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CONTESTING CONCEPTIONS OF THE MUSLIM WORLD: THE
CASES OF SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN DURING THE FIRST GULF
WAR

Bilkent University 2025

CONTESTING CONCEPTIONS OF THE MUSLIM
WORLD: THE CASES OF SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN
DURING THE FIRST GULF WAR

A Master's Thesis

by
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Ankara
July 2025



To Dayı People and my loved ones

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The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

THE DEPARTMENT OF
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BILKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA

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By Muhammet Furkan Küçükmeral

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in
scope
and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of International Relations.

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ABSTRACT

CONTESTING CONCEPTIONS OF THE MUSLIM WORLD: THE CASES OF SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN DURING THE FIRST GULF WAR

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July 2025

This thesis explores the construction of the Muslim world as a referent object in the Islamist security discourses of Saudi Arabia and Iran, adopting Bilgin's analytical framework for its critical perspective on regional security. This framework challenges the traditional statist, military-focused Cold War Security Studies and emphasizes the co-constitutive relationship between (inventing) region and (conceptions and practices of) security. In so doing, Bilgin distinguishes between four regions as "geopolitical inventions of security". One of these is the 'Muslim World', shaped by spatial representations and insecurities of different actors. Over the years, both Saudi Arabia and Iran have appropriated the Muslim world as their security referent. However, it remains unclear whether they share the same approach to the Muslim world or adopt similar approaches to regional security. In this

thesis, I adopt the First Gulf War (1991) as a reference point, and apply this analytical framework to examine how these two actors articulate, define, and seek to secure the Muslim world through an analysis of their discourses.

Keywords: Muslim world, regional security, First Gulf War, Islamist security discourse, Saudi Arabia, Iran



ÖZET

MÜSLÜMAN DÜNYASININ ÇATIŞAN KAVRAMSALLAŞTIRMALARI: BİRİNCİ KÖRFEZ SAVAŞI SÜRECİNDE SUUDİ ARABİSTAN VE İRAN ÖRNEKLERİ

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Temmuz 2025

Bu tez, Bilgin'in bölgesel güvenlik üzerine eleştirel bakış açısına sahip analitik çerçevesini benimseyerek Suudi Arabistan ve İran'ın İslamcı güvenlik söylemlerinde Müslüman dünyasının referans obje olarak inşasını incelemektedir. Bu çerçeve geleneksel devletçi, askeriye odaklı Soğuk Savaş Güvenlik Çalışmaları'na meydan okumakta ve bölgenin 'icadı' ile güvenlik 'kavramları ve uygulamaları' arasındaki karşılıklı kurucu ilişkiyi vurgulamaktadır. Bunu yaparken Bilgin dört bölgeyi "jeopolitik güvenlik icatları" olarak ayırmaktadır. Bu icatlardan biri, farklı aktörlerin uzamsal temsilleri ve güvensizlikleri tarafından şekillendirilen 'Müslüm Dünyası'dır. Yıllar içerisinde hem Suudi Arabistan hem de İran Müslüman dünyasını kendi güvenlik referansları olarak sahiplenmiştir. Ancak Müslüman dünyasına ve bölgesel güvenliğe benzer yaklaşımları benimseyip benimsemedikleri

belirsizliđini korumaktadır. Bu tezde, Birinci Körfez Savaşı'nı (1991) referans noktası alıyorum ve bu analitik çerçeveyi, iki aktörün söylemlerinin bir analizini yaparak Müslüman dünyasını nasıl ifade ettiklerini, tanımladıklarını ve güvenli hale getirmeye çalıştıklarını incelemek için uyguluyorum.

Anahtar kelimeler: Müslüman dünyası, bölgesel güvenlik, Birinci Körfez Savaşı, İslami güvenlik söylemi, Suudi Arabistan, İran



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my greatest thanks to Prof. Pınar Bilgin for her incredible patience and for everything I learned from her throughout the years. Her guidance and support were irreplaceable. Simply put, this thesis would not have been possible without her.

I would also like to thank Onur T. Karabıçak for helping me stand up again through every difficulty, for the countless hours of conversation, and for being a true friend. To the incredibly intelligent, humorous, and loyal members of “Dayı People,” M. Ceyhun Tufan, Kerem Hacıoğlu, Akif Kutlu, M. Enes Erdem, and A. Tutku Bağcı, as well as the Albağlar family, and Rana & Serra Ünalı sisters — your friendship, warmth, quality coffee, and shared memories made this period all the more meaningful.

I am also grateful to my partner and my family for their outright love, support, and understanding even during the most challenging and stressful of times. The support I felt despite the distances and hardships was unimaginable. I am so grateful that I have a great many family and friends for whom the distance has never mattered.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the construction of the Muslim world as a referent object in the Islamist security discourses of Saudi Arabia and Iran, adopting Bilgin's (Bilgin, 2004; 2019) analytical framework for its critical perspective on regional security. This framework argues against the traditional statist, military-focused Cold War Security Studies and emphasizes the co-constitutive relationship between (inventing) region and (conceptions and practices of) security. In so doing, Bilgin distinguishes between four regions as "geopolitical inventions of security". One of these is the 'Muslim World', shaped by spatial representations and insecurities of different actors. Over the years, while both Saudi Arabia and Iran have appropriated the Muslim world as their security referent. However, it remains unclear whether they share the same approach to the Muslim world or adopt similar approaches to regional security. Toward this end, this thesis aims to answer the question, "How did Saudi Arabia and Iran discursively construct the Muslim world as a referent object of security during the First Gulf War (1991)?"

The main elements of the central research question may require further explanation. Saudi Arabia was the first to introduce this alternative spatial representation, the Muslim world. Hence, the agency of Saudi Arabia in terms of the commencement of this approach to regional security should be recognized, and its role analyzed. Later on, Iran, today known as the bearer of the Islamist security discourse, appeared as Saudi Arabia's rival. In order to understand how the Islamist security discourse is constituted, these two actors warrant a closer analysis.

1979 constituted a turning point for the Muslim World Approach (MWA). With the emergence of the Islamic revolution in Iran, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the emergence of regional opposition from state to non-state actors, the MWA began to evolve. The Islamic Revolution in Iran also contributed to the proliferation of Islamic organizations and created different perspectives on what the Muslim world is and how to secure it (Bilgin, 2000, p. 31). The Afghan jihad against the Soviets provided the jihadists with the necessary secure ground to get ideologically and militarily indoctrinated (Mamdani 2005). The US policy of training and arming the guerrillas to fight against the Soviets paved the ground for global jihad and helped create the modern jihad culture (Uz-Zaman, 2012, p. 52). Mamdani argues that before the "Afghan jihad", the right-wing Islamists did not have a solidified program "outside of isolated acts of urban terror." It was an American jihad through which the US created an "infrastructure of terror" with the help of the Pakistani intelligence service ISI and Saudi support of doctrine and recruitment (2005, pp. 120-122). Similarly, Gerges argues that never before in modern times did this many Muslims from around the world separately travel to a Muslim country in an attempt to fight against a common enemy (2009, p. 82).

After 1979, militant political Islam was on the rise, allowing the jihadists to recruit more for their various organizations and further inciting the ambitions of the jihadists. From then on, the jihadists were ready for fighting against the "near enemy", which they considered those Muslim states and rulers that they deem are impious, and as enablers of un-Islamic influences on the Muslim world (Gerges, 2009, pp. 80-82). After these developments, Saudi

Arabia began losing its role as the state-level leading actor of the MWA to regional security (Bilgin, 2019, p. 166).

Although both Iran and Saudi Arabia discursively present the Muslim world as a referent object, they have differences. This leads to the core research question: “How did Saudi Arabia and Iran discursively construct the Muslim world as a referent object of security during the First Gulf War (1991)?”

1.1. The Purpose of This Thesis

The students of mainstream IR chose state-centrism as a methodological approach. However, it eventually reinforced statism and rendered international agents and referents other than the state invisible. It resulted in overlooking all other referents and agents as a normative implication of a methodological choice in the security studies (Bilgin, 2002, p. 25). Studying the use of the Muslim world as a referent object in the discourses of state and non-state actors allows for overcoming such state-centrism in two ways. Firstly, the Muslim world is a non-state concept with an ambiguous scope of use. Through this concept, the actors may imply many geographical locations to construct a security referent. However, each different way of using this concept will have a mark of its maker. Namely, the subject that attempts to utilize this ambiguous concept of the Muslim world may attach a different meaning to what it entails and how it should be secured. Hence, studying how the Muslim world is constructed as a referent object can allow the students of international security to understand further how security

discourse constitutes referent objects, particularly in cases where the concept in question has contested historical and spatial meanings (Bilgin, 2019, pp. 135-136).

Secondly, the thesis aims to capture how constructing the Muslim world as a referent object allows for specific positions, such as defender of the Muslim world, for those utilizing Islamist security discourse. This thesis also narrows the scope by focusing on a single historical period, the First Gulf War, and allows for the analysis of how Saudi Arabia and Iran's approaches to regional security played out in a crisis. Although this thesis was initially intended to include non-state actors, such as Hezbollah and Al-Qaeda, there were very limited sources to conduct proper discourse analysis. Hence, this thesis narrowed its focus down to state-level actors.

1.2. Research Design

In Bilgin's framework, alternative spatial representations and different conceptions of a region are prioritized differently to respond to varying threats based on other competing security conceptions (2019, p. 11). That is to say, actors have different answers to the following questions: "What is regional security?", "Whose security?", and "How to achieve regional security?". By asking the relevant actors these questions, this thesis aims to understand how these actors approach the security of their defined referent object and whether they mean the same referent. Toward this end, the thesis examines the speeches of Saudi and Iranian officials at the United Nations General

Assembly (UNGA) and United Nations Security Council (UNSC) during the First Gulf War.

The 1991 war serves as a historical reference point for three reasons. The first reason is that the War posed a challenge to both Saudi Arabia and Iran and their Islamist security discourse, as to how they conceive the security of their regimes, that of the Muslim world, and how to achieve regional security. The second is that the First Gulf War was the first regional crisis after 1979, during which Saudi Arabia invited a large-scale stationing of non-Muslim foreign troops to deploy on its land against another regional actor. Third, this invitation of permanent stationing to the US military in Saudi Arabia played a significant role in inciting further reaction against the US presence in the region and in what Gerges refers to as the globalization of jihad (Gerges, 2009, p. 57). Consequently, this event marks a beginning for violent Muslim non-state actors finding a wider audience among the Muslim peoples around the world, particularly in the Middle East. Examining the UNGA and UNSC speeches of these actors during this war allows this thesis to assess the change and continuities in discourse during this critical juncture.

1.3. Thesis Organization

The thesis consists of five chapters. The second chapter the analytical framework, key concepts, and theoretical background. It also offers brief histories of how these three actors started or joined the fray of the Muslim world as a security referent.

The third and fourth chapters offer the case studies. Chapter 3 examines how Saudi Arabia reacted to the First Gulf War in 1991, and analyzes how it defines regional security, what its referent object is, and how Saudi Arabia attempts to secure its referent object. Using Bilgin's analytical framework for regional security (Bilgin, 2019), the same analysis is conducted on Iran in Chapter 4. In these chapters, I also utilize secondary sources when there is no sufficient official discourse that this thesis might utilize. Having analyzed how the Islamist security discourses of the selected actors played out in this critical juncture, Chapter 5 summarizes and concludes the analyses.

CHAPTER II: ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The primary purpose of this chapter is to explain the analytical framework used in this thesis. The first section starts by briefly explaining the evolution of security studies. This section aims to inform the reader of the relevant literature on security and regionalism. The second section focuses on the co-constitutive process of inventing regions, conceptions, and security practices. After explaining the core concepts and the relations between them, this section continues by expounding on the questions used in the analysis and how this analytical framework is used in this thesis.

2.1. Security and Regionalism

Security studies did not constitute a unified school of thought throughout the Cold War. Despite that, its fundamental precepts were shaped by the political context of the Cold War and a realist framework that privileged the state as the central provider and referent of security. The development of the field was closely tied to Cold War insecurities and policies of the US, which encouraged a simplified, state-centric outlook that favored national security and claimed scientific order over analytical complexity (Tickner in Bilgin, 2019, p. 24).

The mainstream studies and theories were also mostly produced and reproduced by the US and European academics (Hoffman, 1995, pp. 236-237). Namely, the main assumptions of the Cold War Security Studies were kept reproducing state-centric studies, often disregarding and silencing

studies and theories attempting to focus on subjects and referents other than the state. However, adopting a state-centric perspective for the sake of neatness results in the loss of crucial aspects, as with all simplifications (Enloe in Bilgin, 2019, p. 25).

Over time, the richness of classical realism was overshadowed by a more instrumental and military-focused version. This version assumes that there is harmony between the interests of states and their citizens. The analysts and scholars at the time working within the traditional paradigm claimed that their privileging of the state can be justified since they assumed that security for the state is a precondition for the security of the citizen within that state. Namely, this understanding of security brought about a normative justification for its attribution of primacy to the state. Accordingly, states were responsible for providing security to their citizens at the domestic level, and the primary threat would emanate from other states. Hence, security of the state was “regarded as synonymous with the security of its inhabitants” (Wyn Jones, 1999, pp. 98-99). This history of dominating security studies via the intellectual hegemony of realism (Acharya, 1997, p. 299) constituted the states as the main referent object and primary agents in security studies. It ultimately led to the interpretations of states being treated as ends, not as means (Bilgin, 2002, p. 102).

