REGIONAL POWERS' CONTRADICTORY LEADERSHIPS:

TURKEY AND SAUDI ARABIA IN THE ARAB SPRING

by

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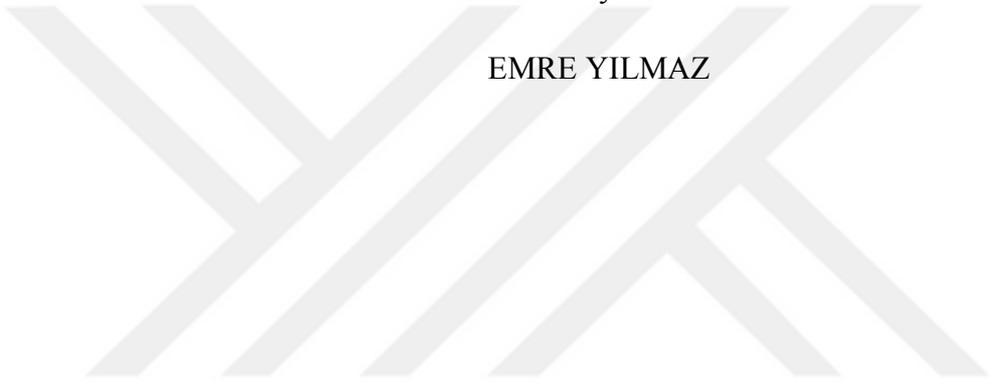Bülent Aras

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## ABSTRACT

*Regional powers, their roles, and places in the future configuration of the new world order have been burning debates in academia. Yet, studies on regional powers' projections in certain regions are quite rare both empirically and theoretically. Needless to say, regional powers have been gaining increasing importance in their respective regions that are gradually becoming autonomous. This creates an environment for them to assert their regional projections. Yet, in this responding region, there might be more than one regional power whose regional projections would possibly contradict each other due to their foreign policy considerations. In this thesis, I demonstrate how two different foreign policy oriented regional powers approach crucially important unfolding regional developments, by examining Saudi Arabia and Turkey during the Arab Spring. By accepting their leadership roles at that period, their intentions and implementations are compared and analyzed in the context of regional powers.*

# BÖLGESEL GÜÇLERİN AYKIRI LİDERLİKLERİ:

# ARAP BAHARI'NDA TÜRKİYE ve SUUDİ ARABİSTAN

Emre Yılmaz

Avrupa Çalışmaları, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2015

Tez Danışmanı: Bülent Aras

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Bölgesel Güçler, Aykırı Liderlikler, Arap Baharı, Türkiye, Suudi Arabistan

## ÖZET

*Bölgesel güçler, rolleri ve gelecekteki yeni dünya düzenindeki yerleri akademide yoğun sekilde tartışılmaktadır. Fakat, belirli bölgeler üzerine bölgesel güçlerin projeksiyonları hakkındaki teorik ve ampirik çalışmalar nadirdir. Bölgesel güçler gittikçe otonomlaşan bölgelerinde artarak önem kazanmaktadır. Bu onlara, bölgesel projeksiyonlarını öne çıkarmak için bir ortam sunmaktadır. Ancak, bu bölgelerde dış politika değerlendirmeleri çeşitli nedenlerden dolayı bölgesel projeksiyonlarında birbirleriyle zıt olan birden fazla bölgesel güç olabilir. Bu tezde, Arap Baharı süresince Türkiye ve Suudi Arabistan göz önüne alınarak iki farklı dış politika anlayışına sahip olan iki bölgesel gücün bölgeye yayılan hayati derecede önemli gelişmelere nasıl yaklaştıkları sorgulanmaktadır. Ayrıca, bu ülkelerin Arap Baharı boyunca liderlikleri varsayılarak, bahsedilen süre içerisindeki niyetleri ve uygulamaları karşılaştırılarak, bölgesel güçler bağlamında analiz edilmiştir.*

To my deceased grandfather…

# LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| AK Party | Justice and Development Party |
| BRICS | Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa |
| EEC | European Economic Community |
| EU | European Union |
| GCC | Gulf Cooperation Council |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| EU | European Union |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| IR | International Relations |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NGOs | Non-Government Organizations |
| OIC | Organization of Islamic Cooperation |
| OPEC | Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries |
| PKK | Kurdistan Worker Party |
| TESEV | The Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation |
| UAE | United Arab Emirates |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UN | United Nations |

| US | United States |
| USAK | International Strategic Research Institute |
| USD | United States Dollar |
| USSR | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics |
| WWI | World War I |

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# 1.INTRODUCTION

Regional powers, their roles and places in the future configuration of the new world order have been burning debates in academia in the last decades. Apart from the traditional middle and great power actors, when we glance at the emerging middle powers and great powers, it is not unusual to be faced their regional power characteristics. Even though their role in world politics as regional powers has been the main subject of most of the academic studies, the analysis of regional powers' regional projections is quite rare.

To enrich both theoretical and empirical analyze is a must situation in this context. Theoretically, Sandra Destradi focuses on three strategies that regional powers could implement in their foreign policy. Destradi (2010) points out the three approaches of empire, hegemony and leadership with the help of IR theories main assumptions in order to fill the gap of explaining how regional powers design their interests to neighboring countries in responding regions. These theoretical discussions should be propped up with empirical analysis to better understand both regional powers' intentions and capabilities as well as to demonstrate their regional limitations, if they exist.

In this thesis, theoretically, two leading regional powers, namely Turkey and Saudi Arabia, will be taken into account in the period of the Arab Spring and will be used to demonstrate how two different foreign policy based actors in the region of polarity acts to regionally influential unfolding developments. Thus, the main problem with most of the studies is that they focus solely on the regional powers' role in the region by ruling out the rival regional powers in the region. Hence, we will examine how two leaderships with different foreign policy orientations influence the regional cooperation or competition in multi-polar region.

Why are Saudi Arabia and Turkey the main concern of this study? Firstly, there have been numerous academic studies comparing Saudi Arabia and Iran or Turkey and Iran. However, Turkey and Saudi Arabia have rarely been the subject of a single literature. Furthermore, as two emerging and regional powers that are also US allies and Sunni majority actors, it will be interesting to compare these countries' approaches toward the regionally influential wave of the Arab Spring.

In the first chapter, I will be delving into power analysis in the International Relations without getting into much detail. Then, we will draw the definition of a regional power as an actor with its main characteristics and demonstrate their place in current discussions. Following this, I will analyze in gradually being autonomous regions, which regional projections can be asserted will be analyzed with the help of Sandra Destradi's illuminating study. Therefore, I will touch upon why I have chosen Saudi Arabia and Turkey as the two leaders of the region.

In the second and third chapters, I will focus on regional powers resources of Saudi Arabia and Turkey by drawing on economic, diplomatic, military and ideational resources. Their leadership methods and foreign policy considerations will also be taken into account in order to grasp why their ways differentiated during the Arab Spring. In the fourth chapter, the challenge between Saudi Arabia and Turkey will be demonstrated over Bahrain, Egypt and Syria. By analyzing strong political figures statements together looking at the implementations of two actors in these countries, the divergence between Saudi Arabia and Turkey will be displayed.

**CHAPTER 2**

**2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### 2.1. Power Analysis in International Relations

In social sciences, concept of power has always been the central focus of burning debates in particularly international relations and political sciences but it is still also most ambiguous one. Myriad attributions to power inevitably lead to diversification of viewpoints on power which makes it harder to find convergence of mutually confessed conceptualization, as well. Having no common and mutually admitted definition of power is even signified as "embarrassment to political scientist" by Robert Gilpin. (Gilpin, 1975, 24) It is inherent repercussions of how different International Relations theories take power into account with their main assumptions and of how interactions among the actors have steadily shifted that gradually made power analysis very complicated. In this context, power has been termed as "influence, coercion, force, persuasion, deterrence, compellence, inducement"(Baldwin, 2012) in which all reflects the different angles of power analysis. In current very complex environment of international relations, it is unreliable to analyze power by focusing on it as one dimension.

David Luke, by analyzing Robert Dahl's "observable" behavior and Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz's "agenda setting" oriented arguments, surfaces "three dimensions of power". (Lukes, 1974) In his study, Lukes first points out the "observable" dimension of power in tandem with Dahl's "observable" outcome oriented angle which is based causal relationship. In the second dimension of power, Luke focuses on the

decision-making based approach which is an actor's ability to keep significant topics away from the discussion table. Finally, Luke comes up with the third dimension of power, which is "shaping" the interest of others. The difference between this third dimension and second is that third dimension of power is not only taken into account "behavioral" or "relational" but also it also pushes other actors to shape their maneuverability in terms of decision making resulting from international system's structure.(Özdemir, 2008)

With this very brief story of three dimensions of power, it is safe to say today power is simply multifaceted because international relations have gradually turned into a multi-dimensional concept which chipped away at classical power attribution to impose a personal will on another. That is not to say that Robert Dahl's well known and almost most cited definition of "A has power over B to get the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do"(Dahl, 1957) is passé. This implication of imposing political will on to another is still considerably valid. Yet, rapid developments in technology, social interaction, ecological concerns and most importantly economic considerations cause interdependence among states which requires each actor to some extent be dependent on each other but, a less dependent actor has more leverage of political influence to another.(Keohane and Nye, 1977) Both definitions signify the importance of outcome but the central focus of the first is "imposition" of a political will whereas latter is "interdependence". In this regard, Holsti's (Holsti, 1964) emphasis on "power as an integral part of all political relationship" and questioning "how does one state influence the behavior of another in its own interests" are very complementary of the aforementioned power analysis. Hence, first, it recognizes the multidimensional version of power and second it specially emphasizes on having influence. In this thesis, by delving into the structural frameworks of power analysis, I will consider the power's multifaceted dimension and its influence on actors by the employment of another one. Therefore, as a necessary part of my thesis in making more sense of benefitting the conceptualization of regional powers, I will specially split two parts for realist and liberal theories analysis of power.

## 2. 1.1. Realist Viewpoint of Power

Realism is one of the most preeminent and influential tradition in international relations whose roots and marks trace back to ancient times. Realist theory firmly emphasizes that power, in particular, has a material side which is regarded as military might of a country. As a matter of fact, when looking at realist theory and power, the first thing that comes to an IR scholar's mind is realist theory when power is mentioned which shows how intricately these two concepts are connected.

Since the earlier times of ancient Greek era and its legendary narrative of Melian Dialogue to current times, security considerations which are very dependent on a country's ability to secure its existence have been the main focus of realist theory. Thinking the collateral arising of international relations as a branch of political science with the intensification of realist studies in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, realists have been frontrunner conducive of shaping international relations discipline.

Realist theory splits into two groups. First, for classic realists like pioneering scholar of Hans Morgenthau, with mentioning the nature of mankind and assuming that the human nature is not good so states, like in human nature, in international politics are not good. Therefore, Morgenthau (1973) considers international politics as "struggle for power" that made actors more deterrent to another one whose intention is both unforeseen and not good. In his approach to power, Morgenthau simultaneously considers power as both ultimate goal and tool to shape an actor's interests in favor of itself.

Morgenthau's consideration of power as both aim and tool has been harshly slammed by constituting second group of realist school, namely neo-realism. By rejecting and standing away from the idea of human nature, Kenneth Waltz with its enlightening study of "Man, the State and War", he points out international structure of politics in which there is no higher authority to control, judge and punish actors' behavior and thereby international system is defined as anarchical.(Waltz, 2001) This international system breeds the need of power, which is entailed for having survival, stemming from anarchical environment, not deriving from human nature. Yet, here is

the most distinguishing feature of neo-realist theory and it is that power as a tool is needed to keep an actor's survival, not emerging as an aim to reach.

Although realist scholars are divided on this issue, there is a common point in which, for realists, power is tantamount to security and survival. Owing to this reason, realist theory and its fellows prioritize military might as main power source so as to be immune from any attacks. In addition to this, realist theorists focus on the economic dimension of power source by accepting that "the political clout of nations correlates closely with their economic power and military might".(Waltz, 2010) After all, in power source hierarchy, military might of a country is located at the top and economic power continues subsequently.

## 2.1.2. Liberal Viewpoint: Non-Material Side of Power

The gradual complexities of international politics by steadily upholding importance of economic considerations resulting in the recognition of material side of power neither comprehensive nor is satisfactory explaining power as a whole, liberal scholars go beyond the security oriented view by confessing interdependence among countries bring in a concrete dimension to power within the scope of three dimensions of power developed by Steven Lukes. In this dimension, the application of power differs from the material and solid dimension by focusing on "agenda setting" ability of power whose observabilility is tough.

In this context, inspiring study of Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz (1962) on "Two Faces of Power", they point out the ability of hiding crucial points and confining the agenda favorably from the decision making table. Following this theoretical study, Joseph Nye has developed a more comprehensive and conceptually recognized approach of "soft power" with its tools and methodologies. As, Bachrach and Baratz put forward, Joseph Nye (1990) defines soft power as "the ability of a county to structure a situation so that other countries develop preferences or define their interests in ways consistent with its own". In shaping other actors' preferences, threatening, coercing, inducing and several methods could be used but, for Nye, "attraction" is crucial to do so. The sources of soft power defined by Joseph Nye (2004) are lined up as "culture", "political values" and "foreign policy" so as to enhance an actor's attractiveness.

Contrary to realist theory's state centered actor mechanism, liberal viewpoint not only takes state as a sole actor, but also private groups and even individuals are regarded as fundamental actor of international politics. (Moravcsik, 1997) Considering this together with Nye's soft power tool of culture, as a main component part of cultural issues, individuals, social groups are automatically turned into collective actors increasing a country's attractiveness.

To sum up, by recognizing the "agenda setting" in which none of the significant issue is under probe and having "attraction" that enables an actor to be persuaded, results in power's intangible dimension in which "soft power" occurs.

### 2.1.3. Definition of Regional Powers as An Actor

In order to grasp main characteristics of regional powers, we need to focus on two separate concepts: first, is geographic concept that indicates "region" and second concept is core issue of International relations, "power".(Nolte, 2010) In addition to this, conceptualization of regional powers can be made with the help of different IR approaches; "they include the internal power base (liberal), the power resources (realist) and their application (realist), role definitions and strategies (constructivists)".(Nolte, 2010) By exploiting all abovementioned approaches and concepts, first, the concept of region and then concept of regional powers should be drawn.

As a geographical concept, in international relations and political sciences, explanation of "region" has been usually ruled out and is rarely given place in the studies of regional powers. Although having lack of abundant definitions of "region", there is widely accepted frame that has been drawn by William Thompson (1973), who indicates four main pillars for explaining the region;

- geographical proximity
- regularity and intensity of interaction between regional actors,
- internal and external recognition as a distinctive area
- a minimum size of at least two actors.

As understood from the definition, region is the internally and externally confined place in which at least two actors have regular and considerably intense interaction due to the help of geographical availability. Hence, an actor that has its own projections and contributions in a region is regarded as "regional powers". Yet, being a regional power entails some criteria that aspiring countries should meet. In this context, Daniel Flames (2007) seeks to explain by relying on four criteria so as to explain the main pivotal necessities for being regional power.

- Formulation of the claim to leadership,
- Possession of the necessary power resources
- Employment of foreign policy instruments
- Acceptance of the leadership role by third states.

