

TURKEY-SAUDI ARABIA RELATIONS SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF
THE SAUDI KINGDOM

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ABSTRACT

TURKEY-SAUDI ARABIA RELATIONS SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SAUDI KINGDOM

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This thesis addresses the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia from the late 19th century to today. It examines the issue under three historical period: First one begins with the late 19th century -when Saudi Kingdom was established- and continues until 1980, year of the September 12 military coup. Second one begins with the year 1980, and examines the relations between two countries until 2002, when Justice and Development Party came into power. Third one begins with 2002 and analyzes Turkish-Saudi relations until 2015. Main argument of the thesis is that the main parameter which shapes the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia is the course of relations between Turkey and the Arab world.

Keywords: Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Turkish-Saudi relations, Turkish-Arab relations, Ibn Saud.

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INTRODUCTION

Turkey and Saudi Arabia are two important countries in the Middle East. The first is successor of the Ottoman Empire, which ruled the Middle East for centuries and was also a bridge between Europe and Asia. The latter is a country that is home to two holy cities of Islam - Mecca and Medina, and also rich oil reserves having big economic importance. Both the Republic of Turkey and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia gained independence during the 1920s. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, the two countries that remained independent in former Ottoman territories were Turkey and Saudi Arabia. As Fethi Tevetoğlu pointed out, in a series of disaster, the two countries which could be saved from the “great fire of the Ottoman Empire” were the Republic of Turkey and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and apart from that, the initiator of Turkish-Saudi relations was the founder of the Republic of Turkey - Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as well as the founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia - Abdulaziz ibn Saud.¹ Both leaders were so popular in Islamic world during their times that, it was even possible to find Muslims who had admiration for both Atatürk and Ibn Saud.² In addition, both countries have different regimes as a result of their differences on historical experiences and sociological structures. Turkey was founded as a secular republic, while Saudi Arabia came into existence as a theocratic kingdom based upon Wahhabi sect of Islam. Another significant point is that both countries are important allies for the United States of America in the Middle East and they play a central role in the foreign policy of the United States, as well. Turkey’s cooperation with the United States goes back to late 1940s and the following decade, when Turkish policy makers reconsidered Turkey’s position in NATO as well as its position in the Middle East from the one-dimensional perspective of East-West confrontation during the Cold War.³ When we look at Saudis’ long history of cooperation with the United States, we see that it goes back to the King Ibn Saud’s meeting with President Roosevelt of the United States on the US cruiser Quincy in the Suez Canal,

¹ Cihad Fethi Tevetoğlu, “Bugünkü Türk-Suudi Dostluğuna İlk Adım: Gazi Mustafa Kemal-Faysal bin Abdülaziz Görüşmesi (1932)”, in *Studies on Turkish-Arab Relations Annual 1986*, ed. Foundation for Studies on Turkish-Arab Relations (İstanbul: TAİV, 1986), 292.

² François Georgeon, “Kemalizm ve İslam Dünyası (1919-1938) Bazı İşaret Taşları”, in *Kemalizm ve İslam Dünyası*, ed. İskender Gökalg and François Georgeon (İstanbul: Kaynak, 2007), 41.

³ Ali Karaosmanoğlu, “Turkey’s Policy in the Middle East”, in *Studies on Turkish-Arab Relations Annual 1986*, ed. Foundation for Studies on Turkish-Arab Relations (İstanbul: TAİV, 1986), 159.

in February 1945, when the two discussed a wide range of subjects, including the Palestine problem.⁴

Turkish-Arab relations had a very long history. First encounter between Turks and Arabs happened when Arab conquests reached Central Asia - homeland of the Turks - during the second decade of the 8th century. This encounter had two consequences: in Turks accepting Islam, and; Arab influence on Turkish culture and language. Turks managed to come to the key positions in the Abbasid Caliphate. Even some Turkish governors under the Abbasids started their own dynasties. Later on, Sunni Seljuk Turks succeeded to end Buwayhid oppression on Abbasid Caliphate, in the tenth century and would become the dominant political force in the Arab provinces.⁵

When the European Crusades reached Arab territories, Seljuks and Zangids in Syria and Egypt fought against them. Mongol invasion in the thirteenth century and Tamerlane's invasion in the fourteenth century left the Arab world morally, economically and physically exhausted. After the Ottomans under Selim I defeated both Safavids at Chaldiran and Mamluks at Marj Dabiq and Cairo, Ottoman domination over the Arab territories started.⁶ Incorporation of the Arab territories into the Ottoman land was one of the primary turning points of both Islamic history and the history of the Arabs between 1516 and 1916. Almost all Arab territories, except Morocco, were incorporated into the Ottoman land in such a short period, 1516-1541.⁷ Ottoman Empire was well received by Arab nation, as they were seen as fellow Sunni Muslims, and as they left the administration of local affairs in the hands of local notables and chieftains.⁸ Ottomans also had a great respect for Arabs as to religious affairs. For example, an Ottoman historian from 15th century, Şükrullah Effendy, claimed in one of his books that God created Arabs as a prominent nation, since Prophet Muhammad was from Arab nation and the Quran was in Arabic language.⁹

In the late times of the Ottoman Empire, a range of problems about Arab territories

⁴ Muhammad 'Abdul Jabbar Beg, "The Foundation of the Modern State of Saudi Arabia", in *Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 100 Years*, ed. Fahd Al-Semhari (Riyadh: King Abdulaziz Foundation, 2008), 97.

⁵ Caesar E. Farah, "Arabs and Turks: Common Heritage, Common Destiny", in *Studies on Turkish-Arab Relations Annual 1986*, ed. Foundation for Studies on Turkish-Arab Relations (İstanbul: TAİV, 1986), 62.

⁶ Farah, "Arabs and Turks: Common Heritage, Common Destiny", 63.

⁷ Halil İnalçık, "Arab-Turkish Relation in Historical Perspective (1260-1914)", in *Studies on Turkish-Arab Relations Annual 1986*, ed. Foundation for Studies on Turkish-Arab Relations (İstanbul: TAİV, 1986), 152.

⁸ Caesar E. Farah, "Arabs and Turks: Common Heritage, Common Destiny", in *Studies on Turkish-Arab Relations Annual 1986*, ed. Foundation for Studies on Turkish-Arab Relations (İstanbul: TAİV, 1986), 63.

⁹ Şükrullah Efendi, *Behcetü't Tevarih: Tarihin Aydınlığında*, trans. Hasan Almaz (İstanbul: Mostar, 2013), 114.

showed itself, including war with Italy to keep Italians out of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica; losing of Algeria and Tunisia to France; British occupation of Egypt and Sudan; British encouragement of Imam Yahya's revolt in Yemen; and Arab nationalist movements in Arab territories. The British were working on isolating the Arabian Peninsula from the Ottoman Empire by encouraging resistance to Ottoman rule and supporting the idea of an Arab leadership over an Ottoman one. The French also exercised influence over Christians in Syria. The policy of separating Arab territories from Ottoman Empire was put in action when British agents achieved to encourage Sharif Hussein of Hejaz to revolt against Ottoman Empire and when the French and the British agreed secretly on dividing up the Syrian provinces and Iraq among themselves. As a result, World War I put an end to the Ottoman unity, which had overshadowed Arabs and Turks for half a millennium.¹⁰

During the last centuries of Turkish-Arab common history, one of the most important topics was the rise of Wahhabism and establishment of Saudi states in the Arabian Peninsula. The first Saudi State was established in 1744, with the Diriyah agreement between Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahab - founder of Wahhabi sect of Islam, and Muhammad bin Saud - leader of Saud tribe. According to the agreement, ibn 'Abd al-Wahab pledged allegiance to Muhammad bin Saud, and in return, bin Saud assumed the duty of providing necessary political and military power for ibn 'Abd al-Wahab's religious struggle. With the help of the alliance between ibn 'Abd al-Wahab and bin Saud, whole Najd (central region of Saudi Arabia) was conquered by the Saudis. They even conquered Mecca in 1803, and then lost the city in the same year to Sharif Galib of Mecca. In 1805, the Saudis managed to conquer Medina.¹¹ Ottoman Empire could not respond to Saudi conquests for a while; because Ottoman-Russian Wars, Janissary rebellions, French occupation of Egypt and various rebellions kept the Ottoman Empire busy.¹² Finally, Sultan Mahmut II of the Ottoman Empire gave Muhammad Ali Pasha - governor of Egypt - the mission to solve the Saudi problem. At the end of Muhammad Ali's efforts, Hejaz was taken back from the Saudis in 1813.¹³ In 1818, Saudi capital, Diriyah was captured by

¹⁰ Caesar E. Farah, "Arabs and Turks: Common Heritage, Common Destiny", in *Studies on Turkish-Arab Relations Annual 1986*, ed. Foundation for Studies on Turkish-Arab Relations (İstanbul: TAİV, 1986), 66-67.

¹¹ Mehmet Ali Büyükkara, *İhvan'dan Cüheyman'a: Suudi Arabistan ve Vehhabilik* (İstanbul: Rağbet, 2010), 31-33.

¹² Eyüb Sabri Paşa, *Tarih-i Vehhabiyan: Bugünkü Türkçeyle*, trans. Süleyman Çelik (İstanbul: Bedir, 1992), 61-62.

¹³ Ebu Bekir Efendi, "Vak'a-i Cedid", in *Vaka-ı Cedid, Yayla İmamı Tarihi ve Yeni Olaylar*, ed. Yavuz Senemoğlu (İstanbul: Tercüman 1001 Temel Eser, 1975), 169.

Ottoman troops.¹⁴ Saudi leaders were captured and sent to Istanbul. They were executed there.¹⁵ This was the end of the First Saudi State.

Second Saudi State in the history was established by Turki ibn Abdallah, in 1821.¹⁶ This state was governed by Riyadh until 1891.¹⁷ Since the Ottoman troops did not remain in Najd but rather concentrated their attention more on the control of the cities of Hejaz, the opportunity to establish a Second Saudi State was seized, within the borders of Najd. The most successful era of this state was between 1843 and 1865, under the rule of Faisal ibn Turki. Over these years, the Saudis were pursuing a “Wahhabism in one country” policy, rather than seeking to expand their territories in the periphery and in eastern Arabia. Faisal also acknowledged Ottoman overlordship through the payment of an annual tribute, and in return, achieved recognition of his own position. The Second Saudi State suffered from intra-Saud divisions, and this in due course ended up with dismantlement of the state towards the end of the century.¹⁸ After that, Muhammad ibn Rashid - leader of Shammar tribe and a friend of Ottomans - took al-Ahsa (a region in eastern Arabia) and a big part of Najd and defeated Saudis in the battles. Finally, he established his authority in Riyadh and put an end to the Second Saudi State in 1891.¹⁹ The Saudi dynasty was driven into exile in Kuwait.²⁰ ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Faisal, the main claimant to the leadership of Saudis, remained in Kuwait with his son, Abdulaziz (the founder of Third Saudi State), until 1902.²¹

The Saudi family returned to Najd in 1902. That year, Abdulaziz captured Riyadh.²² In Riyadh, he welcomed his father with a ceremony and wanted to give the leadership of the new state to his father. However, his father did not accept this request and gave ibn ‘Abd al-Wahab’s sword with a ceremony, as a sign of rule, to Abdulaziz. Ibn Saud increased his military activities to take homeland territories of Saudis from House of Rashid. In 1902 and 1903 Al Aflaj and Al Kharj (which were in the south of Riyadh), and

¹⁴ Mehmet Ali Büyükkara, *İhvan’dan Cüheyman’a: Suudi Arabistan ve Vehhabilik* (İstanbul: Rağbet, 2010), 34.

¹⁵ Eyüb Sabri Paşa, *Tarih-i Vehhabiyan: Bugünkü Türkçeyle*, trans. Süleyman Çelik (İstanbul: Bedir, 1992), 88-94.

¹⁶ Mustafa Karaca, *Evanjelizm ve Vahhabilik* (İstanbul: Nokta Kitap, 2005), 86.

¹⁷ Karaca, *Evanjelizm ve Vahhabilik*, 96.

¹⁸ Tim Niblock, *Saudi Arabia: Power, Legitimacy and Survival* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 29.

¹⁹ Mehmet Ali Büyükkara, *İhvan’dan Cüheyman’a: Suudi Arabistan ve Vehhabilik* (İstanbul: Rağbet, 2010), 36.

²⁰ Muhammad ‘Abdul Jabbar Beg, “The Foundation of the Modern State of Saudi Arabia”, in *Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 100 Years*, ed. Fahd Al-Semari (Riyadh: King Abdulaziz Foundation, 2008), 90.

²¹ Tim Niblock, *Saudi Arabia: Power, Legitimacy and Survival* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 29.

²² Mehmet Ali Büyükkara, *İhvan’dan Cüheyman’a: Suudi Arabistan ve Vehhabilik* (İstanbul: Rağbet, 2010), 37-38.

in 1904 As Sadir and Al Washm in the north were captured by Saudis. Also in the same year, Saudis took back Unaizah and Buraydah in Al-Qassim region from the house of Rashid. House of Rashid loosing against Saudis sat the alarm bells ringing for the Ottoman Empire that are an ally to the Rashidis. This new situation was not in favor of the Ottoman Empire, which was sending help to support the Rashidis against Ibn Saud.²³ First contact between the Ottoman Empire and Ibn Saud –who would be the founder of contemporary Saudi Arabia- would happen in this new situation. Turkish-Saudi relations after these situation will be detailed in the rest of our study.

While analyzing Turkish-Saudi relations in its historical context, the main question we seek to answer is: “What is the main parameter that shapes relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia?”. In the present study, we argue that the main parameter which shapes the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia is the course of relations between Turkey and the Arab world. When Turkey became close to the Arab world and developed good relations with them, there were also warm relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. When Turkey and the Arab world became distant from each other, Turkish-Saudi relations were adversely affected as well. For this reason, in the present study, we will analyze Turkish-Saudi relations within the frame of relations between Turkey and the Arab world.

We examine the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia under three main chapters: First chapter includes the developments between the late 19th century and 1980. This chapter deals with the early period of Turkey-Saudi Arabia relations and their ups and downs, until the year 1980. We preferred to begin the second chapter with 1980 because this year was an important milestone in the relations between the two countries. Bilateral visits increased and economical bonds gained strength after 1980 by comparison with the years before 1980. After this year, Turkish-Saudi bilateral relations rendered a significant improvement with regard to previous years. This era of positive developments, which included an important increase in official visits and developing economical bonds, continued until the late 1990s. After the rupture in the late 1990s, a golden age began in Turkish-Saudi relations, when Justice and Development Party came into power in Turkey. Bilateral visits outnumbered even the 1980s and political bonds between Turkey and Saudi Arabia showed itself as more powerful than the previous years. So because of this, we preferred to begin the third chapter with 2002- the year when JDP won the elections in

²³ Mehmet Ali Büyükkara, *İhvan'dan Cüheyman'a: Suudi Arabistan ve Vehhabilik* (İstanbul: Rağbet, 2010), 42-43.

Turkey for the first time- and analyze the relations during this era until the year 2015 when this study is completed.

The existing literature on Turkish-Saudi relations in Turkish and English languages are very limited. In English books on political relations of Saudi Arabia, it is very hard to find even one sentence which mentions Turkey. English articles offers more information on the issue, however, this information is generally limited with contemporary Turkish-Saudi relations and most of the English articles does not deal with Turkish-Saudi relations in the past. Muhittin Ataman, who wrote some important articles in English about the issue, draws the attention as an exception. In Turkish language, there are more books and articles which mentions Turkish-Saudi relations in the past and today, but they mainly deal with only one part of these relations. There is not much Turkish work to examine Turkey-Saudi Arabia relations since the establishment of the Saudi Kingdom to contemporary developments as a whole. Veysel Ayhan and Muhittin Ataman are two important exceptions, since they mainly focus on the historical depth of Turkey-Saudi Arabia relations and make a point of underscore the chronological order in the history of the relations. Mustafa Bostancı, who examined Turkish-Saudi relations between 1926 and 1990 in his PhD dissertation, succeeded to prepare the most competent work on the issue available in Turkish language, and his dissertation is also one of the important sources for the present study.

As it is seen, there was a need of a work which would analyze the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia from the beginning –the establishment of the Saudi Kingdom and its first contact with the Turks- to today. Because there is a gap in the literature on the historical background of Turkish-Saudi relations and this makes things difficult for researchers and academicians who are trying to analyze the course of relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia aright. While preparing the present study, we aimed to produce a work which would meet this need. We hope that our study will be helpful for researchers and academicians who wonder about the historical roots of Turkish-Saudi relations and want to know its stages from past to present, in an attempt to develop a better understanding of political bonds between Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

1. TURKISH-SAUDI RELATIONS BETWEEN LATE 19th CENTURY AND 1980

1.1. Introduction

In this chapter, from its beginning to 1980 military coup in Turkey, Turkish-Saudi relations will be discussed. We will analyze the rise of the Saudis and the conflict between them and the Ottoman Empire, Saudi affairs with the Republic of Turkey in its first years, their parting of the ways after the Second World War and finally, as of 1960s beginning of a new age of convergence, as a result of some political and economic issues.

1.2. Turkish-Saudi Relations Prior to the Establishment of the Saudi Kingdom

The first contact between the Ottoman Empire and Ibn Saud would be in the battlefield with respect to the warm relations between the Ottoman Empire and Ibn Rashid. Ibn Rashid was a powerful chieftain, who was treated with great esteem by the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II and, who himself could directly communicate with the Ottoman Palace through a private telegraph code.²⁴ Abdul Hamid II made a deal with Ibn Rashid to appoint him as a ruler of central Arabia on behalf of the Ottoman Empire. Ibn Rashid sought support from Ottoman Empire against Ibn Saud. In 1904 summer, eight Ottoman battalions moved towards Najd to reinforce Ibn Rashid. Ibn Saud located them near Al Bukayriyah village.²⁵ In the battle, Ibn Saud was defeated heavily. Later in the spring of same year, Ibn Saud succeeded to defeat joint forces of Ottomans and Ibn Rashid supporters.²⁶ Despite this victory, Ibn Saud felt that he was vulnerable against a serious attack by Ottomans. So he got in touch with governor of Basra, Muhlis Pasha for a meeting. In this meeting, Ottomans accepted Ibn Saud as ruler of Najd territories, on

²⁴ Engin D. Akarlı, "Abdulhamid's Islamic Policy in the Arab Provinces", in *Türk-Arap İlişkileri: Geçmişte, Bugünde ve Gelecekte I. Uluslararası Konferansı Bildirileri*, ed. Hacettepe Üniversitesi Türkiye ve Orta Doğu Araştırma Enstitüsü (Ankara: Yazıt Matbaası, 1979), 55.

²⁵ Harold Courtenay Armstrong, *Arabistan Kralı'nın Yaşam Öyküsü: Abdülaziz bin Suud*, trans. Gülsüm Aldemir (İstanbul: Kaknüs, 2007), 70.

²⁶ Mehmet Ali Büyükkara, *İhvan'dan Cüheyman'a: Suudi Arabistan ve Vehhâbilik* (İstanbul: Rağbet, 2010), 43.

condition that Ottomans would maintain their domination in the region and there would be Ottoman soldiers in Unaizah and Buraydah.²⁷

Ottoman soldiers coming to the territory found themselves in isolation. All roads were invaded by gangs plundering ammunition and supplies. At the end of the year, Ottoman soldiers were almost starved to death. Ibn Saud never sent help to these soldiers. He knew the difficult situation Ottomans were in, from the rebellions and dangers of disorder and anarchy throughout Ottoman Empire. Consequently, Ottomans decreased number of their soldiers and, they completely withdrew from Al-Qassim. They left a bunch of soldiers in Al-Ahsa coast and never returned to central Arabia again.²⁸

The British Empire, which was in need of protecting trade routes to India, was trying to gain the friendship of tribe leaders and rulers in the Persian Gulf region by means of providing money and weapons to them.²⁹ As a part of this strategy, the British developed an interest in Ibn Saud, too. Captain William Shakespear (political officer of the British in Kuwait) met with Ibn Saud in 1913 in Riyadh. He became the main representative of British Empire in the presence of Ibn Saud.³⁰ Ibn Saud would benefit from his bonds with the British while maintaining his conquests of Ottoman territories, as we will detail later.

Ibn Saud had his eyes on Al-Ahsa (a region in eastern Arabia). The British kept him informed about the problems of the Ottoman Empire (like the Balkan War), namely through Shakespear. When Ibn Saud learned that there would be no defense against him in Al-Ahsa, he turned his steps towards Al-Ahsa in April 1913 and captured the territory.³¹ Ottoman Empire's desperation over these events was once mentioned by an Ottoman politician, Hüseyin Kazım Kadri. In his memoirs he stated that the Ottoman government was not able to do anything against Ibn Saud, who deported the Ottomans with their officers from Najd.³²

The Ottoman Empire remained silent against Ibn Saud's fait accompli in Al-Ahsa, in order not to force him to be closer to the British. Ibn Saud was also saying that if he did

²⁷ Harold Courtenay Armstrong, *Arabistan Kralı'nın Yaşam Öyküsü: Abdülaziz bin Suud*, trans. Gülsüm Aldemir (İstanbul: Kaknüs, 2007), 75.

²⁸ Armstrong, *Arabistan Kralı'nın Yaşam Öyküsü: Abdülaziz bin Suud*, 76-77.

²⁹ Muhammed Ali Said, *Britanya ve İbn-i Suud*, trans. Mehmet Erkoç (İstanbul: Şura, 1990), 9.

³⁰ Said, *Britanya ve İbn-i Suud*, 15.

³¹ Mustafa Bostancı, "Suudi Arabistan Devleti'nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)", (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2013), 56.