This approach not only disregarded that some states would be less capable or willing to provide their citizens with security, but also that they could be the main source of insecurity for their inhabitants. Yet this approach was not without its critics, and voices from the Third World began emerging in the

1980s (Korany in Bilgin, 2019, p. 24). They were critical of the Western origins of Cold War Security Studies and often emphasized that students of security studies should examine the domestic sources of insecurity in the Third World and dimensions of security other than military (Al-Mashat in Bilgin, 2004, p. 24).

It was within this context that critics began to challenge the fundamental assumptions of Cold War Security Studies. The Palme Commission, which coined and popularized the term “common security,” rejected the existing zero-sum thinking and practices. Particularly, regarding the fact that in an event of nuclear war, both sides would lose, they should work together (Møller, as cited in Bilgin, 2019, p. 28). The Commission viewed security as something that should be shared. Hence, it is famously argued that “security can best be achieved with, rather than against the adversary”, for which they encouraged arms control, disarmament, and confidence-building measures (Wiseman, 2005, p. 46).

Peace Researchers such as Johan Galtung proposed that peace and security cannot be achieved without addressing structural violence and social injustice. They promoted expanding the understanding of peace beyond the mere absence of war (Galtung in Bilgin, 2004, p. 21). That is, Galtung makes a distinction between personal and structural violence, as well as direct and indirect violence. Focusing on the subject-action-object relation, Galtung argues that while we can trace the consequences back to personal and direct violence, it is not meaningful to trace structural violence back. This is due to the embedded nature of violence, which is built into the structure, showing up

as “unequal power and consequently unequal life chances” (Galtung, 1969, pp. 170-171)

These ideas inspired the scholars of the Third World, where security was seen not only in military terms but also in relation to economic, political, and environmental issues. Not only the military build-up, but also ensuring domestic security through state-building, and maintaining the stability of food, health, and trade systems were on the agenda of the Third World search for security (Thomas, cited in Bilgin, 2004, p. 22). As Bilgin, Booth, and Wyn Jones captured it: “real peace and security was not just the absence of war, but rather depended on the establishment of the conditions for social justice and mutual understanding” (1998, p. 135).

After the end of the Cold War, the debate over the meaning of security further expanded. Scholars such as Buzan argued that security has a multidimensional character. To address it, these scholars, primarily the Copenhagen School, incorporated political, societal, economic, and environmental dimensions into the concept of security. They noted that the military aspect had been emphasized disproportionately (Krause, 1998, pp. 309-310). However, moving beyond state-centrism did not necessarily follow the effort of broadening. Although Buzan pointed to alternative referents and criticized statism, he ultimately kept attributing primacy to the state and ended up reinforcing statism (Buzan, as cited in Bilgin, 2004, p. 33). This statism not only equated security and military issues for a long time but also reinforced and reified the primacy of the state employing its military capabilities in providing security.

Booth and Wheeler, on the other hand, offered a sharper critique and a different perspective. Vis-à-vis the call for “broadening” and “updating” the notion of security, they called for a more holistic approach. It was threefold: A new conception of security should focus on not just on the state, but should include individuals and world community as a whole; secondly, this new conception should be future oriented, rather than the status quo, and should seek progressive change; lastly, while removing the attributed synonymity between security and military issues, it should encompass a broad agenda of threats, that prevent groups and individuals living a full and free live, as well as different referents (1992, p. 5). As Booth later clarified in a Coxian way, there is nothing natural about security, and that it is always “from somewhere, for someone, and for some purpose” (Booth, 2007, p. 150), meaning that assumptions underpinning traditional frameworks cannot be seen as neutral or value-free (Booth, 2005, p. 9). In this sense, Critical Security Studies (CSS) went further by both broadening and deepening the analysis of security. In the following decades, the field saw a merger between the debates of broadening and deepening, which resulted in the explicit debates on the concept of security (Buzan and Hansen, 2009, p. 189).

In contributing to these debates, Booth argued that one’s basic ideas about how the world goes around, and the struggle between the ideas of different agents, shape how one grasps security (Booth, 2007, p. 150). Hence, since there is nothing natural and objective in security, “security agendas and policies can be traced back to one’s basic political assumptions.” These assumptions pave the way for how one reacts against an international phenomenon (Booth, 2007, p. 155). Following this argument, the construction

of Critical Security Studies should be based on an ontology that recognizes and embraces multiple referents, and an epistemology that resists naturalist and positivist claims to knowledge that assume we can scientifically access the social world the same way as we do the natural world. Thus, Booth binds the broadening and deepening together, but his approach to broadening and deepening does not mean that Critical Security Studies tries to turn every political problem into a part of the security agenda; on the contrary, it attempts to turn security issues into a question of political theory, which Booth calls politicizing security (Booth, 2005, p. 14).

While the Copenhagen School attempted to extend the security agenda to include five sectors (military, political, economic, societal, and environmental) (Buzan et al., 1998), Booth argued that such broadening remains conservative if it is rooted in the same neorealist assumptions (Booth, 2005, p. 15). The Copenhagen School did not follow the narrow scope brought about by realists that the discipline studies the “threat, use, and control of military force” (Walt, as cited in Krause and Williams, 1997, p. 38). Similarly, Walt also argued that broadening security would result in less attention paid to military issues, and accordingly, potential intellectual incoherence in the field, with the attention and efforts devoted to studying different threats to security (Walt in Bilgin, 2004, p. 28). Nonetheless, although the Copenhagen School attempted to broaden security through a sectoral approach, Booth argues that it still remains within a neorealist perspective. The position attributed to the state still remains conservative. That is, the starting point for analysis should be deepening, and every security agenda should be traced back to the interests and ideas shaping it (Booth, 2005, p. 14). Booth

suggests that critical perspectives explore different levels and drill down into theories and practices of security to discover the political and philosophical assumptions behind the security agendas. Exploring the different referents of security is a significant part of this drilling down. Namely, as long as the Copenhagen School falls short of achieving this drilling-down, its perspective remains conservative (Booth, 2005, p. 15). Accordingly, the analyst's task becomes one of examining how the assumptions about how the world works shape security conceptions, for "concepts such as 'national security' are not reactions to the so-called real world," but are derived from political and philosophical assumptions (Booth, 2007, p. 150). As Walker also noted, there is more to broadening and deepening security. An understanding of what it means to be secure should be accompanied by whose security is at stake, and what and whom one is to be secured from (Walker, 2002, p. 65).

This critical perspective also allows for a more thorough account of regionalism and regional security. Rather than taking a "region" as a fixed geographical entity, and accepting pre-given assumptions about where a region is, who is included and excluded, it allows for focusing on how regions are constituted through security conceptions and practices of a myriad of actors, and vice versa. That is, despite contributions to regional security studies that attempted to present a different perspective, some remained state-centric (Bilgin, 2019, p. 2). Most of the studies attempting to incorporate non-military issues with a critical perspective either bracketed region or security in regional security (Bilgin, 2019, pp. 9–10). However, most of these do not account for how various geopolitical inventions of security shape regional insecurities, and how insecurities of its makers shape the

geopolitical inventions of security (Bilgin, 2004, p. 9). Hence, apart from examining how actors conceive and practice security, one needs to leave aside the assumption that regions are eternal or natural. Hence, rather than bracketing the region in regional security, examining the political process of inventing regions is of great importance, which would otherwise lead to forgetting the political nature of regions.

On this basis, the challenge is not the absence of regional cooperation, but the presence of multiple, competing visions of “region” and “security,” each rooted in alternative understandings (Bilgin, 2019, p. 11). In examining multiple and contending visions for security, one needs to recognize the need to recognize “the invented character” of regions (Ó Tuathail and Dalby, as cited in Bilgin, 2004, p. 9). That is, political geography, or critical geopolitics, needs to recognize “interpretative politics of reading and writing about region” (Ó Tuathail, 1996, p. 113). That is, since writing and reading about regions is unavoidably textual, and it often results in a particular way of spatial thinking, which orders various actors, elements, and locations simultaneously (Ó Tuathail and Dalby, 1998, p. 1). Hence, the invented character of the regions should be taken into account (Taylor, as cited in Bilgin, 2004, p. 9), considering that even “some of the most taken-for-granted regions such as Southeast Asia and Latin America...have their roots in the security conceptions and practices of their inventors” (Wigen and Lewis, as cited in Bilgin, 2004, p. 26). Against this backdrop, Bilgin’s framework opens both concepts, region and security, to critical analysis, challenging assumptions inherited from the Cold War and insisting on taking seriously the multiplicity

of insecurities voiced by different actors, and how their representations are constituted.

2.2. A New Analytical Framework for Analyzing Regional Security

Building on Booth and Wheeler's ideational contribution to how security should be studied in 'Europe' (Booth and Wheeler, 1992), Bilgin offered a new analytical framework for analyzing regional security. Apart from Booth and Wheeler's works, Waever's work on three different visions of Europe based on the insecurities and practices of its makers, Germany, France, and Russia, is also one of the pieces on which this framework is built (Waever, 1990, p. 479). Differentiating itself from traditional approaches to regional security, Bilgin's framework opens up the concept of regional security and argues for inquiring into the co-constitutive relation between the conception and practices of security and the invention of the region. The framework categorizes four different regional security approaches in the Middle East. These regional security approaches are related to alternative spatial representations. That is, various conceptions of a region respond to different kinds of threats and insecurities (Bilgin, 2019, p. 11). This inquiry is based on the argument that multiple visions of security in "the Middle East" produce multiple "Middle East". Multiple Middle Easts and regionalisms are "shaped by the insecurities who voice them" (Bilgin 2019, p. 2; 2000, 11).

In conjunction with the debate over the referent object, the framework goes beyond rendering the existence of agents and referents other than states visible. Bilgin suggests that the students of Critical Security Studies should

pay attention to how people and states of a region conceive security, what they want to secure as referent, and how security should be established in that specific part of the world (Bilgin, 2004, pp. 27-28; 2017, p. 50). That is, different communities have varying ideas about what they deem needs securing, what they find threatening, and how they want to live (Bilgin, 2019, p. 1). This approach has broad implications for the critical analysis of the approaches of previously invisible agents and referents to regional security.

However, the framework is distinguished not only from Cold War Security Studies but also from previous critical approaches to regional security. It is different in two ways. Firstly, it is reflexive on how an actor's security practice may render other actor(s) insecure (2019, p. 2). For example, militarism and channeling material resources for military security instead of education and health budget may secure the state or the regime while rendering the women in that country insecure (Bilgin, 2004, p. 29). Secondly, it is different from studies on regional security that bracket either "(inventing) region" or "(conceptions and practices of) security" (Bilgin, 2019, p. 2). Rather than solely dealing with the political and (un)natural process of inventing regions or how actors conceive and practice security, the framework focuses on the constitutive relation between the two.

The emphasis on this co-constitutive process also allows the students of International Relations to orient to the significance of spatial representations, as in the following citation: "The naming of a land often implied control over it" (Whitelam, as cited in Bilgin, 1998, p. 21). Namely, spatial representations have a political agenda behind them. The Middle East, for example, is one of

many geopolitical inventions deriving from and constituting the security conceptions and practices of myriad actors. It is “another geopolitical invention which originates in the security conceptions and practices of external actors” (Bilgin, 1998, p. 22). Bilgin’s analytical framework provides a solid framework for studying the relational process between the relevant political agendas and spatial representations. Lastly, although this thesis has parts in which the security practices of the actors are presented and explained, it does not attempt to analyze the gap between discourse and practice.

2.2.1. Core Concepts

Several core concepts need comprehension before understanding an actor’s approach to regional security. The first of these is the concept of “agent.” An agent is an actor/entity responsible for providing security by implementing security measures. It can range from states to international organizations, companies to militant groups. The “referent object” refers to the entity/actor that the agent aims to secure, which ranges from the regime to society, environment, and so on. Arguing against those who claim that since states are primary actors in world politics, they should also be considered the primary referent object (Bilgin, 2019, p. 25), Booth uses the analogy of a mother and baby. In their relationship, a mother is the primary agent with a greater capacity to provide security. However, a baby’s needs usually rule over the mother’s desires. Replacing the mother with the state and the baby with the citizen, Booth argues that the capacity to act as an agent for security

is not necessarily followed by being the primary referent object of security (2007, pp. 195-196).

The concept of region is another essential concept. Thinking regionally provides the researcher with a “way of thinking that arranges different actors, elements, and locations simultaneously on a global chessboard” (O’Tuathail et al., 1998, p. 1). However, it does not mean lumping a particular part of the world together, for they constitute a “single system,” but because it serves as a spatial representation that allows for “thinking about and organizing action for security” (Bilgin, 2019, p. 11).

Among all these concepts, security is perhaps the most contested one. Against Barry Buzan’s argument that security is an “essentially contested concept” (1983, p. 7), Booth asks, “If we cannot name security, how can we ever achieve it?” (Booth, 1991, p. 317; 2007, p. 99). In what follows, Booth argues that although security is easy to define and may lexically mean “the absence of threat,” the way it is contingently conceptualized and operationalized is not easy (Booth, 2007, pp. 100-101). The conceptualization and operationalization of the concept eventually marginalize some ways to address insecurities while prioritizing others. This logic holds for regions and referent objects.

2.2.2. Three Questions of the Analytical Framework for Regional Security

In critically analyzing how selected actors’ conceptions of region and security co-constitute each other, there are three primary questions in the analytical

framework. The first question is, “What is regional security for the actor?” (Bilgin, 2004, p. 27) This question attempts to find how the selected actor conceives and practices security. It does not necessarily expect the actor to utter a definition of security for it. Namely, the actor does not have to say, “Security is X for me.” Interpreting how an actor conceives a secure environment and practices security allows answering this question.