First point demonstrates the leadership which is based on "willingness" of an actor is directly related with the internal base of power that allows a country to undertake crucial roles contributing adverse and positives impacts on upholding issues in the region. Second point emphasizes an ideational and material side of power which are conducive of enlarging or limiting an actor's maneuverability in the region. Third point is the repercussion of predecessor that implies the tools which enable a country to get outcomes. Last but not least, for being a regional the recognition of actor's role in responding region by internal and external actors are vital. Therefore, I will keep up with my thesis by considering all these together and unpacking all aforementioned approaches.

### 2.1.4. Gradual Multilateralization and Regional Powers

Since the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century, US hegemony on international stage has been revisited after several incidents 9/11 attacks, Afghanistan and Iraqi War, respectively. In economic terms, China's economic miracle and constant high level economic growth as well as the rise of the BRICs and near-BRIC countries or emerging powers present serious challenge to existing international order. The debate concerning global power distribution and the future configuration of the global order has been going on.

In the last decade of $20^{th}$ century, after the demise of Soviet Union, US which is the winner of Cold War appeared sole superpower in international politics. In economic, military, technological and cultural terms, US erectedas a giant that has strong ties with all around the world. Moreover, the values that advocated for decades against the Soviet expansionism appealed by myriad countries both in the European continent and other regions.

The combination of material and ideational resources of US was interpreted by some scholars that unlike other hegemony in the past, the distinguishing feature of the US would become a belief that it would never decline.(Cox, 2001) It is, thus, put forward that the present system of international system is unipolar, peaceful most importantly durable.(Wohlforth, 1999)

However, there were some counterarguments signifying the rise of the new powers by their influence in their changing regional and global role through their economic capacities. This reflected opposite claim of unilateralism and post-cold war era could suddenly turn into multilateral international system. In this context, after all of sudden disappearance of Soviet Union, newly emerging countries, such as Japan and Germany were indicated as the new super powers in international politics, and they would be able to constrain, to some extent, the maneuver field of US through their economic and technological presence. In addition, their increasing activity became the clear-cut proof of changing international structure.(Waltz, 1993)

Despite emerging powers and changing international structure after even Cold-War, there was a crucial reality that United States was the only super power in military terms with no need of any comparison through its leading role in the NATO and no intention of emerging countries on balancing US superiority in military field. Nevertheless, as indicated above, their sharply increasing role in economic and technological field, they would use the "soft balancing" (Layne, 2006; Pape, 2005; Paul,2005) so as to curb US unilateral action in all field.

At this point, according to Samuel Huntington, none of the view on international system, neither unilateralism nor multilateralism, do not truly match with contemporary international politics. In Huntington's view, there is solely superpower, United States, and several major powers and this system can be named as "uni-multipolar"

system.(Huntington, 2003)In this international system, the structure of global power distribution, according to Huntington, as follows:

> "At the top, the US has preeminence in every domain of power. At the second level are major regional powers, which are the dominant actors of in important areas of the world but whose interests and capabilities do not extend as globally as those of the US. At a third level are secondary regional powers whose influence in their region is less than that of the major regional powers. Finally, at the fourth level are all the remaining countries, some of which are quite important for various reasons but which do not play roles in the global power structure comparable to countries at the top three levels."(Huntington, 2003, 7-8)

In Huntington's definition, there is no distinct differentiation between regional and great powers place in his hierarchy. Normally, great powers with their influence on world diplomacy through their economic, military and political weight are taken place in second place, under superpower and upper of middle power, on power hierarchy.(Flemes, 2007) In this context, it can be thus said regional powers can be considered at same degree of great powers, from Huntington's perspective. Contrary to this idea, regional powers are measured with the same degree of middle powers. Considering the fact that as well newly emerging middle powers focus more on their immediate region (Jordaan, 2003) is distinguishing feature from traditional middle power points out the another dimension of middle power in the frame of regional power. Because, in this frame, for new emerging middle power can be evaluated as regional power, as a consequence, as an opposite view to Huntington, regional power put the line of middle powers. The classification of regional power, is quite complicated that is derived from "the lack of analytical instruments to identify and to compare regional powers and to differentiate"(Nolte, 2010) whether they are middle or great power. Thus, it is safe to say that regional powers can be middle, great and even superpower in international politics.

Considering the fact that distinguishing feature of great power is to possess nuclear weapons, with combination of to some extent material capacities, it would be claimed that a great power can be both regional and great power, however it is not in same possibilities to say that each regional powers are great power. With citing from the eminent working on the regional powers and their hierarchy, Barry Buzan and Ole Waever (2003) make clear distinction between super and great powers, whose influence

is felt globally, and regional power whose impact can be large in alleged region but less impact at the global level.

In changing international political structure, it is enormously complicated to locate regional powers in global power structure. Nevertheless, there is increasingly clear reality that both regional and emerging powers are gaining importance and rising more rapidly than existing superpower, that is to say, convergence between regional or emerging powers and superpower or great powers is quite distinct. Accepting that there is an "unrevealing" with different "autonomous" centers in global politics(Haass, 2014), Buzan and Waever's idea of regional powers are getting more influential in setting regional politics in this "unrevealing" and "autonomous" centers gain more currency.

## 2.2. Contradictory Leaderships

By recognizing Samuel Huntington's assertion of a single hegemonic power in global politics and several regional powers, Andrew Hurrell(2007) questions the relationship between "one world and the many regions" in the globalization process with the leadership of sole hegemonic power and puts forward that "multiregional system of international relations" soars due to the reason that there is an re-attempt of regional institutionalization mushrooming in the different regions of world. Although Andrew Hurrell mainly emphasizes on the rapid regionalization movements with different dimension in the different regions of world, it is also a clear cut proof of external actors diminishing role and interference to respective regions in a time of "emerging regional architecture of world politics".(Acharya, 2007)

Looking at powers very distinct feature shows that most of them have regional characteristics together with this regional architecture of world politics. It is safe to say that regional powers have more autonomy in responding to these regions. This is also recognized as a "disorderly world" because of upholding a number of centers of gravity with "increasing autonomy."(Haass, 2014)

In this autonomous environment, in academic studies, there is no considerable working on how regional powers exercise and apply their resources so as to reach their regional ambitions.(Nolte, 2010) In this regard, Sandra Destradi focuses on three

strategies that regional powers could implement their foreign policy approaches in accordance with these strategies. Destradi (2010) points out three approaches of empire, hegemony and leadership with the help of IR theories main assumptions in order to fill the gap of explaining how regional powers design their interests to neighboring countries in responding regions. By a deeper glance, Destradi, at first, emphasizes on the coercive power for explaining the empire which a materially (military power) powerful country has the ability to threat on neighboring countries, if necessary and carry out military operation in guarantying its security. This approach also overlaps with John Mearsheimer's Great Power Politics (Mearsheimer, 2001), who is admitted as preeminent offensive realist scholar, who envisages a power maximization of great powers to revise present status quo. He also hailed the instance of China as be coercive by declaring Monroe Doctrine that does not allow external power involvement to China's possible action to reshape its respective region.(Mearsheimer, 2014)

Second, Destradi focuses on another strategy that entails both a value based order provided by preeminent state and consent by other actors in international politics which is called as hegemony. Recognizing final goal of hegemonic state that is establishment of stable environment, Destradi takes closer look at the strategies that a hegemonic state might adopt in reaching its final goals and those strategies are called "hard", "intermediate" or "soft". Destradi's underscore of hegemonic role of regional powers reminds us why we should not rule out the hegemonic stability theory that basically explains how a global order would be stable and secure. The theory mainly suggests that an existence of hegemonic actor which is capable of power components remaining its preeminence and volunteer to carry burden has to pave the way to build up institution, rules and norms in line with its interests.(Kindleberger, 1986) And thus, a global stability can be enjoyed by other actors in the system that considers the costs and benefits in established order. Degrading this approach to the regional context, it is assumed that a regionally hegemonic power would be conducive to shaping regional institutions, norms and rules for the sake of both its interests and regional stability that is good for all stakeholders. However, here is a crucial question soaring and it is what if no existential hegemonic actor surfaces in the region?

Thirdly, Destradi analyzes leadership as a strategy for regional powers. Rather empire, it is assumed that leadership strategy does not cover coercive application, yet it requires a leader country that has to have considerable influence that leads to gain

followers in her policies. Destradi splits leadership attempts into two groups: "leader initiated" and "follower initiated" leadership.(Destradi, 2010) In her view, leader initiated leadership is a socialization process which is cemented on shared norms and values and here is most important point and that is collectivity. In the latter approach, the follower initiated approach could stem from a necessity, like strengthening ties against a common threat, whose process is prone to be bottom-up oriented. After all these, here another question again arises what if there are more than one actor playing leadership role and whose foreign policy projection is totally different comparing to other one?

These aforementioned strategies are important when it comes to the topic of regional powers that seem discomforted regarding the present structure of international organizations including the UN Security Council. When we look at the countries directing harsh criticism on the present structure of the UN Security Council, it is not surprising to come across countries of Brazil, South Africa, India, Turkey, Saudi Arabia who are all regarded as regional powers, as well. In this context, thinking about regional powers' discontent together with Destradi's applied strategies for regional powers, it is easily interpreted that these countries could implement those strategies so as to enhance their status in global politics. This might result in the configuration of permanent membership of UN Security Council.

The most concrete evidence how regional powers hold better status is US itself after the process of it had declared Monroe Doctrine, which excluded external power's involvement to the regional issues, and gradually imposed its regional strategies, at first, and global politics, second. By benefitting from a Waltz's approach, the regional power could also gather in an institutional cooperation with the leadership of pro-eminent country that would derive from either leader itself or bottom-up level for balancing a rising regional actor. Gulf Cooperation Council's emergence is clear cut proof of this institutionalization around common shared norms and most importantly threats coming out from Iran. In context of regional integration, cooperative hegemony, which implies active role of major states in regional institutionalization(Pedersen, 2002) is also a theorized version of how regional powers play crucial role in regional institutionalization by sharing their power. These all imply a regional institutionalization around materially and ideationally powerful states, which eventually

and vulnerably causes no clash with this power states intra-regional countries in both sub-regional and regional environment.

So far, researchers on regional powers generally have been evolved around the context of regional integration, regional cooperation, global politics, multi-polarization, regional/international order, values, identity so on and so forth. This situation put researchers under illusion that as if there is no another regional power in the responding region of a regional power whose intended strategies and projections for the region would be in a conflict with other actor. That is to say, remembering leadership in the conceptualization of regional powers, no intensive focus on the possible intra-regional conflict, due to the assertiveness of a regional actors and its confrontation with another one that also aspires regional strategy, has been done. In this context, Daniel Flames(2009) sought to explain how South Africa's historical legacy caused regional rejection for South Africa's cooperative hegemony strategy in its region. Yet, there is no considerable attention on multiple regional powers' comparative foreign policy analysis in the context of their regional strategy to upholding regional developments. It is also the fact that "countries in the regions themselves could form counter-alliance against the emerging regional power."(Nolte, 2010) or a regional power could mobilizes its resources in order to curb active regional power's actions.

Regional powers' emergence in different parts of world does also mean that different intra-regional challenger or follower would exist in these respective regions. Assuming that Brazil and South Africa's intraregional challengers arethe same as India and Turkey's intraregional challengers in the regions of South Asia and Middle East, all of which are ideationally and materially powerful states with different regional projections and foreign policy approaches, is inaccurate. In the latter point, it would eventually lead to the "contradictory leaderships" which means a regional actor, whose regional projection does not overlap with another regional power that aspires regional order in accordance with its or together with its allies interest, could mobilize its own power resources in order to narrow down the maneuver field of this just aforementioned ambitious actor.

This contradictory leadership would be prolonged or short lived. It is dependent on the number of actors and their ability to find out a middle ground in their interests. In this context, if there are two different policy oriented countries in a region, as long as no

middle way is found, there would be a prolonged clash of regional powers when a regionally effective wave hits the region and sides with the opposite side of the coin. However, if there are more than two actors in the region, it would lead to involuntarily less lived flexible alliance among the regional actors in order to create a balance of power for reducing the influence of soaring regional powers.

## 2.3. Background

As mentioned above, structural differences of foreign policy projections between at least two actors are fundamental point for the contradictory leaderships of regional powers. Bouzazi's self-immolation not only sparked the revolutionary waves in Tunisia but also it incepted a sharp shifting in regional geo-politics. Pre-eminent regional actors have calibrated their foreign policy instruments complying with their interests in accordance with their expectations in this trans-boundary revolutionary wave. In this thesis, there are mainly two reasons why I have deliberately chosen Turkey and Saudi Arabia in order to reach out robust outcomes; first, Saudi Arabia and Turkey are both strong and loyal allies of the United States of America whose influence considerably declined in the region, second both are Sunni majority country. Especially in the second reason, there were harsh criticism targeting Turkey on the issue that during the Arab Spring Turkey has pursued Sunni oriented foreign policy approach instead of democracy and human rights oriented approach. Hence, by comparing Saudi Arabia and Turkey's foreign policy approach toward the Arab Spring, there will be healthy interpretations on how these allegations are reliable.

Beyond these, Turkey's relatively "new" foreign policy approach, namely "pro-active" foreign policy, and Saudi Arabia's traditional foreign policy approach which is based on "defensive" characters that is set up in order to maintain regime's existence appealed me to make a comparative analysis on the Arab Spring. Last but not the least, Turkey's idealistic viewpoint on the Arab Spring is in direct conflict with Saudi Arabia's realist and pragmatist foreign policy orientation.

The unexpected Arab Spring has fundamentally shaken regional politics and brought very ambitious and resistant demands of democracy and human rights prioritized governance, which was never an accustomed movement in the Middle East.

In this unprecedented environment, regional powers calibrated their regional policies and projections in accordance with unfolding developments. This was actually a greater chance and challenge for regional powers in examining their capabilities in favor of developments.

Since the inception of the Arab Spring, there have been two fronts aspiring to quite opposite regional power role in dealing with this revolutionary wave. Theoretical discussion for regional powers' aspiring role in their respective regions mainly emphasizes three different strategies of empire, hegemony and leaderships (Destradi, 2010). Assuming neither Saudi Arabia nor Turkey are sufficient to embrace hegemonic or empire role in the region, their leadership role stemming from their ideational and material resources will be taken into account in this thesis.

As Sandra Destradi suggested, a regional power can assert a regional leadership role. However, this leadership role might confront with another regional power that has a different perspective for the region. This unintentionally emerges a regional competition among regional powers which curbs and limits regional powers maneuverability inside the region itself. In order to make this more understandable, an empirical analysis dealing with regional powers and their intra-regional environment together with possible constraints will be enriched with drawing on theoretical discussions.

In this context, comparing Saudi Arabia and Turkey's attitude toward the Arab Spring in a time of regional powers gaining a greater chance to shape order is a unique and novel opportunity in aforementioned enrichment. The democratic demands, resurgence of political Islamist movement and their ascendance to power caused Saudi Arabia and Turkey to take contradictory leaderships in the region.

With the withdrawal of the US, the region became gradually autonomous and more prone to the influence of regional powers. Turkey politically and economically propped up revolutionary waves spreading from Tunisia to Syria during the Arab Spring because it was assumed that regimes consolidated with democratic legitimacy would be conducive in overcoming entrenched governing problems in the Middle East. By assuming this, Turkey thought it would enlarge its penetration through cooperation with these governments that were ideologically familiar or seeking a similar path to the ruling Justice and Development Party in Turkey.