³² Hüseyin Kazım Kadri, *Balkanlar'dan Hicaz'a İmparatorluğun Tasfiyesi (10 Temmuz İnkılâbı ve Netayici)* (İstanbul: Pınar, 2011), 170.

not take Al-Ahsa, the British would do it. In this way, he was trying to benefit from British-Ottoman rivalry. Thus, an agreement was signed between the Ottoman Empire and Ibn Saud in May 1914, by virtue of which Ibn Saud gained governorship of Najd and the title “pasha”.³³ According to the agreement, Ibn Saud gained complete independence, except for foreign affairs. Therefore, he did not fulfill the section of the agreement about foreign affairs; indeed, he was completely exempted from it.³⁴

In December 26, 1915, Treaty of Darin was signed between Ibn Saud and Britain, by which the British recognized Saudis’ sovereignty. According to the treaty, if he was attacked, Britain would help him and protect his interests. On the other hand, Ibn Saud would refrain from making an agreement with a state, apart from Britain. He also would not let any country to take any part of his territories or grant privilege to any country without receiving Britain’s approval.³⁵

In 1916, Ottoman Sultan Mehmed Reshad decided to send priceless saddles (which were copies of a saddle that was belonged to Selim I) to both Ibn Rashid and Ibn Saud.³⁶ The Sultan appointed Kuşçubaşı Eşref (member of Ottoman intelligence service, “Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa”) to deliver the saddles to Ibn Rashid and Ibn Saud. Ottoman government was attaching particular importance to Ibn Saud and Ibn Rashid, since a lot of Arab leaders were revolting against the Ottoman Empire with the help of British money and weapons. This is why keeping Ibn Saud and Ibn Rashid on its side was important for Ottoman Empire.³⁷

When Eşref met him, Ibn Rashid complained about British financial and armor support of money to Ibn Saud. He asserted that Ottoman Empire had enough armories and materiel. Accordignly, he requested weapons.³⁸ But Eşref told him that their main goal was to prevent frictions between Muslims and form a joint force. He also told Ibn Rashid that he would present the same gifts he gave Ibn Rashid to Ibn Saud. Moreover, he told Ibn Rashid they were ready to send weapons and equipment to him, on condition that he would not use these against Ibn Saud.³⁹ After this meeting, Eşref met with an Amir, where he

³³ Mehmet Ali Büyükkara, *İhvan'dan Cüheyman'a: Suudi Arabistan ve Vehhabilik* (İstanbul: Rağbet, 2010), 45.

³⁴ Mustafa Bostancı, “Suudi Arabistan Devleti’nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)”, (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2013), 61.

³⁵ Bostancı, “Suudi Arabistan Devleti’nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)”, 82.

³⁶ Cemal Kutay, *Necid Çöllerinde Mehmet Âkif* (İstanbul: Tarih, 1963), 40-45.

³⁷ Kutay, *Necid Çöllerinde Mehmet Âkif*, 58.

³⁸ Kutay, *Necid Çöllerinde Mehmet Âkif*, 110.

³⁹ Kutay, *Necid Çöllerinde Mehmet Âkif*, 112-113.

consigned him with gifts of Sultan and a letter to Ibn Saud. Eşref asked him to deliver these gifts to Ibn Saud, and then left.

The gifts were delivered to Ibn Saud by the Amir⁴⁰, however were not successful to achieve their main goal, since Ibn Saud did not participate in the World War I on Ottoman side. Also, he was requested by Talib al Naqib - an Arab representative in the Ottoman parliament, and Mahmud Shukri al Alusi - an Iraqi shaikh, to support Ottomans in the World War I. But these requests were also refused by Ibn Saud.⁴¹

When the Ottoman Empire was defeated at the end of the World War I, an independence war took place in Turkey. After Turkish Independence War resulted in victory, Ibn Saud sent a letter to the last Ottoman governor of Yemen, Mahmut Nedim Bey, who was still living in Yemen after the Ottoman withdrawal from this country. In the letter, he congratulated Turkish victory and entitled Mustafa Kemal Pasha (leader of Turkish Independence War) as “lion of Islam”.⁴² After the Treaty of Lausanne, he wrote another letter to Mahmut Nedim. Main subject of this letter was Ibn Saud’s happiness about Turkish victory in Lausanne conference and grief about Turkey’s renounce of its rights in Arab lands. He asserted this renounce to be a surprise, as he believed Turks would lead their Arab brothers. In addition, he requested information on Turkey’s aim about abandoning Arabs and its policy on this issue. In another letter, he stated their great sympathy for Turkish government that would continue forever. Last but not least, he pointed to the arrival of the time to conquer Hejaz and he ordered his soldiers to capture it.⁴³ His letters to Mahmut Nedim shows that he was satisfied with territories he captured from the Ottoman Empire in Arabia and he did not have any more reason to bear hostility against Turks any more. So he was using positive sentences in his letters. Because, as a new actor in the international area, Ibn Saud was in need of finding friends which would recognize his country, and his positive approach towards new Republic of Turkey would help him to achieve his goal.

⁴⁰ Cemal Kutay, *Necid Çöllerinde Mehmet Âkif* (İstanbul: Tarih, 1963), 122.

⁴¹ Muhammed Ali Said, *Britanya ve İbn-i Suud*, trans. Mehmet Erkoç (İstanbul: Şura, 1990), 15.

⁴² Mim Kemal Öke and Lutfullah Karaman, *Adı Yemen'dir... Belgelerle Milli Mücadele Dönemi'nde Yemen'deki Son Osmanlıların Hikayesi* (İstanbul: Ufuk, 2003), 56-57.

⁴³ Mahmud Nedim Bey, *Arabistan'da Bir Ömür: Son Yemen Valisinin Hatıraları veya Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Arabistan'da Nasıl Yıkıldı?* (İstanbul: İsis, 2001), 5.

1.3. Turkish-Saudi Relations During the Emergence of Saudi Arabia

The abolishment of the caliphate by Turkish Grand National Assembly on March 3, 1924 would open a new page in Arabia's history. Three days after the abolition, Sharif Hussein declared himself as new caliph of Islam. This development gave Ibn Saud opportunity he waited for a long time.⁴⁴ Sharif Hussein's situation was also making Ibn Saud's work easier. For instance, Sharif Hussein was preventing pilgrims of Najd from entering Mecca and this was providing Ibn Saud with an excuse to intervene. The affairs of Hussein with the British were not promising, as well. He was criticizing Britain for not keeping his promise to give a larger Arab empire. Ibn Saud took these chances. He sent his forces to Mecca. At first he captured Ta'if; then, he managed to capture Mecca. After the fall of Mecca, Sharif Hussein abdicated the throne in favor of his son, Ali. Ali's new government in Jeddah could not resist Ibn Saud, so Ali was also obliged to abdicate the Hejazi throne in 1925.⁴⁵

After Hejaz was captured, Ibn Saud declared himself as the king of Hejaz and was firstly recognized by Turkey, in January 8, 1926. Turkey also was the first country to recognize the kingdom of Hejaz as a sovereign country, in May 1926.⁴⁶ This recognition was a reaction to Sharif Hussein's revolt against the Turks during the World War I. Hussein was a common enemy for both Turks and Saudis, so Ibn Saud's victory against him caused Turkey's sympathy to Ibn Saud and eased Turkey's recognition of the Saudis. Also, Ibn Saud sent an official invitation to Turkey, for a congress he organized in Mecca. By doing so, he broke exclusion policy of some Arab circles against Turkey (which was originating from their opposition to the abolishment of the caliphate) as well as seeking support from Turkey for its own legitimacy.⁴⁷ To understand the positive atmosphere between Turkey and Saudi Arabia on that time, it will be helpful to take a look at Turkey's foreign policy towards Arab countries and Saudi foreign policy during the mentioned era.

Essencial principle of Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle Eastern countries during that time was being on good terms with neighbouring countries. Many Arab countries were under occupation of Britain or France, and there were very few independent

⁴⁴ Harold Courtenay Armstrong, *Arabistan Kralı'nın Yaşam Öyküsü: Abdülaziz bin Suud*, trans. Gülsüm Aldemir (İstanbul: Kaknüs, 2007), 196.

⁴⁵ Saleh Mustafa İslam, *Suudi Arabistan'ı Tanıyınız* (Ankara: Ayyıldız, 1961), 51.

⁴⁶ Mustafa Bostancı, "Suudi Arabistan Devleti'nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)", (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2013), 114.

⁴⁷ Orhan Koloğlu, *Gazi'nin Çağında İslam Dünyası* (İstanbul: Boyut, 1994), 364.

Arab countries in the Middle East. Turkey made a point of developing good relations with them. Signing the Sadabad Pact with Iraq in 1937 is a good example.⁴⁸ Turkey's efforts to develop positive relations with Saudi Arabia can be analyzed on this context.

Foreign policy of the Saudi Kingdom during that era was not contradicting with Turkey's views. Neither were Saudis expansionist, nor they had dreams of an Islamic empire. The caliphate was not their concern. They preferred a limited conference instead - to be attended by all Islamic countries. They were not powerful enough to spread their ideology at the time.⁴⁹ The congress to be held in Mecca was not about the caliphate. Wahhabis were seeking acceptance in the international area. Congress subjects included hajj organization and recognition of the new kingdom.⁵⁰ Saudi foreign policy, which did not have any side that could disturb Turkey, was paving the way for an improving Turkish-Saudi relationship.

After Ibn Saud officially invited Turkey to the Congress of Mecca on March 26, 1926, Mustafa Kemal extended his thanks to Ibn Saud for his invitation and informed him that Turkish representatives to the congress were being selected. On May 25, 1926, deputy of Istanbul - Edip Servet Bey - was appointed to represent Turkey in the congress.⁵¹ According to Falih Rıfki Atay's narration, Mustafa Kemal called Edip Servet to tell him that Turkishness was the pioneer and guide of Islam. He also wanted Edip Servet to enter Mecca with a hat on his head, to subvert superstitions that hindered the modernization of Muslim nations. In this way, he was willing to show changing hats and costumes would not mean proselytization.⁵²

Edip arrived at the congress on June 24, 1926. As to his late arrival, he could not vote in the congress. Edip took himself a back seat and assumed a negative attitude. He was in need of objecting to some decisions of the congress, as he assumed some decisions inexpedient to policies of Turkish Republic.⁵³ In the congress, he alleged that God sent Ibn Saud to punish those who plundered Turks, and thanked Ibn Saud in the name of Turks. He

⁴⁸ Muhammed Arafat, "Doğu Ülkeleri İle İlişkiler", in *Türk Dış Politikası (1919-2008)*, ed. Haydar Çakmak (Ankara: Barış Platin, 2008), 213-215.

⁴⁹ Orhan Koloğlu, *Türk Çağdaşlaşması 1919-1938 İslama Etki-İslamdan Tepki* (İstanbul: Boyut, 1995), 140.

⁵⁰ Orhan Koloğlu, *Gazi'nin Çağında İslam Dünyası* (İstanbul: Boyut, 1994), 359.

⁵¹ Mustafa Bostancı, "Suudi Arabistan Devleti'nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)", (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2013), 118.

⁵² Falih Rıfki Atay, *Mustafa Kemal'in Mütareke Defteri* (İstanbul: Pozitif, 2008), 109-110.

⁵³ Mustafa Bostancı, "Suudi Arabistan Devleti'nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)", (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2013), 119.

also wished success to Ibn Saud in protecting holy cities, as Turks did.⁵⁴ He was implying Sharif Hussein with the phrase “those who plundered Turks”, so we see the impact of Turkey’s dislike of Hussein on the Turkish sympathy for Ibn Saud, once again.

In his article, Şefik Hüsni - Turkish member of Comintern - analyzed Turkey’s gains from joining the Congress of Mecca. He asserted that this congress gave Turkey opportunity to eliminate the barriers between Turks and other Muslims that were a result of Kemalist reforms disengaging religion and state affairs, and to regain their place in a big family of Muslim nations.⁵⁵ As Şefik Hüsni pointed out, the congress provide an opportunity to newly founded Turkish Republic to show itself in an international organization that was attended by delegations from various Muslim nations.

Improvements continued in Turkish-Saudi relations after the Congress of Mecca. In 1926, with Ibn Saud’s approval landed properties and residences of Turkish officers and merchants, which were seized by Sharif Hussein before, were returned to their owners.⁵⁶ On August 3, 1929, a treaty of amity was signed between Turks and Saudis: signed by Abdülğani Seni in the name of Turkey and Fuat Hamza in the name of Kingdom of Hejaz and Najd.⁵⁷ With this agreement, Turkey affirmed political independence and territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Hejaz and Najd.⁵⁸

In 1932, the first high level visit between Turkey and Saudi Arabia took place. The Saudi minister of foreign affairs, Prince Faisal visited Turkey as part of his trip to Europe. His trip included Italy, Switzerland, France, Britain, Netherlands, Germany, Poland, the Soviet Union, Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Kuwait.⁵⁹ In Turkey first he came to Istanbul, on June 8, 1932⁶⁰; then, he arrived in Ankara on June 12, 1932, and met Atatürk there. Atatürk gave a banquet in honor of Faisal, where he made a speech. In his speech, Atatürk emphasized that he was pleased with Faisal’s visitation. He also asserted that with this visit relations between the two countries were strengthened, and stated that Turkey was observing Saudi Arabia’s progress efforts with interest. In response to him, Faisal extended

⁵⁴ Orhan Koloğlu, *Türk Çağdaşlaşması 1919-1938 İslama Etki-İslamdan Tepki* (İstanbul: Boyut, 1995), 136.

⁵⁵ Şefik Hüsni, *Komintern Belgelerinde Türkiye-5 Yazı ve Konuşmalar* (İstanbul: Kaynak, 1995), 61.

⁵⁶ Mustafa Bostancı, “Suudi Arabistan Devleti’nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)”, (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2013), 121.

⁵⁷ Reşat Yazıcı, *Türkiye İslam Ülkeleri Anlaşmalar ve Mevzuat Cilt-II* (Ankara: Gelişim, 1982), 413-414.

⁵⁸ Mustafa Bostancı, “Suudi Arabistan Devleti’nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)”, (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2013), 128.

⁵⁹ Cihad Fethi Tevetoğlu, “Bugünkü Türk-Suudi Dostluğuna İlk Adım: Gazi Mustafa Kemal-Faysal bin Abdülaziz Görüşmesi (1932)”, in *Studies on Turkish-Arab Relations Annual 1986*, ed. Foundation for Studies on Turkish-Arab Relations (İstanbul: TAİV, 1986), 296.

⁶⁰ Mustafa Bostancı, “Suudi Arabistan Devleti’nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)”, (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2013), 132.

his thanks and appreciation.⁶¹ Interestingly enough, during this trip Faisal met his third wife in Istanbul. Her name was Iffat al-Thunayan and she was niece of Ahmad al-Thunayan, who accompanied Faisal during his trip to London in 1919. Iffat's father had recently died and some of his properties on Taif were in dispute. Therefore, after hearing that the Saudi prince and foreign minister was passing through Istanbul, Iffat's mother sought Faisal's help to solve this problem. Faisal was much taken with his visitor's daughter, so he invited the mother and daughter to come to Jeddah, where it would be easier to find a solution to the problem. Soon after their arrival in Jeddah, Faisal married Iffat.⁶² When her husband ascended the throne, she would become the most powerful woman of Saudi Arabia.⁶³

On September 23, 1932, Ibn Saud changed the name of his country from "the Kingdom of Hejaz and Najd" to "the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia". Atatürk was the first statesmen to recognize the kingdom with its new name and congratulate Ibn Saud.⁶⁴

During the Second World War, Turkish-Saudi relations remained limited with Turkish efforts to protect interests of some countries in Saudi Arabia. For example, during the war, political relations between Germany and Saudi Arabia were de facto broken off. Accordingly, in August 1942, the German embassy contacted Turkish foreign ministry in an attempt to seek Turkish protection of German interests in Saudi Arabia. After Turkey and Saudi Arabia agreed on the subject, German request was accepted by Turkey; hence, respective instructions were sent to the Turkish embassy in Jeddah, accordingly.

Germany wasn't the only country that sought Turkey's help to protect its interests in Saudi Arabia. France also asked Turkey with an intent to ensure Turkish protection of French interests in Saudi Arabia, since French-Saudi relations were also broken off due to the war. In January 1942, Turkey informed Saudi Arabia on this issue, via Turkish embassy in Jeddah. Saudi Arabia responded this issue positively. Turkish prime minister also approved Turkish protection of French interests in Saudi Arabia in January 7, 1943.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Mustafa Bostancı, "Suudi Arabistan Devleti'nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)", (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2013), 134-135.

⁶² Rebecca Stefoff, *Faisal (World Leaders Past&Present)* (New York: Chelsea House, 1989), 64-65.

⁶³ Hikmet Feridun Es, "Arabistan Çöllerinde 3 Kral Tanıdım!", *Yıllarboyu Tarih*, August 1982, 26.

⁶⁴ Tuba Erdoğan, "Modern Suudi Arabistan Devleti'nin Doğuşu (1914-1932)", (Master's Thesis, Fırat University, 2006), 160.

⁶⁵ Mustafa Bostancı, "Suudi Arabistan Devleti'nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)", (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2013), 165.

1.4. The Fall of Turkish-Saudi Relations After the World War II

After the World War II, in March 22, 1945, seven independent Arab countries – namely; Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen - established the Arab League. Their main goal was to preserve their liberty and independence as well as uniting their powers. Turkey welcomed this attempt warmly.⁶⁶ Secretary General of Arab League also made statements that highlighted the importance of Turkish-Arab friendship. On the other hand, with the agreement of friendship and good neighborhood signed during Jordanian king Abdullah's visit to Ankara (Turkish capital) on January 8, 1947, the first signs of a partition to clearly reveal itself among Arab countries in ensuing years became evident. As a consequence of Abdullah's words about the warm relations between Jordan and Britain in the West and Turkey in the East disturbed Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, as they assumed Britain was trying to form a new block with Turkey and Jordan. Thus, as to bipolar world system, Turkey and Arab world came to the parting of the ways.

Despite King Abdullah's visit, a lack of interest was started to be seen in Turkey's policy towards Arabs in general towards the end of the 1940s. For example, in Turkish governmental programme for 1946, none of the Middle Eastern states were mentioned, except Iran and Afghanistan. Prime minister, Recep Peker was contended merely with a friendship message for Arab world which contained two sentences.⁶⁷

Turkish foreign policy towards Arab world during the 1950s was mainly related with the Baghdad Pact issue and it cannot be separated from this subject, because Turkey's aim to make Arab countries member of this pact seriously affected its relations with Arab world. Because of that, we will analyze Turkey's relations with Arab world within the scope of Baghdad Pact issue and developments afterwards.

Saudi foreign policy during the 1950s ran parallel to that of Nasser's Egypt, as both Egypt and Saudi Arabia joined efforts in opposing the policies of the two Hashemite Kingdoms, Iraq and Jordan. Saud would revise his anti-Hashemite and pro-Egypt policies in the late 1950s only after realizing the dangers of Nasser's revolutionary radicalism for the Saudi monarchy.⁶⁸ Saud's anti-Hashemite approach, which tried to prevent Jordan from joining the Baghdad Pact and targeted Iraq because of its participation to the pact would be an important factor which affected Turkish-Saudi relations during the 1950s and which

⁶⁶ Mustafa Bostancı, "Suudi Arabistan Devleti'nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)", (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2013), 161.

⁶⁷ Bostancı, "Suudi Arabistan Devleti'nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)", 162.

⁶⁸ Rayed Krimly, "Faisal bin Abd Al-Aziz Al Saud", in *Political Leaders of the Contemporary Middle East and North Africa: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Bernard Reich (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 185.

will be detailed later.

In the 1950s, there were two important developments that were related to Turkish-Saudi relations: the Baghdad Pact, which we mentioned before, and the increasing tension between Turkey and Syria. Firstly, we will discuss the Baghdad Pact issue on its historical context and show its affects on both Turkish-Arab relations generally and Turkish-Saudi relations specially. After that, we will discuss another important development that marked Turkish-Saudi relations during the era, Turkish-Syrian conflict, and Saudi Arabia's mediation attempts to resolve this conflict. We will show that negative developments on the area of relations between Turkey and Arab world also affected the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia negatively, in conformity with our main argument.

To understand the origins of the Baghdad Pact, geopolitical concerns of the United States of America during the 1950s should be understood correctly. In June 1950, soon after the outbreak of the Korean War, the United States started to take some security measures both in Far East and Europe. In this way, USA was aiming to create a security corridor around the Soviet Union, which was assumed to be responsible for Korean War. Middle East was also supposed to be integrated this corridor.⁶⁹

US ambassador to Turkey, George McGhee wrote letters to US chiefs of mission in Arab capitals and in Tehran on September 1951, where he requested information about three subjects: Relevant countries' approach towards Turkey; steps that should be taken to improve Turkish-Arab relations; and the likeliness of Turkey's leadership in the Middle East.⁷⁰ Among the answers provided, the one written by the US ambassador to Jeddah is important to show Saudi perspective on Turkey at the time. In his answer to McGhee, he provided important information about the three subjects.

On the issue of approach towards Turkey, the ambassador wrote that Saudis were uninterested towards Turkey; hence Turkish influence on Saudi Arabia was unlikely. Saudis were also skeptical about Turkish participation in Middle East Defense Organization (MEDO), as a founding member. In meetings on MEDO, Saudis were in contact with USA or Britain, yet they almost ignored Turkey and France. According to the information provided by chief of mission, the past was not forgotten in Saudi Arabia, and Turkey's attitude towards religion was arousing hate in the country. Moreover, there was neither linguistic nor racial relation between Turks and Arabs, which is important to Arabs.

⁶⁹ Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, *Türkiye'nin Arap Ortadoğu'suna Karşı Politikası (1945-1970)* (Ankara: Barış, 2010), 51.

⁷⁰ George McGhee, *ABD-Türkiye-NATO-Ortadoğu...*, trans. Belkıs Çorakçı (Ankara: Bilgi, 1992), 312-313.

Furthermore, Turkish representatives in Saudi Arabia adopted an arrogant patronizing manner.⁷¹ About the steps to be taken to improve Turkish-Arab relations, the ambassador defended that Turks remained arrogant and uninterested towards Arab world. They did nothing to resolve problems of the past and break the ice for the future. According to him, Turks were expected to identify their own interests with interests of the region. Over and above this, they should give up their arrogant and distant attitude towards Arabs.⁷² On the subject of Turkey's possibility of becoming a leader in the Middle East, the ambassador wrote that Saudis were skeptical about Turkish leadership in the Middle East, but the situation was not desperate. Turks were expected to change their policies to fix their relations.⁷³ It is understood from the letter that Turkey's lack of interest towards Arab countries which began in the late 1940s had also negative affects on Turkish-Saudi relations, as Turkish diplomats did not make an effort to promote Turkey or correct the misunderstandings about it in Saudi Arabia. Instead of this, they preferred an arrogant and uninterested attitude, which should be changed for the benefit of bilateral relations.

