

CHAPTER II

FOREIGN POLICY OF SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia is the largest desert country in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia occupied most of the Arabian Peninsula¹⁹, bordering with the Red Sea in the west and the Persian Gulf in the east. It has borders in the north with Jordan, Iraq, and Kuwait; east coastline with the Persian Gulf; east with Qatar and United Arab Emirates (UAE); southeast with Oman; south with Yemen; and west coastline with Gulf of Aqaba and the Red Sea. It shares maritime borders with Bahrain, Egypt, Eritrea, Sudan and Iran. Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam and home to Islam's two holiest shrines in Mecca and Medina. Saudi governed by a monarchy; the king is head of both state and government. The king's official title is the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. Sunni Islam is the official religion.

To understand the military intervention of Saudi Arabia in Yemen, there is a need for understanding the general foreign policy of Saudi Arabia. In general, foreign policy can describe as all of the policies (security, political, and economic) adopted by the state to have a relation to the outside world.²⁰ From a state perspective, foreign policy is advised, shaped, and implemented by the practice of diplomacy.²¹ Therefore, the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia can define as any policies from the Saudi government conducted via diplomacy which impacts and aims to the actors and condition outside Saudi Arabia itself, or as Breuning puts it: "Foreign policy is defined as the totality of a country's policies toward and interactions with the environment beyond its borders."²²

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Saudi Arabia, its foreign policy influenced by geography, history, religion, economy, security, and politics. Diplomatically and

¹⁹ Arabian Peninsula, known also as *Jazirah Arab*.

²⁰ G.R. Berridge and Alan James, *Dictionary of Diplomacy*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003., p. 107.

²¹ R.P. Barston, *Modern Diplomacy*, New York: Routledge, 2013., p. 1.

²² Marijke Breuning, *Foreign Policy Analysis: A Comparative Introduction*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007., p. 5.

ideally the Saudi government stated that Saudi foreign policy conducted under the framework of good-neighbor policy, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, strengthen relations with the Gulf States and the countries of the Arabian Peninsula, strengthen relations with Arab and Islamic countries for the benefit of common interests of these countries, as well as advocate their issues, adopt non-alignment policy, establish cooperation relations with friendly countries, and play effective role in the international and regional organizations.²³

Saudi Foreign Policy is implemented in different circles based on the geographical spectrum. They are Gulf Circle, Arab Circle, Islamic Circle, and International Circle.

A. Gulf Circle

For Saudi Arabia, the Gulf Circle is the most important spectrum because of its proximity in the region. “the Gulf” is a term to refer the Arab states residing the Persian Gulf/Arab Gulf, which are Arab Saudi, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and Iraq. Among themselves, they refer to themselves as the Arab States of Arab Gulf and like to avoid using the term “Persian Gulf” to show that the region belongs to Arab.²⁴ These countries are close because they share blood relations, historical connections, unique geographical neighborhood, and similarities in a political and economic system.²⁵

A foreign policy of Saudi Arabia in Gulf Circle based on the principles of:

1. The responsibility of states for security and stability in the region;

²³ “*The Foreign Policy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*” (5 August 2016), retrieved 9 June 2018, from Ministry of Foreign Affairs Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: <http://www.mofa.gov.sa/sites/mofaen/KingdomForeignPolicy/Pages/ForeignPolicy24605.aspx>.

²⁴ Simon Henderson, “Understanding the Gulf States”, in *Focus Quarterly*, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2012.

²⁵ “The Foreign Policy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

2. Rights for security and independence based on their discretion;
3. Declining the interference of internal affairs and such interference or aggression against any Gulf State is considered aggression against all;
4. Strengthening cooperation via the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in political, economic, security, social, and cultural fields;
5. Policies coordination to respond to regional and international issues;
6. Solving disputes among countries through brotherhood and good neighboring principles;
7. Sound enthusiasts in economic coordination, primarily in oil resources.