On the contrary, Saudi Arabia pursued more pragmatic approaches of shifting its attitude ranging from being a revolutionary in Libya and Syria but counterrevolutionary in Bahrain and Egypt due to its lack of legitimacy and prolonged sectarian rivalry with Iran. This signified a contradictory leadership between Saudi Arabia and Turkey in curbing its regional projections of advocating a more democratic realm in the Middle East.

These two structural differences between Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the Arab Spring inevitably breed competition, democracy, and human rights promotion with the leadership of Turkey on the one hand, curbing a revolutionary wave and maneuvering pragmatically with the leadership of Saudi Arabia on the other. Bahrain, Egypt, and Syria, the main case studies for my thesis are the principal places in which contradictory leaderships with fluctuating levels between these two actors occurred. In a nutshell, the intra-regional competition of these regional powers' leaderships over Bahrain, Egypt, and Syria during the Arab Spring will be deeply analyzed.

After all, I will comparatively analyze Turkish and Saudi Arabia's view on the Arab Spring and seek out to put this empirical analysis in the frame of the concept of "clash of regional powers". In order to cement my idea, my thesis will continue as follows: first, I will analyze Turkey's regional power resources and its pro-active foreign policy orientations together with its main pillars, second Saudi Arabia's foreign policy approach together with its regional power resources will be appeared by drawing on Saudi's foreign policy structure together with how it pondered on regionally effective revolutionary wave at past experiences. Consequently, I will analyze how they approached the Arab Spring by deliberately focusing on three countries of Syria, Egypt and Bahrain. The reason behind selecting these countries is that there is a clear divergence of Turkey and Saudi Arabia on the developments of Egypt. For Syria, it seems there is an overlapping goal between Turkey and Saudi Arabia but the fragmentations that both actors prop up in this country was very different, hence there will be in depth analysis so as to prove structural differences in both countries approach. Bahrain will be clear cut proof of showing how regional powers have their own influence within their respective sub-region.

# CHAPTER 3

## TURKEY AS PRO-ACTIVE REGIONAL POWER IN THE MIDDLE EAST

### 3.1. Main Determinants of Traditional Turkish ForeignPolicy

It is generally accepted that a country's internal dynamics play a vital role in shaping the country's foreign policy. Immediately after the establishment of newly independent country of the Republic of Turkey, several reforms in the field of administration, education, justice were intensively conducted by the founding father of the Republic of Turkey. However, the main determinants of traditional Turkish Foreign Policy can even be traced back to Ottoman Era, particularly after the period when Ottoman Empire began to decline.

There are two principles that explain the traditional Turkish Foreign Policy; Westernization and Status Quo.(Oran, 2001, 46-50) These principles can be explained by taking into consideration the domestic dynamics of Turkey together with changing international political conjuncture. In this context, according to Aydin, defining these principles change from state to state, however two main variables "conjectural and structural factors"(Aydın, 1999) shape the Turkish foreign policy.

The historical experience of Ottoman Empire and the security concern of the founder elites of Republic of Turkey indicate one of the main structural variables in building status quo based foreign policy approach. In this context, appearance of

Ottoman Empire as a secondary power in European politics after 18<sup>th</sup> century underwent it to adopt the policies aiming to balance the power between major challengers. Thus, it was believed Ottoman Empire could either prevent the loss of territory through its flexible alliances or at least minimize it. Hence, Ottoman Empire's security culture, which was offensive for enlarging its power by capturing new territories and incorporating new population, evolved to "defensive realpolitik".(Karaosmanoğlu, 2000) However, it cannot be said that this defensive realpolitik derived from domestic developments, which became effective after Republican era in shaping foreign policy.

After the prolonged First World War and the Independence War of Turkey, newly independent state was occupied to implement intensive domestic reforms thereby foreign policy was not priority as long as there was no direct threats to territorial integrity of Turkey. This status quo based foreign policy approach demonstrates a well thought out approach of policy makers in regards to Turkey's power as well as very rational preference taken by foreign policy makers. This policy became crystal clear with Atatürk's phrase "Peace at home, peace at world" which indicates both the peace oriented international line and realistic side of foreign policy that avoided getting conflict with imperial powers in a time when colonization reached its zenith.(Davutoğlu, 2011, 69) In this context, it is great example that despite the fact that Mosul was accepted within the border of National Pact, before the establishment of Turkey, not turning incompatibility into armed conflict with British, that was the protector of Iraq, over Mosul problem is a clear cut proof of recognition of Turkey's power limitation.(Hale, 2002, 72)

The military success of western countries against the Ottoman Empire during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries had alerted Ottoman Empire to alter unwieldy state structure. Initial reforms were carried out in military field so as to curb loosing on battle ground and then were replicated in the field of administration.

After the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, founding elites prioritized domestic reforms that were derived from western values because modernization had been solely brought collaterally with westernization process in their viewpoint. Hence, western based values should have been immediately implemented in every aspect of social, political and cultural life in order to modernize the newly independent country.(Bozdağlıoğlu, 2008)The westernization process was embarked on shortly after

the bitter experience of the Ottoman Empire with Arabic countries in the Middle East. In addition to this, it was also the fact Turkish territories in Central Asia and Caucasus were occupied by Russia and under the control of it. Preventing territorial losses in these regions, ideologically, two approaches, Pan-Islamist and Pan Turkist, had already been tried by Ottoman elites but ultimately failed. Last but not the least, Turkey had no enough power to shift present situation in both geography.

Keeping in view this brief historical background, traditional Turkish Foreign Policy can be described by two terms "Westernization" and "Status Quo". According to Murinson, there are four main sources of this traditional Turkish foreign policy as aforementioned: "the historical experience of the Ottoman Empire", "the nationalist Kemalist revolution and creation of republic itself", western orientation expressed in the policy of Europeanization and modernization" and the suspicion of foreign powers and interests."(Murinson, 2006)

## 3.2. The Basis of New Turkish Foreign Policy

New Turkish Foreign Policy was heavily used in the Justice and Development Party era however cleavages from the traditional Turkish Foreign Policy can be very distinctively seen in Turgut Özal era, who was Prime Minister between 1983 and 1989 and President of the Republic of Turkey between 1989 and 1991. Considering the fact that Motherland party adopted values such as being conservative and embraced the national moral values and enforcement of free market and free enterprise, Motherland Party is considered as "precursor of the Justice and Development Party"(Murinson, 2006) due to similar implementations both in domestic politics and foreign policy approach.

According to Laçiner, the Özal era can be evaluated by separating two periods; during the first period 1983 and 1989, the agenda of Özal was occupied by domestic reforms and coping with the challenge between coup leaders and civilian politicians, economic and political stability. During the second period, Özal created maneuver field and paid more attention on the democratization and foreign policy.(Laçiner, 2009)

With the allowance of democratic election by military government in 1983, Özal came into power with overwhelming number of votes that allowed him to form a government with no support from other parties. Initially, Özal's neoliberal economic policies were coupled with domestic reforms, expanding individual rights and incorporating Kurds, Alawites into the political process. Subsequently, due to the loneliness of Turkey in international stage, Özal undertook crucial initiatives so as to restore deteriorated relations with the EEC, US and other regional actors around Turkey.

Özal initially intended to fix relations with necessary alliance of US. Since humiliated Johnson Letter that warned Turkey not to intervene the Cyprus Issue, American and Turkish relations became unreliable in the eyes of Turkish policy makers. However, the corruption of relations between Turkey and US reached its peak with imposed embargos by US to Turkey due to the military intervention of Turkey to Cyprus for keeping the rights of Turkish Cypriots in 1974. A year prior to the military coup of 1980, international politics had witnessed two crucial things that shaped the US point of view against military junta in Turkey in 1980. Firstly, the military occupation of Afghanistan by Soviet Union took place which could embark on a domino effect on the "Green" containment policy of US toward the Soviet Union. Secondly, the Iranian Revolution was followed which turned Iran from one of the most reliable alliance into a hostile country. Both developments in international politics made US concerned about the future of Turkey.

When Özal came into power, Turkish – American relations were relatively well established through aforementioned reasons. However the main pillars of the relations were still based on security dimension. This drastically changed in the Özal Era, demonstrating Turkey's keenness to expand relations in the field of economy, trade and social development which broadened dimensions of relations and this approach of Turkish foreign policy makers were not generally witnessed by American politicians till Özal Era.(Ataman, 2003)Hence, export and import values considerably increased. The Turkish defense industry cooperated with the US in the F-16 project. Consequently, although some crisis such as decreasing American aid to Turkey due to the pressure by Greek lobbies and alleged "Armenian Genocide" bills in US congress during the Özal Era, the deteriorated relations between Turkey and US took a positive turn of dimension and strategic concept.

During the first phase of the Özal Era, thankfully to military coup and its painful undemocratic implications, Turkey was harshly slammed and isolated by the European countries. Moreover, Greece, which was at par with Turkey in the context of European politics, was no longer outside of the European Community rather it became part of decision making process. To repair the relations between Turkey and the EEC, EEC expected Turkey to demonstrate its readiness for putting relations on a stable route.

In this context, with relying on liberalization in economy and fostering export-oriented trade that abolished many trade restrictions with several countries as well as enhancing the individual rights and reducing army's role on politics, in 1987, Özal evaluated Turkey was ready to become a part of EEC and applied for full-membership despite an unofficial warning by EU officials that the rejection of application was highly possible. Özal's remarks on application "according to agreements, there is no way, they can postpone it, but not refused" was clear cut proof of the continuity of the EEC aimed reforms and the EEC's prioritization in Turkish foreign policy.

During Özal's second era, Özal focused more on the foreign policy issues and democratization in low politics. Thankfully his quest in his first era for the comprehensive inclusion of different social groups into political process that impacted the diversification of different view in making foreign policy, as its consequence, Özal's government became more sensitive on the regions in which Turkey has historical and cultural ties.

Particularly, with the demise of Soviet Union, major changes in international politics marked an opening of new era in Turkish foreign policy. Even though it was supposed that Turkey's value in the western alliance and strategic importance depreciated after the disappearance of Soviet Union, new opportunities for Turkey from Central Asia to Balkans, from Balkans to Greater Middle East occurred.ThroughÖzal's export-oriented economy policy and its result that the emergence of trade groups, particularly in the field of middle size manufacturing, became propellant power at the behind of improving economic relations with the Middle Eastern countries, even though some disputed bilateral issues erupted like over Euphrates and the Tigris rivers with Syria and Iraq. In addition, in Özal's eyes, Arab countries and neighboring countries were considered as natural market for Turkey and even its allies.(Ataman, 2002) Turkey's relation with these countries was required for Turkey, at least as much as its

compulsory relations with western countries for modernizing and updating Turkey's status in globalizing world, so that Turkey can distinctively play its role as a bridge between Asia and Europe.

For Özal, it can be said that he was the first to lay foundation of a "multi-dimensional" foreign policy. He not only dealt with the Arab countries, the EEC, US and neighboring countries, but also played a pivotal role in recognizing the Turkish republics. Turkey as a country which embraced secular and democratic political structure as well as a free market economy presented a model, namely "Turkish Model", to Turkic republics.(Aras, 2008) Cultural, social, educational programs were launched by Turkey and Central Asian countries in order to enhance the relations with these countries. The inclusion of myriad social groups into political process, made them also pressure groups over government through their direct link with associations etc. All of these factors combined enabled Turkey to play a more influential role in the Balkans.(Oran, 2002, 170)

With Özal, Turkish foreign policy gradually became more engaged with regional issues in which it had historical and cultural ties that caused reinvestigation of Turkey's traditional foreign policy approach. Especially, the first Gulf War proved Turkey's departure from "traditional policy of non-involvement in regional conflicts" by standing with the US against Saddam's invasion of Kuwait.(Sayarı, 2003) Moreover, Laçiner's (2009) claim "after the Gulf War Özal claimed that Turkey was the protector of the Iraqi Kurds and Turkmens in its capacity as the big brother of these people, arguing that a federation between these people was possible under Turkish sponsorship"supported this idea.

In a nutshell, the articulation of Özal's foreign policy was substantially helped by both domestic and international developments.(Aras & Görener, 2010) Following Özal Era, the weakness of coalition governments and their struggle in domestic politics has led to overlooking of the foreign policy. Despite Erbakan's strong critics to western based international system and his tendency to Islamist countries, there was no clear departure from Turkey's traditional western oriented foreign policy approach due to military's weight on domestic politics and lack of public support in putting Turkey's route towards Islamic countries. Erbakan's policy actually was nothing more replacing Turkey's western oriented policy with Islamist oriented policy, not reflecting multi-

dimensional new Turkish Foreign Policy. The change in the mindset of bureaucratic elites has occurred with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of 1997-2002, Ismail Cem. With giving special reference to Turkey's geographical location and historical enrichments(Cem, 2005, 10-20), Cem enforced to improve relations with regional countries around Turkey, but it was left at limited level.

## 3.3. New Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkey's Emergence as Regional Power in the Middle East

Distinct activism in Turkish Foreign Policy, particularly since 2002, has been quite visible along with the occupation of harshly implemented positive reforms in domestic politics. Through reforms in the field of economic and domestic politics as well as previously politically omitted groups inclusion in shaping foreign policy, Turkish foreign policy gained a new dimension and policy makers enlarged their horizon. In the economic field, Turkey caught uninterrupted economic growth after deeply influential crisis through making functional independent economic institutions etc.

Appointment of Ahmet Davutoğlu as an adviser of Prime Minister in charge of foreign affairs was demonstration of adoption of the new foreign policy vision. The theoretical perspectives of this vision can be found in Ahmet Davutoğlu's well-known book, "strategic depth", in which he criticizes Turkey's passive role in international politics and comes up with new ideas for Turkey's role in international politics. In this elaborated approach, Davutoğlu denied the defined role of Turkey as a "bridge" country, between Asia and Europe, replacing this passive role with Turkey's role as a "central" country.(Davutoğlu, 2011, 116; Davutoğlu, 2004)Davutoğlu believes that Turkey's strategic depth lies behind its own "historical legacy" and "geographical location"(Davutoğlu, 2011, 65) that provides great opportunities for Turkey to enlarge its horizon in different areas. As Aras argues:

> "The new foreign policy took form under the impact of Davutoğlu's redefinition of Turkey's role in the neighboring regions and in international politics, namely its "strategic depth", with frontiers that have expanded beyond the homeland in the cognitive map of policymaker's minds. The new territorial limits to Turkish involvement in neighboring countries has disappeared in this new mindset"(Aras, 2009)

Giving meaning to Turkey's redefined role, Turkish foreign policy was based on various principles as it is lined up: rhythmic diplomacy, multi-dimensional foreign policy, zero problems with neighbors, order instituting actor, international cooperation and proactive foreign policy.(Davutoğlu, 2012)

Implementation of this new vision began with deepening relations between the EU and Turkey. When AK Party, that has its Islamist roots, took over the government, bureaucratic and military elites in Turkey, who became the propellant power at the behind of implemented domestic and external policies, had several hesitations for the future of secular structure and republican principles of Turkey. Reducing military's influence on politics, AK Party benefited from EU's transformative effect, thusit was such an obligatory for abolishing the bias on AK Party.