Between May 11 and May 28, 1953, on the purpose of sending up a trial balloon for a local defense organization in Middle East, foreign minister of the United States, John Foster Dulles visited all Middle Eastern countries starting with Egypt.⁷⁴ One of his visits was to Saudi Arabia on May 18 and 19, 1953. During the visit, rather than regional problems Dulles put emphasis on bilateral relations. Saudis complained to him about British policies on the Persian Gulf.⁷⁵ After his visits, Dulles pointed to the unlikelihood of establishing a Middle East Defense Organization in near future. According to him, Arabs were unaware of the Soviet threat, but the "northern tier" countries (non-Arab countries which were neighbors of Soviet Union). Although United States postdated issuing of Middle East Defense Organization to an uncertain future, the idea of a Middle Eastern pact would be realized in two years with efforts of Turkey and Iraq.⁷⁶

Turkish Prime Minister, Adnan Menderes took action to establish a Middle Eastern pact. He wanted to meet Egyptian officials to discuss the issue; however he failed to

⁷¹ George McGhee, *ABD-Türkiye-NATO-Ortadoğu...*, trans. Belkıs Çorakçı (Ankara: Bilgi, 1992), 317-318.

⁷² McGhee, *ABD-Türkiye-NATO-Ortadoğu...*, 322.

⁷³ McGhee, *ABD-Türkiye-NATO-Ortadoğu...*, 325.

⁷⁴ Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, *Türkiye'nin Arap Ortadoğu'suna Karşı Politikası (1945-1970)* (Ankara: Barış, 2010), 52.

⁷⁵ Ömer Osman Umar, *Bağdat Paktı* (Ankara: AKDITYK Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2013), 38.

⁷⁶ Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, *Türkiye'nin Arap Ortadoğu'suna Karşı Politikası (1945-1970)* (Ankara: Barış, 2010), 53.

convince them and received reactions from them.⁷⁷ Because Egypt's goal was to form a block of Arab states under its own leadership and furthermore, Turkey's efforts for a Middle Eastern pact were disincentive for Egypt's efforts to become the leader of Arab states.⁷⁸ Therefore, Menderes focused his efforts on convincing Iraq. In the year 1955, he visited Iraq between January 6 and 12, Syria between January 14 and 15, and Lebanon between January 15 and 17. Syria and Lebanon refused Turkey's offer to join a Middle Eastern Pact, as they were influenced by Egypt's negative attitude. Israel also felt uncomfortable with this pact; it was relatively conflicting with its interests.

Despite negative reactions from countries in the region, with the support of Britain and the United States, Turkey signed an agreement with Iraq to establish the Baghdad Pact in February 24, 1955.⁷⁹ Britain joined the pact in April 4, 1955; and it was followed by Pakistan on September 23 and Iran on November 3.⁸⁰

The main goal of the Baghdad Pact was to establish a collective security organization and keep the Soviet Union out of Middle East. However, results of this pact were the opposite. First, since except for Iraq, Arab countries refused to join the pact, and since each and every member of the pact had different expectations from it, an effective union could not be formed. Second, the Baghdad Pact caused a big disunity in Arab world, rather than gathering Arab countries together. Because Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia objected the pact. Iraq was left alone in the Arab world.⁸¹ Despite their closeness to the West, being aware of Egypt's policies, Lebanon and Jordan remained neutral in this issue.⁸² Baghdad Pact also drew reaction from Israel, on the basis that the pact was only open to the countries recognized by its members, and was aiming to gather Arab countries under a single organization. The main purpose of the pact was to keep the Soviet Union from Middle East, yet it backfired. Arab states started to cooperate with the Soviet Union. The pact eased the Soviet involvement in the Middle East. As the leading country of Baghdad Pact, Turkey also faced negative results. Accused by adopting expansionist policies, Turkey's relations with Arab states worsened. Furthermore, Turkey was excluded

⁷⁷ Mehmet Şahin, "Orta Doğu İle İlişkiler", in *Türk Dış Politikası (1919-2008)*, ed. Haydar Çakmak (Ankara: Barış Platin, 2008), 487.

⁷⁸ Kürşat Kan, "Bağdat Pakti", in *Uluslararası Örgütler ve Türkiye*, ed. Şaban H. Çalış et al. (Konya: Çizgi, 2006), 220-221.

⁷⁹ Mehmet Şahin, "Orta Doğu İle İlişkiler", in *Türk Dış Politikası (1919-2008)*, ed. Haydar Çakmak (Ankara: Barış Platin, 2008), 487.

⁸⁰ Türel Yılmaz, *Uluslararası Politikada Orta Doğu* (Ankara: Barış Platin, 2009), 98.

⁸¹ Mehmet Şahin, "Orta Doğu İle İlişkiler", in *Türk Dış Politikası (1919-2008)*, ed. Haydar Çakmak (Ankara: Barış Platin, 2008), 488.

⁸² Türel Yılmaz, *Uluslararası Politikada Orta Doğu* (Ankara: Barış Platin, 2009), 99.

by non-aligned countries, and the trust relationship between Turkey-Israel was spoiled as well. Finally, despite its pro-Western policies, Turkey could not gain the economic support expected from the West.⁸³

Saudi Arabia's reaction to the Baghdad Pact was negative. On February 8, 1955, Saudi Prime Minister Faisal met with Egypt's President Nasser to seek for solidarity on the issue. According to a member of Iraqi parliament, Mahmut Baban, it was Saudi Arabia that provoked wide criticism against Iraq about the Baghdad Pact issue.⁸⁴ Additionally, Baban mentioned that Saudi policy was based on preventing Iraq from signing agreements with other countries; thus, Saudis were actors of coup d'états, which took place in Syria.

As it was mentioned before, its anti-Hashemite attitude was a substantial factor for Saudi Arabia to be on Egypt's side. Therefore, on March 6, 1955 Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria made a joint statement to announce that they decided to make an agreement to strengthen military, political and economic structure of the Arab world. Their main goal was establishing an alternative pact to the Baghdad Pact. Saudi Arabia made great efforts to prevent strengthening of Hashimites in Iraq. What is more, Saudis tried to prevent countries such as Syria, Jordan and Lebanon from joining the Baghdad Pact, and to weaken Iraqi influence on these countries.⁸⁵ Anti-Baghdad Pact demonstrations in Jordan, which took place after British Chief of the General Staff Gerald Templer's visit to the country with the aim of convincing Jordan to join the pact, were financially supported by Saudi Arabia.⁸⁶ In this way, Saudi Arabia was trying to prevent Jordan, another Hashemite country, from joining the pact and benefiting from it.

In the 1950s, another development that marked Turkish-Saudi relations was Turkish-Syrian conflict and Saudi Arabia's mediation attempts to resolve this conflict.

Syrian Defense Minister Khalid al-Azm went to Moscow in July 1957 and signed some agreements including economic and technical cooperation with the Soviet Union. According to the agreements, the Soviet Union was supposed to provide 500 million dollars as economic and military aid. The supply of arms to Syria was also part of the agreement. An event on August 13, 1957 let United States interfere in Syrian affairs. Syrian government expelled three US diplomats who were accused to be engaged in regime-change efforts. In return, the United States declared Syrian ambassador in

⁸³ Mehmet Şahin, "Orta Doğu İle İlişkiler", in *Türk Dış Politikası (1919-2008)*, ed. Haydar Çakmak (Ankara: Barış Platin, 2008), 488.

⁸⁴ Ömer Osman Umar, *Bağdat Paktı* (Ankara: AKDITYK Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2013), 372.

⁸⁵ Umar, *Bağdat Paktı*, 373.

⁸⁶ Umar, *Bağdat Paktı*, 351.

Washington as *persona non grata*. Moreover, communist-leaning Afif al-Bizri became Syrian Chief of the General Staff.⁸⁷

Iraqi King Faisal and Jordanian King Hussein, who were worried about developments in Syria, visited Turkey. On August 24, the two kings met with Turkish president and prime minister. They reviewed the situation in Syria, in detail. Additionally, Turkish Prime Minister Adnan Menderes told the US Ambassador Fletcher Warren that Syria was a Soviet satellite and they were waiting for an unappealable decision to take proper measures. In September 1957, United States declared that weapons would be sent to neighbors of Syria, and any Syrian attack to its neighbors would not be tolerated. On the other hand, United States informed Turkey, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon that no military intervention is planned for Syria. Besides, the United States warned Turkey not to do anything except strengthening defense of Arab countries. Menderes, who assumed that friendly Arab countries and the United States would not intervene in Syria, mobilized troops along the Syrian border.⁸⁸ First reaction against this move came from the Soviet Union. Soviet Prime Minister Bulganin sent a message to Menderes on September 10, 1957 and expressed his concerns about Turkish troops on Syrian border. According to Bulganin, a military operation against Syria would not remain local. On September 30, Menderes replied expressing Turkey's concerns about unreasonable armament of Syria. Soviet support behind Syria and US support behind Turkey set the two superpowers against each other. While US and Soviet officials were threatening each other, two Soviet warships were visiting port of Latakia in Syria and some US warships were visiting port of İzmir in Turkey to show their solidarity with their allies, as well.⁸⁹

While Turkish-Syrian conflict was expanding to become a global conflict, King Saud of Saudi Arabia decided to take action to break the ice between Turkey and Syria. On September 21, Saudi Deputy Foreign Minister made a statement in Cairo, where he remarked that Saudi government did not assume Syria to be a threat for Arab countries or Turkey. On September 25, King Saud visited Damascus and met with Syrian president Shukri al-Quwatli as well as other Syrian leaders. The joint statement after discussions confirmed the cooperation between Arab countries, and that Saudi Arabian support would be provided in case of an attack to Syria or any other Arab countries. The statement

⁸⁷ Türel Yılmaz, *Uluslararası Politikada Orta Doğu* (Ankara: Barış Platin, 2009), 124-125.

⁸⁸ Melek Fırat and Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, "Orta Doğu'yla İlişkiler", in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşı'ndan Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar Cilt I: 1919-1980*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim, 2001), 630.

⁸⁹ Türel Yılmaz, *Uluslararası Politikada Orta Doğu* (Ankara: Barış Platin, 2009), 126-128.

suggested that Syria was not a threat for any Arab countries. Part of this statement claiming Syria not being a threat to Arab countries was to ease worries of Jordan. King Saud also visited Beirut between October 11 and October 20 and sent messages to Turkish and Syrian leaders from there to break the ice between the two. On October 21, Saudi Arabia made an official declaration, where it was stated that King Saud made an offer to be a mediator between Turkey and Syria, which was accepted by both countries. On the same day, Ankara confirmed that King Saud's offer was accepted. However, in the first instance, Syria confirmed that it accepted Saud's offer, then refused it. It was claimed that Syrian president al-Quwatli was in favor of accepting the Saudi offer, while Syrian army was on the side of refusing it. As to being under the sway of Egypt, Syria did not want Saudi Arabia to gain prestige, either. As a matter of fact, Egyptian newspapers were charging Saud with being an US agent and claiming that the mediation offered by Saud was made at the request of US foreign ministry.⁹⁰

In negotiations in United Nations General Assembly that started at Syria's request in October 22, 1957, Turkey demanded postponement of negotiations until King Saud's attempt of mediation was finalized. Syria objected the attempt of mediation and argued that it would make the situation more complicated.⁹¹ Due to Syria's efforts, negotiations were postponed for only three days, and then continued.⁹²

After the issue is handled by the United Nations, moderation of Turkish-Syrian conflict started. Finally the conflict ended when Syria and Egypt merged under the name of United Arab Republic in February 1, 1958, which is recognized by Turkey in March 11, 1958.⁹³

When we look at the 1950s, we can see that Turkey's convergence to Western countries damaged its relations with the Arab world, including Saudi Arabia. None of the Arab countries except Iraq joined the Baghdad Pact, which was a Turkish initiative to build a barrier against a possible Soviet expansion towards the Middle East. Because of its anti-Hashemite attitude, Saudi Arabia also adopted an anti-Baghdad Pact policy. It provoked wide criticism against Iraq because of its participation in the Baghdad Pact and tried to prevent Jordan from joining the pact. Turkey's pro-Western and anti-Soviet policies towards the Middle East backfired, and Arab countries started to cooperate with the Soviet

⁹⁰ Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, *Türkiye'nin Arap Ortadoğu'suna Karşı Politikası (1945-1970)* (Ankara: Barış, 2010), 112-113.

⁹¹ Kürkçüoğlu, *Türkiye'nin Arap Ortadoğu'suna Karşı Politikası (1945-1970)*, 128.

⁹² Kürkçüoğlu, *Türkiye'nin Arap Ortadoğu'suna Karşı Politikası (1945-1970)*, 114.

⁹³ Türel Yılmaz, *Uluslararası Politikada Orta Doğu* (Ankara: Barış Platin, 2009), 129.

Union. Turkish-Syrian conflict, which continued between 1957 and 1958, also worsened Turkey's relations with the Arab countries. During the conflict, Saudi Arabia did not take sides with Turkey and preferred to be a mediator between Turkey and Syria, while declaring that Saudi Arabian support would be provided in case of an attack to Syria or any other Arab countries. In conclusion, while Turkey's relations with the Arab world worsened during the 1950s, Turkish-Saudi relations were damaged as well. This fact is in harmony with our main argument.

1.5. Turkey's New Approach to Arab Countries and Turkish-Saudi Relations in the 1960s

In the 1960s, some changes were manifested in Turkey's policy towards Arab world, as there were some difficulties that required revision of Turkish foreign policy came to light. For example, in 1965, a resolution of United Nations General Assembly ignoring Turkey's rights on Cyprus, which originated from international agreements (which will be provided in detail), was voted. 47 countries casted an affirmative vote for the resolution. 54 countries abstained from voting. Only 4 countries including Turkey voted out. As a consequence, Turkey was not supported enough by Western countries on such an important issue. This made Turkey to take a dislike to Western countries. Turkey, which became distant from Arab countries as long as its ties with the West got stronger, moved away from Western countries a bit in the midst of the 1960s. This was creating a suitable environment for Turkey to develop close relationships with Arab countries.⁹⁴ Furthermore, positive changes in Turkish-Soviet relations had a positive influence on Turkey's Middle East policy. Khrushchev, leader of the Soviet Union, contributed to these changes by remarking that the Soviet Union had some mistakes about its relations with Turkey, too. He also added that NATO had a significant influence on worsening of Turkish-Soviet Relations; therefore, he wanted to improve relations with Turkey. Optimization of Turkish-Soviet relations had positive effects on Turkey's Middle East policy, as well.⁹⁵ As a result of its new approach, Turkey supported the Arab side during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War by disallowing the use of NATO bases in Turkey against Arab countries during the war.

⁹⁴ Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, *Türkiye'nin Arap Ortadoğu'suna Karşı Politikası (1945-1970)* (Ankara: Barış, 2010), 146-147.

⁹⁵ İbrahim Dakuki, "Türk Okul Kitaplarında ve Medyasında Arap İmajını Değiştirmek İçin Eğitim ve Tanıtım Bazında Yeni Bir Hareket Planı", in *Arap-Türk İlişkilerinin Geleceği: Milletlerarası Platformda Çözüm Önerileri*, ed. Arap Birliği Araştırmalar Merkezi (İstanbul: Timaş, 1994), 516.

Turkey also maintained an attitude that was in favour of Arab countries at the United Nations.⁹⁶ The positive atmosphere between Turkey and Arab world would be accompanied by a serious improvement in Turkish-Saudi relations, too, and its examples will be detailed in this chapter, especially Turkey's benefit from its relations with Saudi Arabia on the Cyprus issue. In harmony with our main argument in the present study, Turkey's relations with Saudi Arabia showed important developments in conjunction with Turkey's positive approach to the Arab world during the 1960s.

During the same era, main focus of Saudi foreign policy was a cold war between two opposing camps of the Arab world: The conservative camp led by King Faisal of Saudi Arabia and the revolutionary camp led by President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt. The rising Arab nationalism and Nasserism was threatening the existence of Arab monarchies at the time, including Saudi Arabia. While Faisal considered the territorial status quo in the Arab world as natural, Nasser saw it as an artificial design by colonial powers. Tension between the two camps showed itself in the Yemeni Civil War between 1962 and 1967, where Saudis supported pro-monarchy Yemenis and Nasser sent his troops to reinforce revolutionary Yemenis. During this struggle, Faisal launched a diplomatic campaign advocating Islamic solidarity as an alternative to Nasser's Arab nationalism and visited a lot of Muslim countries including Turkey.⁹⁷ The project that designed by Faisal to be an alternative to Nasserism was called as "Islamic Pact" and was heavily debated in both Western and Turkish newspapers. Faisal's "Islamic Pact" project and its relations with Turkey will be discussed in this chapter, as well.

In January 1965, Turkey sent a delegation of goodwill, which was led by former deputy prime minister Sadi Koçaş, to a number of Arab countries including Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia.⁹⁸

In April 1965, a conference was organized by Muslim World League (Rabita al-Alam al-Islami) in Mecca, between April 17 and April 24. In the conference, Turkey was represented by a delegation of three. President of the delegation was senator of Samsun,

⁹⁶ Vahit Halefođlu, "Açılış Konuşması", in *Arap-Türk İlişkilerinin Geleceđi: Milletlerarası Platformda Çözüm Önerileri*, ed. Arap Birliđi Araştırmalar Merkezi (İstanbul: Timaş, 1994), 22.

⁹⁷ Rayed Krimly, "Faisal bin Abd Al-Aziz Al Saud", in *Political Leaders of the Contemporary Middle East and North Africa: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Bernard Reich (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 185-186.

⁹⁸ Hasan Kösebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 96-97.

Fethi Tevetoğlu.⁹⁹ Rabita had sent two students of Islamic University of Madinah to Greece and Cyprus for researching purposes. The reports about Muslim Turks in Cyprus, Greece and islands that had been prepared by two students and presented to founder associates and members of the conference. Apart from that, a brochure including photographs of Turks killed in Cyprus had been prepared. In the pictures, there was a woman killed along with her children, as well as a very old imam.¹⁰⁰ In the last session of the conference, 36 delegations of Muslim states worked on some resolutions and reached on a consensus. The resolutions are: In the conference, the things done to Cypriot Muslims are condemned vigorously and hopes were raised for a joint struggle of Islamic world to do what is necessary to stop the incidents in Cyprus. Hence, the conference also vociferously condemned each and every attitude against this struggle. Moreover, the conference was considering providing help to Cypriot Muslims for advocating the issue in member countries and United Nations, as a religious and humanitarian duty.¹⁰¹

In 1965 Cyprus negotiations in United Nations that are mentioned before; Saudi Arabia was one of the countries that abstained from voting. Before that, Saudi Arabia was working a separate draft resolution with Afghanistan and Iraq. This resolution was confirming the need to respect independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Cyprus. Additionally, the resolution offered that United Nations General Assembly should recommend new mediation attempts for United Nations to resolve Cyprus conflict in accordance with the charter of United Nations. Turkish foreign minister, İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil was also in a close cooperation with Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Tunisia and Algeria. On December 16, in the discussion of whether draft resolution of 32's (the resolution that ignored Turkey's rights about Cyprus, which originated from international agreements as mentioned before) would vote primarily, delegates of Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan and Iraq struggled very much in favor of Turkey. After a series of discussions, priority of this resolution was accepted.¹⁰² As mentioned before, the resolution was accepted by 47 affirmative votes, 54 abstaining votes and 4 negative votes.

During the 1960s, another important issue about Turkish-Saudi relations was the Saudi King Faisal's project about an Islamic Pact. After visiting Iran in December 1965, Faisal made efforts to organize a conference to achieve a consensus on subjects that are

⁹⁹ Fethi Tevetoğlu and Zeki Sofuoğlu, *Mukaddes Topraklar* (Ankara: Ajans-Türk, 1965), 155.

¹⁰⁰ Tevetoğlu and Sofuoğlu, *Mukaddes Topraklar*, 14-16.

¹⁰¹ Tevetoğlu and Sofuoğlu, *Mukaddes Topraklar*, 156-157.

¹⁰² Mustafa Bostancı, "Suudi Arabistan Devleti'nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)", (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2013), 211-212.

related with common interests of all Islamic countries. Turkey was interested in Faisal's efforts, as well.¹⁰³

Some Western newspapers pointed Turkey's relevance with the project of Islamic Pact. Initially, this issue was debated in British press in December 1965. On December 3, British press reported that King Faisal sent Muhammad al-Kitani of Morocco to North African countries with a secret mission. The press also mentioned that main goal of this secret mission was to found a holy alliance against "progressive" revolutions in the region. French newspaper *La Tribune* dated December 4, 1965 mentioned that Washington mobilized King Faisal and Shah of Iran to establish an Islamic Pact, with the aim of opposing Arab nationalism led by Cairo. According to Reuters Agency bulletin dated December 7, 1965, during his visit to Tehran, Faisal would analyze the problem of Islamic union with Shah of Iran. So indeed, after Faisal's visit to Tehran, in the declaration dated December 14, 1965 it was announced that two rulers were calling leaders of Muslim countries to a summit conference, where main problems of the Islamic world would be discussed. According to *Jeune Afrique* dated December 20, 1965, Islamic Pact project was nothing different than the reviving of Eisenhower project, which would establish the basis to replace Baghdad Pact and CENTO, and would stop waves of neutralism and Arab nationalism.¹⁰⁴ In *Daily Telegraph* newspaper dated January 1, 1966, possibility of Turkey's participation in a pact like project of Islamic Pact was mentioned.¹⁰⁵ *La Tribune* dated January 13, 1966 claimed that the United States was starting to rely on Saudi Arabia to mobilize Arab world with the aim of supporting reactionist movements and ending nationalist economical demands. *Daily Telegraph* dated January 18, 1966 also suggested political capital of the Middle East to be Cairo, as long as it is constituted of Arab countries. According to the newspaper, if an Islamic Pact which was participated by Iran, Turkey and Pakistan could be established; situation might change. The newspaper alleged many Muslim leaders were in the opinion that Islamic alliance would have greater influence in world politics than Arab nationalism. *Le Monde Diplomatique* dated February 16, 1966 questioned whether it was possible to use Islamic flag to suppress progressivist

¹⁰³ Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, *Türkiye'nin Arap Ortadoğu'suna Karşı Politikası (1945-1970)* (Ankara: Barış, 2010), 173.