The second question is, “Whose security does the actor seek?” (Bilgin, 2019, p. 2; 2004, p. 27). This question attempts to find the referent object delineated by the selected actor. The referent objects may be a spatial representation. Many spatial representations, or geographical inventions, help their maker think about and organize security practices (Bilgin, 2019, p. 11). Furthermore, these representations also address insecurities experienced by relevant actors. Hence, this question allows the researcher to detect whose insecurities the actor addresses.

The third question is, “How to achieve regional security?” (Bilgin, 2019, p. 12). Depending on the conception of security, various spatial representations strive to address not only which insecurities should be prioritized but also how they should be dealt with. These representations shape security practices. While they enable certain practices, they do not refrain from marginalizing others (Bilgin, 2019, p. 15). Namely, the way an actor suggests securing a referent object should be conceived to understand the politics of that specific spatial representation and the relevant actor’s conception and practice of security.

Asking the abovementioned three questions to Saudi Arabia and Iranian discourses allows the researcher to understand the Islamist security discourses of these actors and whether their practices are congruent with their discourses. What is more, Bilgin's framework allows the identification of agents attributed to being capable of, or responsible for, providing security to the referent object and the way security should be provided according to them.

2.2.3. Main Characteristics of Actors' Approach to Regional Security

In addition to the three central questions of the analytical framework, there are characteristics that may help capture how actors comprehend security more accurately. These characteristics, namely the conceptual focus, actor's focus, approach, and direction, offer us analytical tools to identify the latent logic of how security is understood and a discourse is set forth. They can also provide a basis for comparison between myriad actors and allow us to focus on whether their understandings of regional security align or diverge, particularly when invoking the Muslim world as a referent object.

The first is the conceptual focus of security. The actors may attribute privilege to the state as the primary agent or referent of security. Namely, "the conceptual focus of security" is attributed to the states since entities are argued to "have to cope with the whole security problem" (Buzan, as cited in Jones, 1999). This may reflect the actor's assumptions about whether a state, a regime, a society, or an ideational construct maintains a central place in the actor's security discourse.

The second is the actor's focus. An actor might either be military-focused or not. It implies the actor's focus and reliance on military practices such as increasing defense expenditures, conducting military exercises, forming military defense pacts, etc. (Bilgin, 2019, p. 4).

The third characteristic is the approach. To understand whether an actor has top-down or bottom-up approaches, one must investigate who defines the threats. A top-down approach usually reflects external perspectives on how to achieve security in the region, while a bottom-up approach may reflect a more local understanding (Bilgin, 2019, p. 14).

The fourth characteristic is the direction. If the security threats are defined as stemming from outside the region, this refers to an approach directed outward (Bilgin, 2019, p. 6). This is especially important to assess whether actors' attempts to achieve regional security are framed as a response to external actors to the region or internal ones.

The questions and characteristics above form an analytical framework through which this thesis aims to identify how these actors conceive security and region. In doing so, this thesis examines the speeches of Iranian and Saudi officials at the United Nations General Assembly and United Nations Security Council during the First Gulf War. Using the speeches, this thesis aims to answer the questions in the analytical framework and examine how Saudi Arabia and Iran conceive security and construct the Muslim world as a referent object.

CHAPTER III: SAUDI ARABIA DURING THE FIRST GULF WAR

This chapter aims to analyse Saudi Arabia's discourse during the Gulf War. It begins by describing the Saudi approach to regional security before the Gulf War of 1991 to set the context and provide the reader with background information. The following section briefly explains why and how the Gulf War began and ended. Using Bilgin's framework, the third section of this chapter deals with the discourse and practices of the Saudi state regarding the question of "what is regional security?". The fourth section deals with the question of "whose security?". The fifth section focuses on the question of "how to achieve regional security?".

3.1. Saudi Arabia's Approach to Security Before the First Gulf War

Towards the end of the 1950s, as Saudi Arabia was seeking a closer alliance with the US, King Faisal, who reigned between 1964 and 1975, started the attempt to change its international outlook. The early and mid-1960s observed this attempt to grow. Saudi Arabia's King Faisal was the first to initiate the state-level appropriation of the notion of the "Muslim world" (Bilgin, 2019, p. 84). When the attempts of the King found support, an alternative regional security referent in the Middle East started to take form, even though these attempts did not immediately bear fruit (Bilgin, 2019, p. 85). The delay was due to the heyday of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's secular Arab nationalism, which rendered international Islamic solidarity unattainable (Aydın, 2017, p. 174). Besides, there was no common ground as to what

constitutes un-Islamic or Islamic; this new security referent implied a trans-statal community that converges on various interpretations of the *ummah* (transnational community of Muslims) (Bilgin, 2004, pp. 32-33; Bilgin, 2000, p. 30).

King Faisal's search for domestic and international legitimacy prompted him to adopt the Islamist security discourse as a rhetorical device to claim the leadership of the Muslim world in the late 1960s. Not only the Arab defeat in the 1967 War between Israel on one side, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria on the other, but also the financial strength brought about by the oil flow allowed King Faisal to make Mecca the focal point of the Muslim world (Bilgin, 2019, p. 137). Although it was Saudi Arabia and King Faisal's efforts to introduce the concept of the Muslim world to a state's security discourse, the US also contributed to these efforts. Rather than replacing the US policies to secure the Middle East, the Saudi efforts were in coordination with them (Bilgin, 2019, p. 136; Gause III, 2014, p. 186). After the 6-day War in 1967, the backlash against pan-Arabism allowed King Faisal to present "the Muslim world as a geopolitical invention of security" (Bilgin, 2019, p. 136). By utilizing this concept as a security referent, Faisal attempted to claim the leadership of Muslims, substitute the Arab world as a referent object, and enhance the regime's international and domestic legitimacy through an Islamist security discourse previously offered by pan-Islamists but failed to become popular (Amghar, 2011). Saudi Arabia's promise of securing the Muslim world and its deliverance of regime security were later laid bare by Iran (Bilgin, 2019, p. 137). The discourse utilized by Saudi Arabia to secure the Muslim world was not transformed into practice.

The use of the Muslim world as a security referent at the discourse level brought about a contribution to the criticisms against statist and top-down security approaches. However, this approach was top-down regarding the internal politics of Islamist movements. In that, although from inside the region, rather than recognizing the insecurities of the citizens, such as economic deprivation and lack of health and education services, the state officials and apparatuses were in a position to determine what constitutes a threat. It was also outward-directed; namely, the threats to the referent object stemmed from outside the region (Bilgin, 2004, p. 33). However, neither the conceptualization of the Muslim world nor the Islamist security discourse has remained static since the late 1970s. Now that there were more non-state and state actors with Islamist security discourse, different interpretations and practices were to follow. That is, not long after MWA was introduced by Saudi leaders, it “slipped away from the hands of its state-level proponents such as Saudi Arabia” (Bilgin, 2019, p. 84).

3.2. The First Gulf War

After the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, the Iraq-Iran War began in 1980 and lasted for eight years. However, ending the war did not mean settling the conflicts in the region. Saddam Hussein, then President of Iraq, emerged from the War with a strengthened position in regional politics and commanding an army with extensive battlefield experience. He continued to promote a version of pan-Arabism that combined the elements of Arab nationalism, state-led socialism, and selective references to the Islamic

credentials of Iraq, especially when addressing Arab and Muslim audiences in other states in the region. He sought to establish his hegemony over the Gulf, if not the whole Arab world (Abir, 2013, p.161). Despite Iraq's self-proclaimed success in the war with Iran, the war effort had required much financing. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia had met that requirement during the 8-year war. However, by 1989, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia refused to continue financial support to Iraq. Being aware of Saddam Hussein's renewed pan-Arab ambitions, Saudi Arabia needed assurances regarding Saddam Hussein's future intentions (Abir, 2013, p. 163).

By the end of 1989, Saddam Hussein started voicing pan-Arab ambitions more often. Iraqi leader's defiance against the US, his emphasis on Iraq's duty to protect all Arabs against any aggressor, the claimed role of Iraq as "the champion of non-aligned states against the superpowers and as the leadership of the Arabs in their conflicts with the Persians and Jews" constituted parts of Saddam Hussein's rhetoric at the time (Mordechai 1993, p. 167). The importance of Arab solidarity accompanied this rhetoric. It temporarily positioned Saddam Hussein as the hero of the Arab masses, who desired a Nasser-like leader for the Arab world (Barnett, 1998, pp. 215-216). Although Saudi Arabia and other Arab leaders feared the potential results of this rhetoric, the officials avoided directly challenging Saddam Hussein due to the popular Arab support he had at the time (Abir, 2013, p. 167).

1990 saw a sharp decrease in oil prices. This drop in prices eventually hurt the oil-dependent economies of the Gulf countries. Iraq was particularly impacted by this decrease since it was still recovering from the 8-year war

against Iran. On July 17, 1990, on the 22nd anniversary of the Ba'ath revolution in Iraq, Saddam Hussein delivered a speech that marked the beginning of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. He declared Iraq had been losing 14 billion dollars annually since the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) oil price "fell in recent years from 27 dollars a barrel to the current level" (13-15 dollars). The Iraqi president added that "Certain Arab oil regimes were cooperating with America, who wished to control Arab oil and buy it as cheaply as possible" and that they "undermine Arab capability and power" (Gause III, 2014, p. 199; Abir, 2013, p. 168). Saddam Hussein threatened to punish the "traitors and quota busters" who strive to decrease the oil prices by producing more oil than the OPEC quota previously agreed by the members, such as Kuwait. Iraq also claimed that Kuwait had infringed on Iraq's territory and "stole" 2.4 billion dollars' worth of oil from the Rumayla oil field, and Kuwait refused to write off the debt it had lent to Baghdad during the Iran-Iraq war (Kamrava, 2013, p. 185). Iraq also revived the territorial claims against Kuwait. Boubayan and Warbah islands are in the Persian Gulf and part of the lands that Iraq attempted to claim. Simultaneously, Iraq asked Kuwait for a 10-billion-dollar loan, which Kuwait rejected. In sum, Iraq's aggression against Kuwait was prompted by Kuwait's claimed manipulation of oil prices, refusal to write off previously lent debt, refusal to provide a 10-billion-dollar loan to Iraq, and rejection of territorial claims of Baghdad on the Boubayan and Warbah islands.

With the efforts of Saudi Arabia's King Fahd, who reigned between 1982 and 2005, and Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak, Iraq and Kuwait agreed to discuss their bilateral problems in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, at the end of July

1990. Talks between the representatives on August 1 indicated that the Iraqi delegation was not interested in finding a peaceful solution. In addition to accepting the writing off of the Iraqi debt, the Kuwaiti delegation agreed to pay a portion of the sum Saddam Hussein demanded. However, Baghdad insisted that the Kuwait accept its territorial demands on the Boubyan and Warbah islands (Abir, 2013, pp. 169-171). Despite the eventual agreement by the Kuwaiti delegation to lease Warbah to Iraq, the Iraqi delegation returned to Baghdad instead of continuing the negotiations. The following day, on 2 August 1990, the Iraqi army began its invasion of Kuwait (Al-Rasheed, 2010, pp. 157-158).

Kuwait's active resistance to the invasion lasted for around 14 hours, resulting in an estimated 4,200 Kuwaiti military casualties. Despite the vigorous defense put up by the remnants of Kuwait's 20,000-soldier army, the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait was completed in the next 36 hours with hardly any resistance. Saddam Hussein's swift invasion of Kuwait and readiness to advance his military forces into Saudi Arabia did not remain unaddressed. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed Resolution 661 on August 6, implemented a comprehensive trade embargo on Iraq, and urged UN member nations to safeguard the assets of Kuwait's lawful government. The following day, Hosni Mubarak invited Arab leaders to convene in Cairo for an urgent conference. On August 10, a total of 12 out of the 21 Arab League countries approved a resolution denouncing Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and supporting the United Nations resolution (*Persian Gulf War | Summary, Dates, Combatants, Casualties, Syndrome, Map, & Facts*, 2024).

3.2.1 Saudi Arabia's Reaction

During the first two days, Saudi Arabia was paralyzed by the swift and unexpected invasion, and the event went unreported by Saudi media (Abir, 2013, p. 173). A few days later, King Fahd invited Western and Arab forces to deploy their militaries in Saudi Arabia to assist the Saudi defense forces.

King Fahd hesitated at the beginning to accept US support, fearing the reaction from Islamic and Arab nationalist groups. After engaging in direct discussions with the US Secretary of Defense on 5 August, King Fahd was convinced that the security of his Kingdom was at stake (Abir, 2013, pp. 170-173). On the early morning of August 7th, he consented to extend the invitation to deploy US soldiers to Saudi lands to seek protection against Iraqi expansion (Abir, 2013, p. 173). Having received Riyadh's official request for assistance, the US deployed air and additional naval forces to Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf. King Fahd made a public speech on August 9, one week after the invasion began. He denounced the invasion, declared that the US military presence was a temporary measure, and appealed to Arab and other friendly states from Western, Arab, and Muslim countries to participate in the defense of Saudi Arabia (Shihabi, 1991c, p. 101; Abir, 2013, p. 174).