In the beginning of AK Party era, two important steps were taken that gained positive tendency in acceleration of the deepening relations between Turkey and the EU. First, the Cyprus Problem, which had restrained Turkish foreign policy for several years and is a crucial point in Turkish- EU Relations, has been taken seriously into consideration. Eventually, the UN with the support of international community, especially the EU, has elaborately prepared a solution plan which was submitted to both communities in Cyprus Problem. For the first time in Cyprus Problem, the AK Party rejected the main idea of "the lack of solution is solution in Cyprus Issue" and fostered the UN plan. However, Annan Referenda was rejected at substantial rate by Greek Cypriot, as overwhelming Turkish Cypriot said "yes" for solution in the island. This result clearly demonstrated that Turkey and Turkish Cypriots were not promoting deadlock. Secondly, on 17th December 2004, EU agreed to embark on negotiations with Turkey. Therefore, the legitimacy of conducted reforms has arise the hope and support for the EU process. These earlier years of the AK Party and gained impetus to relation between Turkey and the EU were defined as "golden age of Europeanization in Turkey"(Öniş, 2008) by leading scholar ZiyaÖniş.

The EU's transformative effect on domestic politics of Turkey in terms of democratization coupled with economic success through reforms following period of economic crisis in 2001. After deeply influential economic crisis in 2001, economic reforms that were prepared by Kemal Derviş were continued under the AK Party government. Moreover, the structural reforms, in economic institutions and related areas

such as privatization in several fields, establishing independent central bank were implemented in accordance with IMF's stand-by agreement. Thus, Turkey's long lasting structural problem inflation was taken under control while ensuring an uninterrupted economic growth. Hence, the economic development and the increasing role of entrepreneurial groups made them "pressure groups" and made economy possible to play very active role in foreign policy.(Kutlay, 2011)As Turkish economy boomed and export volume increased day by day, Turkish economy was defined as "practical hand"(Kutlay, 2011) of new Turkish foreign policy and Turkish businessmen were named as "diplomats".(Atlı, 2011)

As Turkish economy became more globalized, the more decision makers of Turkish foreign policy prioritized trade and investment opportunities. In this context, Kemal Kirişçi used the term "trading state" as one of the definitive elements in changing traditional Turkish foreign policy. Kirişçi says:

> "the rise of the trading state has transformed and is transforming traditional foreign makers, too. They are increasingly coming to recognize that Turkey's national interest cannot be solely determined in terms of narrowly defined national security, and that economic considerations such as to trade, expand export markets, and attract and export foreign direct investment are just as important."(Kirişçi, 2009)

The new motto of Turkish Foreign Policy "Zero Problem with Neighbors" has not only opened the door for Turkey to strengthen its ties with neighboring countries at state level but also paved the way for trade liberalization and for abolishing the visa restrictions in front of the Turkish trader. This influence of economy in shaping foreign policy cannot be taught with overlooking the reconceptualization of national security, as well. Particularly, Turkey's changing security understanding to certain neighboring countries such as Iran and Syria,(Aras & Polat, 2008; Altunışık & Tür, 2006) subsequently, even to Iraqi Kurdistan caused increasing in Turkey's trade volume and constitution of multi-layered dimension in Turkish foreign policy.

Like in the Özal Era, AK Party's agenda was mostly occupied for democratizing political structure and fixing destroyed economy, but basis of new foreign policy was cemented in this period. With the electoral triumph of the AK Party in 2007, increasing its vote from %34 in 2002 to %47 in 2007, AK Party gained more legitimacy and gradually moved to deal more intensively with foreign policy issues.

Political stability and economic growth in the area of low politics have acted as catalysts for a more assertive foreign policy. In particular, since 2002, Turkey, previously internalized the western identity for itself for a long time, now has realized its Eastern part, following these, an expansion in Middle East and Africa has given opportunity to reemerge in the areas or it provided new spaces for Turkey. In addition, along with the Soviet collapse, the relations with newly emerging Central Asian Turkic Republics, which were firstly launched in Özal Era, have caught momentum in economic, political and cultural spheres.

## 3.4. Turkey's Foreign Policy towards the Middle East and Regional Power Dimension

As indicated above; the changing security understanding of Turkey, new emerging interest groups and most importantly new vision in Turkish foreign policy provided Turkey to reemerge influentially in the Middle East. Despite the fact that changes in domestic environment and economic development became propellant power behind of Turkey's headway towards the Middle East, stagnated relations with western countries, particularly with EU members, due to their insincere attitudes toward Turkey also became effective in shaping Turkey's regional engagement with the Middle East.

The positive acceleration of Turkey's relation with European Union at the earlier period of the AK Party had tended to decrease after leaders in Europe who were totally against the Turkey's accession to the EU came into power, particularly in France and Germany. Also, Turkey's denial to implement custom union to Southern Administration of the Republic of Cyprus which was admitted as full member in the EU in May 2004 even although its rejection to Annan Referenda that was a chance to over problem with Southern Administration and Turkey. The increased hope in the public opinion with regard to Turkey's accession to EU was suddenly replaced by pessimistic view in Turkey. Moreover, the EU was continually blamed to become double-faced in its attitudes against Turkey by high-level Turkish politicians. Turkey's relations with the other side of Atlantic were not also going on its proper route. Additionally to shocked Turkish non-permission to US to use Turkey's airspace for conducting military operation against Iraq in 2003, the different perspectives of Turkey and US on regional

issues like Iranian Nuclear Issue, Syria and HAMAS's victory along with its repercussions in both capitals made more clear that Ankara and Washington had different regional agenda so that Turkey had wanted to become more independent in its near periphery.

Turkey's distinct activism in the Middle East also coincided with the time when Middle Eastern stakeholders had different view from each other and when there was a power struggle going on in the region.(Turan, 2010) In regional power context, Kardaş points out crucial dimension why Turkey to play active role in the Middle East as follows:

> "The EU's absorption of southeastern Europe and the stabilization of the region diminished Turkey's relevance as a regional power in the Balkans. Turkey still exercises some influence over developments concerning Bosnia and other smaller Balkan countries; yet in this region it has already reached its limits. Similarly, it is difficult to talk about proactive Turkish presence east of Caspian Sea, due largely to Russia's regaining its influence in Central Asia and Turkey's limited access to region. These transformations leave only the Middle East for Turkey to play an active strategic role."(Kardaş, 2010)

Turkey's political, economic and socio cultural involvement in the Middle East has sparked the discussion regarding Turkish Foreign Policy's "Middle Easternization"(Oğuzlu, 2008) or the "axis shift" in Turkish Foreign Policy. It was clear that Turkish foreign policy was never activated till AK Party era since the establishment of republic. However, it was a part of its embraced foreign policy approaches, namely multi-dimensional and proactive foreign policy. Şahin(2010) considers that latest opening in Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East is not the "axis shift" rather it is reconsideration of being a loyal part of the western alliance without any investigation. Öniş(2011) also emphasized the exaggeration of the used term "Middle Easternization of Turkish Foreign Policy" and observed latest development in Turkish foreign policy is within the context of multi-dimensional foreign policy.

The timing of the intensification of discussion regarding Middle Easternization of Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkey's increasing role as well as a regional power discourse was not a coincidence. Timely, it was coincided the discussions regarding US role on global level were intensified due to China's uninterrupted rapidly economic and political growing together with other emerging powers, in particular of economic fields, such as India, Brazil, Russia and South Africa. These considerations were coupled with

the US role in the Middle East, especially since Obama administration, and reprioritization of the US policy towards the Eastern Asia which caused no influentially existence of super power in the Middle East. Hence, Turkey's quest for "strategic autonomy"(Kardaş, 2011) made it more sensitive in regional issues.

In addition to Turkey's increasing political influence on the Middle East, booming Turkish economy laid the foundations for more assertive foreign policy and Ankara emerged as an influential regional power.(Öniş & Kutlay, 2013)

### 3.4.1. Turkey's Economic Power

Aftermath of the ruinous economic crisis of 2001, Turkey harshly implemented economic reforms by controlling financial system, which was the main reason of 2001 crisis, building new-independent institutions, moreover political stability with Justice and Development Party accelerated Turkey's economic growth since 2001. As aforementioned, Turkey's pro-active foreign policy with its main component under the motto of zero-problem with neighbors coupled with Turkey's economic growth and enabled Turkish trader to strengthen their economic activities by investing their money or exporting their goods to the Middle East. Hence, it was not only ended up with that the proportional sharing of export goods to the EU countries was tended to decline on the one hand, Turkey's total volume in terms of export considerably arose on the other, but also in Turkey middle class manufacturing sectors were prone to gear up its productivity which provided to decrease unemployment in domestic environment.

Comparing Turkey's economic indicators from the year of 2002 to the eve of Arab Spring's fueling of 2010; Turkey's GDP exceeded 3 times by reaching 731 billion US dollar, per capita more or less became 10.000 US dollar, with the exception of 2009 that was following year of world economic crisis Turkish average economic growth surfaced as 5.2 per annum. Most importantly, with the logic of "trading state" approach which became the main pillar of Turkish foreign policy, Turkish export reached 113.9 billion US dollar, capturing considerable market sharing in the Middle East, and appeared approximately 4 times higher comparing with 2002.

Prior to the eruption of the Arab Spring, Turkey erected as the biggest economy in the Middle East region, surpassing oil rich Saudi Arabia and oil rich but isolated Iran, which caught attention of Arab society, as well on Turkey and enormously well contributed Turkey's perception in the region. According to report that was prepared by TESEV in order to measure Turkey's perception in the Middle East in 2010, Turkey was responded as it will be the biggest economy in the region 10 years later and Turkish economy took place at the second line by %12 as a response of the question Turkey should be model for the region.(Akgün & Perçinoğlu, 2010) As it is seen in the TESEV report, Turkey's economic booming became influential in the mindset of the Arab people as well as Turkey's economic booming and steady growing were enough for Turkey to meet the requirement of being regional power.

### 3.4.2. Turkey's Diplomatic Power

Until a decade earlier of the eruption of the Arab Spring, Turkish foreign policy was roughly moved on westward and paid no considerable attention by keeping its direct involvement into the Middle Eastern crisis as long as circumstances were not about directly related with Turkey's national security. For this reason, Turkish diplomatic activities were generally embedded into the western oriented bilateral and organizational ties, taking place in institutions such as Council of Europe and NATO. Unsurprisingly, Ministry of Foreign Affairs' staff had been employed by preferring dominantly English and French speaking people. However, after all of sudden the Turkey's embracement of pro-active foreign policy approach and active involvement the regional issues, Turkey has embarked on diplomatic opening from Latin America region to the Africa and propped its representatives up at abroad by appointing diplomatic staff who can speak native language of where they go. Nevertheless, Ministry of Foreign Affairs' staff and Turkey's engagements with the Middle East in terms of both bilateral capacity and institutionalized bodies were not enough for Turkey's regional power role, as numbers will be indicated below.

First of all, Turkey is a proceeding country for full membership in the EU and admitted as a founding member of the Council of Europe. These are the political organizations that Turkey takes place but there is also military organization that Turkey

is the second biggest army inside of it that is NATO. The sole remarkable organization that enables Turkey to gather with Arabic countries is the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. In this context, Turkey did its utmost effort so as to provide Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu to be elected for General Secretary of OIC in 2004 and accomplished it. However, in organizational bases, there was no more meaning than being symbolic. In addition, Turkey was unable to prompt any organization in the Middle East with omitting the global scale organizations.

For this reason, Turkey's bilateral relations with regional countries gain currency and should be evaluated by taking Minister of Foreign Affairs' diplomatic ability into consideration. Propping up Turkey's diplomatic capacity also availed the diplomatic missions in the Middle East however in the eve of Arab Spring, Turkey's diplomatic capacity was not satisfied for being "order setter" country in the region.(Kutlay & Dinçer, 2012, 18) According to USAK report, the number of Turkey's diplomatic mission in Arabic speaking countries is 25 and total diplomatic staff number is 135. That is to say, Turkey's diplomatic relations in each mission are conducted averagely by 5 people. Moreover, only 6 people were ability to speak in Arabic language among 135 people in 2011.(Kutlay & Dinçer, 2012, 19)

Civil society's sharply increasing role in Turkey at a time when globalization has been felt each cell of relations and identity transformation of Turkey coupling with economic developments Turkish NGOs have intensified their humanitarian activities in the fields such as education, health and emergency relief. Increasing number of visitors and student from Middle Eastern countries increased popularity of Turkish TV series among the Arabs served as soft power instruments to strengthen Turkey's positive image in the region.(Kutlay & Dinçer, 2012)

### 3.4.3. Turkey's Soft Power

Before the Arab Spring, one of the convincing power components of Turkey was Turkey's soft power capacity that was even caused interpretations as Turkey is an example country for Middle Eastern country. Since Justice and Development Party embraced multi-dimensional foreign policy approach and Middle East became focus of Turkey's regional power implementations, the environmental changes occurred in the

global politics, as well. What it meant is that economic and military power sources as coercive tools had been appeared unsatisfactory in dealing with occurring problems, hence soft power approach that was theorized by Joseph Nye became useful in the deployment of country's relations with the rest of the world. In this context, Joseph Nye (2013, 13) emphasized on the persuasion by using soft power sources which were indicated as "culture", "political values", "foreign policy". Glancing at three sources of soft power, Turkey had huge cultural, political, religious and historical ties with Middle Eastern countries and more importantly Turkey's appearance in the Islamic world as a modernized Muslim country together with relatively well functional democracy was causing to be paid attention on by Middle Eastern society and intellectuals.

After Justice and Development Party whose roots traces back to Islamist movement had taken over government in 2002, an Islamist Party accelerated Turkey's domestic reforms in accordance with the EU norms and revived failed Turkish economy providing remarkable economic growth lastly, adopted comprehensive new foreign policy approach. All these factors became influential in the emergence of Turkey's soft power capacity.(Altunışık, 2010)

Traditionally, Turkey's entrenched problem of Cyprus issue together with secessionist aimed PKK terrorist organization made policy makers to be cautious by considering the national security issues which unsurprisingly made Turkey more aggressive to show its military muscles in any national security issues. It was quite noticeable by looking the armament race between Greece and Turkey and Turkey's military deployment to Syrian border and its clear threat to Syrian regime due to presence of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan who were enjoying attacking Turkey by crossing Turkish border and turning its safe areas in Syria. However, shifting internal factors in Turkish domestic politics and occurring external factors appeared as facilitating factors on Turkey's rising soft power.(Oğuzlu, 2007)

Especially, "balance between security and freedom" altered Turkey's security culture by taking serious issues such as Kurdish Issue and the problems of religious minority into consideration which enabled Turkey to establish a new engagement with old foes.(Kalın, 2011) This understanding not only triggered Turkey to strengthen its ties with regional countries but also in paying special attention to Turkey's political values it contributed enormous ideational source for its soft power capacity. In addition

to these, gained tendency to the EU-Turkey relations, domestic reforms in accordance with EU norms by an Islamic rooted party and most importantly decreasing influence of military on politics in Turkey shifted Turkey's perception both in regional and global context. In collateral with these issues, externally emerging development around Turkey after 9/11 attacks, Turkey has been served as a model country in the Muslim world with its integrated economy to globalized world and success of compatibility between democracy and Islam.

Turkey's foreign policy approach should be considered together with its cultural basis in context of its soft power. First, Turkey's shifting away from its traditional western oriented foreign policy understanding by strengthening its ties with Middle Eastern countries in terms of economic and politics has also led to improve cultural and social ties between each other. Considering Turkey's regional engagement to the Middle Eastern countries problem as a Western country which had strongly slammed Western country's stance in regional issues like Palestinian Question together with its seeking to strengthen socio-cultural interaction between Turkish society and Arab society by abolishing the visa restrictions, Turkey has been centralized and even perceived as the voice of Arab people as non-Arab country by Arabic society that provided enormous contribution Turkey's soft power.