To enact its policy, the main framework of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf State is the regional organization of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). This organization is formally known as Cooperation Council of Arab Gulf States and established in May 1981. GCC comprises of all Gulf States minus Iraq because among all the states Iraq showed no interest and had a different political system (a republic compared to the monarchy of other Gulf States). The GCC member states share similarities and links, which are:²⁶

1. The GCC states are in a single geographical region and share common frontiers that facilitate travel and promote trade.
2. The religious, linguistic and historical ties create a homogeneous unit, promoting mutual understanding on the official and public levels.
3. The GCC states enjoy a long history of bilateral, trilateral and multilateral cooperation in various vital areas.
4. The strategic location and possession of most of the world oil reserves lead the GCC states to realize the common dangers confronting them and

²⁶ Reeyadh Alasfoor, *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Its Nature and Achievements*, Lund University, 2007., p. 31.

to take the measures necessary to maintain the status quo.

5. The fact that they share similar political systems and interests, and face similar development problems, prompts them to pursue a policy of close cooperation and coordination.
6. The desire to avoid duplication of industrial projects and to create a common market that would absorb their industrial production has inspired close economic cooperation, and eventually integration and unity.

GCC is also somewhat proven to be effective regarding economic development.²⁷ In 2001, the Supreme Council of GCC set goals of a customs union by 2003, a common market by 2007, and a common currency by 2010, although not all can be achieved. These achievements are namely the GCC electricity grid interconnection, the GCC Dolphin pipeline which transports natural gas from Qatar-Oman-UAE, and infrastructure such as GCC-wide railway network linking Kuwait-Oman-Saudi Arabia-Bahrain-Qatar-UAE. The development can achieve thanks to the pursuit of trade and the freedom of movement of citizens and expats within GCC member states.²⁸ Moreover, GCC can grow bigger with the existence of Saudi Arabia as the biggest country in the GCC, because Saudi Arabia has 55 percent of GCC oil reserves, over 50 percent of GCC's GDP, and 75 percent of the total GCC population. These factors were spillover to GCC via free trade area policy in 1983, and the said common customs union and common market (capital market and product market.)²⁹

However, regarding security in the Gulf States, GCC is recorded as not effective enough as a platform for common regional security. In 1990, leaders of GCC countries Doha Declaration in which they recognize the weakness of GCC to

²⁷ Christian Koch, "The GCC as A Regional Security Organization", *KAS International Report*, 2010., p. 24.

²⁸ Nasser Al-Mawali, "Intra-Gulf Cooperation Council: Saudi Arabia Effect", *Journal of Economic Integration*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 2015, p. 539.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 539.

respond to a security issue, especially regarding the Iraqi invasion in Kuwait.³⁰ For Saudi Arabia itself, the issue of Iraq during the cold war seen as a security threat. Starting in 1970, the Baath regime of Iraq began to threaten Saudi by supporting the anti-monarchy forces like a Marxist government of South Yemen, left-wing opponents in North Yemen, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf in Oman.³¹ Thus, when Iraq was invading Kuwait, Saudi pursued its interest to prevent Iraqi influence in the region by joining the coalition of the United States and the West to against Iraq, with little regard to GCC. After the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2006, Iraq was then ruled by a Shiite regime who has oppressed during the rule of Saddam Hussein. This lead to another repression by the new Shiite regime to Sunni people, which some believed was the catalyst for an extremist group like ISIS to emerge and establish a caliphate in Iraq. This instability is another concern of the Saudi government which the fighters from Iraq will infiltrate Saudi border and escalate the insurgence of a terrorist and extremist group within Saudi Arabia itself.³²

B. Arab Circle

Saudi Arabia foreign policy principle in Arab Circle based on principles which are:³³

1. Emphasizing the importance of Saudi Arabia as the birthplace of Arab culture/nationalism and Islam.
2. Coordination among Arab countries to utilize potential and resources based on solidarity.
3. Preventing to do the intervention in Arab state internal problem.

³⁰ Koch, "The GCC as A Regional Security Organization", p. 26.

³¹ Jospheh McMillan, "Arab Saudi and Iraq: Oil, Region, and An Enduring Rivalry", United States Institute of Peace, Special Report, 2006., p. 5.

³² Ibid., p. 3.