As the coalition forces arrived and settled in Saudi Arabia, they changed their strategy since the first and foremost purpose of stationing the international coalition and US forces was not to liberate Kuwait but to secure Saudi Arabia (Finlan, 2003, p. 29). The first phase of the operation, *Operation Desert Shield*, focused on building up the coalition forces. After the defensive phase of the operation was over, the purpose was to shift to the offensive phase,

Operation Desert Storm. The purpose of the second phase was to remove the Iraqi forces from Kuwaiti lands and restore the status quo (Finlan, 2003, p. 10). On January 17, 1991, *Operation Desert Shield* concluded as the air campaign of *Operation Desert Storm* commenced (*Operation DESERT STORM* | U.S. Army Center of Military History, n.d.). Three phases of air attacks targeted the Iraqi defense posts in Kuwait. It was the most intensive air campaign since World War 2 (January 17-February 24, 1991) (Finlan, 2003, p. 36). After the air strike phases ended, the ground campaign began on February 24. Iraqi resistance on the ground crumbled relatively fast due to intense air campaigns, and in 100 hours after the ground campaign, *Operation Desert Sabre*, began (February 24-February 28, 1991), and Iraqi forces left Kuwait. The same day *Operation Desert Sabre* finished, and Iraq accepted that it would abide by the UN resolutions (*Persian Gulf War | Summary, Dates, Combatants, Casualties, Syndrome, Map, & Facts*, 2024).

3.3 What is Regional Security for Saudi Arabia?

Throughout the First Gulf War, Saudi Arabia's security discourse focused on three elements: Saudi Arabia's territorial integrity and sovereignty, returning to the status quo in the region, and maintaining stable prices and flow of oil. The sovereignty and territorial integrity went hand in hand in Saudi officials' discourse.

Two months after the invasion began, Prince Saud Al-Faisal, the Saudi Foreign Minister at the time, participated in the UN General Assembly (UNGA). Renouncing the aggression of Iraq against Kuwait, the first point

made by Al-Faisal was how “Iraq deviated from the Arab order... and world order” (Al-Faisal, 1990, p. 66). In doing so, Al-Faisal called upon Iraq to immediately and unconditionally withdraw its “forces from the territory of Kuwait, the restitution of Kuwait’s legitimate government, and the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from the borders of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia” (Al-Faisal, 1990, p. 66). After the annexation of Kuwait by Iraq, despite the promises made by Saddam Hussein to Hosni Mubarak and King Fahd, Saudi Arabia no longer trusted the pledges made by Iraq that it would not invade Kuwait. Al-Faisal argued that by annexing Kuwait, Iraq “violated traditions and revoked promises, exposing the Kingdom [of Saudi Arabia]’s security to extreme danger” (Al-Faisal, 1990, p. 67).

The Saudi representative to the UN, Samir Shihabi, also expressed the same concern with more details. Shihabi stated that the surveillance facilities of Saudi Arabia reported to Saudi officials about the Iraqi military build-up along Kuwait’s borders before the invasion began. Despite the assurance from Iraq, Kuwait was invaded (Shihabi, 1991b, p. 231). After the invasion was over and Kuwait was annexed, Shihabi stated that the 120.000 Iraqi soldiers “were positioned on the borders of Saudi Arabia in the same offensive formation” and were conducting a military drill (Shihabi, 1991b, p. 231). At the time, Saudi Arabia “had the same assurances as Kuwait had had, that Saudi Arabia was not threatened, as if the soldiers were only there for the weekend, probably on a pleasure trip” (Shihabi, 1991b, p. 231). Hence, Saudi Arabia had “no question” in their minds about “what that threat meant” (Shihabi, 1991b, p. 232). The formation and activities of Iraq and Iraqi soldiers along

the border have been received by Saudi Arabia as an imminent threat to their sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Another part of Saudi Arabia's position was its pro-status quo position. It can be explained as positioning against revolutionary movements that could overthrow the Arab oil-producing monarchies or forceful territorial changes. While describing the background of the decision to allow the US and international coalition's troops to be deployed on Saudi soil, Prince Saud Al-Faisal stated that the decision "was necessitated by circumstances that were concocted by the ruling regime in Iraq and will come to an end with the reversal of circumstances that made it necessary" (Al-Faisal, 1990, p. 69).

The necessity of the decision came out not only due to Iraq's rejection of reversing its annexation and occupation but also its insistence on avoiding a return to the pre-First Gulf War regional status quo. During this status quo, concerns over the security of their regime, price, and flow of oil, as well as the sovereignty of states in the region, were less pressing for Saudi Arabia. The sustained fall in oil prices and the overproduction of some oil monarchies, such as Kuwait, were some of the reasons Iraq cited as a pretext for its invasion (Mason, 2022, p. 26). However, since Iraq and Kuwait were two significant producers and exporters of oil, the invasion of Kuwait and sanctions on Iraq paused the oil flow from these countries to the international market.

Regarding the possibility of an unstable oil market, Saudi Arabia declared that it would pursue "an oil production policy that will compensate as much as possible for the interruption of Iraqi and Kuwaiti exports and will make the

greatest possible effort to maintain stable and reasonable prices” for the “states which have suffered as a result of...their staunch unflinching adherence to the Security Council resolutions” (Al-Faisal, 1990, p. 73).

Security agendas of the actors external to the region were again topped by ensuring a stable flow and a reasonable oil price. To quote a placard from an American peace march at the time, protesting the decision to deploy forces against Iraq: “If Kuwait exported broccoli, we [the US military] would not be there.” (Nye Jr., 1991). As the leading force of the international coalition and one of these external actors in the region, the US was one of the primary audiences of the reassuring statement of Al-Faisal regarding the oil flow. That is, right after Saudi Arabia overcame its paralysis due to the immediate possibility of an invasion, one of the first assurances the Saudi regime provided was to keep the oil prices reasonable and ensure a stable flow, as expected by the US and Western states.

In conclusion, we can infer that the protection of its territorial integrity, restoration of the regional status quo, and the maintenance of oil flow and prices were the central tenets of how the official discourse of Saudi Arabia defined regional security. These answers demonstrate that Saudi Arabia had a statist approach to security that prioritizes regime survival, territorial integrity, and economic stability. The emphasis on the status quo reveals an understanding of security as the protection of the existing regional order. The readiness of Saudi Arabia, vis-à-vis a defined threat, to call for military help from external powers demonstrates the military focus of the Saudi officials. That is, Saudi Arabia relied heavily on using and consolidating military forces to secure its referent object. Moreover, the consideration of oil production and

pricing reflects the extent to which regional security was understood through the satisfaction of the expectations of external powers regarding the flow and prices of oil, along with the expectations for the country's own economic stability. Despite the use of Islamic credentials, the official Saudi discourse in the UN meetings focused rather on the need for external powers to intervene. Regional security was hence conceived not in terms of the security of the Muslim world, but rather Saudi Arabia itself.

3.4. Whose Security?

Although Saudi officials also invoked Islamist security discourse and Islamic practices, such as issuing a *fatwa* (ruling extracted from scholars of Islamic law), during the Crisis, they were used to complement and legitimize Saudi practices. These practices were ones that other Islamist actors denounced, such as inviting foreign troops to the sacred lands of Islam. Most notably, the Grand Mufti Shaykh Abd al-Aziz ibn Baz issued a widely publicized fatwa in August 1990 that endorsed the deployment of non-Muslim coalition forces on Saudi lands. Drawing on the Islamic legal principle of *darura* (necessity), Ibn Baz argued and declared that deploying foreign troops was permissible under the condition that they are stationed to defend the Muslim nation against the imminent threat posed by Iraq to the Kingdom (Kurzman, 2003, p. 157).

Additionally, the Saudi government also convened an Islamic assembly consisting of 350 high-profile Muslim scholars in Jeddah. These scholars also issued a collective declaration that supports Saudi Arabia's decision to

deploy foreign forces, thereby reinforcing the religious legitimacy. To further strengthen the alignment between Saudi Arabia's policy and its Islamic discourse, the government orchestrated a dissemination campaign, supportive of these fatwas through Friday sermons and official newspapers (Kurzman, 2003, p. 157). This was a deliberate strategy to serve the integration of Islamic authority into the political rationale during the First Gulf War.

The Arabic credentials of Saudi Arabia are also often invoked in the speeches, even when Saudi officials emphasized the failure of the Arab order (Shihabi, 1991a, p.38). Before the war started, Saudi officials attempted to mend the differences between Iraq and Kuwait so that they could reach an agreement "in the spirit of Arab cooperation and solidarity" (Khadduri and Ghareeb, 2001, p. 83). Despite invoking the Islamic credentials of Saudi Arabia, the security referent behind it was Saudi Arabia rather than the Muslim world.

Nevertheless, the focal point of these speeches was neither the Muslim world nor the Arab world, but rather the security of the regime and the necessity of the measures taken by the Saudi regime. Although there were indicators of Saudi Arabia using Islamic symbolism, the extent to which Saudi officials emphasized the Iraqi threat to Saudi Arabian territory in speeches at the UNGA and UNSC could lead one to infer that the primary concern of these summits was the defense of Saudi Arabia, rather than the invasion of Kuwait.

The representative of Saudi Arabia and the Saudi Foreign Minister Al-Faisal emphasized the unique position and religious status of Saudi Arabia from

time to time. Al-Faisal's address to the UNGA began by stating, "Coming to you from the heart of the Arab land, the cradle of Islam, the seat of the two holy mosques (Al-Haram Mosque in Mecca, and The Prophet's Mosque in Madina), and the abode of the messenger of God" (Al-Faisal, 1990, p. 62). The utilization of religious symbolism sought to consolidate the role of Saudi Arabia as the guardian of Islam's most sacred sites, thereby mobilizing Muslim support in opposition to the Iraqi aggression. However, the invocation of religious authority went beyond appealing to countries with Muslim populations; it was instead a calculated maneuver to frame Saudi practices as intrinsically righteous and necessary as regards the security of the Muslim world.

Saudi officials expressed the primary security concerns about the imminent threats posed by Iraq. Al-Faisal clearly expressed this threat, and whose security was at stake while thanking the international coalition: "I should like, on behalf of the custodian of the two Holy Mosques, King Fahd Bin Abdul Aziz, to thank all countries, peoples, and organization who stood against injustice and supported the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in its defense of its security and territorial integrity" (Al-Faisal, 1991, p. 36). This emphasized that the primary security referent behind the discourse of Saudi officials was the Saudi regime itself.

Throughout the War, Saudi officials kept on attempting to legitimize the decision to deploy international coalition forces, even by diluting the presence of the US troops on Saudi lands through discourse. This was done by emphasizing Saudi Arabia's quest to reinforce its defense through Arab,

Muslim, and “other” friendly states. Al-Faisal stated that “Arab, Islamic and other friendly states hurried to the support of Saudi Arabia’s armed forces in performing the duty of defending the State, and the safety of its citizens” (Al-Faisal, 1990, p. 68). Using religious and ethnic bonds, and referring to regional alliances aimed at securing Saudi Arabia. However, the use of “other” in the abovementioned sentence of Al-Faisal due to the un-Islamic nature of the US, displays the fragility of the legitimacy of inviting a foreign Western state to secure the Saudi Arabian regime. It presents the defense of the Saudi Kingdom as a collective and shared responsibility of the Islamic and the Arab world, as well as regional allies, while primarily prioritizing Saudi Arabia’s own security needs.

Being both an Arab and a Muslim country, citizens of Saudi Arabia could be exposed to both nationalist and Islamist discourse. The Gulf War also strengthened the nationalist component of the Islamist tendency and enhanced the ability of other Islamist actors to exploit this combined system of references (Burgat, 1994, p. 205). Despite the religious invocations, Saudi Arabia lost its “pan-Islamic credibility” during the First Gulf War due to the deployment of foreign troops on its lands (Hegghammer, 2010, p. 33), which eventually prompted the Saudi officials to attempt to prevent societal fractures. The primary potential societal fracture was due to the arrival of the US troops, against which radical Islamists in Saudi Arabia accused the Saudi government of being un-Islamic (Hegghammer, 2010, pp.105-106).

Hence, Saudi officials appealed to Saudi citizens to prevent any rift from emerging among the Saudi people. Saddam Hussein’s use of nationalist and

Islamist discourse presented a direct challenge to Saudi Arabia's attempt to build consent for its practice, calling upon its allies to face Iraq and defend the lands of Saudi Arabia. It prompted the Saudi officials to reinforce their religious legitimacy. Domestically, the Saudi regime faced dissent and the danger of decreasing public support and, by extension, stability.

The presence of the US troops in Saudi Arabia and the actions of the new elites severely worried the establishment ulama. Some extremist theologians from the *Sahwa* (Awakening) movement, known as neo-fundamentalist Islamic scholars, started openly criticizing the government policy and the US (Hegghammer, 2010, p. 4). They advocated for an Islamic solution to the crisis instead of relying on non-believers to protect the holy land of Islam and fight against Muslim Iraq to liberate Kuwait (Abir, 2013, p. 176). However, the regime's position against Iraq was supported by the bulk of the conservative population and the official religious hierarchy led by the established ulama.

Saudi officials responded to the Iraqi propaganda by bolstering Islamic institutions, such as the morality police, and obtaining fatwas to legitimize their activities and veil the de facto security referent behind their discourse, namely the Saudi regime. Prominent religious figures such as Shaykh Abd al-Aziz ibn Baz published fatwas to authorize jihad against Saddam Hussein, even if it necessitated assistance from non-believers in an attempt to earn the military campaign an Islamic facet (al-Rasheed, 2010, p. 163; 1996, p. 361). These attempts demonstrate that Saudi officials did not avoid utilizing Islamic authority to legitimize their security practices to secure the Saudi regime.