Consequently, Turkey's increasing soft power capacity can be easily noticed by looking at the number of three factors: number of visitors, number of incoming student and the rate of Turkey's TV series in watching. According to numbers that were surfaced by leading Turkish think tank of USAK, Turkish TV series, which explicitly reflect the socio-cultural structure of Turkey's, reached 85 million Arabic watchers by the TV series of "Gümüş" and 67 million people by the series of "Ihlamurlar Altında".(Kutlay & Dinçer, 2012, 31) Indicators of incoming student from the Middle Eastern countries demonstrate that there were 1048 incoming students, whose rate appeared as %12,37 at overall, and there were no more than 20 students from Gulf countries. Hence, the number of incoming student from the Middle Eastern countries were quite limited and worse still there were no dialogue mechanism built by Turkey in order to keep contacts with those students.(Kutlay & Dinçer, 2012, 28) However, the number of visitor from Arab countries provided clear cut proof for Turkey's appealing by reaching 3.6 million people in 2010 that was more than 3 times compared with the number of 2002.(Kutlay & Dinçer, 2012, 29)

At the onset of the Arab Spring, there was an intensified discussion regarding "Turkish Model"(Göksel, 2012; Taşpınar, 2003) which was demonstrated as an example for the Arab countries by considering Turkey's democratic compatibility with Islam, globally integrated economic structure and socio-cultural environment. However, when Arab Spring erupted, Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs deliberately announced that Turkey has intended allegations to be model for the Arab countries.(Gürsel, 2011) In this context, Turkey's stability quest, socio-cultural interactions with the regional countries and most importantly its trade and investment opportunities in the region were featured points in Turkey's angle in the beginning of the Arab Spring.

In 2010, before the Arab Spring, Turkey, with its economic and ideational capacity, through being biggest economy, second biggest population, its motivated and activated civil society, most importantly Turkey's pro-active and sensitive foreign policy approach in the Middle East. Moreover, as regional power theory indicated; acceptance by regional actors, claiming regional leadership as well as material and ideational resources, in 2010, Turkey demonstrated its regional leadership by taking place in such mediation effort and being sensitive on regional issues. Last but not least, Turkey was admitted as regional power with the indicator of its regional role, economic capacity and political structure by Arab people in different countries.(Akgün & Perçinoğlu, 2010)

# CHAPTER 4

## SAUDI ARABIA AS DEFENSIVE REGIONAL POWER IN THE MIDDLE EAST

### 4.1. The Main Determinants of Saudi Arabia's Foreign Policy

Saudi Arabia's role in international politics became more important both regionally and globally. From the discovery of rich oil reserves to its engagement to fight global terrorism after 9/11 attacks, Saudi Arabia plays a critical role in the international arena. Saudi Arabia's affirmative and harmful contributions to regional and global issues cannot be denied, despite allegations of terrorist organizations damaging its reputation in international politics.

Theoretically, domestic or environmental developments are vital in considering foreign policy, especially for government leaders who rule within an authoritarian regime. In this context, Saudi Arabia, a country ruled by a monarchical regime under a Kingdom, has always taken into account domestic concerns in drawing its foreign policy lines. It is also important to think about external threats when abolishing the security concerns in domestic politics, which at the end, are largely determined by domestic concerns. To sum up, the main determinants of Saudi Arabia's foreign policy are domestic security and external security. (Nonneman, 2006)

In this context, the first question that should be answered is: what are the things that allow the Saudi Arabian regime to survive or what are the key factors in "legitimizing" Saudi Arabia's regime in the domestic environment? The social acceptance of the Saudi Arabian regime can be accredited to five factors as indicated by Nonneman: "personal charisma", "tradition and maintenance of values", "patronage and

delivering quality of life", "effective dealing with the outside world" and "performance as the protector of the Holy Places and of Islam in the Kingdom". (Nonneman, 2006) As a matter of fact, Saudi Arabia's increasing economic success for several years through its oil production can be included in these conditions since, with a possibility of a loss of economic benefits, which led citizens to question the legitimacy of the Saudi government. The second factor that is directly relevant to the domestic environment is influenced by regional developments and its transitional influences; those are regarded as external threats that would not only shake the regime but also be as effective as wiping out the regime itself. The fourth factor is directly related to the cost and benefit accounting of opportunities provided by the international system in order to either create a maneuver field for survival or constrain the ability to cement its existence.

Considering the main determinants of Saudi Arabia's foreign policy together with external and internal security by drawing on Nonneman's path, Saudi Arabia's foreign policy approach will be evaluated with its historical context and we will pay special attention to core issues like Saudi-US Relations, Saudi Foreign Policy in the turbulent times of revolutionary waves, and the emergence of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Saudi Arabia's reaction to regionally effective revolutionary waves will be taken into account by glancing into the historical experiences in order to accurately grasp Saudi Arabia's foreign policy reaction to the Arab Spring. The following paragraphs will discuss how Saudi Arabia rationally approached regionally influential revolutionary waves from Nasser to the Iranian Revolution.

### 4.2. Evolution of Saudi Arabia's Foreign Policy

After a very long struggle, the first state establishment failed in 1744 but at the end of WWI, Saudi Arabia was formed after the very turbulent period under the centenary alliance of the ruling Saud family and the religiously important Wahhabi ulama with the name of Kingdom of Hejaz and Nejd. The Treaty of Jeddah signed on 20 May 1927 with the United Kingdom secured an internationally important recognition for the Kingdom of Nejd and Hejaz. As soon as Hijaz was captured, the Saudi King centralized his power in order to modernize some part of the Saudi society so as to consolidate its realm. Yet, the Ikhwan movement, which occurred by settling Bedoui's military ability

being utilized, did not appreciate these attempts and the first legitimacy crisis erupted in Saudi domestic politics between the Saudi regime and Ikhwan. The ensuing period of the stamping out of Ikhwan was a turning point in the history of the Wahhabiya and Saudi State. The Islamic scholars were no longer crucial in shaping important policies, despite the fact that some of the policies that were implemented by the Saudi state were controversial with the ulama's consideration.(Steinberg, 2005, 24)

Following a very rational decision to give up expanding Saudi penetration into British protected Iraq and Transjordan, the defeat of Ikhwan and thereby, ulama's decreasing political influence ended up with a relatively centralized power of Saudi monarch. With its new name, Saudi Arabia grasped a novel chance to export oil, resulting in the birth of Saudi - US relations. Since the establishment of the Saudi state, the US did not pay considerable attention to Saudi Arabia until the American company Standard Oil of California (SOCAL) was permitted to explore and charge oil in the Saudi fields. Indeed, it became crystal clear that Saudi Arabia, as an oil rich country, was an economically favorable prospect for the U.S. The US cemented its relations as soon as it realized that Saudi Arabia was indispensable for US interest due to its location and resources during on the eve of the Cold War. Giving concession to SOCAL for charging oil fields in Saudi Arabia seemed like a rational approach for Saudis. In theeyes of theKing, Americans did not intend to alter political arrangements in the region, considering the domestic security concerns of Saudi Arabia along with the UK's colonial keenness.

Increasing economic relations on both sides have turned into strong political relations after it became clear that Saudi Arabia's rich petrol reserves were crucial in supplying oil to US's European alliance and its strategically important location was also vital for US containment policy. On the other hand, for Saudi Arabia, cementing relations with the US was reasonable because she was under possible danger of Soviet expansionism. Moreover, the US was the right country to have a deeper cooperation with in the bipolar international system because it was challenging the communist/officially atheist state, which ensured a leverage for Saudi's to legitimate its relations in domestic environment with US. In order to cement the prevention of any external and internal legitimacy threats, the reason behind strong relations with the US is exclusively stemming from the security concerns of Saudi Arabia.

## 4.3. Regionally Effective Revolutionary Waves and Saudi Arabia


### 4.3.1. Ascendance of Nasser to Power in Egypt


In the bipolar international system, the US - Saudi Arabia's alliance has confronted several major issues in both the regional and international contexts. The first major crisis erupted with the overthrow of King Farouk by Gamal Abdal Nasser and its transitional ideology in the Arab world from Morocco to the Gulf shores. A vital factor that attributed to Nasser's rise to power was the support of the Soviet Union. It meant that the more Nasser penetrated into the Arab states with its ideological influence, the more Saudi Arabia and the US would have lost their regional influence. Moreover, it might have led to the end of the reign of the Saud family.

Nasser's ideology was mainly based on the balanced combination of two contrary and main streams of ideology in political science: nationalism and socialism. This interesting blend of socialism and nationalism, namely Nassarism in the Arab world, consisted of secular and nationalist revolutionary movements in the region. As a matter of fact, this ideational basis was reflecting Nasser's regional ambitions to make Egypt the regional leader in the Middle East. In response, Egypt crucially entailed strong military equipment supported with heavy weapons, robust and sustainable independent economy, transitionally appealed ideology, and leverage on the world stage.(Feris, 2012)The existence of the USSR as the main competitor of the US was a great chance for Nasser as well as having economic and military support for disseminating his ambitions under the name of Nasserism. The USSR's support to Nasser irked both US and Saudi Arabia yet the latter was more vulnerable in confronting this ideology.

Nasser's increasing charismatic popularity in the Arab world, alliance with the Soviet Union, and ideational direct threat to monarchical Arab regime, emerged as a direct threat to both Saudi Arabia's regime(Sharnoff, 2011) and the US's influence on the Middle East through the Soviet inclusion over Egypt. For this reason, the US pushed

Saudi Arabia to become a regional leader in order to curb Nasser's penetration into the whole Arab world by its anti-western discourse. However, it was not ready to wrap itself in the Arabs' leadership. Nevertheless, Saudi did its utmost to keep its present regime in North Yemen, which Nasser tried to annihilate.

Even before Nasser's emboldening of secular and national groups in North Yemen, the opposition group in Saudi Arabia was gradually forming due to the rise of a well-educated middle class, the increase of nationalism in the Arab peninsula just after Arab-Israeli conflict, and the effect of Nasser's increasing transnational ideology.(Mordechai, 1993)Additionally, following the death of King Aziz, the emerging unrest of different social groups with different reasons put the King in a very difficult position to provide stability. In this context, the competition between Faisal and Saud to rule the country has created flexible alliances between challengers and demanding groups ranging from nationalists and reformist to fundamental conservatives and military. Hence, nationalists were never allowed to get rid of the reign and take over the government; their attempts of plotting against the reign and strikes on the streets were suppressed. During this period, Nasser's successful attempt, which ended up with the unification of Egypt and Syria in 1958 under the United Arabic Republic, created hesitation among Saudi rulers who thought this revolutionary wave had suddenly appeared in their territory. Despite the fact that Saudi Arabia was not powerful enough to thwart the nationalist movement all around the region, it did its utmost when it came to its bordering region. Most importantly, it was Saudi Arabia's first significant confrontation with the trans-bordering revolutionary movement.

In 1962, the military coup in Yemen erupted with the leadership of Abdullah Sallal, taking down a strictly conservative traditional oligarchic regime. This coup was a direct a result of the inspiration of Nasser's successful military coup, which destroyed the monarchical regime. This attempt aroused sympathy among the Yemeni people and was supported even more by those who fled from the dictator Imam Ahmed regime to Cairo, embarking on the "Free Yemen" movement.(Yılmaz, 2009, 140) At that point, in Yemen, there was a huge divergence between republic supporter Arab nationalists and royalists, which eventually turned into a civil war in Yemen. It also fueled a proxy war between Saudi Arabia, who regarded this situation as a danger to its regime, and Nasser's Egypt who had a dream to unite all Arab countries.

Thus, considering Nasser's role in the Arab world together with the decline of his prestige due to the dissolution of the United Arab Republic, Nasser needed the opportunity to revitalize his glory in the Middle East. Therefore, he backed the Yemeni revolution and even sent armed forces to help this initiative. Yet as it had been predicted, ousted leaders fled to Saudi Arabia and launched a resistance movement against the military coup with substantial military assistance from Saudi Arabia that aimed at destroying the newly established republican government.(Katz, 1992) This proxy war concluded with a victorious Saudi Arabia and in 1967, Abdullah Sallal was taken down and replaced with Abdurrahman Iryani, who had inclined to continue very close relations with Saudi Arabia.

As previously indicated, external threat is one of the main determinants of Saudis foreign policy. A regionally effective revolutionary wave, feared by the Saudi rulers, is one of the greatest challenges that Saudi Arabia may confront. Nasser's ideology ignited a great challenge for Saudi Arabia to keep status quo in its interest but in a limited area. Yemeni civil war consisted of this limited frame and when the revolutionary wave hit Yemen, Saudi Arabia has militarily and economically propped up Yemeni loyal groups to keep the keep status quo in which the next revolution might been erupted. A regionally effective revolutionary movement always remains the main challenge of Saudi Arabia due to lack of its offensive appealing idealistic viewpoints in the region. Nasser was the first serious experience of the Saudis but the following Iranian revolution, which became more persistent and prolonged, pushed Saudi Arabia to take more active leadership in the region.

### 4.3.2. Iranian revolution

The second regional development that concerned Saudi Arabia and the newly independent Gulf shore countries was the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Interestingly, this second important regionally effective wave did not stem from the Arabic land, but rather from its historical rival the Persian shores with the use of religious motives as pillars of ideology to shape the state structure under the name of "Islamic Republic". With the Iranian revolution, Iran undertook the duty to protect all Muslims around the world. Despite the fact that Iran's vision of itself seemed idealistic because protecting

the Islamic regime meant going beyond its borders, it could be interpreted as Iran being realistic because using this duty became a reason for them to expand to the Arab land.(Şahin, 2008) Iran's dissemination resulted in the war between Iran and Iraq and caused the deepening of the sub-regional ties among the Gulf countries.

In 1979, international politics faced several incidents in the regional and international context. Among these are the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan escalating the tension between two super powers in the globe and the US empowering the Islamist group in combating against the Soviet Union. In the regional context, the situation is much more complicated because political shifts in the region occurred consecutively. First, the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt through the mediation effort of the US was signed but consequently, Egypt became isolated in the Arab world. In addition to the isolation of this premier Arab country of Egypt, the Iranian Revolution triggered a new revolutionary wave throughout the Middle East but with limited effect.

Remembering Nasser being bogged down in North Yemen along with his ideologies declining in the Middle East, there were two countries that could influence the regional balance in the Middle East at during the early 1970s: Iraq and Iran.(Yılmaz, 2009, 257) Iran's huge economic income through the success of its oil production for its Western allies during this decade became a propellant power behind the Shah's regional ambitions, which aimed to reemerge the Persian Empire. Meanwhile, Iraq was undergoing considerable changes in the regional context under Ba'athist regime and was rapidly turning into a key player in the region.

Iran had done its utmost to reach its regional goals, even to the point of annexing the three islands of the United Arabic Emirates. This annexation was completely incompatible within the interest of the Iraqis because these three islands were strategically important for Iraq since they provided control to the entrance of the Strait of Hormuz. Beyond this, both countries had shared border disputes and this situation occasionally caused agitation in their soft belly regions, namely Northern Iraq where Kurdish people were inhabited and Khuzistan, in which ethnic Arabic people were the majority.