³³ "The Foreign Policy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia", Ministry of Foreign Affairs Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

4. Commitment to the principle of Arab brotherhood through offering all types of support and assistance.

Most of the Saudi foreign policy aimed to Arab Circle conducted via Arab League. Formally known as League of Arab States, it was founded in March 1945 by Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. This organization has grown to have 22 members which are Lebanon, Iraq, Palestinian National Authority, Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Djibouti, Mauritania, and the Comoros, with Syria as suspended member following the civil war eruption in 2011. Established during the time of nationalism and self-determination awareness in the Arab region, according to Arab League Charter:

“The purpose of the League is to draw closer the relations between member States and co-ordinate their political activities with the aim of realizing a close collaboration between them, to safeguard their independence and sovereignty, and to consider in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries” (Article 2)³⁴

Unfortunately, on many occasions, the Arab League was deemed ineffective in achieving its purposes. The principle of unanimity in Arab League’s decision-making process is also an obstacle to achieve common agreement in strategic issues; however, even with unanimity Arab League could still produce more than 4000 resolutions from 1945 to 1980 but only 20 percent of them implemented. The lack of willingness from Arab states to fall within the framework of Arab League is due to lack of central authority or

³⁴ Raslan Ibrahim, “Regional Organizations and Internal Conflict: The Arab League and the Arab Spring”, *BPC Policy Brief*, Vol. 4, No. 2, BRICS Policy Center, 2016., p. 18.

understanding of regionalism. Arab state and the Middle East considered as a region without regionalism.³⁵

Also, although aimed to safeguard sovereignty, most Arab states were heavily getting involved in each other's internal affair at least until the 1980s. *First*, the employment of Peacekeeping Forces in Crisis between Iraq and Kuwait in 1961. This action was taken as protection force to respond the claim of Iraq over Kuwait after British withdraws from the region. *Second*, the employment of Arab Deterrent Force in Lebanon in 1976. The force was created by the Riyadh Summit to maintain stability and implement ceasefire agreement towards the conflicting parties in the Lebanese civil war. *Third*, taking a Major Decision Concerning the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait in 1990. This decision led to the deployment of Arab armies to liberate Kuwait from Iraq. *Fourth*, Arab League Observer Mission to Syria in 2011 to monitor the full implementation of the cessation of all acts of violence from any source in Syrian cities and neighborhoods, to ensure that the Syrian security forces. The "Shabiha" (violent armed groups) do not impede peaceful demonstrations, to work for the release of all detainees, to ensure the withdrawal of all armed forces from cities and neighborhoods where demonstrations were taking place, and to make sure that the Syrian government granted the media entry and freedom of movement in Syria. Saudi Arabia played a major role in all those actions.³⁶

The interest of Saudi Arabia concerning the Palestinian issue also falls within the Arab Circle, because Palestine is considered the only Arab people who are yet to free from occupation. Saudi Arabia and other Arab states share a common interest to acknowledge Palestine as a sovereign nation by helping to create a Palestinian National Council and Palestinian Liberation Organization at the Cairo Summit in

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 16-17.

³⁶ Hesham Youssef, "Mediation and Conflict Resolution in the Arab World: The Role of the Arab League", *OSCE Yearbook 2013*, Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, 2014., pp. 301-302.

1964 as organizations to represent Palestinian people. Palestine is now also a full member of Arab League.

In March 2002 in Beirut, the Arab League adopted the Arab Peace Initiative which was inspired by Saudi plan for Arab-Israeli conflict. The plan offered full normalization of relations with Israel and Israel was required to withdraw from occupied territory, recognize Palestinian independence, and find a just solution for Palestinian refugees. Although not all points implemented, and the formal diplomatic relations between Israel and Arab states not restored, but this is proven to be a high effort from Saudi to pursue the Palestinian cause. In 2006-2007, numerous talks between Saudi and Israel held.³⁷

In 2011, a series of uprising and revolution erupted in the Arab World which known as the Arab Spring. Started in Tunisia, the people demanded better living and economic condition and protested the current corrupt and authoritative regime. These autocratic regimes added to the misery of their people by tolerating and even encouraging, widespread corruption and sketchy legal systems that frightened away legitimate investors. As a result, foreign investment and development were replaced by those looking to exploit the region in cahoots with its semi-criminal elite.³⁸ The Arab Spring so spread is by the usage of social media to campaign and influence other Arab nations to do the same.