The same fatwas were utilized to seek international support from the Muslim countries. Azzam notes that Muslim governments initially expressed outrage towards Iraq's actions. However, popular attitudes in non-Arab Muslim nations such as Malaysia differed, especially after the interference from the US. Protests against the war and American participation were widespread, indicating a more considerable concern among Muslim communities about the presence of non-Muslim military forces in Saudi Arabia. This sentiment was also expressed through demonstrations and political discussions in Jordan, Algeria, Yemen, and Pakistan (Azzam, 1991, pp. 474-476). Namely, there was no consensus among Muslim states and communities. However, Azzam argues that despite Saudi Arabia's attempt to legitimize its alignment with the Western coalition against a Muslim-populated country, the debate over whether it was legitimate to allow non-Muslim troops in Saudi Arabia persisted (Azzam, 1991, p. 480).

The bombardment of Iraq by the international coalition forces added to questions raised by the Maghreb countries, such as Morocco and Algeria, about the intentions of the international coalition. According to these actors, the presence of Western forces in the region aimed at laying their hands on the area's rich oil reserves and shattering Iraq's military and technological potential (Bihad, as cited in Boulding, p. 165).

Against this backdrop, Saudi Arabia obtained approval from the Grand Mufti of Egypt regarding the Islamic legitimacy of deploying foreign troops. Since the same invitation was sent to Muslim troops, and it served the greater good of the *ummah*, it did not breach Islamic law, according to the issued *fatwa*.

Saudi Arabia also hosted Islamic conferences in support of Kuwait, along with those supporting the international coalition (Azzam, 1991, p. 481).

In conclusion, despite invoking Islamic symbols and appealing to religious authority, Saudi Arabia's security discourse during the First Gulf War prioritized the security of the Saudi regime. This Islamic symbolism included fatwas, references to the Two Holy Mosques, and Islamic principles such as *darura* (necessity) and appeals to Islamic solidarity. However, they remained discursive tools that were primarily used to legitimize the deployment of foreign troops and frame contested policies for securing Saudi Arabia as an Islamic duty. This Islamist security discourse functioned as a way to accommodate controversial security practices with the Islamic norms. This was particularly important when there was domestic and regional opposition. Similarly, references to Arab and Muslim unity were associated with Saudi Arabia's unique role in the region, and why it should be secure. However, the emphasis of Saudi officials' speeches at the UN was not on a collective security conception for the Muslim world, but rather on securing the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and economic stability of Saudi Arabia. Thus, the Islamist security discourse was instrumentalized to justify Saudi Arabia's security practices, in which the underlying referent object was not the Muslim world itself, but the Saudi state and ruling monarchy.

3.5. How to Achieve Regional Security?

During and after the First Gulf War, Saudi officials argued that the manner of dealing with Iraqi aggression was mainly based on cooperation with the allies

of Saudi Arabia. In discourse, this coalition included, but was not limited to, Muslim and Arab countries. Along with an international coalition that enforced the UNSC resolutions, Saudi officials prioritized the use of economic assets and defensive capabilities of the Kingdom and return to the regional territorial status quo, namely liberating Kuwait (Shihabi, 1990a, p. 11). They also underlined the importance of solidarity amongst the regional Arab states. However, although Saudi Arabia often invoked a regional and Arab mechanism, composed solely by Arab states' officials, to solve the problem from inside the region on a discursive level, it was accompanied by an emphasis on how a unified Arab strategy failed to solve the problem (Shihabi, 1991a, p. 38-40; Awad, 1994, p. 149).

The primary way to achieve security in the region vis-à-vis the Iraqi aggression was to call on the allies of the Saudi regime for aid. Saudi Arabia requested assistance from friendly states to defend its territorial integrity and sovereignty. Al-Faisal stressed that the presence of allied forces in Saudi Arabia was a temporary action carried out at the request of the Kingdom purely for defense reasons (Al-Faisal, 1990, p. 69). However, Saudi Arabia's dependence on external assistance was considered essential for securing both the state and its inhabitants, despite the challenges it posed in terms of regional and domestic politics (Abir, 2013, p. 177), as regards the Arab nationalists and Islamists' opposition to the presence of foreign forces.

Notwithstanding the Kingdom's close relations with external actors, Saudi officials emphasized the necessity of an Arab resolution. They argued that they would prefer to address the conflict through a mechanism from within

the region. Al-Faisal stresses the involvement of Saudi Arabia in the search for an Arab solution and expresses disappointment over Iraq's lack of response to these attempts (Al-Faisal, 1990, pp. 69-70). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, according to Al-Faisal, "has always called for a unified Arab strategy which plans for a common future and which avoids volatile emotional reactions...in supporting the new Arab order" (Al-Faisal, 1990, p. 81).

However, the discourse on a unified Arab regional strategy remained merely on a discursive level and did not translate into practice, and the First Gulf War seemed to be "the last gasp of the dying phenomenon of Arab unity" (Kamrava, 2013, p. 170). As Baghat Korany pointed out, Iraq's adventure to invade another Arab state at the expense of Arab solidarity reinforced the concerns of oil monarchies for the security of their regimes. The intensity of Saddam Hussein's adoption of pan-Arabism to justify Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was "akin to a fatal bear hug" (Korany, 1994, p. 165). Using brute force and attacking a sister Arab state diminished the credibility of not only Saddam but also pan-Arabism.

Saudi officials often used the failure of regional frameworks as an excuse to rely on external forces. Apart from the pan-Arabist discourse of Saddam, the inaction and limitations of the Arab mechanism in dealing with the First Gulf War, the fragmentation of the Arab state system, and the lack of institutional capabilities within the Arab League revealed the challenges embedded in relying solely on the regional frameworks (Tibi, 1994, pp. 141-142). Hence, the official Saudi policy to achieve security in the region, despite the articulated intention of an Arab solution, entailed relying on external powers'

involvement in the region rather than mere regional cooperation of Arab and Muslim states (The GCC, 1993, p. 35).

To contain domestic and regional opposition, Riyadh's dependence on the Western allies needed to be less blatant since it would not be conducive to domestic and regional stability (Dawisha, 1994, p. 130). In an attempt to balance the need for Western presence and assistance to achieve security in the region, Saudi Arabia has avoided signing a comprehensive military pact with the US since it would eventually entail the establishment of US bases on Saudi soil. Instead, Saudi Arabia and the Americans agreed on cooperation, military procurement, and training arrangements (The GCC, 1993, p. 35). In 1991, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia stated, "It is no longer acceptable to allow our region's security to be the target of those with ambitions for expansion and domination. Therefore, our interest at the current stage has been devoted to future security arrangements. In this, we proceed from a view that depends on self-reliance and cooperation with friendly states in everything that serves the aims of security and stability in our region." (The GCC, 1993, p. 39). Thus, Saudi Arabia aimed to replace the existing inter-Arab relations system with a new and less aggressive version of the Arab order. That is, Saudi Arabia aimed at having an Arab order in which the world would not experience an Arab country's "invasion of a sister Arab country, its trampling of all values, transgression against traditions, violation of laws, spilling blood, and usurpation of the rights of people" (Shihabi, 1990a, pp. 3-5).

To create a new framework for the region's security, Saudi Arabia led GCC members Syria and Egypt, resulting in the Damascus Declaration on 6 March

1991. The main characteristic of the Declaration was the principle of respect for each Arab state's sovereignty and the intention to create a new Arab peace force based on mutual consent and joint action of Arab states. After the declaration, signatory states expected that Egyptian and Syrian troops, which joined the coalition efforts to secure Saudi Arabia and push Iraq out of Kuwait, would remain in the Gulf after the liberation of Kuwait. It was thought these troops would form "a nucleus for an Arab peace force...to guarantee the security and safety of the Arab states in the Gulf region...and the effectiveness of the comprehensive Arab defense order" (The GCC, 1993, p. 36). Although it did not materialize, the attempt spoke to the Saudi desire to replace the previous pan-Arabist, aggressive, and expansionist tendencies (Barnett, 1998, p. 224). The substitution was expected to be a loose and controllable Arab order that would decrease the dependence on foreign forces, which caused immense and widespread debate about the Arab and Islamic credentials of the Saudi Kingdom (Schiavone, 1997, pp. 79-81). Ultimately, while both the Arab world and the Muslim world were invoked as a referent of security by myriad actors, these efforts did not materialize into "clear-cut alternatives in the form of regionalization projects" (Bilgin, 2020, p. 124).

While examining regional solutions to the crisis, the crisis continued, and other solutions were being utilized. Saudi officials emphasized that the way to force Iraq out of Kuwait and secure Saudi Arabia was to "ensure the protection of vital economic assets (oil) and the consolidation of defensive capabilities" (Al-Faisal, 1990, p. 67). It highlights that Saudi Arabia, apart from its allies, relied on its economic strength to secure its economic might to

fund the campaign and its military strength. To secure its northeastern borders and liberate Kuwait, Saudi Arabia contributed to the alliance with 40,000 soldiers, 500 tanks, and 180 tactical aircraft (The GCC, 1993, p. 36). The eastern region was one of the country's biggest oil production sites and constituted one of its biggest economic assets. Therefore, securing the Eastern region of Saudi Arabia was significant. It was one of the reasons Saudi Arabia called for aid from the US despite potential backlash. Apart from the constitution of the international coalition, the contribution to the military campaign also demonstrated that Saudi Arabia acted upon its statist and military-focused approach to security.

Saudi Arabia's consolidation of allies and the country's military and economic resources eventually aimed at returning to the status quo in the region, in which Kuwait existed as a state, Iraq did not have much more oil to fund its expansionist pan-Arabist project, and the survival of the Saudi regime was not at stake. In conclusion, Saudi Arabia's approach to securing the region can be summed up as follows: forcing Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait by gathering international support for its defense, using economic and military resources, and supporting a new and less dangerous Arab order for oil monarchies.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the answers drawn from Saudi Arabia's discourse and practices during the First Gulf War to the questions of "What is regional security?", "Whose security?", and "How to achieve regional security?" The

answers to the first question were threefold: territorial integrity and sovereignty, maintaining the status quo, and keeping the price and flow of oil stable. As for the second question, the emphasis was on the security of the Saudi regime itself. Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia attempted to utilize the security of the Muslim world and the Arab world as a rhetorical device to legitimize its security practices. The method was to appeal to the Islamist and Arab audiences, and to cast itself as the guardian of the two holy mosques and supporter of the Arab order. In addressing the third question, Saudi Arabia's answer to how to achieve security in the region was based on cooperation with its allies, especially the United States. The collaboration was decisive in securing military and political support from the international actors. Additionally, protecting and using vital economic assets such as oil and consolidating the defensive capabilities were significant. Lastly, Saudi Arabia's demand for restoring the territorial status quo by liberating Kuwait demonstrates its position against territorial expansion and aggression in the region.

CHAPTER VI: IRAN DURING THE FIRST GULF WAR

This chapter analyzes its discourse and practices of Iran during the First Gulf War. The first section begins by describing how Iran approached regional security before the Islamic Revolution in 1979. The following section aims to explain the changes in Iran's approach to region and security after the Islamic Revolution and the main ideological elements of the new Islamic regime in Iran. Using Bilgin's framework, this chapter's third section analyses Iran's discourse and practices regarding "What is regional security?". The fourth section deals with the question of "Whose security?". The fifth section focuses on "How to achieve regional security?" based on the official discourse of Iranian representatives in the UNGA and UNSC and Iran's practice of security.

4.1. Before and After the Islamic Revolution

Before the Islamic Revolution in 1978-1979, Iran's approach to regional security was linked to that of the United States and the Cold War projections of the US in the Middle East. Under the leadership of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who reigned between 1941 and 1979, Iran did not join the Non-Aligned Movement and positioned itself as a US ally in the Persian Gulf. The Shah's framing of Iran as a US ally in the region and his support for the US position on key issues such as Palestine and Vietnam gave rise to the image that the Shah derided neutralism (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 156).

The 1953 coup re-established Mohammed Reza Shah's authority with American and British support, and solidified the pro-Western orientation of the Iranian regime (Cleveland and Bunton, 2009, p. 293). This support allowed for close diplomatic and military ties with the US. The regime relied heavily on American support to sustain its security apparatus and needed help maintaining regional stability (Reda, 2016, p. 181). Iran's close relations with the US and reinscribing Iranian identity "as a staunch US ally helped to ensure sustained US financial and military assistance" (Bilgin, 2019, p. 71). In the meantime, portraying the Soviet Union as a significant threat to the region, Iran justified its alignment with the US security policies. It ensured that the US investment and support continued (Ramazani, 1975, p. 327).

Iran also further integrated into the Western security framework by participating in the 1955 Baghdad Pact, which later became known as CENTO (Ehteshami, 2002, p. 127). Although it strengthened the regional position of Iran, this alignment alienated it from its Arab neighbours and contributed to tensions with the Soviet Union (Ramazani, 1975, p. 327). In parallel, despite disputes over Iran's control over its oil resources, Iran pursued sustained cooperation with the US over oil flow and prices, and preventing Soviet influence in the Middle East (Ramazani, 1975, p. 330).

To summarize, Iran's approach to regional security was characterized by alignment with the US prior to the Islamic Revolution in 1979. The Shah embraced this position to secure his regime and economic benefits. Playing the role of a sustained supplier of cheaper oil and contributing to preventing Soviet influence in the region, the Shah's regime helped address US

insecurities in the region. Despite the efforts and economic unrest, this pro-Western position also created political turmoil in Iran. The Shah's authoritarian rule and close ties with the US and its allies helped set the stage for domestic quarrels by alienating important demographic segments, such as the *bazaari* (the merchant class) and the *ulama* (clerics) (Hiro, 2013, pp. 4-5). These quarrels later became one of the reasons the Islamic Revolution took place in Iran. The fall of the Shah and the subsequent regime, the Islamic Republic, was tied to the guidance of the *Velayat-e Faqih* position (Guardianship of Islamic Jurist) (Adib-Moghaddam, 2014, p. 13). It not only wholly changed Iran's state structure but also had considerable implications regarding Iran's approach to regional security.