¹⁰⁴ Doğan Avcıoğlu, "İslam Paktı ve Türkiye", *Yön: Haftalık Fikir ve Sanat Gazetesi*, September 2, 1966, 8-9.

¹⁰⁵ Doğan Avcıoğlu, *Atatürkçülük Milliyetçilik Sosyalizm (Yön ve Devrim Yazıları)* (İstanbul: İleri, 2006), 483.

forces in the Arab world.¹⁰⁶ In Tehran-originated news *Le Monde* newspaper dated August 22, 1966 asserted that Iranian political circles believed Turkey's participation to Panislamist holy alliance was guaranteed.¹⁰⁷ So, Western newspapers generally regarded Faisal's project as an attempt to build a barrier against revolutionary Arab nationalism and highlighted its links with strategic interests of the United States.

The idea of Islamic Pact had different repercussions in Turkey. Especially people who were close to the ruling party of that time - Justice Party ("Adalet Partisi") - welcomed this project warmly. For example, vice president of Justice Party, Osman Turan put forth in his article in *Yeni İstanbul* newspaper that Saudi king was giving Arabia a new historical duty after thirteen centuries and the main goal was rise and strengthening of unity of Islamic nations as a confederation or integration of Islamic countries. In an article, also the president of senate group of Justice Party, Fethi Tevetoğlu stated that King Faisal's visit to Turkey (which will be provided in detail) would be one of the most effective occasions for affiliation and cooperation between Muslim nations.¹⁰⁸ However, leftwing writers in Turkey took a dim view of the Islamic Pact. For instance, a writer in *Cumhuriyet* newspaper, Kayhan Sağlamer saw this project as an outcome of conservative-radical conflict in Arab world and Faisal's struggle for dominance against Egyptian leader Nasser. Sağlamer also defended that diverging among Arabs would not of Turkey's benefit.¹⁰⁹ Another writer, Doğan Avcıoğlu evaluated project of Islamic Pact as an Anglo-Saxon attempt to unite Muslim countries against republican and revolutionary Arab countries. He accused Turkish government for adopting Adnan Menderes' foreign policy.¹¹⁰ According to Avcıoğlu, Turkey was supposed to ensure good relations with Saudi Arabia, yet should also avoid being a party to Nasser-Faisal's struggle or Nasser-Shah of Iran's struggle and becoming imperialists' pawn. He claimed that Turkey should be friends of both King Faisal and Nasser, while declaring that it is against Islamic Pact and anti-Nasser campaign.¹¹¹ Debates on the issue would end only after King Faisal's visit to Turkey and his comments on the issue.

¹⁰⁶ Doğan Avcıoğlu, "İslam Paktı ve Türkiye", *Yön: Haftalık Fikir ve Sanat Gazetesi*, September 2, 1966, 9.

¹⁰⁷ Doğan Avcıoğlu, *Atatürkçülük Milliyetçilik Sosyalizm (Yön ve Devrim Yazıları)* (İstanbul: İleri, 2006), 483.

¹⁰⁸ Doğan Avcıoğlu, "İslam Paktı ve Türkiye", *Yön: Haftalık Fikir ve Sanat Gazetesi*, September 2, 1966, 9.

¹⁰⁹ Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, *Türkiye'nin Arap Ortadoğu'suna Karşı Politikası (1945-1970)* (Ankara: Barış, 2010), 173.

¹¹⁰ Doğan Avcıoğlu, *Atatürkçülük Milliyetçilik Sosyalizm (Yön ve Devrim Yazıları)* (İstanbul: İleri, 2006), 482-483.

¹¹¹ Doğan Avcıoğlu, "İslam Paktı ve Türkiye", *Yön: Haftalık Fikir ve Sanat Gazetesi*, September 2, 1966, 9.

No doubt an important development in Turkish-Saudi relations was Saudi King Faisal's visit to Turkey. He was the only Saudi king to visit Turkey in the 20th century.¹¹² Faisal visited Turkey after Turkish parliamentary delegation visited Saudi Arabia in April 15, 1966.¹¹³

After Turkish President Cevdet Sunay's invitation, King Faisal came to Turkey in August 29, 1966.¹¹⁴ At the airport, Faisal was welcomed by president Cevdet Sunay, prime minister Süleyman Demirel, chief of the general staff Cemal Tural, president of the senate Atasagun, deputy chairman of the parliament İsmail Arar, ministers and military and civil officers.¹¹⁵ On the first day of Faisal's visit, a Turkish newspaper, *Tercüman* published a free supplement providing information about Saudi Arabia. On that day, *Tercüman* was printed one million copies. Also Turkish and foreign newspapers, covered news about a possible "Islamic Pact" to include Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia.¹¹⁶

When King Faisal went to Çankaya Palace to meet with Sunay, they discussed Turkey and Saudi Arabia relations.¹¹⁷ Sunay held a banquet in the honor of Faisal and made a speech, where he pointed to his joy as well as his nation's joy that aroused from Saudi successes under Faisal's leadership. He also asserted that Turkey and Saudi Arabia establishing relations with brother Arab nations and protecting and improving joint interests and prosperities that belonged to Arab and non-Arab nations of the region are both common goals for Turkey and Saudi Arabia. After Sunay, Faisal made a speech, where he emphasized the bonds between Turkey and Saudi Arabia as well as between Turkey and other Muslim and Arab countries, while pointing out the spirit which linked these bonds to the history to be spirit of religion. According to him problems, wars and conflicts in the world originated from weak belief in God. Furthermore, he argued that which having the aim of affinity and agreement between Muslim brothers, his invitation was misunderstood by some people. He also remarked that his goal was not to profit from this invitation but to establish powerful bonds of brotherhood between Muslim nations.¹¹⁸

¹¹² Muhittin Ataman, *Turkey and Saudi Arabia: Newly Discovered Partners?* (Ankara: SETA, 2012), 13.

¹¹³ Faruk Sönmezoğlu, *II. Dünya Savaşı'ndan Günümüze Türk Dış Politikası* (İstanbul: Der, 2006), 364.

¹¹⁴ Lütfü Akdoğan, *Krallarla ve Başkanlarla 50 Yıl (2. Cilt)* (İstanbul, Gazeteciler Cemiyeti: 2012), 94.

¹¹⁵ Mustafa Bostancı, "Suudi Arabistan Devleti'nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)", (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2013), 222.

¹¹⁶ Lütfü Akdoğan, *Krallarla ve Başkanlarla 50 Yıl (2. Cilt)* (İstanbul, Gazeteciler Cemiyeti: 2012), 94.

¹¹⁷ Mustafa Bostancı, "Suudi Arabistan Devleti'nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)", (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2013), 222.

¹¹⁸ Türkiye Suudi Arabistan Dostluk Cemiyeti, *Hac Farızası ve İki Dost Ülke* (Ankara: Ajans-Türk, 1969), 38-40.

In the Turkish-Saudi joint declaration on September 4, economic, social and cultural cooperation that aroused from spiritual links and common interests were insisted. In the declaration, also it was remarked that Islam was strengthening sympathy and brotherhood between Muslim countries. Project of Islamic Pact was not mentioned in the declaration. After negotiations, Faisal made a statement to the newspapers. He expressed in the statement that he wanted foundation of a religious, political, economic and cultural cooperation between Islamic countries, not an “Islamic Pact”.¹¹⁹ In this way, he was putting an end to the debates on “Islamic Pact”.

Before leaving Turkey, Faisal invited Sunay to Saudi Arabia and Sunay stated that he would meet this demand in his earliest convenience. As well, president of Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Ferruh Bozbeyle officially visited Saudi Arabia between April 5 and April 10, 1967, as an official invitee of Saudi government.¹²⁰

On January 22, 1968, Cevdet Sunay went to Saudi Arabia.¹²¹ He was accompanied by Foreign Minister İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil.¹²² His visit lasted until January 27, 1968. With this visit, Sunay became the first Turkish president who step foot on the Arabian Peninsula after the First World War. Sunay and his delegation were welcomed by Faisal in the airport when they arrived Riyadh. In the morning of the same day, Faisal held a banquet in honor of Sunay and made a speech. In his speech, he expressed his pleasure about Turkey’s support to Arab affairs and emphasized that Saudi Arabia never forgot Turkish mujahids in Cyprus. Sunay also made a speech in the dinner. In his speech he stated that Saudi Arabia’s development attempts were appreciated by Turkey and all friendly nations, and King Faisal’s visit to Turkey in 1966 contributed to a new and great manifestation of Turkish feelings of brotherhood against Saudi Arabia.¹²³

In January 24th, Sunay visited the Prophet’s Mosque and during his visit, he was accompanied by Muhsin bin Abdulaziz, local amir of Medina. After Medina, Sunay went to Jeddah, and then visited Mecca to perform umrah.¹²⁴ In this way, he became the first

¹¹⁹ Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, *Türkiye'nin Arap Ortadoğu'suna Karşı Politikası (1945-1970)* (Ankara: Barış, 2010), 174.

¹²⁰ Mustafa Bostancı, “Suudi Arabistan Devleti'nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)”, (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2013), 232.

¹²¹ Bostancı, “Suudi Arabistan Devleti'nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)”, 233.

¹²² Lütfü Akdoğan, *Krallarla ve Başkanlarla 50 Yıl (1. Cilt)* (İstanbul, Gazeteciler Cemiyeti: 2011), 322.

¹²³ Mustafa Bostancı, “Suudi Arabistan Devleti'nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)”, (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2013), 235-236.

¹²⁴ Bostancı, “Suudi Arabistan Devleti'nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)”, 238-239.

Turkish president who performed umrah.¹²⁵ During umrah, Sunay was hosted by Ali Ulvi Kurucu, a Turkish scholar living in Saudi Arabia. Kurucu provided information on Mecca and Medina to Sunay. Sunay and his delegation also entered the Kaaba and worshipped there. Deputy of Tokat from Justice Party, Osman Saraç led their prayer inside the Kaaba.¹²⁶ At the end of the visit, Sunay and his delegation left Saudi Arabia to Libya, from Jeddah Airport on January 27th.¹²⁷

When we look at the 1960s in general, we can see that Turkey's newly adopted policy towards the Arab world, which was aiming to side with Arabs on the international area (1967 Arab-Israeli War is a good example, as we pointed out), resulted in Turkey's favor. Turkey, which was left alone in the Cyprus issue, started to gain more support from the Arab world. In relation to the improvement in Turkey's relations with the Arab world, bilateral relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia also showed a marked improvement. Saudi support to Turkey on the Cyprus issue, which showed itself in 1965 Cyprus negotiations in United Nations and also in a conference by Rabita in the same year, is an important evidence for this improvement. Another important evidence is that a first time visit by a Saudi king (Faisal's visit in 1966) to Turkey and a first time visit by a Turkish president (Sunay's visit in 1968) to Saudi Arabia became a reality during this era. All of this evidence shows that improvements in Turkish-Saudi relations during the 1960s were shaped by the general improvement in Turkey's relations with the Arab world, which proves our main argument.

1.6. Turkish-Saudi Relations in the 1970s

During the time of technocratic governments, which started with March 12, 1971 military coup, Turkey walked away from Justice Party's multidimensional foreign policy that was in force since 1965; and started to pursue a foreign policy which was close to the United States.¹²⁸ For example, the United States' demand for prohibiting opium poppy plantation in Turkey, which was previously refused by former Turkish governments, was accepted by Nihat Erim government.¹²⁹ Another sign of convergence to the United States

¹²⁵ "Cumhuriyet'te Hac Modası", *İkibin'e Doğru*, May 17-23, 1987, 11.

¹²⁶ Cengiz Özakıncı, *İblisin Kiblesi* (İstanbul: Otopsi, 2013), 16-17.

¹²⁷ Mustafa Bostancı, "Suudi Arabistan Devleti'nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)", (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2013), 239.

¹²⁸ Hüner Tuncer, *İki Darbe Arasında Türk Dış Politikası (1971-1980)* (İstanbul: Kaynak, 2014), 86.

¹²⁹ Merve Demiriz, "Askeri Darbeler ve Türk Dış Politikası", (Master's Thesis, Atılım University, 2011), 92.

was appointment of two pro-Western diplomats to the position of Turkish foreign ministry - Osman Olcay and Haluk Bayülken. Such developments prompted the Soviet Union to adapt a slow and sure approach to Turkey. Turkish government was also suspicious about the Soviet Union due to anti-Turkey broadcasts by Soviet-controlled socialist regimes press, which regarded as provoked anarchy and terror in Turkey.¹³⁰ Turkey also kept its distance with Arab countries, as to its foreign policy that was close to the United States during the time of technocratic governments. During that time, Middle Eastern countries like Iraq and Syria started to come to an agreement with the Soviet Union. In 1972, an agreement of friendship and good neighborhood was signed between Iraq and the Soviet Union. This development annoyed Iran, Israel and Turkey, which are allies to the United States in the Middle East.¹³¹

When the era of technocratic governments ended with general elections in October 1973, coalition governments under the leadership of Bülent Ecevit came to power. These governments also adopted a multidimensional foreign policy and tried to improve relations with Arab countries. There were two reasons for this choice: First, Turkey's disrupted relations with the West after Cyprus Peace Operation.¹³² This operation was carried out by Turkish army in Cyprus after Nicos Sampson staged a coup against Makarios, president of Republic of Cyprus, and declared the Hellenic Republic of Cyprus.¹³³ Main aim of the operation was to avert unification of Cyprus with Greece as well as extermination of Cypriot Turks.¹³⁴ Cyprus Peace Operation had negative influence on Turkey's relations with the Western countries. The United States stopping weapon sale to Turkey in 1975 makes a good example for that.¹³⁵ Second factor that affected Turkey's attempts in improving relations with Arab countries was the negative impact of rising oil prices on Turkish economy after the 1973 oil shock. With the purpose of reducing oil shortage, Turkey wanted to improve its trade with Arab countries.¹³⁶ Turkey's need for loans was another important economic issue that affected its relations with Arab countries. After 1974, during one of the most depressed periods of Turkish economy, the first topic on Turkish economic agenda was external loans. Especially challenges in relations between

¹³⁰ Merve Demiriz, "Askeri Darbeler ve Türk Dış Politikası", (Master's Thesis, Atılım University, 2011), 90.

¹³¹ Demiriz, "Askeri Darbeler ve Türk Dış Politikası", 95-96.

¹³² Hüner Tuncer, *İki Darbe Arasında Türk Dış Politikası (1971-1980)* (İstanbul: Kaynak, 2014), 88.

¹³³ Tuncer, *İki Darbe Arasında Türk Dış Politikası (1971-1980)*, 43.

¹³⁴ Tuncer, *İki Darbe Arasında Türk Dış Politikası (1971-1980)*, 45.

¹³⁵ Tuncer, *İki Darbe Arasında Türk Dış Politikası (1971-1980)*, 59.

¹³⁶ Tuncer, *İki Darbe Arasında Türk Dış Politikası (1971-1980)*, 88.

Turkey and Western economical foundations put Arab countries to the forefront in terms of loans.¹³⁷ Both the Cyprus issue and economic needs made contribution to the relations between Turkey and Arab world. For example, during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, Turkey adopted a attitude towards Arab countries and demanded Israel to withdraw from Arab territories that it occupied. As a response to this pro-Arab policy, Arab countries like Iraq, Libya and Saudi Arabia supported Turkey and Cypriot Turks during and after Cyprus Peace Operation. Thanks to the positive atmosphere in relations between Turkey and Arab world, Turkey hosted the 7th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in 1976 (This development and its implications on Turkish-Saudi relations will be detailed later). Apart from that, between 1976 and 1978, Turkey established diplomatic relations with Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and Oman for the first time.¹³⁸ We will detail positive developments in Turkish-Saudi relations during the 1970s to show that improvements in Turkey's relations with the Arab world also affected Turkish-Saudi relations positively in the mentioned era and this fact is in harmony with our main argument.

Saudi foreign policy in the 1970s had two important topics: King Faisal's interest in Arab-Israeli conflict and use of the Arab oil as a weapon. Faisal, who strengthened ties with incoming moderate leaders of Egypt and Syria during this era, believed that a just solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict was essential if the radicalization of the Arab world was to be averted. He also warned that Saudi-American relations would be undermined if total American support for Israel continued. In this context, he managed to use the Arab oil as a political weapon following the 1973 Arab-Israeli War and the American supply of weapons to Israel. The Arab oil producers announced a monthly reduction in oil production and a total embargo of oil sales to the United States in support of the Arab goals in the war.¹³⁹ The worldwide oil shock, which was triggered by this decision of the Arab oil producers, had negative affects on Turkish economy, as well. As it was mentioned above, Turkey's suffering from oil shortage and other economical problems forced it to improve its economical relations with Arab countries including Saudi Arabia. In this way, Turkish-

¹³⁷ Selim İlkin, "Türkiye'nin İslam Ülkeleriyle İktisadi İşbirliğini Artırma Girişimleri", in *Türk-Arap İlişkileri: Geçmişte, Bugünde ve Gelecekte I. Uluslararası Konferansı Bildirileri*, ed. Hacettepe Üniversitesi Türkiye ve Orta Doğu Araştırma Enstitüsü (Ankara: Yazıt Matbaası, 1979), 262.

¹³⁸ İbrahim Dakuki, "Türk Okul Kitaplarında ve Medyasında Arap İmajını Değiştirmek İçin Eğitim ve Tanıtım Bazında Yeni Bir Hareket Planı", in *Arap-Türk İlişkilerinin Geleceği: Milletlerarası Platformda Çözüm Önerileri*, ed. Arap Birliği Araştırmalar Merkezi (İstanbul: Timaş, 1994), 518-519.

¹³⁹ Rayed Krimly, "Faisal bin Abd Al-Aziz Al Saud", in *Political Leaders of the Contemporary Middle East and North Africa: A Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Bernard Reich (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 186-187.

Saudi relations improved within the frame of Turkey's relations with Arab world, once again.

Ecevit's coalition partner and deputy prime minister, Necmettin Erbakan went to Saudi Arabia with the intent of solving Turkey's oil and foreign currency problems on April 29, 1974. In Saudi Arabia, Erbakan met with Saudi ambassador Anas Yassin and Saudi minister of oil affairs, Zeki Yamani. After the meeting, Yassin remarked that he would contact with King Faisal to discuss oil and loan issues and then, he would meet with Erbakan again on April 30 to inform him about outcomes of the contact with Faisal. Therewith, Yassin and Erbakan met again on April 30. Details of this meeting are available in an official report taken from Ecevit's personal archive by two journalists, Rıdvan Akar and Can Dündar. According to the report, in the meeting with Yassin, Erbakan stressed the importance of Saudi Arabian oil and loans to Turkey. Erbakan also stated that Turkey would come close to Saudi Arabia and other Arab and Islamic countries in case the oil and loans requested from Saudi Arabia are provided; otherwise, Turkey would remain affiliated to the West. However, in Yassin's opinion, the requested amount of loans by Turkey was too much. He pointed all nine delegations requesting oil and loans in Riyadh simultaneously, and should Saudi Arabia provide the oil and loans requested, it would go through an economic stagnation, itself. As for Erbakan, he claimed that Turkish nation was ruled by Zionists, so they needed help to survive this rule. He was hoping Saudi economical support to Turkey would be a help. At this point, Yassin reminded that it was Turkey that objected the phrase "two Muslim nations", that removed the word "Muslim" and wanted to remove the phrase "Islamic conference" in the Turkish-Saudi cultural agreement (which would be signed soon). Furthermore, he stated that because of King's strict order, they could not sign agreements with foreign states that did not bear the phrases "Muslim" and "Islamic conference". After this, Erbakan expressed that if Saudis gave 250 million dollars to Turkey in 1974 that would make Turkey join the Islamic conference as a full member; thus, also if they gave out an additional 250 million dollars to Turkey the following year, Turkey would break off its relations with Israel. In response, Yassin stated that he would discuss the matter with crown prince Fahd. As well, Erbakan wanted Saudis to make some commitments to Turkey about oil issue.¹⁴⁰ Later, Yassin expressed that he would meet with Prince Fahd and left the room. In the report, according to the footnote provided by translator, after leaving the room, Yassin implied that under these

¹⁴⁰ Rıdvan Akar and Can Dündar, *Ecevit ve Gizli Arşivi* (Ankara: İmge, 2008), 196-199.

circumstances Saudi Arabia could give neither oil nor loans to Turkey, thus Turkish delegation was trying to present them with a fait accompli and by no means this behavior would be successful.¹⁴¹

On May 1, 1974, a cultural agreement was signed between Necmettin Erbakan in the name of Turkey and Saudi Deputy Prime Minister Prince Fahd bin Abdulaziz in Riyadh, including subjects such as exchange of books, brochures and educational films. On the same day, two trade agreements were signed between the two parties. Trade agreements included subjects such as improved trading relations between the two countries and each party ensuring easier trade activities to one another.¹⁴²

On October 20, 1975, Turkey joined 6th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in Jeddah, at a level of foreign minister for the first time. In return for Turkey's foreign minister-level appearance in the conference, president of Turkish Federated State of Cyprus, Rauf Denktaş, Secretary of State of Turkish Federated State of Cyprus, Vedat Çelik and Mufti of Cyprus, Rıfat Yücelten were accepted to the conference. In the declaration issued after the conference, it was stated that efforts of Cypriot Turkish society to protect their legitimate rights and Islamic character within the frame of a Republic of Cyprus on a bi-zonal, federal, independent, sovereign, neutral and free from foreign bases, was appreciated. In the conference, Turkey offered to hold 7th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in Istanbul, which was accepted.¹⁴³

7th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers convened in Ataturk Culture Center in Istanbul on May 12, 1976 with the participation of delegations from 42 countries.¹⁴⁴ In the conference, Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al Faisal made a short speech. He ended his speech with wishing God protect and glorify Turkish nation. The most important subject in the first day of negotiations was developments about future of Turkish Federated State of Cyprus. Rauf Denktaş, who joined the conference as an observer, explained Cyprus's problems to the representatives in detail, and stated that Cypriot Turks were expecting political support. Furthermore, in the conference Turkey accepted the Palestine Liberation Organization to open political bureau without any preconditions.¹⁴⁵

Saudi Arabia continued to show its support to Turkey regarding Cyprus. In 1978, in the Conference of Foreign Ministers of Non-Aligned Countries in Belgrade, Saudi Arabia

¹⁴¹ Rıdvan Akar and Can Dündar, *Ecevit ve Gizli Arşivi* (Ankara: İmge, 2008), 200.