However, contrary to what Arab League did before the 1980s, during the Arab Spring issues Arab League was mostly silent. During the crisis in Tunisia, the Arab League did not do the action to mediate between the regime and the opposition. Even when the people ousted the Tunisian president, the Arab League only produces a diplomatic statement, saying that Tunisia should reach "... national consensus to bring the country out of this crisis in a way that guarantees respect for

³⁷ Josua Teitelbaum, "Saudi-Israeli Relations: Balancing Legitimacy and Security", BESA Center Perspectives Paper No. 228, 2013.

³⁸ Kenneth M. Pollack, "Understanding the Arab Awakening", in Kenneth M. Pollack, et al, *The Arab Awakening: America and the Transformation of the Middle East*, Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2011., p. 2.

the will of the Tunisian people”.³⁹ After the fall of the regime, Tunisia surely faced difficulties in democratization and justice, but the Arab League did not help Tunisia to overcome the problem. One of the reasons is that unlike other regional organization, the Arab League did not have a formal procedure in promoting democratization to its member.⁴⁰ The same also happened to Egypt where Arab League did not even call the coup by opposition Abdul Fatah Al-Sisi as a military coup but as desire and determination of people. When the regime of Al-Sisi conducted serious human rights violation, the Arab League also remained silent.

The condition began to be different for Libya and Syria. When the regime of Gaddafi conducted mass killing and other human rights violation, the Arab League suspended Libya’s membership from Arab League in February 2011. Then, in August 2011 Arab League acknowledge the National Transitional Council of Libya as the representative of Libya and accepted them in Arab League, showing that Arab League took decisive action and acknowledged the rebel group. Arab League even asked the UN to impose the no-fly zone over Libya and supported United Nations Security Council Resolution to take any means necessary to stop the violation by Gaddafi regime.⁴¹ The same also happened in Syria, where in November 2011 Arab League suspended Syrian membership and considered to acknowledge National Coalition of Syria (the rebel group) as the representative in 2013,⁴² but due to the unstable condition, Syria remains suspended from Arab League. Various conflict resolution plan conducted in Syria by the Arab League but failed to succeed. This is due to three reasons: (1) the conflict has been so internationalized and complex with the intervention of Iran, Hezbollah, Russia, and the US, and also other groups like ISIS

³⁹ Ibrahim, “Regional Organizations and Internal Conflict: The Arab League and the Arab Spring”, 2016., p. 24.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 24.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 25.

⁴² Martin Beck, *The Arab League: A New Policy Approach in the Making?*, Center for Mellemostudier, 2013.

and Kurdish liberation movement; (2) there is a lack of trust between Syria and other Arab League states, especially Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and; (3) other conflicts are happening at the same time in Arab World like in Bahrain, Yemen, Iraq, Tunisia, Libya, and other, forcing Arab League member to focus on their domestic problem rather than focusing more on mediating Syria.⁴³

For Saudi Arabia itself, Arab Saudi sees the Arab Uprisings as a threat.⁴⁴ *First*, the uprising threatens the status quo. Many of the regimes are authoritarian allies of Saudi Arabia such as Egypt and Bahrain. Saudi Arabia feared that the new opposition brought by the uprising would not in-line with the interest of Saudi Arabia. The unstable caused by the new government will also weaken the position and legitimacy of Saudi Arabia as a powerful state in the region. *Second*, the uprising demanded democracy and human rights, things that Arab Saudi failed to address properly. The demand for democratization from the uprisings is feared to be influencing Saudi Arabia.

Third, the disruption in the region is feared to open expansion for Iranian influence. The condition if Syria, Yemen, and Bahrain are accused by the Saudi government to be the ground for Iranian exerting its influence in groups within the countries. *Fourth*, the uprisings can be a catalyst for the Muslim Brotherhood movement to rise again in the region. Saudi Arabia has a long history of perceiving the Muslim Brotherhood as a threat to the royal family and the regime. *Last*, the Saudi government was outraged because they claim the US supported Arab Spring by giving aid to groups aiming for establishing democracy. Saudi Arabia believed that US action was outraging because they supported the uprisings instead of their old allies of an authoritarian regime like Saudi

⁴³ Ibrahim, "Regional Organizations and Internal Conflict: The Arab League and the Arab Spring", 2016., p. 27.

⁴⁴ James L. Gelvin, "Why is Saudi Arabia suddenly so paranoid?" (20 October 2017) retrieved 9 June 2018, from The Conversation: <https://theconversation.com/why-is-saudi-arabia-suddenly-so-paranoid-85784>.