The Islamic Revolution of 1979 transformed Iran's political and social landscape. The Revolution was carried out by a coalition of different political forces, such as liberals, Marxist-Leninists, and Islamists. Various groups in the revolutionary forces had different visions as to what should come next, as the Shah was expelled (Hiro, 2013, p. 103). Hence, the Islamists' consolidation of power did not occur right after the revolution took place. Khomeini considered that all the non-Islamic forces in governing positions had to be eliminated first, and the society be purified from un-Islamic influences which had been corrupted for a long time before the revolution (Hiro, 2013, p. 135). Implications of the revolution did not remain limited to the political regime of Iran and the question of how Iran should be ruled, but reached beyond. Namely, Iran's approach to global politics and regional security has significantly changed. This change was because Khomeini's vision extended beyond the Iranian borders since he regarded the revolution

not primarily as Iranian but as international. The purpose of the revolution was to disseminate the message of Islam globally. Khomeini argued that the expansion of the Islamic Revolution was an obligation essential for all Muslims. His vision aimed to unite the *mostaz'afin* (the oppressed) against the *mostakbarin* (the oppressors) (Kazemi and Hart, 2019, p. 59). The great powers, particularly the US, were described as the primary oppressors, and Iran had the responsibility to protect the oppressed against these oppressors. In connection with this perspective, the Islamic Republic of Iran attempted to export the revolution to other Muslim countries.

A key part of Khomeini's revolutionary ideology was the doctrine of "neither East nor West, only the Islamic Republic," which denied the influence of and intervention from both superpowers, the US and the USSR. He referred to the US as the "Great Satan" while labeling the USSR as the "Red Satan" or the "Lesser Satan" (Kazemi and Hart, 2019, p. 60). This antagonism towards both superpowers was more than rhetoric. It was a core principle that shaped Iranian foreign policy at the time. Khomeini's position also involved Israel, Egypt, South Africa, and Saudi Arabia due to their criticized position as lackeys to the US (Kazemi and Hart, 2019, p. 61). However, this position was not independent of the self-image of Iran as the defender of the Muslim world and its self-styled Islamic discourse during both Khomeini (1979-1989) and Khamenei (1989-). The leaders of the Islamic Republic often claimed a right to recognize or deny the Islamic credentials of other Muslim-populated states. Accordingly, they often invoked the threat of revolution and divine wrath against the neighboring governments that the Iranian supreme leader deemed un-Islamic (Chubin, 2019, p. 75).

Despite the criticisms of Iran about un-Islamic influence on the neighboring Muslim states, Islamic unity was a significant facet of Khomeini's ideas about foreign policy. Notwithstanding the fervor of excluding or including different states from being a part of the Muslim world, Khomeini consistently called for unity among Muslims as a way of resisting foreign intervention in the region ever since he took office as *Velayat-e Faqih* (Reda, 2016, p. 192). He argued that the success of Western intervention in the Middle East was due to discord and disunity among Muslims, and urged for the creation of a unified Islamic front to resist Western dominance (Reda, 2016, p. 194). This message of Islamic unity was central to the ideology of revolutionary Iran, yet it resonated beyond Shia communities. Some Sunni groups echoed similar concerns about unity, in return for which Iran extended support to Sunni militancy (Devji, 2017, pp. 56-57). The 1979 Revolution, in the end, was not only a challenge to the secular regimes in the region but also to those who claimed the leadership, or a significant position, in the Muslim world. Khomeini's rhetoric eventually came into conflict with Saudi Arabia as the leader of the Muslim world due to the latter's close alliance with the US (Bilgin, 2019, p. 127).

Khomeini's approach to regional and international politics involved a categorical rejection of cooperation with the Western-aligned Gulf states, which he saw as representatives and agents of Western imperialism (Taremi, 2003, p. 385). Namely, this interpretation, including the opposition to the US hegemony in the region, was not limited to Iran but extended to the broader regional community of states and the Muslim world. It was mainly seen in his criticism of the US support for Israel and the threat that Israel and foreign

intervention in the region pose to the Muslim-populated states. Khomeini's narrative framed Israel as the "illegitimate offspring of the Great Satan [the US]" and the US as the "godfather" of Zionism and imperialism (Reda, 2016, p. 187). This narrative described Israel as an existential threat to Islam, and it was not only aimed at rallying the Iranian population base. It also sought to unite transnational Muslim communities in opposition to Western influence over the Muslim world and the threat posed by Zionism to the security of the region (Reda, 2016, p. 187).

In light of the context described in this section, it can be said that Ayatollah Khomeini's revolutionary vision, *Khatt-e Imam*, the ideological position promoted by the Supreme Jurist Khomeini, reshaped Iran's approach to regional security. The export of the revolution, the rejection of un-Islamic influence and intervention in the region, and the emphasis on the unity of the Muslim world against not only the foreign powers such as the US and the USSR but also their regional allies were all central to the Khomeini's ideology that shaped Iran's approach to regional security in the Middle East. While the revolutionary fervor in Iran may have waned over time, especially after he died in 1989 and before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait began, the central pillars of Khomeini's vision remained relevant for the new *Velayat-e Faqih*.

Before going on with examining how the discourse of Iranian officials at the time answered the questions of the analytical framework, it is necessary to contextualize the position of Iran after the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988). This war constituted a formative term for the Islamic Republic, shaping both its internal consolidation and regional posture.

Continuously increasing tensions eventually resulted in a war between the countries in September 1980. At the time, the War signified more than an interstate conflict for the representatives of Iran. It was rather interpreted as an assault on the Revolution itself, an imposed war against the Islamic Republic (Bolourchi, 2018, p. 736). According to Ayatollah Khamenei, the War was an imposed one on the “true government of God”, and the Iranian people were “fighting to protect Islam,” while Saddam Hussein was “fighting to destroy” it (Hiro, 1991, p. 53). Thus, the War was framed within the narrative of external hostility against the revolutionary order. By the mid-80s, the War enabled the growing military presence of the United States in the region, which Iran interpreted as further evidence that the US was determined to undermine the Islamic Revolution in Iran (Hiro, 2013, p. 287).

Apart from attracting the attention of the US and enabling increased presence in the region, particularly the Persian Gulf, the toll of the war was catastrophic. Adib Moghaddam argues that in terms of political, social, and economic losses, the period from the Revolution to the War’s conclusion marked the most destructive era in the modern history of the Persian Gulf (Adib-Moghaddam, 2006, p. 11). The War, however, was more than a military struggle between two competing countries with geographical proximity, but rather a struggle for ideological and cultural legitimacy between two contending regional projects: Iraqi pan-Arabism and Iranian Islamism (Adib-Moghaddam, 2006, p. 23).

Eventually, 8 years of war resulted in economic collapse, declining living standards for Iranians, and contributed to the rise of pragmatic actors within

the Islamic Republic. Due to the impact of the War, by 1988, revolutionary fervor was diminished, and priorities of the Iranian officials began to shift (Marschall, 2003, p. 25). Although Iranian officials preserved the Islamic outlook in their discourse, the pragmatists, such as later President Hashemi Rafsanjani (19 adopted a more developmentalist vision, aiming at rebuilding the country and normalizing relations with Iran's neighbors (Esposito and Ramazani, 2001, p. 3).

Revolutionary fervor had diminished by the end of the War, and priorities decided by Iranian officials began to shift (Marschall, 2003, p. 25). The pragmatist camp in Iranian politics, such as President Rafsanjani, who was yet to be elected at the time, adopted a more moderate and developmentalist vision. The pragmatists called for focusing on domestic stability and seeking to rebuild the country. (Esposito and Ramazani, 2001, p. 3). Rafsanjani, elected president a year after the War ended, campaigned for regional cooperation to stabilize the prices and flow of oil. He often called for an end to "childish slogans," declaring that Iran could live peacefully with its Muslim neighbors and avoid wasting national resources (Marschall, 2003, p. 97).

4.2 What Is Regional Security?

Ali Akbar Velayati, Iran's Foreign Minister at the time, and Kamal Kharrazi, Iranian representative to the United Nations, made various statements at the UN meetings concerning the war. In these statements, three key themes emerge that define Iran's approach to regional security, but more precisely, the official Iranian answer to the question "What is regional security for the Islamic Republic of Iran?". These central themes are "resistance to foreign

intervention,” “regional self-reliance,” and “the significance of the Persian Gulf.” Although one may count more than three themes in the statements of Iranian officials, the ones this thesis regards as the main themes are the result of interestingly fused conceptualization of Khomeinian ideology and the interests of the Muslim peoples of the region as narrated by Iran.

One fundamental precept of Iran’s Islamist security discourse and the approach to regional security was the opposition to foreign intervention, especially by Western powers. In his statements, Velayati often remarked that Iran perceives the presence of foreign military forces, particularly those belonging to the US, as a threat to regional stability and security. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia’s invitation to the US for military deployment were significantly condemned by Iranian officials. Velayati stated that “the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait provided the pretext for foreign powers, particularly the United States and other Western countries, to dispatch their forces on a massive scale to the Persian Gulf region” (1990, p. 46). This categorical rejection of foreign interventions in the region was recapitulated later by Kharrazi, who maintained that “the presence of foreign forces on a massive scale in Persian Gulf region has also threatened long-term security in this sensitive area” (1990b, p. 38).

The opposition to the presence of foreign forces in the region had been a consistent pillar of Iran’s approach to regional security, rather than a contingent one, since foreign intervention was not only a temporary issue but rather a structural implication of how the intervening states see the regional actors. According to Iranian officials, these interventions are detrimental to

the stability of the region and part of the larger hegemonic design. This resistance to the intervention from actors external to the region was rooted in Iran's previous experiences, not only the remnants of the Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 97) or the MI6-supported coup against Mosaddegh (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 121) but also the lack of support from neighboring Arab states during the eight-year war with Iraq. As Velayati noted, during the war, Iranian officials thought that "...the righteous positions of the Islamic Republic of Iran...were ignored, owing to the supremacy of the self-serving logic of hegemonic powers over the principles of the [UN] Charter." (1990, p. 42). Thus, Iran's aim in resisting foreign intervention was shaped by the sense of resisting colonization by external actors in the region and betrayal by regional actors, and it remained a consistent pillar of how Iran conceived security.

Another significant theme in Iran's approach to regional security was the emphasis on regional self-reliance and the idea that regional security should be managed by the countries within the region. Both Velayati's and Kharrazi's statements emphasize the need for a regional security framework free from foreign interference. "The religious, cultural, and economic bonds between the countries in the Persian Gulf" were emphasized by Velayati as the foundation for a collective regional security arrangement, arguing that these bonds provide the regional actors with the capacity to secure the region independently (1990, p. 46). This vision of a regional security arrangement for the region, and by the regional actors, was tied to the teachings of the late Ayatollah Khomeini and Ayatollah Khamenei.

Khomeini's position was that as the one truly Islamic country, Iran had the duty to claim the "vanguard of an Islamic revolutionary movement and help Muslim and other oppressed nations to reach true independence". The call for not only the Muslim unity across sects, borders, and political affiliations remained a part of the Iranian approach (Marschall, 2003, pp. 11-12). Hence, Iran positioned itself as a key proponent of a regional security framework grounded in Islamic solidarity and designed to reduce the influence of un-Islamic external forces in the region. In line with this vision, Kharrazi stated that once Iraq fully withdraws from Kuwait, the countries of the region should "play an important role in maintaining security in the Persian Gulf area through regional arrangements" (1990a, p. 16). This was also a reflection of Iranian officials' belief that the Muslim peoples and states in the region have far more in common than the external actors. The commonalities are expected to provide the regional actors with the capacity and responsibility to secure their own region, rejecting any form of foreign custody.

The third key theme was the significance of the Persian Gulf for Iran, both in terms of economic development and geopolitical stability. As Velayati noted, Iran sees the Gulf as a lifeline for Iran's economic well-being and that of other littoral countries, with the free flow of oil and the stability of global oil markets being crucial to their national interests (1991, p. 56). This economic dependency on the Persian Gulf and stable oil flow further necessitated the efforts for a secure region. The region must have been free from the instability introduced by the presence of external actors in the region and military interventions from foreign powers. Furthermore, this emphasis on the stability and security in the Persian Gulf also emphasized the "territorial

integrity and political independence of the states in the region, including Iraq and Kuwait” (Kharrazi, 1991b, p. 11). Through encouraging non-interference from the external powers and preservation of the existing geopolitical map, Iran positioned itself as the defender of the regional status quo and independence, as long as the status quo in the region was free from intervention.

To summarize, Iran’s approach to regional security was also threefold. They are respectively based on resistance to foreign intervention, support for regional self-reliance, and the role of the Persian Gulf as a lifeline. Apart from reflecting pragmatic concerns of Iranian leadership as regards security in the Middle East, these principles also demonstrated Iran’s ideological commitments to the *Khatt-e Imam*, such as Islamic unity and anti-imperialist position. Accordingly, Iranian officials argue for a secure region free from external intervention, and one in which local actors can create security mechanisms by and for themselves.