¹⁴² Reşat Yazıcı, *Türkiye İslam Ülkeleri Anlaşmalar ve Mevzuat Cilt-II* (Ankara: Gelişim, 1982), 423-427.

¹⁴³ Hüner Tuncer, *İki Darbe Arasında Türk Dış Politikası (1971-1980)* (İstanbul: Kaynak, 2014), 90.

¹⁴⁴ Günvar Otmanbölük, "İslam dünyasının kalbi İstanbul'da attı...", *Hayat*, May 20, 1976, 3.

¹⁴⁵ Otmanbölük, "İslam dünyasının kalbi İstanbul'da attı...", 5.

was the only Arab country to vote against the 5th article in the draft resolution about Cyprus, which was to Turkey's disadvantage.¹⁴⁶

Starting with 1970s, economic relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia started to improve thanks to a number of Turkish workers going to Saudi Arabia as well as Turkish businessmen winning full-scale construction contracts there.¹⁴⁷ In 1979, Turkish journalist Kenan Akın wrote in *Tercüman* newspaper that there were 40.000 Turkish workers in Saudi Arabia. He also stated this number was officially confirmed by Turkish ambassador in Jeddah, Fikret Bereket. According to the information provided by Akın, hundreds of Turkish pilgrims started to work in Saudi Arabia, transferring their earnings to their homeland.¹⁴⁸

Overall picture of relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia during the 1970s shows a positive era for the two countries, except the period of technocratic governments in Turkey before October 1973. After 1973, Turkey started to pursue a multidimensional foreign policy again with the aim of gaining political support from Arab countries on the Cyprus issue after Cyprus Peace Operation and economical support from them because of its oil shortage and loan need. In response to Turkey's pro-Arab policies (its approach on 1973 Arab-Israeli War is a good example), Arab countries showed their support to Turkey on the Cyprus issue. The 6th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in Jeddah and 7th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in Istanbul are two important examples where Arab countries showed their close interest and support to Cypriot Turks. Improvement in Turkey's relations with the Arab world also led to positive developments in Turkish-Saudi relations, as can be seen from cultural and economical agreements between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, Saudi support to Turkey on the Cyprus issue and developing economical bonds between the two countries. Our main argument, which uses the course of relations between Turkey and the Arab world as a base to explain ups and downs in Turkish-Saudi relations, is in accordance with the information we gave on Turkey-Saudi Arabia relations in the 1970s.

¹⁴⁶ Ersin Onulduran, "Türkiye'nin Arap Ülkelerine Karşı Dış Politikasında Son Gelişmeler", in *Türk-Arap İlişkileri: Geçmişte, Bugünde ve Gelecekte I. Uluslararası Konferansı Bildirileri*, ed. Hacettepe Üniversitesi Türkiye ve Orta Doğu Araştırma Enstitüsü (Ankara: Yazıt Matbaası, 1979), 70.

¹⁴⁷ Graham E. Fuller, *Yeni Türkiye Cumhuriyeti: Yükselen Bölgesel Aktör*, trans. Mustafa Acar (İstanbul: Timaş, 2008), 232.

¹⁴⁸ Kenan Akın, *Kutsal Vaha Suudi Arabistan* (İstanbul: Eren, 1979), 91-93.

1.7. Conclusion

Initially, Saudi - Turkish relations began with Saudis' military struggle against the Ottoman Empire. After Ottoman Empire's downfall, in contrast to their different regimes and approaches to religion, Turkey and Saudi Arabia managed to ensure good relations in between, thanks to their joint approaches on foreign policy issues until the Cold War era. Turkey was trying to form good relations with its neighbouring countries, right along with a few Arab countries which were independent during that time. Saudi foreign policy, which was not in tendency to expand Saudi territories or to spread its ideology during that time, made contribution to the improvement of Turkish-Saudi relations as well.

Until the end of the World War II, Turkish-Saudi relations were in a positive atmosphere, just as Turkey's relations with the Arab world were. After the World War II, despite some positive developments like Jordanian King's visit to Turkey, a lack of interest towards Arab countries started to be seen in the late 1940s. Especially in the 1950s, Turkey's participation to NATO and convergence to Western countries negatively affected its relations with Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia. Arab countries except Iraq objected the Baghdad Pact, which was a Turkish initiative to build a barrier against a possible Soviet expansion towards the Middle East. Because of its anti-Hashemite attitude, Saudi Arabia was among that countries, too. Turkey's pro-Western and anti-Soviet policies towards the Middle East backfired, and Arab countries started to cooperate with the Soviet Union. While Turkey's relations with the Arab world worsened during the 1950s, Turkish-Saudi relations were damaged as well.

In the 1960s, being disappointed to its Western allies and being left alone on Cyprus conflict, Turkey increased its interest in Arab countries to gain support from them and adopted a multidimensional foreign policy. Turkey's pro-Arab policy during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and other efforts were reacted positively by the Arab world. Arab countries started to support Turkey on the Cyprus issue. Thanks to these developments, a positive atmosphere was created in Turkey's relations with Saudi Arabia, too. Two historical visits between Turkey and Saudi Arabia were made in the 1960s: King Faisal's visit to Turkey in 1966 and President Sunay's visit to Saudi Arabia. Apart from that, Saudis became an important supporter of Turkey on the Cyprus issue, as it was seen in 1965 Cyprus negotiations in United Nations and also in a conference by Rabita in the same year.

Technocratic governments, which came to power after March 12, 1971 military coup, walked away from multidimensional foreign policy that was in force since 1965; and started to pursue a foreign policy which was close to the United States. However, this situation did not last long and when the era of technocratic governments ended in 1973, Turkey started to adopt a policy which was close to the Arab world again. Turkey's need for oil and loans was one of the reasons for this policy change. The other reason was Turkey's need of gaining political support from Arab countries on the Cyprus issue after Cyprus Peace Operation. As a result, Turkey showed its support to Arab countries in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, and in return, gained support from them on the Cyprus issue. Within the scope of Turkey's improving relations with the Arab world in the 1970s, also an advancement was seen in Turkish-Saudi relations. There were two important sides of this advancement: Developing economical bonds between the two countries and Saudi support to Turkey on the Cyprus issue (an example of this support was seen in the Conference of Foreign Ministers of Non-Aligned Countries in 1978, as we mentioned).

2. TURKISH-SAUDI RELATIONS BETWEEN 1980 AND 2002

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter the period between 1980 and 2002, an era of more positive and closer relations in comparison with the previous years –except the rupture in the late 1990s- in Turkish-Saudi relations, will be analyzed. We will begin with growing bilateral relations that started with September 12, 1980 coup in Turkey, and further detail reciprocal visits and negotiations between two country. Then, Rabita, which is a Saudi-originated foundation that started a great controversy in Turkey as to its relations with Turkish state, will be analyzed under a specific title. Over and above this, both positive and negative developments during the 1990s will be also examined. In addition, economic relations between Turks and Saudis in 1980s and 1990s will be analyzed to reveal the economic framework of Turkish-Saudi relations during the respective era.

2.2. Rapprochement Between Turkey and Saudi Arabia During the 1980s

Turkish foreign policy during the 1980s showed important developments thanks to Prime Minister Turgut Özal's initiatives.¹⁴⁹ Özal, who believed that Turkey should renew itself to solve its internal problems, understood the importance of a pluralistic and dynamic foreign policy. During his era, Turkey showed convergence to the Islamic world in terms of economy, culture, religion and tourism. It also improved the dialogue with a lot of countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Libya, Iran and Iraq.¹⁵⁰ Özal was also attentive to take sides with Arab countries on important subjects. For example, when American air force bombed Libya and killed 54 people in March 1986, Turkey expressed concern over violation of international law. Furthermore, when the Palestinian National Council declared the independence of the state of Palestine on November 15, 1988, Turkey became the first NATO member who recognized Palestine.¹⁵¹ Some international developments

¹⁴⁹ Beril Dedeoğlu, "Türkiye'nin Türk Dünyası ile İlişkileri Rusya'ya Rağmen Olamaz", in *Mülakatlarla Türk Dış Politikası Cilt 1*, ed. Habibe Özdal et al. (Ankara: USAK, 2009), 77.

¹⁵⁰ Ramazan Gözen, "Dış Politikayı Alternatifler Çerçevesinde Değerlendirmek Doğru Olmaz, Zira Dış Politikada Ülkeler Birbirini İkame Etmez", in *Mülakatlarla Türk Dış Politikası Cilt 1*, ed. Habibe Özdal et al. (Ankara: USAK, 2009), 278.

¹⁵¹ Mehmet Hasgüler and Bülent Uludağ, *Kriz Üçgeninde Türkiye –Orta Doğu, Avrasya ve Kıbrıs Yazıları (1997-2003)-* (İstanbul: Anka, 2004), 89.

also eased Turkey's improvement of relations with Arab world. For example, after 1979 Iranian Revolution, because of a potential threat of Iranian dominance in the Middle East, the United States started to prompt Turkey to improve its relations with Arab countries which were against Iran. Özal took advantage of this situation and in this context, Turkey made great strides in its relations with Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait and Egypt.¹⁵² Turkey-Saudi Arabia relations in the 1980s also benefited from Turkey's improving foreign policy towards Arab countries, and we will detail its examples in this chapter.

Saudi foreign policy in the same era focused on two important topics: One of them was 1979 Revolution that took place in Iran. After the revolution, new leadership of Iran was propagandizing that kingdom regimes were incompatible with Islam and was also gaining sympathy of the Shiite minority in Saudi Arabia. Saudis were concerned about this situation, so they discreetly sided with Iraq –as we will detail while mentioning Fahd-Özal meetings- but also absent their country from a direct conflict with Iran.¹⁵³ Second important topic on the Saudi agenda about foreign policy was Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Saudis were concerned about a possible Soviet expansion toward the Persian Gulf; hence, they provided financial aid to the Afghan insurgents. Saudi Arabia was also interested in Turkey's strategic location, because one of the closest staging areas for any American response to a possible Soviet threat in the Persian Gulf was Turkey. Saudis' economical support to Turkey during the 1980s –its central role in Turkish-Saudi relations will be detailed later- helped anchor Turkey to the Western alliance at such an important time.¹⁵⁴

In 1980s, Turkish-Saudi bilateral relations rendered a significant improvement with regard to previous years, and that is the reason why we preferred to begin the second chapter of our study with the year 1980. Increasing number of official visits between two countries - outnumbering the previous years – and ever developing economic bonds were two notable characteristics of Turkish-Saudi relations during this era.

During the 1980s, one of Turkey's reasons to improve its relations with Muslim countries, particularly the Middle Eastern ones, and to adopt a positive attitude towards Saudi Arabia; was to implement an export-oriented economic model and to secure its oil

¹⁵² Ramazan Gözen, "Dış Politikayı Alternatifler Çerçevesinde Değerlendirmek Doğru Olmaz, Zira Dış Politikada Ülkeler Birbirini İkame Etmez", in *Mülakatlarla Türk Dış Politikası Cilt 1*, ed. Habibe Özdal et al. (Ankara: USAK, 2009), 279-280.

¹⁵³ William B. Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s: Foreign Policy, Security, and Oil* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1981), 39-40.

¹⁵⁴ Quandt, *Saudi Arabia in the 1980s: Foreign Policy, Security, and Oil*, 42-43.

demand.¹⁵⁵ Another reason of convergence between two parties was political. Gulf countries were under the threat of the Soviet Union and Iran, however, of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries' armed forces were not sufficient enough to defend their countries. Should United States directly attempt to strengthen these armies; it could draw reaction from the Soviet Union and Iran. Consequently, the United States incorporated Turkey into its plans. Accordingly, bases in Turkey would be fortified and made available to the US army. Furthermore, Gulf countries' armies would be trained and strengthened by Turkey.¹⁵⁶

When September 12, 1980 military coup took place, the first leader to send a greeting telegram to leader of the coup, Kenan Evren, was King Khalid of Saudi Arabia.¹⁵⁷ After the September 12 military coup, Turkish-Saudi relations would show an important increase.

On March 3, 1982, Turkish Prime Minister Bülend Ulusu went to Jeddah to attend a meeting of Goodwill Committee of Islamic Conference. During the meeting, Ulusu remarked Turkey's concern about Iran-Iraq War, and stated the need to make every necessary attempt to end this war.¹⁵⁸

Evren visited Saudi Arabia between February 21 and February 24, 1984.¹⁵⁹ He met with Saudi King Fahd. After the meeting, Evren informed journalists that the issues of Iran-Iraq War as well as developments in Lebanon and situation of Palestinians were discussed. He also remarked that both countries are on the same track, and that Saudi Arabia was acting in good faith. Furthermore, he asserted that they also wanted peace and stability in the region. Turkish Foreign Minister Vahit Halefoğlu also confirmed that Iran-Iraq War and regional stability were among discussed issues in the Evren-Fahd meeting. Also according to the information given by Halefoğlu, Evren also explained Fahd the reasons why Turkey chose to remain neutral on Iran-Iraq War and why this was the most

¹⁵⁵ Muhittin Ataman, *Turkey and Saudi Arabia: Newly Discovered Partners?* (Ankara: SETA, 2012), 13.

¹⁵⁶ Melek Fırat and Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, "Orta Doğu'yla İlişkiler", in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşı'ndan Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar Cilt II: 1980-2001*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim, 2001), 125.

¹⁵⁷ Ufuk Güldemir, *Çevik Kuvvetin Gölgesinde Türkiye (1980-1984)* (İstanbul: Tekin, 1987), 78.

¹⁵⁸ Mustafa Bostancı, "Suudi Arabistan Devleti'nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)", (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2013), 302-303.

¹⁵⁹ Melek Fırat and Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, "Orta Doğu'yla İlişkiler", in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşı'ndan Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar Cilt II: 1980-2001*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim, 2001), 125.

appropriate attitude to ensure peace in the region. He further stated that Evren informed Fahd about a possible future visit to Iran, if it would contribute to end Iran-Iraq War.¹⁶⁰

In Turkish delegation, there were also president of TÜSİAD (Turkish Industry and Business Association), Ali Koçman; president of Turkish Union of Chambers, Mehmet Yazar and president of Turkish Contractors Association, Nurettin Koçak - all from Turkish private sector. Negotiations between Turks and Saudis in Riyadh had two sides. On the one hand, Turkish deputy prime minister, Kaya Erdem was discussing public projects with Saudi officials, among which was a 250-million-dollar loan for preparing the substructure of slum areas in Turkish cities of İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir. There were other loan requests, as well. On the other hand, representatives of Turkish private sector were trying to convey their problems as well as requests to Saudi officials, most important of which was difficulties for businessmen in getting visa. Turkish businessmen believed that Saudi economy bears new opportunities. Evren-Fahd friendship increased their hopes.

Military issues were also an important part of negotiations in Riyadh: The two parties signed a military training agreement. Main goal of this agreement was to contribute to training of Saudi army. According to this agreement, Saudi cadets could receive education in military academies in Turkey.¹⁶¹

During his visit to Saudi Arabia, Evren and his delegation performed umrah. The military commission in İstanbul banned Turkish press to publish any photos. With this umrah, Kenan Evren became the second Turkish president who performed umrah.¹⁶²

Political visits were not limited to Kenan Evren's visit. On September 10, 1984, Saudi First Deputy Prime Minister and Commander of National Guards, prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz came to Ankara as Turkish Prime Minister Özal's guest. During Turkish-Saudi negotiations, which was chaired by Özal and Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, problems such as Turkish workers in Saudi Arabia, increase of trade between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, and political situation of the region were discussed. Besides, Abdullah bin Abdulaziz met with President Evren and made military examinations in Eskişehir and Gölcük.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Haluk Şahin, "Acaba ne konuştular?", *Nokta: Haftalık Haber Dergisi*, February 27-March 4, 1984, 15.

¹⁶¹ Şahin, "Acaba ne konuştular?", 16.

¹⁶² "Cumhuriyet'te Hac Modası", *İkibin'e Doğru*, May 17-23, 1987, 10-11.

¹⁶³ Mustafa Bostancı, "Suudi Arabistan Devleti'nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)", (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2013), 325-326.

In March 1985, Turkish Prime Minister Özal visited Saudi Arabia. During the meeting between King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and Özal, both sides emphasized their desire to end Iran-Iraq War.¹⁶⁴

On April 8, 1986, Özal and Fahd met again in Saudi Arabia. During the meeting, Fahd asked Özal to support Iraq and to provide convenience to Iraq for its debts to Turkey. According to Fahd, Turkey's large-scale trade with Iran during Iran-Iraq War was a good support for Iran. After meeting with Fahd, Özal briefed Anadolu News Agency that Turkey refused to be mediator in Iran-Iraq War. Afterwards, while visiting Tehran on his way to India, Özal informed Fahd that Turkey would sustain its neutrality policy on Iran-Iraq War. After negotiations in Tehran, while flying to New Delhi, Özal told journalists in the plane that Turkey would maintain trust of both countries - Iran and Iraq - and be a mediator in the long term, if necessary.¹⁶⁵

Prime Minister Özal went to Jeddah between July 20 and July 27, 1988, to perform hajj. There, Özal also met with Saudi King Fahd to discuss Iran-Iraq war.¹⁶⁶ On the other hand, military officials of Turkey and Saudi Arabia were also making reciprocal visits during this era. In September 1984, Saudi defense mission came to Ankara. On September 1985, commander of the Turkish Air Forces, Air Chief Marshal Halil Sözer went to Riyadh, at the invitation of Commander of the Saudi Air Forces, Abdullah Abdulaziz al-Hamdan. In February 1986, Saudi Minister of Finance and National Economy, Muhammad Abalka came to Ankara at the invitation of Kaya Erdem. During this visit, a protocol was signed between Turks and Saudis in Esenboğa Airport, where continuation of Turkish-Saudi defense cooperation was emphasized. In the same month, members of Turkish council of presidency (Turkish National Security Council during the September 12 military coup era) met with Saudi Minister of National Defense and Aviation, Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz, in Riyadh. In the meeting, it was decided that a technical committee under the presidency of Turkish undersecretary of ministry of national defense, General Sabri Deliç, would go to Saudi Arabia on February 16. After that, Sabri Deliç went to Saudi Arabia and met with Prince Abdurrahman bin Abdulaziz. Afterwards, Deliç was accepted by Saudi Chief of General Staff, General Mohammed Saleh al-Hammad. In January 1986,

¹⁶⁴ Mustafa Bostancı, "Suudi Arabistan Devleti'nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)", (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2013), 306.

¹⁶⁵ Bostancı, "Suudi Arabistan Devleti'nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)", 307-309.

¹⁶⁶ Bostancı, "Suudi Arabistan Devleti'nin Kuruluşu ve Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri (1926-1990)", 340-343.

Commander of the Saudi Air Forces, Major General Abdulaziz al-Hamdan came to Ankara at the invitation of Commander of the Turkish Air Forces, General Halil Sözer. Al-Hamdan was accepted by Turkish Chief of General Staff, General Necdet Üruğ and after that, visited Sabri Delic.¹⁶⁷

2.3. The Effects of World Islamic Union (Rabita) on Turkish-Saudi Relations

During the 1980s, another important side of Turkish-Saudi relations was the Turkey and World Islamic Union (Rabita al-Alam al-Islami) connections. Actually, Rabita's relations with Turkey started before 1980s. Still, after September 12, 1980 military coup and Kenan Evren's coming into power, this subject remained in Turkish agenda.

Rabita was founded in Mecca on May 29, 1962. According to its founding declaration, Rabita's existence were to spread Islam; erase doubts about Islam; take measures against ideologies like communism, Zionism and fascism; and struggle against enemies of Islam. Rabita was founded by 53 members including statesmen, publishers and representatives of Islamic communications. One of the members was a Turkish journalist and owner of a publishing house, Salih Özcan.¹⁶⁸ Also, another Turkish member of Rabita was Ahmet Gürkan, who was a parliamentarian from Justice Party and president of Turkish-Saudi Friendship Organization.¹⁶⁹ Turkish flag was also among the flags presented in conference hall of central office of Rabita in Mecca; hence, one of official languages of Rabita was Turkish.¹⁷⁰ Because of its relations with Islamists in Turkey, Rabita was named by a Turkish journalist, Metin Toker, as “one of the two cominterns of panislamists” (the other one was Hizb ut-Tahrir).¹⁷¹

In the 1980s, Rabita became a matter of debate in Turkey. Because, Turkish journalist Uğur Mumcu revealed that between 1982 and 1984 salaries of Turkish imams outside Turkey were covered by Rabita. According to the information given by Mumcu, Rabita was paying \$1100 monthly to Turkish embassies and Turkish embassies were transferring the amount to the imams. This practice first started in Belgium and then spread to Federal Germany.¹⁷² Decree about letting Rabita to pay salaries of Turkish imams in

¹⁶⁷ Ufuk Güldemir, *Çevik Kuvvetin Gölgesinde Türkiye (1980-1984)* (İstanbul: Tekin, 1987), 111-112.

¹⁶⁸ Reşat Yazıcı, *Türkiye İslam Ülkeleri Anlaşmalar ve Mevzuat Cilt-I* (Ankara: Gelişim, 1982), 14.

¹⁶⁹ Uğur Mumcu, *Rabita* (Ankara: um:ag Vakfi, 2014), 139.

¹⁷⁰ Metin Toker, *Solda ve Sağda Vuruşanlar* (Ankara: Akis, 1971), 142.

¹⁷¹ Toker, *Solda ve Sağda Vuruşanlar*, 137.