Arabia, who has been allying with the United States since World War II.

C. Islamic Circle

For Saudi Arabia, Islam is the main characteristic of the nation and has great importance in shaping Saudi foreign policy. To legitimize its position as the “leader” of the Islamic world, kings of Saudi Arabia uses the title “Custodian of Two Holy Mosques,” referring themselves as the guardian of holy mosques in Mecca and Medina. This title was a ceremonial and cultural title, used many times by previous Islam leaders in history. King Faisal was the first to use the title, following by King Fahd, King Abdullah, and King Salman.⁴⁵ Since the foundation of Saudi Arabia, “... the Kingdom works out to devote and dedicate Her potentials and resources to serve issues of Islamic World and achieve the motives of solidarity and unity based on the fact of belongingness to one belief.”⁴⁶

Saudi foreign policy in the Islamic World based on the following principles:⁴⁷

1. Achieve comprehensive Islamic solidarity.
2. Open new horizons for economic cooperation among Islamic countries aiming at the support of their potentials and resources on different levels.
3. Stand against different types and techniques of cultural overflow and intellectual invasion that threaten the Islamic World.
4. Workout to develop the Organization of Islamic Conference and support its activities to achieve more effective in confronting the issues encountered by the Islamic World.
5. Activate the role of Islamic countries within the framework of new world order. Provide assistance and support to Muslim minorities

⁴⁵ Galal Fakkar, “Story Behind the King’s Title” (27 January 2015), retrieved 10 June 2018, from Arab News: <http://www.arabnews.com/saudi-arabia/news/695351>.

⁴⁶ “The Foreign Policy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

worldwide, and look after their rights by the principles of international law.

6. Introduce the real and true image of Islam and its tolerance law Shari'a and protect Islam from all the clear accusations and slanders addressed to Islam, such as; terrorism and human rights violations.

The main instrument of Saudi foreign policy in the Islamic World is the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). This organization previously called Organization of the Islamic Conference. It was founded in 1969 as the reaction of the criminal action toward Al-Aqsa Mosque in the occupied Jerusalem. Now, with 57-member countries, the OIC becomes the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations. Based on its platform, the organization is found as "... the collective voice of the Muslim World and ensuring to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim World in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world."⁴⁸ By 2011, its name changed into the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

The success of OIC could be seen through its various steps in promoting the welfare and spirit of Islam. By 2007, OIC gains its importance in the global affair through the interest of the US to send a special envoy to OIC. According to President Bush:

"Our special envoy will listen to and learn from representatives from Muslim states, and will share with them America's views and values,"

"This is an opportunity for Americans to demonstrate to Muslim communities our interest in respectful dialogue and continued friendship,"⁴⁹

⁴⁸ "About OIC" (2013), retrieved 10 June 2018, from Organization of Islamic Cooperation: http://www.oic-oci.org/oicv2/page/?p_id=52&p_ref=26&lan=en.

⁴⁹ Ben Feller, "Bush to Name Envoy to Islamic Conference" (27 June 2007), retrieved 10 June 2018, from The Guardian: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/latest/story/0,-6740455,00.html>.

OIC also responds swiftly towards actions which disgracing Islam. In 2008, OIC condemned a film from Dutch filmmaker which disgrace Quran and Prophet Muhammad. OIC stated that “The film was a deliberate act of discrimination against Muslims” that aimed to “provoke unrest and intolerance.”⁵⁰ A similar act of condemnation also done in 2005 when a Danish Newspaper published a cartoon of Muhammad which OIC claimed to be offensive and controversial.⁵¹

One of the main concerns of OIC is the issue of Palestinian people. OIC formally support the two-state solution for Israel and Palestine. OIC was an instrumental actor in the efforts to UN General Assembly’s approval of Palestine as observer member and has pressed the international community to support the establishment of an independent Palestinian State.⁵² Following the tension in 2016, members of OIC held a meeting to discuss the banning of Israeli product to hurt Israeli economy because of harsh action toward Palestine.