Iran's aggressive policy in the Gulf region and its occupation of the islands, that belonged to the UAE, coupled with the Iranian "regime export" foreign policy approach greatly concerned the Gulf countries due to their Shia ethnic minorities and most

importantly, their monarchical regime. For Saudi Arabia, this revolution and Iran's aggressive policy can be interpreted at two levels, as it was indicated in the theoretical perspective; the first is external security and the second is internal security, which is directly linked with domestic stability and legitimacy after the revolution.(Niblock, 2004, 80)Despite the fact that both of Saudi Arabia's security concerns are quite important, the latter is more dominant following Iranian revolution.

In this context, unsurprisingly, since the beginning of Iran's regional aggressive policy, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries inevitably economically and politically supported Iraq together in fighting against Iran so as to halt Iran's aggressive policy.(Gresh & Vidal & Türe, 1991, 70) Nevertheless, the main reason behind Saudi Arabia backing Iraq is to prevention of the revolutionary wave coming out from Iran, which was direct threat to the existence of the regime.

In addition to Saudi Arabia's support of Iraq in the war against Iran, Saudi Arabia initiated intensifying regional relations with the Gulf countries because they shared the same kind of administrative structure in the organizational context in order to curb Iran's regional ambitions and prevent a revolutionary wave in the region. The Gulf Cooperation Council, which was established with the incorporation of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and the UAE, is the best illustration of what Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries did in order to maintain the luxury of the regime and have regional stability.

In this security featured sub-regional mechanism, six countries were jointly committed to defend any member country by declaring that if there is an attack in any of the member countries, it will be considered an attack to the rest of them as well. In this context, the Peninsula Shield force was formed under GCC as a military wing organization to deter or respond to the aggression against any member country in 1984; it was deployed very closely to the neighboring countries of Iraq and Kuwait. Relations among the countries not only progressed militarily, but also improved other aspects. Although this mechanism was created as a result of security concerns of member countries both in the domestic and external environments, it deepened their relations in various fields such from economy to culture.

However, the Iranian revolution never became powerful enough to shift the regime in the Gulf region due to the war between Iran and Iraq and the precautions taken.

Interestingly, following the period when the Iraq and Iran war concluded, one of the major superpowers, the Soviet Union, was disappearing and disbanding. Iraq unilaterally invaded Kuwait by pretending a historical dispute with the country and exaggerating Kuwait's oil production within OPEC. Saudi Arabia's support of Iraq against Iran was an indispensable assistance since Iraq was insistently claiming regional leadership and most importantly, Iraq's republican government structure was a most serious challenge, as well. However, this inconsistency between Saudi Arabia and Iraq was suspended at least for a while with the sudden appearance of a common Iranian threat. It was crystal clear after the Iranian revolution that Saudi Arabia perceived the Gulf monarchies as a backyard and created a mechanism for protecting them, GCC, in this context. Nevertheless, GCC was unable to deter Iraq's invasion or respond to it by prompting collective security under itself. Before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait relations were deteriorated by Kuwait's shifting axis from Saudi Arabia and its regional role as peace broker. With the Kuwait's invasion of Iraq, Saudi Arabia contributed an enormous amount of economic contribution, more than half of overall spending and provided a strategic air base to conduct military actions in order to pull back Iraqi soldiers from Kuwait.

Nasser's nationalist movement and Iranian regime export policy, along with regionally effective revolutionary waves, have seriously threatened Saudi Arabia's domestic legitimacy which pushed it to take a tough stance including sending an army and supporting states in order to curb upcoming revolutionary waves. This historical background suggests us a trace in evaluating Saudi Arabia's approach to regionally revolutionary waves which characterized it as a defensive actor due to the lack of ideational resources impacting state and non-state actors in the region. Hence, it should be stated here as a result that revolutionary waves that threat Saudis legitimacy will eventually confront a great resistance coming from Saudi Arabia.

### 4.3.3. Post-Cold War Era and New Challenges for Legitimacy

Following the end of the Cold War, there was a perception that US no longer needed any alliances because it was seen as the sole superpower in international politics, which coincided with the US expelling Iraqi forces from Kuwait. For Saudi

Arabia, despite the fact that the Cold War gathered these countries in the same axis with the security concerns since the very beginning of relations, common interests such as preventing conflict from threatening the political status quo in the Persian Gulf and safe flow of oil resources to international markets, still continued strong.(Blanchard, 2010)Nevertheless, it was gradually well understood and recognized that the relations among the countries were quite complex in the post-Cold War era.

To liberate Kuwait, the U.S. soldiers were deployed in Saudi Arabia and Saudi Arabia air bases were used to expel Saddam from Kuwait. Deployment of the U.S soldiers in Saudi Arabia sparked an opposition movement, particularly, by strict conservative Muslims in domestic spheres. Even more, from the period Desert Storm to 9/11, Saudi Arabia and even Gulf Countries like Qatar had been targeted several times by terrorist attacks due to their relations with the US. During the Cold War era, Saudi Arabia with the collaboration of the US, canalized substantial amount of financial and material resources to fighters combating against the Soviet Union. Now, after the Cold War, these people were fighting against US friends and Saudi Arabia itself.(Bronson, 2006, 338)However, crucial relations ranging from energy issues to security had still remained positive though the relations were evolving rather slowly compared to the last five decades. In this environment, the beginning of the new millennium was witnessed unprecedented rifts between the US and Saudi relations and the 9/11 attacks, which targeted the World Trade Center and Pentagon with the affiliation of some Saudi citizens and the mastermind of Usama Bin Laden, who had already been granted as Saudi citizenship, shocked not only both sides but the rest of the world as well. The participation of Saudi citizens in the launch of the 9/11 attacks made the situation much more complicated. On the one hand, it seemed as if the Saudi Arabian government sponsored these terrorist attacks to some extent, but on the other hand, entrenched US-Saudi relations showed that Saudi Arabia substantially needed the US who had been a non-official protector of her regime. Even though the latter argument made sense and Saudi Arabia suddenly denied the allegations of its affiliation with the terrorist attacks, bilateral relations between Saudi Arabia and US inevitably deteriorated. This led to hesitations among the Saudis about being abandoned by historical ally in dealing with emerging threats.

Terror on the global scale was also a "wake up call" for Saudis. Saudi Arabia was a special ally of the US together with Israel in the region and this was enough for Saudis

to be accused of being "apostates". In this context, even before the 9/11 attacks, Bin Laden had always expressed his intention to overthrow Saudi reign to drive Saudi Arabia away from the West axis and launch internal reforms.(Cordesman & Obaid, 2005) Bin Laden's threat, interestingly, was opening the new discussion of the legitimacy of the Saudi reign with reference to Saudi Arabia's special relations and its facilitation to the US. Especially, the bombing of a Muslim country with the help of another Muslim country, which includes the two main holy Muslim cities of Mecca and Medina provided motivation for recruiters to join Bin Laden's movement. Hence, Saudi Arabia's regime was once again under intimidation of Al Qaeda, which became an urgent problem for the country to tackle. (Teitelbaum, 2005)

With the inception of the fight against global terror in Afghanistan by the American leadership, Afghanistan became unsecure for jihadist recruits who naturally returned back to the kingdom, organized sleeper cells and patiently waited for the right time inside the country. They were intentionally counting down for the right time that might activate people against the Saudi regime with the impending US military operation against Iraq. Therefore, the "third front"(Riedel & Saab, 2008) was believed to launch a fight against the "Muslim murderer" crusaders and would be able to overthrow the regime in Saudi Arabia with the support of mobilized Saudis.

For abovementioned reasons, mushrooming terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia collateral with Iraq's invasion by the US was no coincidence. No more than three months after the first bomb down in Iraq, Al Qaeda launched terrorist attacks using various methods like car bombing and targeting the regime itself and its alliances in Saudi Arabia. Owing to the activation of motivated sleeper cells against the regime, the Saudi government underwent to take tough measures in domestic spheres, deepening cooperation with international actors so as to root out terrorist activities. In this context, Saudi Arabia has initiated counterterrorism under three headlines: "The Men: Counterterrorism", "The Money: Combating Terror Financing", "The Mindset: Overcoming Extremism".(Saudi Embassy, 2015) In this regard, Saudi Arabia forged cooperation with international actors, provided international seminars on how to prevent money transfer to terrorism affiliated people, how to indoctrinate people, who previously attended terrorist action, how to stay away from terrorism through psychological treatment.

Just before the Arab Spring, apart from its tiny legitimacy problem in domestic spheres, external ideological threats like the Iranian revolution and democratic transformation in long distances countries, which were less effective till the Arab Spring, continued to be serious challenges for Saudi Arabia. In addition to these, the growing influence of Iran on certain state and non-state actors was carrying potential threat to ignite Shia uprising in Saudi Arabia. Last but not least, because radical movements gained currency since the demise of the Cold War together with the internal dynamics of Saudi Arabia, radical groups that possessed their legitimacy from religious values appeared as a crucial problem to be tackled by Saudis.

## 4.4. The Regional Role and Regional Power Dimension of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has always given its utmost efforts so as to curb regionally effective revolutionary waves, which became very efficient in shaping its foreign policy but also restrained maneuverability. Furthermore, the bipolar structure of the international system and entrenched alliance with the United States against officially atheist the Soviet Union did not allow the enlargement of its foreign policy horizon. However, Saudi Arabia's role in enforcing Islamists group to keep its interests aligned with US' in different areas was undeniable. Nevertheless, none of them made Saudi Arabia one of the major regional actors in the Middle East perpetually standing as a secondary regional power following Turkey, Egypt and Iran. Nevertheless, with the end of the Cold War and the dismantling of its restrictions, economic considerations became more influential in defining relations in the rapidly changing global environment, whereas military considerations were crucial during the Cold War. In this context, Saudi Arabia gradually increased its economic capacity which enabled her to increase its military weight and appear as a defensive regional power in the Middle East.

Owing to its legitimacy problem in domestic sphere, compering its political and economic weights with other regional countries, Saudi Arabia had been very weak in dealing actively with regional issues and it never took active leadership to shape the whole region in accordance with its interests, always defined its approach from the defensive perspective. However, since it became crystal clear that Iran embraced an aggressive policy aimed at wiping out the existing regime in the Gulf region which

surfaced ideological differences in both shores of the Persian Gulf, Saudi Arabia launched to quest for regional supremacy in the Gulf region.(Amirahmadi, 1993) In this context, Saudi Arabia actively initiated the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council that consolidated collective security among the member countries and strengthened relations in various fields so as to balance the emerging Iranian threats. On Saudi Arabia's role and capacity, it could even be said that Saudi Arabia is a "sub-regional hegemony" on the Gulf countries with its domination of these countries. Hence, Saudi Arabia's active role establishing a mechanism in which considerable oil resources are located is clear cut proof of the admission of Saudi Arabia's leadership by the other members.

Economically, Saudi Arabia benefited very effectively from its rich oil resources and this not only provided leverage in shaping its relations with other countries, but also caused Saudis to get substantial amount of money through black gold. Despite the fact that oil is a crucial resource for industrialized countries which has to be consumed by them to keep their robust economic conditions, there is also negative side to the production of oil: Saudi Arabia's economy that is being extensively dependent on oil revenues. Considering that oil consumption is increasing each day, it could be easily concluded that as long as Saudi Arabia maintains its ties with major consumers, the oil revenues will be stabile. However, this does not prevent the social muttering due to the lack of enlargement in economic fields. In this context, Saudi Arabia initiated institutionalization in order to enlarge economic activities from tourism to investment opportunities and for this aim, considerable lawful steps, which were entailed to appeal foreign investors, were enacted so as to create new economic spheres.(Malik & Niblock, 2005)

Despite its objection to the Iraqi War in 2003 due to geopolitical concerns, the war inevitably increased oil prices which resulted in a sudden boom of Saudi Arabian economy since 2003. Instability in Iraq which is one of the main suppliers together with emerging economies' oil demand like China provided uninterrupted economic growth, averaging approximately at 7.5% annual growth between 2003 and 2011 omitting the world economic crisis in 2009. Its GDP per capita of 9.070 USD in 2003 soared to 21.210 USD, likewise its total GDP of 214.5 billion USD in 2003 to 669.5 billion USD in 2011.(World Bank) This economic boom made Saudi Arabia the second biggest economic power in the Middle East, just after Turkey.

Thinking of Saudi Arabia's growing oil income together with its surfacing political role in the Arab and Muslim worlds as the protector of the two Muslim holy cities in its territory, Saudi Arabia stands out as a respected and brave country in dealing with the Arab people's emerging problems in the last two decades. Especially, when Saudi Arabia got actively involved in regional issues at the beginning of 2000s and took the very bold initiative of trying to solve the Palestinian Question. Saudi Arabia, with the Saudi Peace, also known as the Crown Prince Abdullah Peace Plan, proposed the pullout of Israeli soldiers the territories that have been occupied since 1967, to the expense of the normalization of the relations between Israeli state and Arab states. The peace plan brought nothing new to the other proposed peace initiatives of the past, but the proposition coming out from Saudi Arabia was significant. Saudi Arabia was assumed Saudi Arabia to be the last country to establish diplomatic relations with Israel due to its ultra-conservatism.(Füller, 2002) Although the peace plan was failed to reach its goal, it was enormously important for Saudi Arabia to never be excluded from the Arab world after taking bold steps for the peace deal. In addition to this, Saudi Arabia mediated Hamas and Fatah to form a Palestinian unity government and to a large extent, accomplished this through its financial aids and regional role. On one hand, Saudi Arabia's initiative, even astonished to the US because it desired HAMAS to be kept in isolation. On the other hand, HAMAS's driving away to Iran's axis was prevented by Saudi Arabia. Consequently, this mediation effort with the Mecca Accord highlights two important things; first Saudi Arabia desired to deepen the Palestinian's admission of an initiated peace plan and, secondly, it did not leave the ground to Iran through accepting HAMAS as a legal actor. Rather, imitating the US, it demonstrated its self-ascribed regional leadership.(Kamrava, 2014)Both non-state and state actors have recognized Saudi Arabia's leadership in the region, especially in its neighboring countries, which have generally followed the Saudi foreign policy. Apart from this crucial attempt, Saudi Arabia has been a very active player in supporting the political inclusion of Sunni groups in Iraq in post-construction period of Iraq's political structure. In Lebanon, in order to crackdown Iran's influence over Hezbollah, Saudi Arabia provided enormous economic and politic support in order to make the government stronger in responding to Hezbollah's attempt to dominate Lebanon. Yet, stability has been the main consideration of Saudi Arabia and due to this reason, Saudi Arabia mediated to gather all Lebanese factions in order to reach a stable environment, as well.

Saudi Arabia's domestic and external security concerns, especially stemming from Iran since the Iraqi invasion of the US that deepened Iran's influence in Iraq, always left it to stay on the knife-edge. Hence, Saudi Arabia, by benefitting from its economic inputs, has blindly scattered money in order to build up and modernize its military muscles. In this context, at just the very beginning of the Arab Spring, Saudi Arabia's military spending was up to 45.245 billion USD, making it the 9th biggest consumer in the world after very developed countries.(SIPRI)Two years after the inception of the Arab Spring, in 2013, Saudi Arabia hailed as the 4th most military spending country in the world with its 67 billion USD worth of military spending after preeminent superpowers like the US, China and Russia.(CNN Türk, 2014) Just before the Arab Spring, Saudi Arabia with its gigantic budget became the most spending country in the Middle East, which does not necessarily mean that it has the most powerful army in the region. However, the military might of a defensive regional power is a substantially important indicator of its material resources that displays its regional power role.