4.3 Whose Security?

The Islamist security discourse of Iran was primarily shaped by Iran’s attribution of primacy to its position in the Muslim world as a central force. At the heart of this discourse lies the commitment to securing the interests of the Muslim world. That is, Iran’s Islamist security discourse attempts to signal that Iran’s security policy is based on securing the Muslim world. Yet, despite Iran’s consistent emphasis on the security of the Muslim world, its practices reflect on this discourse differently. Namely, while Iran preaches Islamic unity

(axis of resistance) against the intervention of external actors in the region and the export of Islamic revolution on a discursive level. Namely, although Iranian officials discursively present the Muslim world as the referent object, their practices demonstrate that Iran might have prioritized regime security.

In various statements, Iranian officials have stated that they are concerned about the military presence of foreign forces in the Persian Gulf, framing this presence as a source of instability in the region. Ali Akbar Velayati, for instance, often stated that security for the region was only possible when it was coordinated and decided from within the region. This suggests that, according to Tehran, security was only possible when it was for the region, by the region, and for the regional security. Thus, foreign interventions do not aim at securing the region; in fact, they create insecurity. With that, Kharrazi declared that “only the countries of the region, which enjoy a common religion and culture, can, and indeed must, find a proper mechanism for safeguarding peace and security in the Persian Gulf area” (1991a, pp. 194-195). The idea of a Muslim-led security arrangement in the region aligns with Iran’s previous public discourse, emphasizing the collaboration of countries from the region with common grounds.

Although this discourse suggests Iran pursues a regionally inclusive and pan-Islamic vision of regional autonomy, its security practices did not follow. Instead, they fixated on reinforcing Iran’s geopolitical influence. The First Gulf War constitutes one of the examples of the discrepancy in Iran’s Islamist security discourse and practice. While Iran proclaimed its role as a defender of the Muslim world, its response to the War was manifested by strategic

neutrality instead of active defense of the Muslim world (Rajaei, 2007, p. 165). The friendly overtures toward other Gulf states and Iran's tendency towards cooperation remained focused on developing and consolidating Iran's regional influence in the Gulf (Ehteshami, 2002, pp. 151-152). In discourse, Iran declared itself a bastion of resistance against the domination of foreign powers in the region. At the time, Khamenei himself stated that the combat against the United States was a "holy war and jihad" (Arjomand, 1991, p. 57).

The neutrality of Iran emphasized a selective approach to intervention. This prioritization of regime security becomes more apparent when one analyzes the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq War. The 8-year-long war depleted Iran's military resources, and Iran experienced a shift in its military and economic policy. Under President Rafsanjani's leadership, the fourth president of Iran from 1989 to 1997, the government focused on rebuilding the country and securing the flow of oil, which was vital for the economic recovery of the regime (Marschall, 2003, p. 14). This post-war emphasis on domestically stabilizing the country and prioritizing the security of the Islamic Regime accentuates how Iran's security practices were driven more by the motivation of regime security rather than commitment to securing their referent object in discourse, the Muslim world. Although Iran kept the discourse that its security was "intertwined with the stability of the sensitive Persian Gulf" (Velayati, 1990, p. 46), Iran's focus its regime's social and economic stability did not follow Khamenei's call for jihad, or more moderate calls for unity among Muslim countries of the region vis-à-vis the US presence in the region.

Another example of Iran's self-proclaimed role in the region comes from Ayatollah Khamenei. Reflecting on Iran's role in the region, he emphasized that the very existence of the Islamic Republic of Iran served as an example of inspiration for other states and movements in the Middle East, and that people of these states would rise up themselves seeing the Iranian example (Marschall, 2003, p. 29). However, from the beginning, this model did not necessarily focus on securing the Muslim world but rather cementing the newly found Islamic Republic's ideological and political leadership. As seen during the First Gulf War, although Iran was harshly aggressive towards the presence of foreign militaries and argued that regional stability was at stake due to their presence, the practical efforts were limited to criticizing diplomatic rhetoric rather than organizing a unified Muslim front. Instead, during the Gulf Crisis, Iran focused on the opportunity to expand "relations and cooperation among the countries in the area" (Velayati, 1991, pp. 54-55). This positioning suggests that strengthening Iran's regional position was more important than an effort toward collective security in the region.

To summarize, Iran's Islamist security discourse during the First Gulf War constructed the Muslim world as the referent object and expressed a vision of regional security rooted in Islamic unity and autonomy from foreign intervention. Velayati and Kharrazi often emphasized that regional security must be achieved to secure the Muslim peoples of the region. A part of this discourse was these officials' calls for regional collaboration among the states of the region with shared religious and cultural ties. This discourse positioned Iran as a pivotal actor in creating a regional order in which no external power can intervene in the regional issues. This portrayal

demonstrates that Iranian officials often attempted to legitimize Iran's regional role. Iran attempted to present itself as such through appeals to Islamic solidarity and anti-imperialist positioning. Hence, despite the inconsistencies that this thesis does not examine thoroughly due to its scope, Iran's answer to the "Whose security?" question can be summed up as the collective interests of the Muslim world, particularly those residing in the region. The following part elaborates on Iran's answer to the "How to achieve security in the region?" question.

4.4 How to Achieve Regional Security?

Notwithstanding the Islamic Republic of Iran's practices during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the international coalition's response to the invasion, its discourse was full of opposition against the Western forces penetrating into the region and how to avoid it for the sake of security in the region. There are four main pillars in Iran's discourse during the Gulf Crisis as regards how to secure the region vis-à-vis powers external to the Muslim world. These can briefly be counted as cessation of the invasion of Kuwait, avoiding any alteration in the region's borders, preventing the long-term presence of foreign military forces in the region, and lastly, securing the region through an arrangement prepared solely by the regional forces, and without any foreign interference. However, it should be added that all these pillars are connected to one very important factor: the presence of external powers in the region and their potential implications for Iran.

By the time the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait had begun on August 2, 1990, the exchange of letters on the release of war prisoners and normalization of relations between Iran's president Rafsanjani and Saddam Hussein had still been ongoing. These letters establish the first pillar that Iran was totally against an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and called for the immediate withdrawal. Rafsanjani openly expressed that Iran expected nothing other than the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait (Daftari, 1995, xvii). However, it should be noted that the reason for that statement was tied to Iran's concerns about the "large presence of the military forces of the wicked powers," whom Iran cannot trust. (Daftari, 1995, xviii).

Iran's demand to Iraq to stop the hostilities and withdraw from Kuwait was often associated with Iran's discomfort with the eventual implication of the invasion. This eventual implication was that the invasion opened the region to foreign penetration into the region. Kharrazi's speech at the UN Security Council on November 28, 1990, leaves no doubt about Iran's perspective on the invasion. In the relevant speech, Kharrazi stated that "the only way to achieve peace and the return of the normalcy to the region is through the total withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait," but "unfortunately, the invasion...of Kuwait by Iraq has provided a pretext for foreign forces to expand their presence in the region" (Kharrazi, 1990a, p. 16). Kharrazi also did not refrain from calling for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait and also called for the "total withdrawal of foreign forces from the region" (Kharrazi, 1990a, p. 17). Hence, the primary connection established by Iran was that the invasion worked as a lightning rod around Iran's immediate surroundings, except that this one did not secure the region from Iran's perspective.

The second pillar of achieving security in the region was avoiding any alteration in the region's geography. While Iran stated that it supported the inviolability of the international borders in the region (Velayati, 1991, p. 56), it was again tied to Iran's discomfort about the foreign powers' entrance to the region and their interference. In his 24 September 1990 speech at the UN, Velayati stated that "while condemning the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq and rejecting any alternation in the region's geography," the Islamic Republic of Iran also "considers the long-term presence of foreign military forces in the area to be detrimental to the interests and security of the countries in the region" (Velayati, 1990, p. 47). In discourse, one can see a similar linkage established by Iran. The linkage between the Iraqi invasion and the presence of foreign powers was tied not only to the interests and security of Iran but also to other countries in the region.

Despite the self-proclaimed roles of Iran and Saudi Arabia as defenders of the Muslim world and similar approaches to any change in the borders of countries, the two had opposing approaches to the presence of foreign forces in the region, the third pillar of Iran's proposal on how to secure the region. While Saudi Arabia approached foreign interference as a necessary measure to survive, Iran claimed that the long-term presence of foreign military forces in the region should be prevented. Consistent with Iran's previous discourse of "neither East nor West," Iranian officials often stated that lasting security could only be possible when the region was "free from the presence and intervention of foreign forces" (Velayati, 1990, p. 46). Arguing that foreign forces exploited the crisis, Kharrazi declared that "any attempt by foreign countries present to consolidate that presence cannot be tolerated by the

people of the region” (1991a, pp. 194-195). To resolve the crisis and secure the region, according to Kharrazi, “any workable political settlement has to be built upon three major criteria: first, immediate, unconditional, and complete withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait; second, rapid withdrawal of all foreign forces from the areas; third, a forward-looking scheme of security arrangements to provide for the collective security of the littoral States of the Persian Gulf” (1991a, p. 194-195). While the first two criteria attempt to remove the foreign powers from the region, the last one’s purpose was to ensure that the regional actors achieve the region’s security without foreign interference, the previous pillar.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Iran’s vision of security in discourse was based on the idea of security for the region and by the regional actors. That is, the only way of achieving security in the region was through initiatives started and maintained by the countries internal to the region. Velayati confirms that “lasting peace and security in the volatile Persian Gulf region can be provided only by the countries of the region” (1990, p. 46). In an attempt to detail what he means by regional arrangements, he further elaborates that security in the region was only attainable through the “expansion of relations and cooperation among the countries in the region.” He delineates two principles for this expansion. The first was founding the arrangement for regional security “primarily on the common values and interests of the regional countries concerned” (Velayati, 1991, p. 54). He argued that the existing bonds of religion, culture, history, and commerce can naturally facilitate the achievement of this purpose. The second fundamental principle expressed by Velayati was that “any security regime in the area has

to be based on...confidence-building rather than on competition and bloc formation, because in a competitive scenario, interstate relations tend to be based on mistrust...which...inherently fail to secure long-term stability for the region” (1991, p. 54).

This approach to removing insecurity from the region and securing the Muslim world was based on removing foreign, un-Islamic forces from the region. The open rejection of Iran vis-à-vis “outside forces” (Velayati, 1991, p. 56) in the region calls for a solution to the Crisis from inside the region.

However, it is hard to argue that the primary reason for this approach was the security of the Muslim world. Even in discourse, the main problem with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was not tied to the threat posed by Iraq to the local peoples and states. The main problem was that it provided a pretext for external forces to intervene in the region. As for the intervention of the US and international coalition in Iraq, Iran’s opposition was rather based on skepticism about the objective of the intervention. That is, Iranian officials stated that the “objectives of foreign military presence...go far beyond the liberation of Kuwait” (Kharrazi, 1991a, p.188). Saudi Arabia argued that the presence of foreign forces was necessary to secure the region, while Iran argued otherwise. Although they both utilize the security of the Muslim world in discourse, their suggestion regarding the way of achieving security in the region strictly clashed.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the Islamic Republic of Iran's discourse and practices during the First Gulf War in relation to several critical questions from the analytical framework of Bilgin (2019): "What is regional security?" "Whose security?", and "How can regional security be achieved?". It concludes that Iran's approach to regional security considerably changed after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. The answer to the first question drawn from the UN speeches revolves around three main themes. These themes are resistance to foreign intervention, regional self-reliance, and the significance of the Persian Gulf as an economic lifeline. The answer to the second question is twofold. That is, Iranian officials discursively presented the Muslim world as the primary referent object.

Four main pillars came to the forefront of the Iranian Islamist security discourse on how to achieve security. They are (1) cessation of the Iraqi invasion, (2) avoiding border changes, (3) preventing the long-term presence of foreign powers in the region, and (4) creating regional arrangements for security rather than externally imposed ones. The characteristics of Iran's approach to the region and security can be drawn from the answers to the questions of the analytical framework. The following chapter addresses the characteristics and comparison of Iranian and Saudi security discourse throughout the Gulf Crisis.

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to examine the Islamist security discourses of Saudi Arabia and Iran and how these actors have constructed the Muslim world as a referent object since 1979. It took the First Gulf War as a case and focused on the UN speeches of the actors during the war. Using the analytical framework for regional security, it asked the following questions: (1) “What is regional security?”, (2) “Whose security?”, and (3) “How to achieve regional security?”. By asking these questions to the official discourse of these countries, it attempted to reveal their approaches to the region and security.

The comparison between the approaches of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran reveals a pattern of slight discursive convergence and practical divergence. Both of these actors attempted to invoke the Muslim world as a referent object. However, their conceptions of region, security, and the characteristics of their approaches differed significantly. While Saudi Arabia proposed and supported securing the regional status quo with external support, Iran promoted Islamic solidarity, resistance, and regional autonomy. Nevertheless, both states ultimately prioritized the security of their regimes in practice, accentuating the use of Islamist security discourse in legitimizing their own perceived interests.

In answering the question of “What is regional security?”, Saudi officials consistently highlighted three answers: the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Saudi Arabia, the return of the pre-existing status quo, and the stability of oil prices and flow. In this framework, regional security was understood not in emancipatory or transformative terms, but as the conservation of the pre-

existing geopolitical order in which the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia remained secure. This position was not only reactive to the immediate threat of Iraq, but also preventive against any revolutionary shift, be it military or social, that might jeopardize the regional order dominated by oil monarchies and their Western allies, primarily the US.