Regarding the declaration of President Trump to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, members of OIC gather in Istanbul and produce Istanbul Declaration, which condemned the actions of the US and in turn declared that East Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine.⁵³

OIC also contributed to a peace process and conflict resolution in Muslim countries in Africa. In Somalia, OIC tried to establish a “Contact Group” to mediate between the

⁵⁰ “Muslims condemn Dutch lawmaker’s film” (2008), retrieved 11 June 2018, from CNN: <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/europe/03/28/islam.film/index.html>.

⁵¹ Daniel Howden, “How a meeting of leaders in Mecca set off the cartoon wars around the world” (10 February 2006), retrieved 11 June 2018, from The Independent: https://web.archive.org/web/20080708204534/http://news.independent.co.uk/world/middle_east/article344482.ece.

⁵² Victor Luiz Gutierrez Castillo, “The Organization of Islamic Cooperation in contemporary international society”, *Revista Electrónica de Estudios Internacionales*, 2014., p. 19.

⁵³ Satuk Bugra Kutlugun and Nilay Kar Onum, “OIC Istanbul Declaration: E Jerusalem capital of Palestine” (14 December 2017), retrieved 11 June 2018, from The Muslim News: <http://muslimnews.co.uk/news/palestine/oic-istanbul-declaration-e-jerusalem-capital-palestine/>.

conflicting parties. In a military intervention in Ethiopia in 2006, OIC took parts in talks that resulted in the 2008 Djibouti Peace Agreement. OIC also played an important role in coordinating relief efforts in the Horn of Africa in 2011. OIC invited many Muslim NGOs to assist Somali people, and open office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Mogadishu and became the representation to monitor Somalia to an international community. In Mali, OIC condemned the action of radical Malian forces and published the document of Final Communiqué of the Islamic Summit held in Cairo in February 2013 that describes terrorism as contrary to “the values of tolerance, peace, and moderation advanced by noble Islam.”⁵⁴

Outside of OIC, Saudi Arabia saw the Islamic Circle as the ground of rivalry with Iran. Saudi Arabia and Iran are competing for influence in the Islamic World, where Saudi Arabia represent Sunni, and Iran represents Shiah, the two big branches of Islam. Saudi tried to assert its legitimacy as Islamic leader by calling Saudi King the Custodian of Two Holy Mosques. However, in the Shiite perspective, this claim was illegitimate because Shiah rejects Sunni’s succession to power after the Prophet. Even though Saudi has the real power of two holiest Muslim sites, but Iran keeps believing that Shiah and Iran possess legitimate succession of Prophet and Islam.⁵⁵ According to Noi, both Saudi Arabia and Iran present themselves as a role model of an Islamic state in the Middle East after the Arab Spring. Saudi Arabia shows how strong monarchy with Islamic value and sharia law can create a strong nation, while Iran presented how a republic with a central religious figure (Khomeinist concept) can also be an alternative.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Castillio, “The Organization of Islamic Cooperation in contemporary international society”, 2014., pp. 16-17.

⁵⁵ McMillan, “Arab Saudi and Iraq: Oil, Region, and An Enduring Rivalry”, 2006., p. 10.

⁵⁶ Aylin Unver Noi, “A Clash of Islamic Models”, *Current Trend in Islamist Ideology*, Vol. 15, 2013.

The rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran are so competitive up until the point where despite Saudi Arabia sees Israel-Palestine conflict as a factor undermining stability, Saudi still perceives Iran as its main security and ideological problem.⁵⁷ We can see this situation from the relation between Saudi Arabia and Israel; Saudi Arabia is not about to give up its position in the Islamic world by allying with Israel, the perceived enemy of Islam, even though they both have cooperation in strategic issues particularly to combat terrorism.⁵⁸ Iran tried to exert its influence by supporting Shiah groups within countries in the Middle East like in Yemen, Bahrain, and Syria. To contain this, Arab Saudi does not only enact a hard policy like direct containment and direct support to Sunni groups but also by promoting the Sunni Islam in education and culture. For example, Saudi Arabia financed the Islamic institutions in Africa, Russia, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, America, and Canada. Part of the Saudi educational program was established by King Fahad's donation program, which focused on delivering a translated copy of Holy Quran to pilgrims visiting Saudi Arabia in their languages and delivering copies of the Holy Quran to civil and governmental organizations worldwide.⁵⁹

D. International Circle

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affair of Saudi Arabia:

In the international circle, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is very keen to establish equal relations with the great power which is connected with the Kingdom through a series of interests; these interests emerged as a result of Kingdom's growing major role in both Arab and Islamic

⁵⁷ Udi Dekel and Yoel Guzansky, "Israel and Saudi Arabia: Is the Enemy of My Enemy My Friend?", *INSS Insight*, No. 500, 2013., p. 3.