Consequently, Saudi Arabia's material resources of economic and military might make it one of the three powerhouses in the region. Its gargantuan defense spending and its overwhelmed economic resources enlarged its maneuverability in the region over state and non-state actors. Yet, its lack of ideological sources made it vulnerable against revolutionary waves and caused to be defined as defensive regional power in the Middle East so that in the abovementioned parts Saudi's soft power is omitted. Finally, a year before the eruption of the Arab Spring, according to the 2010 TESEV report of Turkey's perception of the Middle East, Saudi Arabia has been regarded as the biggest economy and second most appealing actor in the region.(Akgün & Perçinoğlu, 2010)

# CHAPTER 5

## CONTRADICTORY LEADERSHIPS

### 5.1. The Arab Spring

When a street fruit vendor, Muhammed Buazizi, set himself on a fire to protest constabulary's insulting attitudes on his livelihood activity, he was highly possibly no aware of that he sparked a revolutionary wave under the discourse of democracy, freedom and dignity throughout the region. After Buazizi's fire, streets were occupied to protest government and eventually ended up with the toppling of 23 years old Bin Ali's reign in Tunisia, 30 year old Hosni Mubarak government in Egypt. Now, there were small and considerably important protests all around the Arab countries from Lebonan to Libya, Syria to Yemen. These revolutionary waves under the democratic demands were gone down in history as "the Arab Spring" by experts, academics and even countries.

All of a sudden emergence of the Arab Spring, following the toppling down of Bin in Tunisia Ali and Mubarak in Egypt, Fall of Berlin Wall was reminded and "Arab Wall Begins to Fall"(Halimi, 2011) was used to explain situation unfolding the region. Additionally, investigation of regimes' legitimacy, demanding democratic right in the Arab streets with emerging opposition groups opened up a discussion whether these developments should be taken into account in the "Democracy's Third Wave"(Huntington, 2011; Sarıhan, 2012) or the inception of fourth wave of democracy mentioning the Samuel Huntinghton's theory.(Diamond, 2011)

However, this so called "Arab Spring" has been continued with its ups and downs. Especially, after dispatching rancid governments in Tunisia and most importantly in Egypt, it was believed Arab society under oppressor regime could change their government in response to their social, political and economical confrontations. The resistance of Gaddafi in Libya not to give in for political transformation exacerbated the civil war and agitated with the NATO's military intervention. Likewise, in Bahrain, whose majority consist of Shia ethnic groups ruled by Sunni minority, protests were harshly responded. A transition government in Yemen brokered by Saudi Arabia but that did not enable Yemen to be stabile. In Syria, the Arab Spring entered a new phase and protracted civil war which ended up over 3 million refugees, as of November 2014, and 6.5 million internally displaced people, as of May 2014, and unfortunately approximately 200.000 people(BBC, 2014) have lost their life till November 2014.

In this nested and complex environment, regionally powerful countries have calibrated their foreign policy tools in accordance with the possible geopolitical consequences. However, the prediction of the Arab Spring's direction was quite complicated for regionally influential countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Israel to shape their foreign policy approaches. For Israel, just after Mubarak who is loyal ally of the US and good man in Cairo for Israelis, security concerns suddenly soared because elections that will be held in Egypt in order to provide political transition possibly could elevate the anti-Israeli groups to government that meant the loss of Israel's solely reliable and valuable ally in the region.(Ayoob, 2012) Being a good example of HAMAS take over in Gaza by democratic elections is behind this security consideration. With the same logic, Iran interpreted the developments upholding the Middle East as a resurgence of Islamism being against the west and new front opening to tackle effectively with western countries. In addition, Iran was supposed there will eventually be Islamic republic export in Arab Spring countries, yet it was turned a complex issue when Arab Spring reached Iran's most important Arab ally of Syria that shifted Iran's point of view on the Arab Spring.(Rafati, 2012)Iran's regional rival, Saudi Arabia has also regarded Arab Spring as, on the one hand, a threat to its regime's stability but on the other hand considered as an opportunity to reduce Iranian influence when Arab Spring arrived to Syria. In addition to that, Saudi Arabia dispatched the soldiers, under the GCC auspicious, to Bahrain in which ruling group is Sunni minority as the vast majority of populations is Shia in order to surpass the Shia

demonstrations in Manama. Saudi Arabia implemented some measurements against revolutionary wave of the Arab Spring both domestically and regionally, accepting the Arab Spring as external and internal threats for regime's existence. To some extent, the perception of these countries was reflecting the security concern of them emerging from the Arab Spring. Yet, for Turkey, there was neither a security concern in terms of its regime and political structure nor a direct military concern. Nevertheless, that is not to say that Turkey has no possible loosing in its approach towards the Arab Spring. As a county who had been defined as exemplary county with its political structure and compatibility between democracy and Islam in the Middle East region, there were two possibilities when Arab Spring spread into the countries where Turkish foreign policy's trading state mentality stake at its zenith, namely in Syria and Libya. This was such a dilemma that Turkey has confronted and had to choose either ethical approach which pushes Turkey to foster political transformation or self interest that made Turkey to continue enjoying its trade and investment opportunity.(Öniş, 2012) Consequently, Turkey as a major regional power projected to promote democratization in the region with siding people's demand of dignity and freedom at the Arab streets.

As a main focus of this thesis, since the inception of Arab Spring, there was a divergence of Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Especially, Ankara's responses to developments in North Africa and the Middle East became gradually coherent with principled foreign policy approach whereas Riyadh viewed the Arab Spring movements with domestic security concern and skepticism.(Ennis & Momani, 2013)From now on, these two countries contradictory leaderships in the Arab Spring will be analysis in the context of "contradictory leaderships". While Turkey's regional projection will be taken into account with its democracy promotion approach in general terms with excepting Bahrain in which Turkey pragmatically applied to real-politic by recognizing its limitations, as a defensive and rational regional power Saudi Arabia's defensive regional projections will be evaluated in three context; containment, revolutionary and counter-revolutionary.(Steinberg, 2014) Turkish and Saudi projections for the Arab Spring provide also an understanding "how emerging powers conduct foreign policy under conditions of uncertainty".(Ennis & Momani, 2013)

## 5.2. Contradictory Leaderships of Turkey and Saudi Arabia During the Arab Spring

### 5.2.1. Bahrain: The Limitations of Regional Powers

Following the downfall of Bin Ali and Mubarak, the Arab Spring's subsequent serious station finally became Bahrain's ruler is Sunni minority whereas the majority of citizens are Shii. Saudi Arabia erects as a gigantic hegemonic power there and as a balancer against the Iranian influence in the country. The Shia led uprising in Bahrain alerted Saudi Arabia to take a tough stance, since it was supposed that the turmoil ignited by Iran. The fear of Saudi Arabia was that if a sustainable revolution prevailed in Bahrain, this would embolden the Shia minority in Saudi Arabia.(Johnston, 2011)

No doubt, the Bahrain case in the Arab Spring was a clear-cut proof in showing the limits of a regional power within the respective region. Since the foundation of the Gulf Cooperation Council, its main aim has been both to maintain any legitimate trouble and to balance between Iran and the Gulf monarch countries in order to curb the Iranian ambitions of dominating the region. Shia led demonstrations caused Saudi Arabia to confront both challenges, simultaneously. After all, as a hegemon that has been conducive in building the GCC mechanism that provides a legitimacy to intervene, not surprisingly, Saudi Arabia demonstrated its military muscles to halt demonstrations against Sunni rulers. Saudi Arabia's harsh intervention in Bahrain has led to a bloody outbreak and crashed oppositions in the street.

Turkey, that had already calibrated its political vision during the Arab Spring as a supporter of democratic demands throughout the region had to face off the realpolitik that its influence in the Gulf was very low. In addition to this, direct investments and flows of money from Gulf Countries was occupying a very considerable share in Turkey's growing economy. Having no sectarian agenda in its diplomatic relations with Middle Eastern countries, Turkey, as a champion of democracy promotion during the Arab Spring has not been able to lash out against Saudi Arabia's intervention to Bahrain. As a matter of fact, the Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan has spoken out against

Saudi Arabia's military intervention in Bahrain, saying "we do not want to see new Kerbelas"(Analiz Merkezi, 2011), though he did not go beyond this discourse.

The meeting of the Turkish Prime Minister, who urged the resignation of Mubarak and propped up the opposition group in Syria, with the Bahraini King caused Turkey to be accused of having double standards in its regional politics, especially compared with the Syrian case.(Vahedi, 2011) Turkey's calm attitude towards Bahrain even caused the upholding of allegations that Turkey pursues a sectarian agenda in its regional engagement. Yet, considering exclusively the Bahraini case, claims that Turkey had a sectarian agenda or double standards were inaccurate because Saudi Arabia's sub-regional mechanism that allows it to carry out a collective security not only undermined Turkey's approach but also the EU and the US's democracy agenda.(Hassan, 2015)

It was the Realpolitik that Turkish policy makers have considered in approaching the development in the Bahraini case. Turkey's awareness of Saudi Arabia's non-tolerant change attempts in its near periphery and its strong economic ties with the Gulf countries were, certainly, calculated by Turkish foreign policy makers and the limitations of Turkey's regional power projections had been drawn. Iran, having a sectarian agenda and custodian of the Shii population in the region was also curbed and confined by Saudi Arabia.

### 5.2.2. Egypt: A Great Confrontation

When the protests began in Tunisia, there was no considerable attention by both Turkey and the international community. The happenings left a shock effect on policy makers. However, when the Arab Spring hit Egypt as a transformative political wave, strategies had already been taking shape in regional and international countries. Turkey considered the Arab Spring as the third major earthquakes in the international system since the Cold War, together with the economic crisis of Europe. (Davutoğlu, 2013) Thinking of this earthquake together with Davutoğlu's "flow of history" understanding, Turkey had no chance but support people's struggle for dignity, honor and freedom. Turkey had to be on the right side of the flow of history and decided to back the trans-boundary regional revolutionary wave.(Aras, 2014) Thus, Turkey raised its discourse in normative perspectives, by promoting western oriented values of democracy and human

rights in response to the demands of people for better governance from their authoritarian rulers in the Arab streets. In Egypt, it was brought to public attention that Turkey had started the "promotion of democracy".(Kardaş, 2011)

In the case of Egypt, when Tahrir Square started flooding with massive demonstrations, the Turkish government and the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan explicitly urged Hosni Mubarak to resign in order to meet with the legitimate demands of the Egyptian people. The Turkish government considered that a democratic transformation throughout the region could create a more stabile environment and solve the legitimacy problem of authoritarian regimes. Therefore, Turkey could get involved in the region more effectively by relying on democratic political structure. Therefore, following the fall of Bin Ali, Turkey never hesitated to take side with the people and their demands to change the regime or government. From a trading state perspective, Turkey's lack of extensive investments in Egypt made it easy forth country to determine its position during the Egyptian Turmoil.(Tocci, 2011)

For Saudi Arabia, the Arab Spring's hit to Egypt not only proved why the revolutionary waves should be taken seriously. Egypt had always been the center of the Arab World and any serious change in Egypt would be as effective as the Nasser experience in the past, but also that Egypt was the loyal ally of the Western system that enabled Saudi Arabia to strengthen its ties against Iran and its influence in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria. There would be considerable strategic and symbolic challenges if Mubarak was to fall down in Egypt; first the ascendance of the Muslim Brotherhood who represents Sunni Islam, and which would be Saudi Arabia's only serious Sunni challenger from the Arab lands in terms of governance, second that Egypt could direct its way towards Iran which would shake the regional balance of power in favor of Iran against Saudi Arabia.(Al Tamamy, 2012)

Mubarak in Egypt was clearly a loyal partner of US in the Middle East and had been propped up economically, militarily and politically for at least three decades. However, along with the upholding of the Arab Spring, there was an emerging dilemma on the US side about the Egyptian case. The US could either urge Mubarak to take demands for democracy into consideration or to continue back the Mubarak regime, which the US benefitted from for 30 years. Together with the US role in Egypt, there was also another important actor whose decision on the demonstrations was vital: the

Egyptian army. Saudi Arabia had assumed that both the Egyptian Army and the US, would do their utmost to hold Mubarak in power. However, first the Egyptian Army declared that they would never use the force against the Egyptian people and then the US President Barack Obama urged Mubarak to organize free and fair elections and not to run for the next elections.(CNN, 2011)The US's turning its back to Mubarak raised concerns in Saudi Arabia, who was also a historical partner of the US in the region that could confront the Arab Spring. Thus, Saudi Arabia's confidence in the US was damaged.

The downfall of Mubarak and the sudden ascendance of Muslim Brotherhood to the government, following the first ever democratic elections in the Egyptian history caused the increase of Saudi concerns concerning Saudis' domestic and regional considerations. The Muslim Brotherhood is cross-border but fragmented within itself in each country's civil society organizations. It is also one of the most motivated and active political organizations. Its success in both parliamentarian and presidential elections in a country like Egypt, which is an source of inspiration for the Arab world, was interpreted as an alarming situation in Saudi Arabia. Indeed, democratic accordance together with Islamic values in the heartland of the Arab world, Egypt, would accelerate and revive the demands of people for change and its eventual regional and domestic repercussions would harm the legitimacy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. For this reason, Saudi Arabia's approach to the Muslim Brotherhood was very hostile from the moment they took over the government to the military coup led by General Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi on July 3rd2013.

Contrary to Saudi Arabia, the ousting of Mubarak, who had already been urged to resign by the Prime Minister Erdoğan, was welcomed by Ankara. In addition to this, the holding of the first free and democratic elections in Egypt was regarded as an opportunity window for Turkish decision makers to wipe out legitimacy problem in the capital of Arab World and it would also be conducive in overcoming structural Middle Eastern problems and strengthening ties between Turkey and Arab countries. The Muslim Brotherhood's taking over the government in Egypt was also a very crucial development for Turkey in terms of identity politics. Just like the ruling Justice and Development Party in Turkey, the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology stemmed from Islamist movements and leading the government with democratic legitimacy. Turkey's appearance as a role model country enabling an accord between Islam and democracy

together with Turkey's new principled zero problems with neighbors, overlapped with Turkey's expectations of serving people's legitimate demands and a more inclusive and with the inclusion of people into the government.