¹⁷² Uğur Mumcu, *Rabita* (Ankara: um:ag Vakfi, 2014), 137.

foreign countries was issued by Bülend Ulusu government on April 28, 1981. However, the decree was not published in official gazette.¹⁷³

After Mumcu's research, when controversies about Rabita first began in Turkey, contradictory statements came from Turkish officials. According to *Cumhuriyet* newspaper dated March 17, 1987, President Kenan Evren and prime minister Bülend Ulusu who was in power when Rabita was covering salaries of Turkish imams; claimed that they have no information on the issue. Directorate of Religious Affairs of that era, Tayyar Altıkulaç asserted that there was a decree of the council of ministers about Rabita; but his claim was refused by an ex-state minister, Mehmet Özgüneş.¹⁷⁴ Afterwards, foreign minister of that era, İltter Türkmen also claimed that he had no relations to the issue.¹⁷⁵

According to *Cumhuriyet* newspaper dated March 19, 1987, finally Bülend Ulusu confirmed Altıkulaç's claims about the decree of the council of ministers. Furthermore, he claimed that Rabita's name was written in English in the decree, therefore he could not remember the decree at first, when journalists asked him about the issue.¹⁷⁶

Later on, other activities of Rabita apart from paying salaries of Turkish imams in foreign countries were discovered. Rabita also made 20-million-dollars aid to a mosque construction in Turkish Grand National Assembly; 2-million-dollars aid for Kocatepe Mosque in Küçükesat, Ankara and 5-million-dollars aid for mosques in Adana that are damaged in a flood.¹⁷⁷

According to *Cumhuriyet* newspaper dated March 21, 1987, Prime Minister Turgut Özal asserted that Turkey agreed to Rabita as to shortage of foreign currency.¹⁷⁸ In *Cumhuriyet* newspaper dated March 23, 1987, a statement that of Saudi ambassador in Ankara, Abdulaziz bin Mohiuddin Khoja was published. According to Khoja, Rabita had no activities in Turkey, and by no means Rabita's services to Turks living in foreign countries about learning Islam was an anti-secular activity. He clearly stated that Rabita did not interfere in the internal affairs of any country.¹⁷⁹

According to *Cumhuriyet* newspaper dated March 28, 1987, Kenan Evren finally held a press conference to make a statement about Rabita.¹⁸⁰ According to Evren, the

¹⁷³ Uğur Mumcu, *Rabita* (Ankara: um:ag Vakfi, 2014), 181.

¹⁷⁴ Mumcu, *Rabita*, 169.

¹⁷⁵ Mumcu, *Rabita*, 172.

¹⁷⁶ Mumcu, *Rabita*, 180.

¹⁷⁷ Mumcu, *Rabita*, 198-199.

¹⁷⁸ Mumcu, *Rabita*, 201.

¹⁷⁹ Mumcu, *Rabita*, 231.

¹⁸⁰ Mumcu, *Rabita*, 258.

respective decree on Rabita was signed due to Turkey's shortage of foreign currency.¹⁸¹ Furthermore, Evren stated that in a similar situation, he would do the same.¹⁸²

2.4. Growing Economic Relations Between Turkey and Saudi Arabia

Turkey started to buy one million tones oil from Saudi Arabia in 1980. On August of the same year, Saudi Arabia declared that they would give two million tones oil to Turkey, right along with 75-million-dollars economical support. In return, Saudi Arabia requested Turkey to break off its relations with Israel.¹⁸³

It should be noted that Turkish-Saudi economic relations in the 1980s was not limited to oil issue. Liberal economic movement, which began in Turkey after 1980, provided convenience about investment to foreign capital, especially in oil exporting Arab countries. In the era between 1980 and 1990, capital flow from Arab countries rendered %9 of the total foreign investment in Turkey. Most part of this foreign investment was originating from Saudi Arabia, Libya and Kuwait.¹⁸⁴

Saudis played an important role on development of an Islamic financial sector in Turkey.¹⁸⁵ Most of the Saudi companies that came to Turkey focused on banking sector.¹⁸⁶ Faisal Finance is a good example. Faisal Finance, which was founded by Mohammed bin Faisal, came started its activities in Turkey in December 16, 1983. There were two Turkish deputies from National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi), Salih Özcan and Tevfik Paksu among founding partners.¹⁸⁷ By providing 50 million dollars every year, Faisal Finance was financing Turkey's oil import and was providing commercial credits to Turkish exporters.¹⁸⁸ İhlas Holding, which was also supported by Faisal Finance, spread on a large area of activity throughout 27 companies.¹⁸⁹ Saudi-American Bank was another

¹⁸¹ Uğur Mumcu, *Rabita* (Ankara: um:ag Vakfi, 2014), 260.

¹⁸² Mumcu, *Rabita*, 264.

¹⁸³ Hüner Tuncer, *İki Darbe Arasında Türk Dış Politikası (1971-1980)* (İstanbul: Kaynak, 2014), 93-94.

¹⁸⁴ Mahmud Abdülfazil, "Türk Arap Ekonomik İlişkileri: Fırsatların Önündeki Çıkmazlar ve İmkanlar", in *Arap-Türk İlişkilerinin Geleceği: Milletlerarası Platformda Çözüm Önerileri*, ed. Arap Birliği Araştırmalar Merkezi (İstanbul: Timaş, 1994), 380.

¹⁸⁵ Yılmaz Polat, *Amerikan Gizli Belgelerinde Türkiye'de İslamcı Akımlar* (İstanbul: Milenyum, 2010), 53.

¹⁸⁶ İlhan Uzgel, *Ulusal Çıkar ve Dış Politika: Türk Dış Politikasının Belirlenmesinde Ulusal Çıkarın Rolü, 1983-1991* (Ankara: İmge, 2004), 175.

¹⁸⁷ Enis Berberoğlu, "Petro-Dolarlar ve İslami Bankacılık", in *Batı ve İrtica*, ed. Ferit İlsever (İstanbul: Kaynak, 1999), 125.

¹⁸⁸ Yılmaz Polat, *Amerikan Gizli Belgelerinde Türkiye'de İslamcı Akımlar* (İstanbul: Milenyum, 2010), 49.

¹⁸⁹ İlhan Uzgel, *Ulusal Çıkar ve Dış Politika: Türk Dış Politikasının Belirlenmesinde Ulusal Çıkarın Rolü, 1983-1991* (Ankara: İmge, 2004), 176.

Saudi-related bank that came into activity in Turkey. Saudi-American Bank became operational in Turkey in 1985 with a capital of 42 million dollars.¹⁹⁰

On May 1984, Turkey and Saudi Arabia decided to establish an investment company. Turkish-Saudi Investment Company was established with an original capital of 250 million dollars, upon signing of the protocol in Jeddah by the President of Turkish Union of Chambers and Exchange Commodities (TOBB), Mehmet Yazar.¹⁹¹

Saudi-originated funds were an important source for Turkey and the Saudi loans were used by Turkey in different fields in the 1980s. An important Saudi-originated loan source for Turkey was Saudi Fund that provided Turkey with 56.76 million dollars in 1981, 17.92 million dollars in 1982, 59.75 million dollars in 1983, 87.95 million dollars in 1985 and 110.65 million dollars in 1986, as loans. These loans were used in construction sector – in construction of the bosphorus bridge, reconstruction of city centers, restoration of relics, electric energy projects; in transport sector - highway and railway construction, export to Saudi Arabia and to Central Bank of Turkey.¹⁹²

Another important side of Turkish-Saudi economic relations was Turkish workers in Saudi Arabia in the 1980s. According to the information given by general director of Turkish Employment Agency, Abdullah Teoman Gürer, number of Turkish workers in Saudi Arabia in 1985 was 35.067. In addition, according to the records of the Agency, total number of Turkish workers who went to Saudi Arabia between 1967 and 1986 was 145.016.¹⁹³ Apart from that, according to the numbers given by Dr. Butros A. Labaki via Dr. Abdel Rahman Zein el-Abidin, the number of Turkish workers who went to Saudi Arabia in 1982 was 12235, in 1983 was 20238, and in 1984 was 25985.¹⁹⁴

It should be noted that Turkish contractors had an important place in Turkish-Saudi relations during the 1980s. By year 1983, there were 109 contractor companies from Turkey active in Saudi Arabia. Turkey's foreign currency earnings from these companies

¹⁹⁰ Butros A. Labaki, "Mevcut Türk-Arap Ekonomik İlişkileri", in *Arap-Türk İlişkilerinin Geleceği: Milletlerarası Platformda Çözüm Önerileri*, ed. Arap Birliği Araştırmalar Merkezi (İstanbul: Timaş, 1994), 132.

¹⁹¹ İlhan Uzgel, *Ulusal Çıkar ve Dış Politika: Türk Dış Politikasının Belirlenmesinde Ulusal Çıkarın Rolü, 1983-1991* (Ankara: İmge, 2004), 175.

¹⁹² Butros A. Labaki, "Mevcut Türk-Arap Ekonomik İlişkileri", in *Arap-Türk İlişkilerinin Geleceği: Milletlerarası Platformda Çözüm Önerileri*, ed. Arap Birliği Araştırmalar Merkezi (İstanbul: Timaş, 1994), 133.

¹⁹³ "İş ve İşçi Bulma Kurumu Genel Müdürü Sayın A. Teoman Güner'in 'Selam' Dergisi'nin Sorularına Verdiği Cevaplar", *Suudi Arabistan'dan Selam*, August 1986, 7.

¹⁹⁴ Butros A. Labaki, "Mevcut Türk-Arap Ekonomik İlişkileri", in *Arap-Türk İlişkilerinin Geleceği: Milletlerarası Platformda Çözüm Önerileri*, ed. Arap Birliği Araştırmalar Merkezi (İstanbul: Timaş, 1994), 135.

in Saudi Arabia were 91 million dollars in 1983, 43 million dollars in 1984, 93 million dollars in 1985, and 16 million dollars in 1986.¹⁹⁵ According to Dr. Butros A. Labaki, number of Turkish contractor companies in Saudi Arabia was 13 in 1980, 19 in 1981, 79 in 1982, 109 in 1983, 120 in 1984, and 120 in 1985.¹⁹⁶

2.5. Deterioration in Turkish-Saudi Relations During the 1990s

The 1990s began with a cooperation between Turkey and Arab countries who joined the alliance against Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait -which provoked the Gulf War in 1991- and strengthening in the Persian Gulf annoyed Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. These countries started to cooperate with the Western countries and Turkey. During that era, Turkey leaned towards selling F-16 warplanes and armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, however, negotiations on this issue which lasted until 1997 came to nothing.¹⁹⁷ After the Gulf War era, Turkish foreign policy towards the Arab world had so much problems. The subject of sharing of Euphrates and Tigris rivers among neighbouring countries led to some problems between Turkey and its two Arab neighbours, Iraq and Syria. For instance, in December 1995, Syria sent a diplomatic note to Turkey with the support of eight Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia and Egypt. In the note, Syria asserted that it was damaged by Turkey's dam constructions on the rivers of Euphrates and Tigris. On the following day, officials from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates and Egypt came together in Damascus and issued the Damascus Declaration. The declaration was criticizing Turkey's dam constructions on the rivers of Euphrates and Tigris. Another important problem for Turkey's relation with the Arab world was Turkish-Israeli alliance. In reprisal for Syrian support to PKK -a separatist terror organization which threatens Turkey- during that time, Turkey signed an agreement of military cooperation with Israel on January 23, 1996. This agreement received reactions from all Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia -its reaction

¹⁹⁵ İlhan Uzgöl, *Ulusal Çıkar ve Dış Politika: Türk Dış Politikasının Belirlenmesinde Ulusal Çıkarın Rolü, 1983-1991* (Ankara: İmge, 2004), 168-169.

¹⁹⁶ Butros A. Labaki, "Mevcut Türk-Arap Ekonomik İlişkileri", in *Arap-Türk İlişkilerinin Geleceği: Milletlerarası Platformda Çözüm Önerileri*, ed. Arap Birliği Araştırmalar Merkezi (İstanbul: Timaş, 1994), 137.

¹⁹⁷ Melek Fırat and Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, "Orta Doğu'yla İlişkiler", in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşı'ndan Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar Cilt II: 1980-2001*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim, 2001), 552-553.

to the Turkish-Israeli alliance will be detailed later.¹⁹⁸ The 28 February process in Turkey also another negative factor for Turkey's relations with the Arab world in the late 1990s, and it will be detailed later, as well.

During the 1990s, main focus of Saudi foreign policy was the threat Saudis perceived from Iraq. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, made Saudi Arabia closer to the United States. To be under protection against Saddam Hussein's Iraq, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia even took the decision to invite American troops to his country without the approval of important members of his family, and before consulting the Saudi clergymen.¹⁹⁹ Apart from that, Saudis economically supported the alliance against Iraq in the Gulf War by extending credit and grants to the members of alliance including Turkey.²⁰⁰ The Saudi economical support to Turkey during the Gulf War will be detailed in this chapter.

The Gulf War started when Iraq occupied Kuwait on August 2, 1990, claiming Kuwait to be a district included in Basra province in the past.²⁰¹ Saudi Arabia, Syria, Egypt and Iran were uneasy about Iraq gaining strength in the Gulf, so they established collaboration, and came closer to the West and to Turkey.²⁰² Furthermore, Turkey played an important role in the crisis of the Gulf by massing troops along Turkish-Iraqi border and letting the United States use Turkish territories to bomb Iraq. So both Kuwait and Saudi Arabia was grateful about Turkey's role and they promised to make financial support to Turkey, with the purpose of covering Turkey's loss originating from embargo against Iraq.²⁰³

Turkey was among the countries to which King Fahd of Saudi Arabia issued debt notes to assemble them against a possible war with Saddam Hussein's Iraq.²⁰⁴ The Saudis gave 1.2 billion dollars to the Turkish government and 1 billion dollars to the Turkish defense fund, with the aim of compensating Turkey's economic losses during the Gulf

¹⁹⁸ Melek Fırat and Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, "Orta Doğu'yla İlişkiler", in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşı'ndan Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar Cilt II: 1980-2001*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim, 2001), 558-560.

¹⁹⁹ Said K. Aburish, *The Rise, Corruption and Coming Fall of the House of Saud* (London: Bloomsbury, 1994), 178.

²⁰⁰ Peter W. Wilson and Douglas F. Graham, *Saudi Arabia: The Coming Storm* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1994), 189.

²⁰¹ Türel Yılmaz, *Uluslararası Politikada Orta Doğu* (Ankara: Barış Platin, 2009), 299.

²⁰² Melek Fırat and Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, "Orta Doğu'yla İlişkiler", in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşı'ndan Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar Cilt II: 1980-2001*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim, 2001), 552.

²⁰³ Kemal Kirişçi, "Türkiye ve Müslüman Ortadoğu", in *Türkiye'nin Yeni Dünyası: Türk Dış Politikasının Değişen Dinamikleri*, ed. Alan Makovsky and Sabri Sayarı (İstanbul: Alfa, 2002), 68-69.

²⁰⁴ Said K. Aburish, *The Rise, Corruption and Coming Fall of the House of Saud* (London: Bloomsbury, 1994), 179.

War.²⁰⁵ The aid was less than expected, therefore aroused a feeling in Turkey, of undercompensate for its efforts.²⁰⁶ Moreover, sanctions against Iraq damaged not only Turkish businessmen doing business with Iraq but also Turkey's relative superiority over Saudi Arabia and Gulf countries on selling raw material and processed agricultural goods. Before the Gulf War, Turkey's export to the Middle East was 23% of its total export and in 1996; it dropped down below 14 % of its total export.²⁰⁷

In 1993, Turkish Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel visited Saudi Arabia as a sign of improvement in Turkish-Saudi relations.²⁰⁸ This was the only official visit between Turkey and Saudi Arabia between 1990 and 2005.²⁰⁹ There were also people from Turkish investment companies, bureaucracy, business world and press in Demirel's delegation. Demirel and his delegation performed umrah during the visit and entered the Kaaba.²¹⁰

Turkish-Israeli alliance after 1996, which we mentioned before, affected not only Turkey's relations with Arab world but also Turkish-Saudi relations negatively. In reprisal for Turkey's alliance with Israel, on April 22, 1996, a pro-government Saudi newspaper, *Al Riyadh* asserted that there were a lot of cards to play against Turkey, including Kurdish nationalism and Islamist forces.²¹¹

Nevertheless, because of political instability inside Turkey in the 1990s, there were ups and downs in Turkish-Saudi relations. Bilateral relations improved at least in rhetoric during Necmettin Erbakan's government in 1996; however, the disturbed political climate in the aftermath of the 28 February military intervention caused another rupture.²¹²

Immediately before, during and after the 28 February process, in government agencies' reports, Saudi Arabia was mentioned among the external powers behind anti-secular activities in Turkey. "Report of Reactionarism" ("İrtica Raporu"), which was prepared by National Intelligence Service ("MİT") and filed to the Turkish presidency in 1995, provides a good example. In the report, under the title "Countries, legal or illegal

²⁰⁵ Muhittin Ataman, *Turkey and Saudi Arabia: Newly Discovered Partners?* (Ankara: SETA, 2012), 13-14.

²⁰⁶ Kemal Kirişçi, "Türkiye ve Müslüman Ortadoğu", in *Türkiye'nin Yeni Dünyası: Türk Dış Politikasının Değişen Dinamikleri*, ed. Alan Makovsky and Sabri Sayarı (İstanbul: Alfa, 2002), 69.

²⁰⁷ Kemal Kirişçi, "Türkiye'nin Ortadoğu Politikasının Geleceği", in *Günümüzde Türkiye'nin Dış Politikası*, ed. Barry Rubin and Kemal Kirişçi (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, 2002), 158.

²⁰⁸ Muhittin Ataman, *Turkey and Saudi Arabia: Newly Discovered Partners?* (Ankara: SETA, 2012), 14.

²⁰⁹ Veysel Ayhan, "Başbakan Erdoğan'ın Suudi Arabistan Ziyareti Kapsamında Ankara-Riyad İlişkilerinin Analizi", *Ortadoğu Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi*, January 20, 2010, accessed April 13, 2015, <http://www.orsam.org.tr/tr/yazigoster.aspx?ID=552>.

²¹⁰ Aynur Ayaz, "Kabe Hatıraları", *ilhankesici.org*, September 09, 2010, accessed April 13, 2015, <http://ilhankesici.org/desifredetay.asp?sc=0&vid=1450>.

²¹¹ Cengiz Özakıncı, *İblisin Kiblesi* (İstanbul: Otopsi, 2013), 381.

²¹² Muhittin Ataman, *Turkey and Saudi Arabia: Newly Discovered Partners?* (Ankara: SETA, 2012), 14.

foundations which are supporting Islamist activities openly or secretly”, Saudi Arabia was mentioned among countries that were cooperating with Islamist groups in Turkey. Rabita was also mentioned as a foundation that cooperated with Islamist groups. The report asserted that “National Vision” (“Milli Görüş”) movement led by Erbakan had significant relations with Saudi Arabia. The report also accused National Visionists of cooperating with Saudi Arabia in numerous fields such as student exchange, hajj organization, working for cooperation with Muslim communities, supply of financial power within the scope of Rabita, and universal propaganda activities.²¹³

In June 11, 1997, a briefing that was given by Turkish General Staff to Turkish press on reactionary activities had a specific title on Saudi Arabia. According to the briefing, Saudi Arabia was gaining sympathy of reactionary Turkish deputies and bureaucrats, by means of providing extra opportunities to perform hajj as well as providing financial support to reactionary elements. The briefing pointed out that during hajj season, Turkey was given a quota of 5000 people to work in Saudi Arabia, whose visa application processes would be covered by a Saudi firm. Workers were charged with a visa fee of \$ 1000 per person, and collected money was transferred to reactionary organizations in Turkey. Another issue asserted in the briefing was that Saudi Arabia subsidizing Turkish reactionaries through getting in touch with banking and finance sector in Turkey, by means of Muslim Brotherhood and Rabita.²¹⁴

In “Western Concept of Operations” (“Batı Harekat Konsepti”), which stands as a documentation of operation plan of the 28 February process, prepared by General Çevik Bir and filed to Turkish General Staff, it was asserted that Saudi Arabia was joining efforts of regime exportation with legal and illegal Islamic foundations in Turkey.²¹⁵

It should be added that documents which were mentioned above made contribution to the deterioration in Turkey’s relations with the Arab world, as well. Because the documents were accusing not only Saudi Arabia but also many Arab countries of joining regime changing efforts in Turkey.²¹⁶

²¹³ Cengiz Özakıncı, *İblisin Kiblesi* (İstanbul: Otopsi, 2013), 412-413.

²¹⁴ Özakıncı, *İblisin Kiblesi*, 442.

²¹⁵ Özakıncı, *İblisin Kiblesi*, 459.

²¹⁶ Özakıncı, *İblisin Kiblesi*, 412-413, 441-442, 459.

2.6. Demolishing of the Ajyad Fortress and the Crisis Afterwards

In 2002, a crisis emerged in Turkish-Saudi relations in consequence of the destruction of a historical site in Mecca. The Ajyad Fortress, which stood on the Bulbul hill overlooking the Kaaba in Mecca and was built in 1780 by the Ottomans to protect the city from rebel tribes, was bulldozed.²¹⁷ Reason for demolishing the old fortress was a 533 million dollars project to house pilgrims in Mecca.²¹⁸ The project included the building of 11 high-rise residential towers, consisting of 942 apartments and a twin-tower five-star hotel with 1200 rooms. The revenue generated from the project including a commercial center and covered 23000 square meters, would be used for the upkeep of the Kaaba.²¹⁹

Demolishing of the Ajyad Fortress drew negative reactions of Turkish officials against Saudi Arabia. The Turkish Minister of Culture, İstemihan Talay said: “It has once again become clear that the source of the Taliban mentality is Saudi Arabia. Just as the Taliban destroyed the Buddha statues (in Afghanistan), the Saudis are seeking to eradicate all traces of our heritage”. Furthermore, Talay stated Turkey would lobby for further condemnation of Saudi Arabia, and would elevate the issue to the UNESCO Director-General, Koichiro Matsuura.²²⁰ Turkish Parliament Speaker, Murat Sökmenoğlu said: “A Muslim country’s destruction of another Muslim country’s historic heritage on holy soil is a sinful behaviour in breach of the moral values of Islam, religious brotherhood and common sense.”²²¹ President of Turkish Historical Society, Yusuf Halaçoğlu described the demolishing of the Ajyad Fortress as “Saudi vandalism” and said: “They destroy Turkish monuments. They do not even leave their foundations.”²²²

Saudi officials did not accept Turkey’s accusations. As quoted by the French news agency AFP, Islamic Affairs Minister of Saudi Arabia, Saleh al-Shaikh stated that Saudi

²¹⁷ “Saudis demolish fort in ‘act of Taliban vandalism’”, The Telegraph, accessed April 17, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/saudiarabia/1380885/Saudis-demolish-fort-in-act-of-Taliban-vandalism.html?>

²¹⁸ “Saudis hit back over Mecca castle”, BBC News, accessed April 17, 2015, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1748711.stm.