⁵⁸ Teitelbaum, "Saudi-Israeli Relations: Balancing Legitimacy and Security", 2013.

⁵⁹ Abdullah Khuliyf A. Alanazi, "Saudi Arabia's implementation of soft power policy to confront Iran's obvious threats", *Master Thesis*, Naval Postgraduate School, 2015., p. 43.

worlds. Where the Kingdom seeks out through both worlds to expand the Saudi move on the level of international society and therefore tries to react with the effective and significant international policy centers, taking into consideration the consequences and responsibilities resulting from this policy.⁶⁰

Some principles of Saudi foreign policy in International Circles including:

1. Willingness to react with international society through a commitment to UN Charter, international agreements, and the basis of international law.
2. Commitment to stay from interfering with the internal affairs of other countries and condemn the violence that affects international security and peace.
3. Stability of international oil markets and develop trade on fair basis based on free market economies.
4. The moral principle of supporting victims of natural disasters, homeless, and refugee in many countries of the world.

One of the main activities of Saudi foreign policy in International Circles is its relationship with the United States. The United States-Saudi relation is known as close and influential, starting with the meeting of President Roosevelt and King Abdul Aziz in 1945. The US sees Saudi Arabia as a vital actor in delivering US interest in the Middle East. Firstly, as containment to Soviet influence in the region, then in the 21st century to put pressure on Iraq, Iran's nuclear issue, and on a war on terrorism. The influential driving factor for US-Saudi close relation is oil. The establishment of Arab

⁶⁰ "The Foreign Policy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia", Ministry of Foreign Affairs Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

American Company (ARAMCO) is known as the momentum of US-Saudi relation before World War II.⁶¹

Another important instrument for Saudi foreign policy is its oil. Oil become 80 percent of Saudi Arabia income from export and its used for many decades as a tool to influence the situation of other country and region. In the 1970s, to put pressure on Israel and Western countries supporting Israel in the war against Arab states, Saudi Arabia put an oil embargo to make oil price expensive and cripple down economies of Israel's supporters.⁶² However, recent economic condition suggests that oil price is falling globally, and Saudi government believed it needs to find other economic strategies and stop depending on oil too much. That era is where the recent foreign policy of Saudi Arabia tries to open to more relation, namely China and Russia. Especially China, where it also fits with China's effort in global economic dominance.⁶³

A foreign policy of Saudi Arabia can illustrate as a model below:

⁶¹ Anthony H. Cordesman, *Saudi Arabia and the United States: Common Interests and Continuing Sources of Tension*, Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2016.

⁶² Ahmad Anwar, "Rasionalitas Riyadh dalam Dinamika Hubungan Saudi dan Amerika", *Jurnal PIR*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2016.

⁶³ Mishaal Al Gergawi, "China Is Eyeballing a Major Strategic Investment in Saudi Arabia's Oil" (26 October 2017), retrieved 12 June 2018, from Foreign Policy: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/10/26/china-is-eyeballing-a-major-strategic-investment-in-saudi-arabias-oil/>.

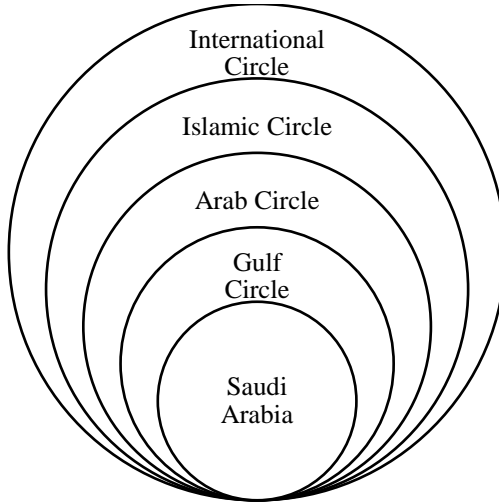


Diagram 2.1
Foreign policy circles of Saudi Arabia