The democratic transformations in Egypt had been financially and politically propped up by Turkey, extending a helping hand of 2 billion USD to bridge the budget deficit(Reuters, 2012) and inviting the newly elected President Morsi as honorary visitor to the Justice and Development Party's convention in Turkey. Just 45 days after this convention, Prime Minister Erdoğan visited Egypt and discussed the forefront crisis of Israel's Operation Pillar of Defence in Gaza. Both leaders publicly announced their full support to the Palestinians people and slammed Israel's attack.(Hürriyet Daily News, 2012) Turkey's inspiration for Egypt and convergence of foreign policy approaches on sensitive issues put both sides in a path of developing strong ties that certainly started to change the balance of the region. Turkey's promotion of democracy and human rights since the eruption of the Arab Spring together with the inception of democratic consolidation in the inspirational heartland of the Arab world, would be direct a threat to the Gulf countries' limited legitimacy.(Hearst, 2013)

After all, Egypt had been the mainland for the "regional leadership contest"(Cook & Stokes and & Brock, 2014, 4-5) between Turkey and the Gulf countries except Qatar that sided with Turkey on one hand, and the UAE and Saudi Arabia on the other. The rise of the Muslim Brotherhood and its possible repercussions on the region irritated Saudi Arabia enough that they provided huge economic and political assistance to Abdel Fettah Al-Sisi, who led the military coup in Egypt on July 3$^{rd}$, 2013. After the sudden military coup, Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah together with Kuwait and the UAE pledged to provide 12 billion USD worth of economic aid and urged Western countries not to impose any sanctions by notably implying that they would compensate any sanction on Egypt.(Reuters, 2013) The counter-revolutionary movement in Egypt exposed already presents intra-regional challenges between Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

Not surprisingly, the Turkish government came out as the most vocal critic of Egyptian coup, pulling back its ambassador from Egypt and, calling western countries to comply with their values against military coups. The rift between Turkey and Saudi Arabia over Egypt caused a new "Cold War" between two Sunni countries, interpreted as the conflict between "Islamic Wahhabism and Islamic democracy"(Al Buluwi, 2014)

In this comparison, the evolution should go beyond the Islamic Wahhabism since there was a clear anxiousness about Islamic democracy in Saudi Arabia. It was also publicly announced by the Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan that Saudi Arabia was "a part of coup in Egypt", a "hypocrite".(Ergin, 2013) On both sides, there was also a very active media row, accusing Saudi Arabia of being part of the "evil axis" on one hand, and identifying Turkish Prime Minister as "Sultan" on the other.(Al Rasheed, 2013)

Turkey's critical voice and Saudi Arabia's supportive actions to Abdal-Fattah Al-Sisi continued and the competition was picked up on global stages on the occasion of Turkey's bid for temporary membership in the UN Security Council for 2015 and 2016. The Turkish government never hesitated to carry the Egyptian case on to the international stage and Turkish President Erdoğan directed harsh criticism to those who kept silence and legitimized Al-Sisi instead of Morsi in his speech at the UN General Assembly. Turkey's active role in setting an agenda on Egypt confronted with Saudi Arabia's active play to curb Turkey's ambition to be part of the UN Security Council and, eventually, Saudi Arabia launched an intensive campaign against Turkey's membership.(Avni, 2014)

Egypt signifies a verisimilitude of clashes between regional powers when it comes to the crucially important topic that is vital for the region itself, albeit there were convergence of common interests in dealing with other regional issues and increasing mutual dependency on each side. This also shows the importance of the balance of power in the region. For Saudi Arabia, losing Turkey in a time of US disassociate itself from the region would be a handicap for it in balancing Iran's regional hegemony ambitions, by activating local militias. Aside from this, the Egyptian case demonstrates how the regional powers' projections to the responding region can be very different and how another regional power can curb the leadership by launching opposite leadership.

### 5.2.3. Syria: "Bitter Frenemies"

As the Arab Spring landed in Syria, geo-politic realities clearly surfaced in which three materially and ideationally powerful states of Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran embraced three different paths in their way of dealing with the Syrian Crisis. For Saudi Arabia looking with the sectarian lens, weakening the government in Damascus and

replacing it by a more moderate one meant the weakening of Iran in the broader context. Likewise, for Iran, Damascus continuous presence in the axis of Iran is crucial to supply all necessities of proxy Shia groups supported by Iran from Iraq to Lebanon. Yet, for Turkey, there was no sectarian agenda, though there was a choice of real-politic between Turkey's economic interests in Syria and the morally supported democratic transformation. Turkish policy makers adopted for the latter.

Analyzing the Syrian crisis is very complicated because, though it once seemed like Turkey and Saudi Arabia shared common goals to provide a change of regime, it was obvious that both actors prop up different segments of the Syrian opposition which are thought to shape the future order in Syria. Thus, since the very beginning of the Syrian Crisis, there have been structural differentiations between Saudi Arabia and Turkey's considerations. Gause expressed this situation as follows;

> "The inability of Turkey and Saudi Arabia to form a powerful axis in opposition to Assad in Syria and Iranian influence in the region more generally can be attributed, in part, to an intra-Sunni Islamist dispute over political order."(Gause, 2014, 17)

Looking from the Saudi perspective, a decade before the Arab Spring, there had been a considerable growing Iranian influence. The invasion by US and subsequent elections brought a Shia dominated government in Iraq. The failure of the Saudi's support of Hariri against Hezbollah in Lebanon, the steady increase of the Shia originated Houthi movement in Yemen and the Arab Spring that toppled down a Mobarak, major ally of Saudi Arabia, gave only an opportunity for Saudis in Syria to weaken the Iranian influence.(Gause, 2014, 15)The Saudis' frustration was exacerbated by the ascendance of the Muslim Brotherhood to government which presented a different path in the Arab-Islamic world. With the onset of the Syrian upheaval, the Muslim Brotherhood occupied the front side in demanding a better governance based on elections like in Egypt and Tunisia. Despite having a strategic chance to weaken the Iranian influence, Saudis might have also confronted a situation in which the Muslim Brotherhood would take over two governments with democratic legitimacy, which would mean a new version of Nasserism, a direct threat to Saudi Arabia's monarchy. Thus, Saudi Arabia shunned away any segment of the Muslim Brotherhood, supported Salafi movements by differentiating them from radical groups and took a clear stance against the Assad regime.

In Bahrain, Turkey's role was very low and the country took a position considering its regional limitations from realpolitik perspectives. It was also fact that there were no actors except Saudi Arabia able to meddle strongly into the Bahraini case. Yet, in Syria, Turkey, as a moral and democracy defender champion since the eruption of the Arab Spring, confronted a serious dilemma, posing between self-interest and moral obligations. Unlike Saudi Arabia and Iran, Turkey had no sectarian agenda and no security considerations stemming from its domestic environment. Thereby, it might have sided with Assad for the sake of its enormous trade interests and Syria's strategic importance as a gateway to the Arab land. In the beginning of the demonstrations in Syria, Turkish government called the Syrian leader to hear the voices and reform in accordance with the demands coming out of the Syrian streets. In this context, it was even interpreted that Ankara would not go beyond the democratization discourse and it was said that "Turks are unlikely to abandon their man in Damascus"(Cook, 2011) Nevertheless, the brutal oppression of the Syrian against the demonstrator irked Turkey which eventually cut off relations and supported opposition groups, both politically and financially.

Turkish and Saudi governments not only diverged in their geo-politic considerations toward the Syrian crisis, the first prioritized democratization and the latter considered sectarianism, but also in their support of different opposition groups. For the post-Assad era, Turkey envisioned a participatory mechanism including all the fragmentation of Syria so as to prevent a possible blow up due to the lack of democratic consolidation among political groups, however Saudi Arabia advocated Sunni Islamist governments with more radical elements in the country.(Altunışık, 2012) Since the fear against the Muslim Brotherhood, for the projection of the reconfiguration of Syria after Assad, expecting a government that the Muslim Brotherhood are kept at bay or curbed them, by Saudi Arabia, to control all segments of the government came as no surprise.(Eyal, 2012)

This regional competition between Turkey and Saudi Arabia both in Egypt and Syria drove Qatar and the United Arabic Emirates close to each side, respectively. As a follower of Turkey's regional policy, even in the Gulf region there have been serious setbacks among Gulf countries, in particular Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and UAE against Qatar, even though they were firmly tied in pondering against Iran.(Hassan, 2013) In Syria, this discord has been prevented to unify opposition groups to tackle more

effectively with Assad's cruel acts and so that the fragmented opposition groups more weakened on the ground and eventually radical elements became very active on the stage.

The Syrian crisis not only demonstrated the intra-regional constraints, but also signified the limitations of both regional powers stemming from domestic and global dynamics. First, Turkey has never been able to conduct military intervention in favor of its interests due to domestic limitations the public has supported any military intervention and most importantly Russia's unlimited support and the lack of UN Security Council resolutions did not allow any military intervention by Turkey in Syria. Likewise, Saudi Arabia never dared to halt Iran by conducting a military operation as it has done in Bahrain and later in Yemen despite the fact that she was well aware of the situation of Iranian militias together with Hezbollah fighters occupying the Syrian stage.

Mainly, in Syria, the main goal of both Saudi Arabia and Turkey was to get rid of the Assad regime, though, in the deep, there have been clear structural divergences that Turkey basically advocates for a more inclusive and comprehensive political attendance including of the Muslim Brotherhood on the one hand, Saudi Arabia is very concerned of the ascendance of the Brotherhood to government. Thus, opposition groups could not gain a strong support and were weakened against regime, which prolonged the durability of Assad's power. That is to say, Saudi Arabia's biased attitude toward opposition groups in Syria not only made Turkey's Syria policy complicated but also disabled its Syria policy to get rid of the Iranian influence over Syria, shattering the Shia Crescent in one of the important Arab countries.

**CHAPTER 6**


**CONCLUSION**


Regional powers, their roles and places in the future configuration of the new world order have been burning debates in academia. Consequently, academic studies have been paying more attention to the role of regional powers in regionalization but lacking in dealing with their projections in respective regions. In this context, SantraDestradi's article *"Regional Powers and Their Strategies: Empire, Hegemony and Leadership"* is a guiding study underpinned by international relations theories for those who are interested in exploring the regional projections of regional powers.

Remembering regional powers' main feature of leadership role, this point pushed me to quest what if there is another regional power whose leadership is contradictory in which another regional power aspires regional power role opposite of alleged one. In this thesis, I aim to show how two regional powers have carried out contradictory policies towards the most transformative and historical developments in the Middle East. Thus, this thesis proves that there might be intra-regional challenges that limit regional powers' projections in a region.

In this thesis, I displayed regional powers' intra-regional challenges by drawing on a comparative analysis of the foreign policy approaches of Turkey and Saudi during the Arab Spring which undoubtedly opened up a novel environment for regional powers to pursue their regional intentions. Theoretical discussions come up with three projections of empire, hegemony and leaderships for regional powers in their responding regions. Looking at the power resources of both actors proved that they are neither hegemony nor empire but leading countries. Thus, their leadership roles were considered in this paper.

Keeping the Middle East's multipolar structure in mind, Saudi Arabia and Turkey collaterally worked together in order to build up a more stable region before the Arab

Spring. Yet, the Arab Spring caused the rethinking of geopolitical considerations which deepened cleavages among the regional actors. Considering withdrawal of the United States together with the small power gap among the actors influencing the regional balance of power and the interconnections finding a mutual way between actors in regionally unfolding developments were getting harder.

The Arab Spring has brought an unprecedented bottom-up dynamism to the Middle East in which democratization and human rights oriented governance were the main focus. This situation also signals the reshaping of the geopolitical balances of the Middle East. In this tectonic and remotely volatile environment, Turkey asserted its own projections, taking side with the democratization and people's legitimate demand, supporting regime and government change for mentioned directions. On the contrary, Saudi Arabia, who has seen the political Islamist movement as a survival threat together with the Arab Spring itself, pragmatically approached the developments with different considerations, both supporting regime change and doing its utmost in order to maintain existent regimes and governments in Egypt and in Bahrain.

Turkey's active stance supporting regime and government change was signaling the break up with Turkey's traditional foreign policy of non-intervention or non-dealing with Middle Eastern developments. This has been directly tied up with Turkey's emergence as an assertive and active regional power. This assertiveness coincided with Turkey's accelerated economic growth and increasing acceptance as role model country through its accordance between Islam and democracy in its political realm. Yet, this assertiveness was confronted with intra-regional actors' intention to narrow down Turkey's maneuverability in the region.

In the multipolar region, the leadership role might confront substantial obstacles and this thesis mainly shows how Turkey's democratization oriented foreign policy approach was undermined by Saudi Arabia. Since the inception of the Arab Spring, Turkey supported democratization and even regime and government change in this way. Yet, Saudi Arabia's active role in the count-revolutionary movement in Bahrain and in Egypt, and its "frenemy" position in Syria, have been intra-regional constraint to Turkey from another regional power.

The Arab Spring's arrival to Egypt was a breakthrough moment for the fate of the revolutionary political wave. Egypt is the heart of Arab lands and the repercussions of a

change in this country would be unforeseeable for the region. In this context, Saudi Arabia never desired for Hosni Mobarak's to leave his power whereas Turkey urged him to resign. This was only a small part of the contradictory leaderships between Turkey and Saudi Arabia over Egypt. In following times, what was most feared by Saudi Arabia happened in Egypt and the Muslim Brotherhood took over the government after the first free elections held in Egyptian history. Turkey, as supposedly, welcomed this democratic transformation because the country was expecting a replication of Turkey's Muslim identity's accordance with democratic consolidation in a pro-eminent Arabic country so as to reach out stability in the region.

Yet, the first elected President Morsi has been toppled down with a military coup conducted by General Abdul Fattah Sisi. This surfaced a great confrontation and made apparent the competition between Saudi Arabia and Turkey since the latter was speaking out against the military coup on the international stage while the former was canalizing economic aid to cement military coup's implementation. The Egyptian issue was the clearest example of how two regional powers can curb each other in presenting their regional projections.

Bahrain was another important issue displaying the limitation of regional powers. Even though Turkey's effective dealing with the developments around the Gulf countries were limited, glancing at Turkey and Saudi Arabia's approaches in this county was important in the context of the emergence of Sunni axis allegations, as well. Saudi Arabia erected as a sub-regional hegemonic power over the Gulf countries and it dispatched its military equipment to Bahrain in order to crack down protests. This is where Turkey has been harshly slammed for lashing out Saudi Arabia's intervention and accused of following Sunni oriented foreign policy. In fact, Turkey realistically approached the situation in Bahrain and confessed its limitation which was the actual reason behind degrading its voice.

The Syrian crisis was another competition place in which Saudi Arabia and Turkey seemed as if they were acting together with the aim of toppling down the Assad regime. Yet, deeper glance at the situation on the ground and the approaches that both actors carried out shows us differentiations. These differentiations stemmed from the divergence in thinking for post-Assad period. Despite the fact that Saudi Arabia's main aim of toppling down Assad was to curb Iran's penetration, Turkey was aiming to build

an an inclusive democratic consolidation in which Islamist groups might have been preeminent actors. Saudi Arabia's concern made it harder to achieve any convergence with Turkey and the longer they did not agree on a mutual way the more the conflict prolonged in Syria.

This thesis solely focused on the contradictory leaderships of Saudi Arabia and Turkey in the most transformative period of the Middle East, namely the Arab Spring. This has been a great chance for Turkey to promote democratic values as Muslim country and a substantial challenge for Saudi Arabia both in domestic and regional geopolitical contexts. Nevertheless, the ensuing period of that saw emergence of terrorist organizations along with Iran's clear indication to penetrate into the Arab world as recently seen in Yemen, have created an area of convergence between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. This is related to the balance of power in the region and this competition could be turned into cooperation in relation with the balance of power.

Finally, this thesis proved the intra-regional challenges of regional powers. In the broader context, the concept of regional powers pushes us to think of the limits of regional powers in three spheres; domestic, regional and global. Domestic limitation of a regional power is directly related to its liberal basis of leadership which is dependent on the will of domestic decision makers, ranging from small elites to the national will. Regional limitation of a regional power stems from another regional power's regional projections, as demonstrated in this thesis. Lastly, a regional power would be limited by superpowers whose influence, coerciveness and appealing, to some extent, would be more dominant than regional powers. For Turkey's regional power limitations, a PhD thesis that simultaneously focuses on the domestic, regional and global limitations of the country with in-depth interviews with political parties' foreign policy representatives and analyses of other regional powers projections together with global superpowers' considerations to the responding region might be very illuminative as well as contributive for future academic studies.

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