²¹⁹ “Historic Makkah fortress demolished”, Arab News, accessed April 17, 2015, <http://www.arabnews.com/node/217526>.

²²⁰ “Saudis demolish fort in ‘act of Taliban vandalism’”, The Telegraph, accessed April 17, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/saudiarabia/1380885/Saudis-demolish-fort-in-act-of-Taliban-vandalism.html?>

²²¹ “Saudis hit back over Mecca castle”, BBC News, accessed April 17, 2015, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1748711.stm.

²²² “Saudis demolish fort in ‘act of Taliban vandalism’”, The Telegraph, accessed April 17, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/saudiarabia/1380885/Saudis-demolish-fort-in-act-of-Taliban-vandalism.html?>

Arabia was exercising its sovereignty and no one had the right to interfere. Moreover, he claimed that a reconstruction of the fortress would be included as part of the site redevelopment.²²³ The residents of Mecca, who were worried about the destiny of the Ajyad Fortress, were pleased with this decision to reconstruct the fortress. One of the residents said to Arab News: “It means a lot to us. We were used to seeing it standing there for a long time. It reminds us of our history.”²²⁴

Another answer to Turkish accusations came from Riyadh newspaper, *Okaz*. The newspaper criticized Turkey’s ‘alleged’ abolition of its own heritage and identity as an Islamic state. It also claimed Turkey to be “the last country that has the right to talk about preserving Islamic or human heritage.”²²⁵

2.7. Decreasing Economic Relations in the 1990s

After the Gulf War, due to the embargo against Iraq, Saudi share in Turkish oil import increased; therefore, Turkey’s foreign trade balance turned against it. However, in 1998, with reduction in general oil price levels, Turkey’s foreign trade deficit prominently decreased.²²⁶

In 1999, Saudi Arabia had a share of 14% in Turkey’s export volume and ranked number 15 in the countries to which Turkey exported. However, between January and September of 2000, Saudis had a share of 1,3% in Turkey’s total export and ranked number 13 in the countries that Turkey exported to. When examining numbers about import, it is seen that in the year 1999, Saudis had a share of 1,4% in Turkish total import and ranked number 18 in Turkey’s import partners. Also it should be noted that between January and September 2000, Saudis had a share of 1,7% in Turkey’s total import and ranked number 16 in Turkey’s import partners.²²⁷

²²³ “Saudis hit back over Mecca castle”, BBC News, accessed April 17, 2015, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1748711.stm.

²²⁴ “Historic Makkah fortress demolished”, Arab News, accessed April 17, 2015, <http://www.arabnews.com/node/217526>.

²²⁵ “Saudis hit back over Mecca castle”, BBC News, accessed April 17, 2015, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1748711.stm.

²²⁶ Ayşe Oya Benli, *Suudi Arabistan Ülke Raporu* (Ankara: İgeme, 2001), 22.

²²⁷ Benli, *Suudi Arabistan Ülke Raporu*, 23.

Table1. Turkey's Foreign Trade with Saudi Arabia (1000 \$)

Years	Export	Import	Volume
1996	430 643	1 707 636	2 138 279
1997	534 998	1 017 638	1 552 636
1998	473 867	669 948	1 143 815
1999	367 184	579 159	946 343
1999 (January-October)	295 572	441 760	737 332
2000 (January-October)	285 914	741 264	1 027 178

Source: Ayşe Oya Benli, *Saudi Arabistan Ülke Raporu* (Ankara: İgeme, 2001), 22.

2.8. Conclusion

1980s was an important era of development in Turkish-Saudi relations. Beginning with September 12 military coup in Turkey, bilateral visits and cooperation on regional issues increased significantly. With the help of Turgut Özal's foreign policy vision, Turkey's improving relations with the Arab world also eased positive developments between Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia, which was concerned over Iranian dominance or possible Soviet threat in the Middle East, also preferred to develop positive relations with Turkey, which has a strategic location. Turkish statesmen (especially Prime Minister Özal) visited Saudi Arabia several times and met with Saudi officials to discuss Iran-Iraq War and economical relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia in the 1980s. Apart from that, military officials from both countries made reciprocal visits. Economical bonds between two countries were strengthened, while Saudi Arabia became a more important loan resource for Turkey, and Turkey became a more important market for Saudi Arabia during the era.

The positive climate between Turkey and Saudi Arabia continued in the early 1990s, where Turkey was on the same side with Saudi Arabia during the Gulf crisis. However, because of water dispute in the Euphrates-Tigris river basin and Syria's support to PKK, Turkey's relations with the Arab world started to worsen in the rest of the 1990s. Turkey's convergence to Israel during the same era was another negative factor for Turkish-Arab relations. On these issues, Saudi Arabia criticized Turkey and took sides

with other Arab countries. So it can be seen that deterioration in the relations between Turkey and Arab world affected Turkish-Saudi bilateral relations negatively, and that is in conformity with our main argument. Apart from that, new problems in Turkish-Saudi bilateral relations were triggered by February 28 military intervention -which was a negative factor for both Turkish-Arab and Turkish-Saudi relations- and the Ajyad Fortress crisis.



3. TURKISH-SAUDI RELATIONS BETWEEN 2002 AND 2015

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, bilateral relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia will be examined. We will underline the rise of Turkish-Saudi relations during the period, examine parallelisms of foreign policies by two countries on the Middle East, while mentioning important visits and events, and finally take a look at the effect of a much larger scaled event regarding Turkish-Saudi relations - the Arab Spring - which changed the whole region.

3.2. A New Beginning in Turkish-Saudi Relations

When Justice and Development Party (“Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi”) came to power in Turkey in 2002, it started a restructuring process in Turkey’s relations with Muslim countries. With JDP’s rule, relations between Turkey and Arab countries assumed a policy more of confidence building measures. In this context, some efforts are made to improve areas of cooperation between two sides.²²⁸ JDP also declared significant principles on its foreign policy, such as zero-problem with neighbors and maximum cooperation. Apart from that, it introduced a pro-active, dynamic and multidimensional foreign policy, which aimed at solving bilateral problems and to increase cooperation with other countries.²²⁹ Furthermore, the crises in Iraq, Palestine and Lebanon and their potential of expansion created an opportunity for Turkey to play a more active role in the subjects related with Arab world. The United States, which was trying to reshape the Middle East during this era, also supported increasing Turkish efficiency in the region and tried to benefit from it.²³⁰ JDP’s pro-active foreign policy vision which aimed at playing a more active role in Arab issues also helped its efforts to strengthen Turkish-Saudi bilateral relations, which is in harmony with our main argument.

²²⁸ Muhittin Ataman, “Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri: Temkinli İlişkilerden Çok-Tarafli Birlikteliğe”, *Ortadoğu Analiz*, September 2009, 75.

²²⁹ Muhittin Ataman, “Turkish-Saudi Arabian Relations During the Arab Uprisings: Towards a Strategic Partnership?”, *Insight Turkey*, Fall 2012, 124.

²³⁰ Nuri Yeşilyurt, “Orta Doğu’yla İlişkiler”, in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşı’ndan Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar Cilt III: 2001-2012*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim, 2013), 405.

Saudi foreign policy during the same era was influenced by a series of developments: 9/11 terrorist attacks and its negative consequences for Saudi-American relations, the possibility of a civil war and fragmentation in Iraq after the American invasion, increasing terrorist attacks and Shiites gaining strength in Iraq. These developments deeply influenced foreign policy of Saudi Arabia, so as a result, Saudis started to adopt a more active foreign policy on the subjects of Iraq, Palestine question, Lebanon, Syria and Iran.²³¹

With this new era, a brand new stage in Turkish-Saudi relations, which can be called as the golden age of Turkish-Saudi relations, embarked. Main events that affected the beginning of this new stage were US invasion of Iraq in 2003, collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, Al Qaeda's terror attacks that targeted Saudi Arabia and Turkey, and start of a new period of instability in the Middle East.²³² Especially struggle against transnational terrorism was a concern for both Turks and Saudis, so they both began to understand and recognize each other's political differences. In addition, due to the increase in mistrust between the West and Saudis after September 11 attacks, Saudi Arabia began to look for other countries to work with – especially in investment and economic cooperation. Turkey, as one of the fastest growing economies in the world as an emerging power in the Middle East, was regarded one of the best options for economic and political cooperation. Accordingly, Saudis started to evaluate Turkey as a regional military power that could balance regional threats and prevent instabilities. According to Saudi Arabia, Turkey could also increase bilateral trade and initiate joint projects with them.²³³

While Turkey chose a regional policy attempting to find a solution for regional problems via regional dynamics, Saudi Arabia adopted a regional policy that did not marginalize Turkey in the Middle East. Saudi officials thought that should Turkey be marginalized due to its increased regional initiatives, Ankara may get closer to Israel and to the West and may turn its back on the Middle Eastern countries. This would be against the interests of Arab world. Saudi administration also did not want to re-establish Turkish-Israeli alliance in the region. JDP coming to power and other internal and external

²³¹ "Suudi Arabistan Tarihi, 17.01.2011", Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı Cidde Başkonsolosluğu, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://cidde.bk.mfa.gov.tr/ShowInfoNotes.aspx?ID=121147>.

²³² Çağrı Erhan, "Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri", *Türkiye Gazetesi*, January 26, 2010, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://www.turkiyegazetesi.com.tr/prof-dr-cagri-erhan/431622.aspx>.

²³³ Muhittin Ataman, "Turkish-Saudi Arabian Relations During the Arab Uprisings: Towards a Strategic Partnership?", *Insight Turkey*, Fall 2012, 125.

developments contributed to the optimization and improvement of Turkish-Saudi relations since 2003.²³⁴

In January 2003, when Abdullah Gül was the prime minister, Turkey organized a meeting of six Middle Eastern foreign ministers and invited delegations from Iran, Syria, Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. The initial Turkish proposal was to organize a summit meeting of state leaders, but this idea was put down as to opposition of a few Arab countries.²³⁵ The meeting assembled on January 23 and Saudi Arabia was represented by Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal.²³⁶

Bilateral visits went on increasingly. Upon concerns of Turkey and Saudi Arabia about US invasion of Iraq, Turkish Prime Minister Abdullah Gül visited Saudi Arabia on January 11, 2003 and met with Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah, who would later become king, to create a common understanding among neighboring countries about Iraq. In this visit, mutual political will on improving bilateral relations was confirmed, and in this context the emphasis was laid on importance of senior-level visits. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal visited Turkey on April 2004. Before the 31st Session of Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in Istanbul, Turkish Foreign Minister Abdullah Gül came to Jeddah on May 2004 with Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, who was nominated as candidate by Turkey for office of secretary general of Organization of Islamic Conference, and met with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud and Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz. Turkish Minister of Internal Affairs Abdülkadir Aksu, visited Saudi Arabia between February 12 and 13, 2005, at the invitation of Saudi Minister of Internal Affairs, Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz. Aksu was also accepted by Crown Prince Abdullah. During the visit, an agreement of security cooperation was signed. As part of this agreement, a technical committee from Saudi ministry of the interior visited Turkey between May 28 and June 4, 2005 to discuss opportunities of cooperation on safety training.²³⁷

During the JDP era, one of the most important developments in Turkish-Saudi relations was Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz's visit to Turkey between August 8 and 10, 2006. This visit had a historical importance as King Abdullah was the first Saudi king

²³⁴ Muhittin Ataman, *Turkey and Saudi Arabia: Newly Discovered Partners?* (Ankara: SETA, 2012), 14.

²³⁵ Hasan Kösebalaban, *Turkish Foreign Policy: Islam, Nationalism, and Globalization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 175.

²³⁶ "Komşulardan son uyarı", *Hürriyet*, accessed July 11, 2015, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/haber.aspx?id=123718>.

²³⁷ "Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İkili İlişkileri-Siyasi ve Kültürel, 14.09.2008", Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı Riyad Büyükelçiliği, accessed April 21, 2015, <http://riyad.be.mfa.gov.tr/ShowInfoNotes.aspx?ID=121158>.

to visit Turkey after 40 years.²³⁸ Indeed, previously for many times Abdullah had planned to visit Turkey, but each time it was postponed.²³⁹ He took the decision to visit Turkey in 2006 as a gesture to the country that made senior-level appearance in former king Fahd's funeral. Foreign Minister Gül attended the funeral on behalf of Turkey and then, prime minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan went to Jeddah to express his condolences and extend good wishes to new Saudi king, Abdullah. Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer also sent a telegram of condolence to Abdullah.²⁴⁰

Before King Abdullah visited Turkey in 2006, both Turkish and Saudi officials made positive comments about the visit. For instance, Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud al Faisal said: "The secular character of Turkey will not be an obstacle on the way of forming a strategic partnership between Riyadh and Ankara". According to the prince, this would be the first visit of a Saudi king in 40 years and was expected to open a new chapter in bilateral relations. The prince also asserted that accession of Turkey to European Union would help the West have a better understanding of the Islamic world and contribute to resolving several issues. He further stated: "I believe that Saudi Arabia and Turkey can play a role at regional and international levels to reinforce world peace and stability." According to him, both sides were willing to strengthen political, economic and military bonds. He pointed out: "Ankara has taken important steps toward attracting foreign investment and Turkish and Saudi companies could establish alliances to enter European and Asian markets." He overruled the idea that different regimes of Turkey and Saudi Arabia would prevent them from becoming partners. Turkish international trade minister, Kürşat Tüzmen also made positive statements about the visit. He stated that Turkey and Saudi Arabia sought to boost commercial bonds. He said: "There are several plans in the pipeline like helping Turkish banks to open branches in Saudi Arabia and to help Turkish companies boost their presence and educating businessmen of the two countries to invest". In addition, he suggested: "The total Saudi-Turkish trade represents only seven percent of our global trade, which is quite minimal."²⁴¹

²³⁸ Veysel Ayhan, "Geçmişten Geleceğe Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri", *Ortadoğu Analiz*, November 2010, 30.

²³⁹ "Suudi Kral'dan Türkiye'ye tarihi ziyaret", CNN Türk, accessed April 21, 2015, <http://www.cnnturk.com/2006/dunya/07/11/suudi.kraldan.turkiyeye.tarihi.ziyaret/199656.0/index.html>.

²⁴⁰ "Suudi Kralı, 17 uçakla geliyor", Sabah, accessed April 21, 2015, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2006/07/28/siy111.html>.

²⁴¹ M. Ghazanfar Ali Khan, "Saudi-Turkey Relations Set for New Era", *Arab News*, August 8, 2006, accessed April 21, 2015, <http://www.arabnews.com/node/287530>.

On August 8, 2006, King Abdullah came to Ankara with 7 planes and a delegation of 300 people including Crown Prince Sultan Bandar bin Abdulaziz, Prince Muhammad bin Navaf and Prince Abdullah bin Fahd. In Esenboğa Airport, he was welcomed by Turkish foreign minister Gül. Then, Gül and King Abdullah went to the Çankaya Presidential Palace with the same limousine.²⁴²

President Sezer welcomed King Abdullah with an official ceremony. After national anthems were performed; Sezer and Abdullah reviewed the escort of honor. Then the two posed for the cameras, handshaking. Some of the participants to the ceremony were Turkish parliamentary deputy speaker, Ali Dinçer; foreign minister and deputy prime minister, Abdullah Gül; minister of state, Ali Babacan; finance minister, Kemal Unakıtan; minister of transport and communication, Binali Yıldırım and minister of health, Recep Akdağ.²⁴³

President Sezer carried out negotiations with King Abdullah in Çankaya Presidential Palace. Six agreements were signed between Turkey and Saudi Arabia²⁴⁴, on subjects such as health, road transportation and investment promotion.²⁴⁵ Sezer gave a dinner in Abdullah's honor. Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan; Chief of General Staff, Hilmi Özkök; Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gül; and a great number of invitees participated. In his speech before the dinner, Sezer reminded King Faisal's visit to Turkey in 1966, and expressed his happiness about hosting King Abdullah and his delegation in Ankara, 40 years after Faisal's visit. He also stated that a fair and extensive solution for problems in the Middle East was not yet to found, thus, Turkish-Saudi cooperation gained importance in this situation. King Abdullah expressed his gratitude for the sincere and friendly attitude towards him and his nation, and rendered that Saudi people were sharing his sincere feelings against Turkey. Additionally, he remarked their similar efforts in searching for a fair solution for Palestine problem like Turkey, as well as

²⁴² "Suudi Arabistan Kralı Abdullah 7 uçakla Ankara'ya indi...", Milliyet, accessed April 23, 2015, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2006/08/08/son/sonsiy13.asp>.

²⁴³ "40 yıl sonra ilk ziyaret", Hürriyet, accessed April 23, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/4886590.asp?gid=48>.

²⁴⁴ "S. Arabistan'la 6 anlaşmaya imza", NTVMSNBC, accessed April 23, 2015, <http://arsiv.ntv.com.tr/news/381685.asp>.

²⁴⁵ "Ankara protokolü", Hürriyet, accessed July 11, 2015, <http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/haber.aspx?id=4892160&tarih=2006-08-09>.

working for nuclear disarmament of the Middle East and believing in intercivilizational dialogue.²⁴⁶

Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made a visit to Saudi Arabia on October 8, 2006, at the invitation of the King Abdullah. In Erdoğan's delegation, there were also two state ministers - Mehmet Aydın and Ali Babacan.²⁴⁷ Erdoğan met with King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia in Jeddah. There, they achieved a consensus on the importance of deepening bilateral coordination between the two countries, and its value for solving the problems in the Middle East region. According to the diplomats that were keeping a close watch on Turkish-Saudi relations, Erdoğan's visit to Jeddah had the characteristics of a supplement for the dialogue aimed at establishing strategic relations, which was unprecedented in the past.

In Jeddah, security was the first issue on Erdoğan's agenda. In this context, security vacuum in many Iraqi cities and dangers arising from it came to the forefront during the visit. Erdoğan informed Abdullah about Turkish participation in United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) between Israel and Lebanon, and Turkish impact on Lebanon problem as well as regional security and stability.²⁴⁸

After the Jeddah visit, bilateral visits continued with an intense traffic. Between January 21 and 23, 2007, Saudi minister of health, Hamad al-Manaa visited Turkey at the invitation of his Turkish counterpart, Recep Akdağ. Between January 29 and February 1, 2007, members of Saudi-Turkish friendship group, consisting of some members of the Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia (formal advisory body of Saudi Arabia) and presided by Dr. Fahad al-Shamary, visited Turkey. This group was accepted by Turkish parliamentary speaker, Bülent Arınç and Turkish Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gül. In February 17, 2007, foreign minister Gül met with his Saudi counterpart, Saud el Faisal and on the same day King Abdullah accepted him. Between February 23 and 25, 2007, Erdoğan came to Saudi Arabia with the purpose of attending 8th Economic Forum of Jeddah. In February 24, he met with King Abdullah. Between May 28 and 30, 2007, Turkish minister of national defense, Vecdi Gönül visited Saudi Arabia at the invitation of

²⁴⁶ "S. Arabistan'la 6 anlaşmaya imza", NTVMSNBC, accessed April 23, 2015, <http://arsiv.ntv.com.tr/news/381685.asp>.

²⁴⁷ "Karşılıklı üst düzey ziyaretler, 14.09.2008", Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı Riyad Büyükelçiliği, accessed April 24, 2015, <http://riyad.be.mfa.gov.tr/ShowInfoNotes.aspx?ID=121160>.

²⁴⁸ "Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan Görüşmeleri Stratejik Ortaklık Yönünde Sürüyor...Kral Abdullah", Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başbakanlık Basın Yayın ve Enformasyon Genel Müdürlüğü, accessed April 24, 2015, <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/turkce/haber/trkiye-suud-arabstan-grmeler-stratejk-ortaklik-ynnde-sryor...-kral-abdullah-/19578>.

Saudi minister of defense and aviation, crown prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz. In this visit, Gönül met with Prince Sultan and also Saudi Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Prince Ahmed. Between June 18 and 20, 2007, Turkish minister of health, Recep Akdağ visited Saudi Arabia at the invitation of his Saudi counterpart, Hamad al-Manaa.²⁴⁹

In 2007, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia visited Turkey as part of a four-nation Europe tour including Britain, Italy and Germany.²⁵⁰ His aim was to congratulate the new Turkish president, Abdullah Gül, on his presidential election and to exchange views with Turkish authorities about the Middle Eastern peace process.²⁵¹ He arrived at Ankara with a delegation of 300 persons including government ministers, members of the royal family, bureaucrats, businessmen and his aides.²⁵²

President Gül welcomed King Abdullah at the airport and awarded him the State Medal of Honor.²⁵³ This token is given to foreign statesmen, who have built cooperation between their countries and Turkey as well as to former Turkish Chiefs of General Staff and presidents. King Abdullah was the eight foreign leader who was given this medal.²⁵⁴

In a ceremony held at Çankaya Presidential Palace, Abdullah granted President Gül with the King Abdulaziz Medal of the First Degree and awarded Prime Minister Erdoğan with the Abdulaziz Legion of Honor. During the visit, both countries emphasized the necessity to diversify and improve relations. Gül and Abdullah signed a memorandum of understanding for strengthening political and economic cooperation between Turkey and Saudi Arabia as well as a convention on the avoidance of double taxation. Turks and Saudis shared views regarding the Palestinian, Lebanese, Iraqi and Kurdish problems, and collectively opposed to both Iranian dominance in the Middle East and United States' intervention in regional issues.²⁵⁵

On 25 February 2007, on Pakistan's initiation, foreign ministers of seven countries assembled in Islamabad, Pakistan. Turkey was represented by foreign minister Abdullah

²⁴⁹ "Karşılıklı üst düzey ziyaretler, 14.09.2008", Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı Riyad Büyükelçiliği, accessed April 25, 2015, <http://riyad.be.mfa.gov.tr/ShowInfoNotes.aspx?ID=121160>.

²⁵⁰ "Saudi King Abdullah to receive state medal in Ankara visit", Today's Zaman, accessed April 25, 2015, http://www.todayszaman.com/diplomacy_saudi-king-abdullah-to-receive-state-medal-in-ankara-visit_126676.html.