As for the question of “Whose security?”, the answer is twofold. The primary referent object was the Saudi regime, while the Muslim world accompanied it through associating it with the Kingdom’s role in the Muslim world. While Saudi Arabia often invoked the Islamic practices, and Saudi Arabia’s role as the defender of the land of the sacred sites of the Muslim world, these were primarily deployed as rhetorical devices to legitimize its own security practices. The UN speeches of the officials did not focus on the need for securing the Muslim world, but rather on securing the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Although the intuitional expectation of the author of this thesis, while researching, was a more focused construction of the Muslim world as the primary referent of security, Islamist security discourse remained merely as a legitimizing tool for Saudi Arabia’s security practices. For example, casting itself as the guardian of the two holy mosques served to associate the security of the Kingdom with the defense of Islam, through which the officials attempted to insulate the Kingdom’s practices from criticism. Similarly, appeals to Islamic solidarity and Arab unity were not sustained by policy content and were sometimes discursively undermined due to their ineffectiveness. As such, the Muslim world functioned as a legitimizing tool.

The answer to the “How to achieve regional security?” question centered on cooperation with allies, most notably the US. Although Saudi officials initially highlighted the need for resolving the crisis from inside the region through regional mechanisms such as a unified regional front, these attempts were ultimately deemed insufficient (Shihabi, 1991a). Hence, Saudi officials argued that it was necessary to call the Western allies of Saudi Arabia, who were ready to protect the Kingdom vis-à-vis Iraqi aggression and potential Iraqi incursion into Saudi Arabia’s lands. The external military assistance from the US was essential in securing Saudi Arabia, although it posed challenges in terms of Saudi Arabia’s relationship with its citizens and other regional actors. The Arab nationalists and Islamists in Saudi Arabia opposed the official decision of Saudi Arabia to call for military deployment by the US. To manage this tension, the gap between the American and Saudi religious sensibilities was tried to be bridged. The US efforts accompanied the Saudi efforts to address this gap. The US military leaders worked to keep the media coverage of the religious practices of their soldiers under control. Accordingly, US military leaders also urged the soldiers not to wear insignias such as a cross or Star of David, and renamed chaplains and religious services as morale counselors and morale meetings, respectively. The aim was to prevent giving “Iraqi President Saddam Hussein further ammunition for criticism against Saudi Arabia in the Arab world” (Baum, 1991). In the end, the deployment of foreign troops on Saudi territory was portrayed as a pragmatic measure necessary to ensure the survival of the regime rather than a deviation from Islamic principles. In addition, Saudi Arabia attempted to downplay its external reliance through attempts to consolidate and utilize

its own military and economic assets. This strategy of international coordination, along with domestic consolidation, formed a significant part of Saudi Arabia's approach to achieving regional security.

The characteristics of Saudi Arabia's approach to regional security also require attention to see if any change occurred in Saudi Arabia's understanding of security. Observing the security discourse and practice of Saudi Arabia, the characteristics of Saudi Arabia's approach remained considerably the same, except for the direction. Firstly, its conceptual focus remains statist, with Saudi officials' perspective of the state(s) as the primary agent for providing security against the Iraqi invasion. The Iraqi aggression toward Kuwait and the military deployment on the border of Saudi Arabia constituted the primary security threats to the Kingdom. At the time, Saudi Arabia attributed the role of the agent of security to the sovereign states and formal alliances in securing their regime vis-à-vis Iraqi aggression.

Secondly, the Saudi approach to regional security remained military-focused. Although Saudi Arabia was immobilized for a few days due to the potential invasion of Saudi lands by Iraq, the immediate response of the Kingdom to the invasion of Kuwait was to call upon its allies for military deployment on its lands. Although this decision was debatable, due to the regional actors' approach to the US presence, Saudi Arabia hesitated very little before inviting foreign militaries to fight against a military invasion. Namely, Saudi Arabia relied heavily on military means as the primary method to secure its regime.

Thirdly, Saudi Arabia's approach remained top-down. That is to say, actors external to the region had a primary role in defining and addressing regional threats. Although Saudi Arabia attempted to gather support from regional actors through the Damascus Declaration and Islamic Conferences, it did not result in forming a security arrangement from inside the region through which the regional actors could resolve the Gulf Crisis. Hence, the Saudi officials argued that the failure of regional mechanisms was one of the reasons why Saudi Arabia invited external actors to the region.

The last characteristic of Saudi Arabia's security approach is its direction. Previously, so long as the Soviet Union was kept outside and any communist infiltration into the region was prevented, the US and its allies were satisfied (Bilgin, 2019, p. 6). However, at the time of the First Gulf War, Soviet and communist infiltration into the region was not possible anymore since the USSR was on the brink of collapse. Foreign Minister Al-Faisal recognized at the time that with the passing of the Cold War, potential penetration of the Soviet Union was not at the top of the agenda. In the same speech, Al-Faisal also recognized that the threat to Saudi Arabia's security "emanated from within the region itself" (Al-Faisal, 1991). That is, the Saudi approach was now directed inward. In sum, the threats to its security stemmed from within the region.

Although Saudi Arabia often invoked the concept of the Muslim world, its approach to region and security remained deeply tied to the regime's security and the regional status quo. Despite articulating that Saudi Arabia is the cradle of Islam and claiming a leadership position, the primary emphasis in

discourse was not securing the Muslim world but rather on restoring the status quo ante and securing Saudi Arabia's territorial integrity, sovereignty, and stability of the oil market. That is, although the referent object had been the Muslim world, Saudi officials' discourse in the UN summits remained centered around Saudi Arabia itself. Likewise, despite its calls for Islamic and Arab solidarity vis-à-vis the Iraqi aggression, the official discourse often called for an intervention from "friendly states", most of which were Western powers. Hence, Saudi Arabia's official discourse oscillated between invoking the Muslimness of Saudi Arabia and how Saudi Arabia positioned itself in the Muslim world, and the insufficiency of the Muslim and Arab solutions to the problem. As discussed in the next section, Iran's discourse took a different turn from Saudi Arabia's when the official discourse put emphasis on Islamic solidarity, resistance, and opposition to the presence of external powers in the region.

As regards Iran, despite seemingly having the same referent object on the discourse level, the Muslim world, Iran's approach to regional security significantly differed from that of Saudi Arabia. For Iran, the answer to the "What is regional security?" question revolves around three main elements: resistance to foreign intervention, regional self-reliance, and the significance of the Persian Gulf for stable oil prices and flow. Relevant to the first element, Iranian officials often remarked that the Muslim peoples of the region remained vigilant vis-à-vis the foreign intervention. However, states in the region should also follow that path and resolve the regional security issues among themselves. Appealing to the state and grass-roots actors of the region who are recipients of its discourse, Iranians pursued a path of regional

self-reliance in discourse. Namely, regional actors should not need foreign assistance in regional security issues and facilitate foreign domination. Instead, regional actors should deal with the security problems on their own. To sum up this approach, Iran suggested that regional solutions for regional problems be provided by the regional actors.

The last element around which the Iranian approach to regional security revolves was the significance of the Persian Gulf. Iranian officials define the Gulf as a lifeline for the regional states due to its importance regarding the oil flow. All the littoral states in the Persian Gulf were oil-exporting states, and most of their income was based on oil and gas. Arguing that both the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the foreign presence brought about this invasion could potentially inflict instability in both oil prices and flow, according to Iranian officials. That could mean reduced income and increased instability for the regional actors, potentially harming peace and security in the region. Hence, the importance of the Persian Gulf as a lifeline. Eventually, the dominant elements of Iranian discourse diverged significantly from the Saudi discourse, which tied regional security to the territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia, regional status quo, and the stability of oil prices and flow.

The answer to the second question, regarding whose security Iran prioritizes, was a bit more complicated. Iran's discourse throughout the crisis was seemingly less self-centered compared to Saudi discourse. That is, while Saudi officials often cited national security concerns in their speeches at the UN assemblies, Iranian officials suggested arguments that seemingly concern the security of the regional actors, primarily the littoral states in the

Gulf. Iranian discourse was based on the commonalities of the regional actors, such as religious, cultural, and commercial, and the need for Islamic solidarity. Namely, Iran cast itself in a self-proclaimed position of securing the Muslim world. This approach to the region, however, was based on geographical proximity to the Gulf Crisis, as Iranian officials often cited “littoral states”. However, it was hard to find data suggestive of Iranian practice aiming at securing the Muslim communities in the region since Iran preferred neutrality during both the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the international intervention against Iraq. Iran rather turned inwards to recover from the 8-year war with Iraq and reconstruct the country.

In addressing the third question, the Islamic Republic of Iran’s discourse on how to secure the region was based on four main factors. The first one was that the invasion should stop immediately all Iraqi soldiers should withdraw from Kuwaiti lands. Apart from the obvious purpose to stop the ongoing war, this was also targeted to prevent the emergence of any pretext that foreign powers could exploit to intervene in the regional issues.

The second factor was to prevent any border changes between sovereign states in the region. This was again tied to the long-term presence of foreign powers. Iran opposed changes in borders, arguing that it could trigger a long-term plan for foreign forces to stay in the region, cause instability, and prove detrimental to the security of the states in the region.

The third factor, preventing the long-term presence of foreign powers, was one of the reasons why Iran opposed the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and border changes in the region, since they provided a pretext for foreign powers to

infiltrate the region. Iran suggested that deploying the US military and other Western coalition forces should be a short-term plan. According to Iranian officials, foreign forces would inflict instability and insecurity on the region rather than resolve it. Hence, it was a crucial part of achieving regional security. It was also related to the fourth factor. That is, creating regional arrangements to resolve regional crises rather than externally imposed ones. According to Iranian representatives, the existence and engagement of foreign forces in resolving the crisis provided these actors a say in the regional actors. Thus, preventing their long-term presence was deemed necessary to create regional arrangements by and for the regional actors without foreign intervention and imposition. Unlike Saudi Arabia's reliance on external actors to achieve security for its own regime, Iran emphasized the necessity of regional arrangements and self-sufficiency, framing the military presence of external powers in the region as a threat to regional order.

The characteristics of Iran's approach to security differed from those of Saudi Arabia, although not significantly. First off, Iran's approach to security remained statist. Although Iranian officials cited the Muslim peoples of the region regarding their vigilance against the intentions of the US and its allies, Iran also attributed the primary agency for providing security in the region to the states of the region. Namely, the references made to the grassroots remained on a discursive level, and the states remained the primary agents and referents of security vis-à-vis Iraqi aggression and the presence of foreign forces in the region.

Second, the Islamist security discourse of Iran in the UN speeches was, in fact, not military-focused. They were rather based on cooperation among the regional actors, without foreign intervention, and seemingly did not rely heavily on military practices to resolve the crisis. However, not long after the beginning of the Iraqi invasion, Iraq made a bid for Iranian support against the international coalition out of desperation. Iraq made unilateral concessions to Iran concerning the unresolved issues that resulted from the 8-year war (Arjomand, 1991, p. 56). Namely, Iran was not a party to the crisis, and neither did its officials suggest that it had been threatened by the Iraqi aggression. Hence, whether Iran had a military-focused approach to regional security cannot be drawn from a crisis in which they are not a party. However, it is safe to argue that the official discourse was not military-focused.

Thirdly, Iran's approach was a bottom-up one. Namely, according to Iranian representatives, foreign forces should not have a primary role in defining and addressing the security issues in the region. Iran was against any foreign intervention in the region in the affairs of the regional states. The Iranian vision of "neither East nor West" was in consonance with the Iranian reaction to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the intervention of the international coalition. Iranian approach to how regional crises should be resolved can be summed up as security arrangements for the region by the regional actors.

Lastly, the direction of Iran's security approach was outward. The US allies in the region were categorized as representatives and agents of Western imperialism (Taremi, 2003, p. 385). Namely, Iranian officials regarded the

regional collaborators of the West as enabling the un-Islamic influence in the region. However, the primary actor against which Iran sought to achieve regional security was the US. Although the Saudi alliance with the West, the US military deployment ensuing from the Iraqi invasion, and the Saudi invitation stemmed from inside the region were detrimental to the interests and security of the countries of the region (Velayati, 1990), the main threat was the infiltration of the US into the region. Hence, the outward direction.

In sum, Iranian official discourse also had its inconsistencies. Despite the calls for Islamic unity, resistance to foreign intervention, and regional self-reliance, Iranian officials often refer to the security of the Persian Gulf and littoral states for the stable flow of oil allows the argument that Iranian officials had a restricted understanding of the Muslim world, and narrow down the universal Islamic tone that Iranian officials claimed to hold. Additionally, Khomeini's call for jihad against the US, and Iranian officials' appeal in the UN summits to the UN, and international mechanisms to remove Iraq from Kuwait and foreign military presence from the region make the discourse less consistent. That is, the inconsistency between the call for a revolutionary confrontation and diplomatic cooperation invited a thorough examination of the official Iranian discourse.

The contrast and inconsistencies in both states' own discourses can also be observed between the official Saudi and Iranian discourses. As an alternative explanation for why these two states adopted different approaches to regional security, one could suggest sectarian differences. While Iran is a Shia-majority country, Saudi Arabia's population is mostly dominated by the

followers of Wahhabism. Against this alternative explanation that the sectarian differences might have led to different approaches, Madawi al-Rasheed suggests that these differences should not be reduced to sectarian divides between Sunnism and Shiism (2011, p. 514). The political elites often mobilize sectarianism as a tool of counter-revolution and for regime security, rather than utilizing it as a genuine factor in policy-making. Particularly in the Saudi case, sectarian differences have sometimes been invoked and instrumentalized to delegitimize Shi'a groups and prevent Iranian influence by mobilizing the Sunni population (Al-Rasheed, 2011, p. 520). Hence, rather than looking for a single overarching factor behind different approaches to region and security, the students of International Security may need to look at the politics behind.

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