 46 other suspects constitute the right of Saudi Arabia's Government as a sovereign state. Majority states in the world still applied the death penalty as punishment, even the Republic of Iran is also listed as the state that conducted the most of death penalty. The problem for the Shias was the figure of al-Nimr, as a loud supporter of Shiite rights and important figure that fight against the monarchy system of Saudi Arabia. The death of al-Nimr will stop the Shiite movement in Saudi Arabia. In Islam, resistance (*Makar*) against Government institutions is forbidden, so that the death penalty is feasible. In addition, the impact of provocation by al-Nimr has prompted other Saudi Arab population to fight against. The figure of al-Nimr considered as a dangerous figure for the Saudi kingdom national stability (Saudi Arabia Ministry of Foreign Policy, 2009).

After the execution by the Saudi Government on al-Nimr, the Iranian Government gave a statement that Saudi Arabia has taken the wrong step and will get a reward from God. A few days after the statement the Saudi Arabian embassy in Iran was attacked. The

Government of Saudi Arabia considered in that attack there was an element of neglect from the Iranian Government, so it was considered as a form of "aggression". Similar attacks had occurred in the United States embassy in 1979 and the British embassy in 2011. This is a bad history of the Iranian republic against foreign embassies that is considered as "violating diplomatic missions". Then the Saudi Arabian Government firmly cut off the diplomatic ties toward Iran, withdrew the ambassadors and expelled the closure of the Iranian embassy in Saudi Arabia. Termination of diplomatic relations then followed by other Arab League states which led to increasingly cornering the position of Iran in the Middle East.

In the study of International Relations science, diplomatic relations are very important in the system of states Government. There will be a reciprocal exchange between states that have diplomatic ties. In practice, not all diplomatic relations can lead to peace because the interests of two states that establish diplomatic relations will change as the condition of international politics grows. Termination of diplomatic relations is an emergency and usually done as the last effort if other less radical means do not make results.

The tension that occurred in early 2016 was an accumulation of various events before. In the Hajj season of September 2015, an incident occurred in Mina killed about 2000 pilgrims, the number of victims from Iran reached 250 people. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia assessed that the incident due to the pilgrims from Iran did not comply with the rules and deliberately conspiracy to ignite sectarianism. Sectarian issues have always been a topic that used to heat up the atmosphere of both sides. The Iranian Government considered that this incident was the result of Saudi Arabia Kingdom failure in managing the Hajj. Since this incident the tension between the two sides began to heat up. In addition to the tragedy that

occurred in Mina, the invasion of Saudi Arabia's army to Yemen was also a factor that supported the conflict between the two sides. There are many more factors behind the feud, as the author mentions earlier.

The Iranian Government became mad with the termination of diplomatic relations by the Saudi kingdom. The Iranian Government felt that they were taken maximum action against the rampage of the masses at the Saudi Arabian embassy in Tehran, but this action was ignored by the Saudi kingdom. Saudi Arabia saw that this incident was a good opportunity to further disguise Iran's position in the Middle East region, this can be seen from the support provided by the other Arab League states. Most Arab League states follow Saudi Arabia's action by termination of diplomatic ties toward Iran.

The feud between Saudi Arabia and Iran is an accumulation of long-standing conflicts. Each side has its own interests and support from states that also have historical feuds. Support from states with a history of conflict cannot be separated from the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The Saudi Arabian - Iran dispute has become an open field of various parties interested in getting its interest that since decades ago experienced dramatic fluctuation.