²⁵¹ Muhittin Ataman, *Turkey and Saudi Arabia: Newly Discovered Partners?* (Ankara: SETA, 2012), 16.

²⁵² "Saudi King Abdullah to receive state medal in Ankara visit", Today's Zaman, accessed April 25, 2015, http://www.todayszaman.com/diplomacy_saudi-king-abdullah-to-receive-state-medal-in-ankara-visit_126676.html.

²⁵³ Muhittin Ataman, *Turkey and Saudi Arabia: Newly Discovered Partners?* (Ankara: SETA, 2012), 16.

²⁵⁴ "Saudi King Abdullah to receive state medal in Ankara visit", Today's Zaman, accessed April 25, 2015, http://www.todayszaman.com/diplomacy_saudi-king-abdullah-to-receive-state-medal-in-ankara-visit_126676.html.

²⁵⁵ Muhittin Ataman, *Turkey and Saudi Arabia: Newly Discovered Partners?* (Ankara: SETA, 2012), 16-17.

Gül. Other participating countries were Egypt, Indonesia, Malaysia, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. In the joint declaration published by seven countries, it was stressed that Palestine was the main problem in the region, and the necessity to resolve nuclear tension of Iran without using force was underlined. Moreover, in the declaration, a call for struggle against terrorism and extremism was made, and territorial integrity of Iraq and Lebanon was emphasized. Abdullah Gül warned about polarization tendency in Islamic world and pointed out the need for a better dialogue. Exclusion of Syria and Iran was seen as an effort to create a Sunni bloc, but Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan told Al Jazeera that by no means the meeting was intended to exclude any country.²⁵⁶

Strong relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia continued in recent years, as to multilateral and active foreign policies of two countries influenced one another to cooperate on regional and bilateral issues. Saudi chief of the naval forces, Admiral Fahd bin Abdullah Mohammed al-Saud and the head of Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia, Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Ibrahim al-Sheikh visited Turkey in 2009. In addition to official visits, the head of the Saudi Arabian Security Council, prince Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz al-Saud and prince Abdulaziz bin Mohammed bin Fahd al-Saud spent their holiday with their families in Turkey, the same year. Moreover, Turkish foreign affairs minister, Ali Babacan visited Jeddah with a delegation in September 2008 to join the first ministerial meeting of the High Level Strategic Dialogue Mechanism between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Turkey. It was the first regular consultation process between the GCC and a country. Babacan highlighted that institutionalization of relations with the GCC countries would serve joint interests and provide a basis for cooperation.²⁵⁷

On January 3, 2009, Turkish prime minister Erdoğan went to Saudi Arabia for a one-day visit. Vice president of JDP, Egemen Bağış accompanied him.²⁵⁸ Erdoğan met with King Abdullah and Abdullah held a dinner in honor of Erdoğan.²⁵⁹

President of Turkey, Abdullah Gül visited Saudi Arabia on February 2009. This was the first official visit by a Turkish president to Saudi Arabia after 19 years.²⁶⁰ Gül,

²⁵⁶ “Ortadoğu için Sünni dayanışması”, Radikal, accessed April 27, 2015, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=214031>.

²⁵⁷ Muhittin Ataman, *Turkey and Saudi Arabia: Newly Discovered Partners?* (Ankara: SETA, 2012), 17-18.

²⁵⁸ “Başbakan Erdoğan, Suudi Arabistan’a gitti”, Hürriyet, accessed April 27, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/10691794.asp>.

²⁵⁹ “Erdoğan, Arabistan Kralı ile bir araya geldi”, İhlas Haber Ajansı, accessed April 27, 2015, <http://www.ihb.com.tr/haber-erdogan-arabistan-krali-ile-bir-araya-geldi-49582/>.

who was welcomed at the airport by King Abdullah, was also the first president of a Muslim country to address the Consultative Assembly of Saudi Arabia.²⁶¹

In the first day of the visit towards evening, Gül met with Turkish businessmen. In the meeting presided by chairman of the executive board in TOBB and Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK), Rifat Hisarcıklıođlu, state minister, Kürşat Tüzmen; national defense minister, Vecdi Gönül; and minister of transport, Binali Yıldırım accompanied Gül. During the meeting, Gül stated that Saudi Arabia was the most important Gulf country and his visit was a return visit for King Abdullah's visit in 2007 to congratulate Gül. Gül also encouraged Turkish businessmen to do business with Saudi Arabia and wanted them to make Saudi Arabia invest in Turkey, in return.²⁶²

Gül also addressed the Consultative Assembly in Riyadh, where he indicated that Saudi Arabia was pursuing a positive policy, in an effort to ensure peace and stability in the region. He also asserted that division among Palestinians was the biggest barrier along Palestine's independence. Besides, he criticized terrorist actions of extremists and supported interfaith dialogue meetings of the King.²⁶³

Those days during Gül's visit was when Turkey's policy on Palestine was rendering great excitement and support from Arab world. Gül's visit was also a response to allegations about a Turkish convergence to Iran, as Gül explained his support to Arab initiative in solving Arab-Israeli conflict. In this way, he showed that he was standing by Arabs, not Iran.²⁶⁴

Between January 1 and 3, 2009, Turkish foreign minister Ahmet Davutođlu visited Saudi Arabia at the invitation of Saudi foreign minister, prince Saud al-Faisal. Davutođlu was accepted by King Abdullah and met with prince Saud al-Faisal; secretary-general of Organization of the Islamic Conference, Ekmeleddin İhsanođlu; and head of the Islamic Development Bank, Ahmad Mohammed Ali Madani.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁰ Çađrı Erhan, "Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri", *Türkiye Gazetesi*, January 26, 2010, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://www.turkiyegazetesi.com.tr/prof-dr-cagri-erhan/431622.aspx>.

²⁶¹ Muhittin Ataman, *Turkey and Saudi Arabia: Newly Discovered Partners?* (Ankara: SETA, 2012), 18.

²⁶² Vahap Munyar, "Suudi Arabistan'la iş yapın tek tek takipçisi olacağım", *Hürriyet*, February 5, 2009, accessed April 27, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/10930427.asp>.

²⁶³ "Gül: Terörle işimiz olmadı", *Hürriyet*, accessed April 27, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/10923829.asp?gid=233>.

²⁶⁴ Veysel Ayhan, "Suudi Arabistan-Türkiye İlişkileri", *International Middle East Peace Research Center*, July 10, 2012, accessed April 27, 2015, <http://www.impr.org/en/suudi-arabistan-turkiye-iliskileri/#.VT4pJCHtlBc>.

²⁶⁵ "Ocak", Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışışleri Bakanlığı, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/ocak.tr.mfa>.

Erdoğan visited Saudi Arabia between January 19 and 20, 2010.²⁶⁶ After the dinner held by King Abdullah in Riyadh, Erdoğan went to Jeddah. On the plane to Jeddah, he was accompanied by his wife, Emine Erdoğan; state minister, Zafer Çağlayan; foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu; finance minister, Mehmet Şimşek; minister of energy and natural resources, Taner Yıldız; and president of Prime Ministry Investment Support and Promotion Agency, Alpaslan Korkmaz. Erdoğan and his delegation were welcomed by secretary-general of Organization of the Islamic Conference, Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu; Turkish consul general to Jeddah, Salih Mutlu Şen and governor of Jeddah, prince Mishaal bin Majid.²⁶⁷ In the meeting which was held in Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Riyadh, Erdoğan addressed Turkish and Saudi businessmen. He further indicated their appreciation towards Saudi contributions to regional peace and stability. He also stated that distances between regional countries cannot prevent them from being brothers because things that made these countries brothers were common history, belief, culture, tradition, destiny and ideals. Additionally, Erdoğan remarked that Turkey will be happy when Saudi Arabia is happy, and will be sad when Saudi Arabia is sad.²⁶⁸ Upon ending of 3-day visit, Erdoğan left Saudi Arabia.²⁶⁹

Between January 19 and 22, 2010, Saudi minister of health, Dr. Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz al-Rabeeah, visited Turkey at the invitation of Turkish minister of health, Recep Akdağ.²⁷⁰

The most important event of Turkish-Saudi relations during 2010 was Erdoğan receiving of King Faisal International Prize. This prize was given Erdoğan due to his services to Islam; such as, Erdoğan's courageous conduct towards president of Israel, Peres, during the Davos meeting in 2009.²⁷¹ To receive the prize, Erdoğan went to Riyadh between March 8 and 9, 2010.²⁷² King Abdullah himself handed the prize to Erdoğan in the ceremony. Erdoğan stated that he was receiving the prize in the name of Turkish

²⁶⁶ "Ocak", Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/ocak.tr.mfa>.

²⁶⁷ "Başbakan Erdoğan, Suudi Arabistan'da", Hürriyet, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/13527498.asp>.

²⁶⁸ "Suudi Arabistan'ı da Önemsiyoruz", Cumhuriyet, accessed April 29, 2015, http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/diger/113768/_Suudi_Arabistan_i_da_onemsiyoruz_.html.

²⁶⁹ "Başbakan Erdoğan, Suudi Arabistan'dan ayrıldı", Hürriyet, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/13539021.asp>.

²⁷⁰ "Ocak", Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/ocak.tr.mfa>.

²⁷¹ Muhittin Ataman, *Turkey and Saudi Arabia: Newly Discovered Partners?* (Ankara: SETA, 2012), 18.

²⁷² "Erdoğan, Suudi Arabistan'a Gidecek", Zaman, accessed April 29, 2015, http://www.zaman.com.tr/politika_erdogan-suudi-arabistana-gidecek_956915.html.

nation. He thanked King Faisal Foundation and King Abdullah saying he would carry this prize with honor as long as he breathes.²⁷³

3.3. Revival of Economic Relations Between Turkey and Saudi Arabia

During the JDP era, a revival in economic relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia draws attention. For example, the two countries signed a treaty establishing the Turkish-Saudi Business Council in 2003. In May 2005, Turkey and Saudi Arabia agreed on establishing an investment fund with the purpose of encouraging private and governmental investments from the Gulf countries in Turkey, which was to be governed by an international body and coordinated by the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce and the Jeddah Chamber of Trade and Commerce. Apart from that, during King Abdullah's visit to Turkey in 2006, Turkish and Saudi businessmen and entrepreneurs signed many investment agreements. During the visit, businessmen from the two countries exchanged information on investment opportunities and generally improved commercial relations, which paved the way for Saudi public and private institutions to invest \$25 billion in energy, finance, tourism and petroleum chemicals industry and communications in Turkey. Apart from that, after his meeting with King Abdullah, Erdoğan stated that Turkish businessmen and companies handled about \$30 billion in projects in Saudi Arabia at that time. The visit of 32.000 businessmen and tourists to Turkey in 2005 also showed the increasing interest by Saudis to Turkey. Just before the global economic crisis, bilateral trade volume between Turkey and Saudi Arabia increased to more than \$5.5 billion.²⁷⁴

Partnership between the leading companies from Turkey and Saudi Arabia is another important side of the strengthening bilateral economic bonds between the two country. For example, the National Commercial Bank, the largest bank in Saudi Arabia, paid \$1.8 billion and acquired 60 percent of the shares of the Turkey Finance Participation Bank, owned by the Ülker and Boydak groups. Furthermore, the Turkish construction firm Yüksel Construction was awarded the Saudi Arabia Eastern Region Water Pipeline Project tender of \$372 million in March 2008. Ziraat Bank from Turkey was granted fully

²⁷³ "Erdoğan ödülünü aldı", *Gazete Vatan*, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.gazetevatan.com/erdogan-odulunu-aldi-292545-gundem/>.

²⁷⁴ Muhittin Ataman, "Turkish-Saudi Arabian Relations During the Arab Uprisings: Towards a Strategic Partnership?", *Insight Turkey*, Fall 2012, 125-126.

authorized banking license in 2008 and announced that it would establish seven branches in Saudi Arabia in addition to its first branch in Jeddah.²⁷⁵

There were 173 Saudi firms working in Turkey and they had a direct investment of 1.3 million dollars in Turkey by 2010.²⁷⁶ By 2012, number of Saudi firms in Turkey increased to 200.²⁷⁷

Table2. Turkish-Saudi Bilateral Trade (1000 \$)

Years	Export	Import	Volume
2002	554.643	793.790	1.348.433
2003	740.341	967.863	1.708.204
2004	768.369	1.231.507	1.999.876
2005	961.464	1.888.577	2.850.041
2006	982.809	2.244.670	3.227.479
2007	1.486.277	2.439.988	3.926.265
2008	2.197.152	3.322.455	5.519.607
2009	1.770.956	1.686.728	3.457.684
2010	2.217.646	1.380.601	3.598.247
2011	2.763.476	2.001.529	4.765.005
2012	3.677.732	2.171.061	5.848.793

Source: “Suudi Arabistan Ülke Bülteni Mart 2014”, Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu, accessed June 8, 2015, http://www.deik.org.tr/KonseyIcerik/5633/Suudi_Arabistan_%C3%9Clke_B%C3%BClteni_2014.html.

3.4. Effects of the Arab Spring on Turkish-Saudi Relations

During the Arab Spring -a series of anti-government protests and rebellions in the Middle East that started in 2011-, policies of Turkey and Gulf countries on the Middle East were still in harmony. Especially with increasing bilateral visits starting from the second half of 2011, coordination was ensured in approaches of both sides to Syria and Libya.

Turkey reacted differently to anti-regime protests in Bahrain in comparison to the ones in Syria. Bahrain was the most affected country from the Arab Spring in the Gulf.

²⁷⁵ Muhittin Ataman, “Turkish-Saudi Arabian Relations During the Arab Uprisings: Towards a Strategic Partnership?”, *Insight Turkey*, Fall 2012, 128-129.

²⁷⁶ Çağrı Erhan, “Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri”, *Türkiye Gazetesi*, January 26, 2010, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://www.turkiyegazetesi.com.tr/prof-dr-cagri-erhan/431622.aspx>.

²⁷⁷ Fuad Ferhavi, “Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri ve Ortak Stratejik Derinlik”, *Usak Analist Dergisi*, March 2012, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.usakanalist.com/detail.php?id=516>.

After Shiites in Bahrain revolted against Sunni monarchy in February 2011, their movement was quelled by the military intervention of Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates in March 2011. With the exception of prime minister Erdoğan's sentence "We do not want to live a new Karbala", Turkey's reaction to the military intervention in Bahrain was mild. A few days after Erdoğan's statement, he claimed to be misunderstood and that he actually implied Libya, not Bahrain. Consequently, Turkey contented itself with advising Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Iran to keep them away from deepening the crisis.²⁷⁸

It should be noted that Turkey and Saudi Arabia did not agree with each other every time during the Arab Spring. While Saudi Arabia voiced support for former Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarek until his last day in power, Turkey was one of the first countries which asked Mubarak to "listen the will of the shouting people" in Tahrir Square, Cairo.²⁷⁹ However, events in Syria and Libya revealed the harmony between Turkey and Saudi Arabia.²⁸⁰ When uprisings in Syria began, Turkey and Saudi Arabia went through a series of consultations about Syria. Saudi Arabia also consulted Turkey prior to withdrawing its ambassador from Syrian capital, Damascus.²⁸¹

On May 20, 2013, Saudi Crown Prince, Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud visited Turkey. After his arrival in Ankara, Prince Salman said: "It is my pleasure to express my joy at this visit and to pass the greetings of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al Saud, to his brother Abdullah Gül, the President of Turkey, as well as to the prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and his wishes for further progress and prosperity of the brotherly Turkish people. The two historic visits of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to Turkey in 2006 and 2007 represented a significant shift in all fields and on all levels in the Saudi-Turkish relations. I would like to express our thanks and gratitude for the warm reception that reflect the depth of our countries' fraternal, historic and cultural ties. I pray to God to guide us to the well-being of our peoples,

²⁷⁸ Nuri Yeşilyurt, "Orta Doğu'yla İlişkiler", in *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşı'ndan Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar Cilt III: 2001-2012*, ed. Baskın Oran (İstanbul: İletişim, 2013), 437.

²⁷⁹ Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi, "Turkey and Saudi Arabia: the buildup to Syria by Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi", *Today's Zaman*, August 18, 2011, accessed April 29, 2015, http://www.todayszaman.com/op-ed_turkey-and-saudi-arabia-the-buildup-to-syria-by-sultan-sooud-al-qassemi-_254174.html.

²⁸⁰ Fuad Ferhavi, "Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri ve Ortak Stratejik Derinlik", *Usak Analist Dergisi*, March 2012, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.usakanalist.com/detail.php?id=516>.

²⁸¹ Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi, "Turkey and Saudi Arabia: the buildup to Syria by Sultan Sooud Al Qassemi", *Today's Zaman*, August 18, 2011, accessed April 29, 2015, http://www.todayszaman.com/op-ed_turkey-and-saudi-arabia-the-buildup-to-syria-by-sultan-sooud-al-qassemi-_254174.html.

countries and the Islamic ummah.”²⁸² Then, Prince Salman met with Turkish defense minister, İsmet Yılmaz. According to the Saudi Press Agency, Salman and Yılmaz “reviewed military cooperation relations between the two countries and ways of enhancing them and discussed the latest developments at the regional and international arenas”. Salman also exchanged cordial talks and views with Turkish foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu, on the latest developments in the Middle East, including the position of each country as well as discussing aspects of bilateral relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia and ways of enhancing them in all fields. Turkish President Abdullah Gül held a luncheon in honor of the crown prince, which was attended by the Saudi delegation and senior Turkish ministers.²⁸³

During the Arab Spring, Ankara and Riyadh managed to cooperate on certain fields, but a disagreement between the two revealed itself when Egypt’s first democratically elected president Mohamed Morsi was overthrown by General Abdul Fatah al-Sisi in mid-2013. Morsi had close ties with Turkish leadership during his presidency, and he was supported by Turkey after he was ousted. However, Saudi Arabia regarded the Muslim Brotherhood, which had also Morsi as one of its members, as a terrorist organization.²⁸⁴ This arose from differences of both Turkish and Saudi sides in approach to the issue of Egypt. Turkish government was in favor of a region ruled by Muslim Brotherhood parties, which were looking up to Turkey for guidance. Still, Saudi Arabia, together with Jordan, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates supported the military coup against the Muslim Brotherhood, as Saudis disliked the idea of an Islamic democracy led by the Brotherhood. They considered it to be tumultuous and destabilizing.²⁸⁵

Turkish-Saudi disagreement on Egyptian coup could be seen in statements of officials from both sides. After Egyptian security forces opened fire on pro-Muslim Brotherhood protesters, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia made a statement about the issue on August 16, 2013. He said that they were supporting Egypt against “terrorism” and he

²⁸² “Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Visits Turkey”, *Asharq Al-Awsat*, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.aawsat.net/2013/05/article55302691/saudi-arabias-crown-prince-visits-turkey>.

²⁸³ “Saudi Arabia and Turkey announce defense cooperation”, *Al Arabiya News*, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2013/05/22/Saudi-Arabia-and-Turkey-announce-defense-cooperation.html>.

²⁸⁴ Sinem Cengiz, “The benefits of a stronger Saudi-Turkish relationship”, *Al Arabiya News*, February 27, 2015, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2015/02/27/The-benefits-of-a-stronger-Saudi-Turkish-relationship.html>.

²⁸⁵ Soner Çağaptay and Parag Khanna, “Middle East reconfigured: Turkey vs. Iran vs. Saudi Arabia”, *CNN*, September 13, 2013, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/09/13/opinion/khanna-cagaptay-turkey-iran-saudi-arabia/>.

called all Egyptians and Arabs on banding together against efforts for destabilization of their countries. 24 hours later, in his speech during a ceremony, Turkish prime minister Erdoğan objected to the pointing pro-MB protesters as terrorists, and claimed Egypt to perform state terrorism. While King Abdullah declared that they were against interference of foreign countries in Egypt's internal affairs, Erdoğan stated his unlikeliness to remain silent to Egypt. Erdoğan also underlined that no one was in favor of Morsi except Qatar and Turkey and defined this as hypocrisy. He also accused the countries which made 16 million dollar aid to Egypt's military regime of being partners of military rule. Saudi Arabia was among the countries that provided the aid.²⁸⁶

Despite the fact that Turkey and Saudi Arabia were challenging each other in Egypt, where Turkey was supporting Morsi and Saudi Arabia was supporting al-Sisi, they continued to unite against Iran in Syrian problem. Still, they were supporting different camps in the Syrian opposition.²⁸⁷

Bilateral visits continued between the two countries. Saudi foreign minister, prince Saud al-Faisal met with his Turkish counterpart, Ahmet Davutoğlu, on August 28, 2013, to discuss developments in Syria. Davutoğlu's visit to Saudi Arabia took place as Britain had said it would present a draft resolution to the United Nations Security Council urging "all necessary measures" to protect civilians in Syria, and the United States and its allies built their case for military action against Syrian regime over alleged chemical weapons attacks. Both Turkey and Saudi Arabia were in favor of an international action after the suspected chemical strikes on August 21, which are said to have killed hundreds in Syria. Davutoğlu called the chemical attack as a crime against humanity, and asserted that it must not go unpunished. On August 26, he said Turkey would join an international coalition against Syrian regime, even if the United Nations Security Council failed to reach a consensus. On August 27, prince Saud also had called for a "firm and serious" action against the Syrian regime over the alleged chemical strikes.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ Sedat Ergin, "Erdoğan Suudilerle köprüleri atıyor", *Hürriyet*, August 20, 2013, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/24552407.asp>.

²⁸⁷ Soner Çağaptay and Parag Khanna, "Middle East reconfigured: Turkey vs. Iran vs. Saudi Arabia", *CNN*, September 13, 2013, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/09/13/opinion/khanna-cagaptay-turkey-iran-saudi-arabia/>.

²⁸⁸ "Saudi, Turkey foreign ministers discuss Syria", *Al Arabiya News*, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2013/08/28/Saudi-Turkey-foreign-ministers-discuss-Syria.html>.

On October 12, 2013, Turkish president Abdullah Gül left Turkey to perform hajj in Saudi Arabia.²⁸⁹ He was invited by King Abdullah. Gül and his wife, Hayrünisa Gül, were welcomed by Amir Prince Faisal bin Salman bin Abdulaziz of Madinah; Turkish ambassador to Riyadh, Ahmet Muhtar Gün; Turkish consul general to Jeddah, Fikret Özer; Mayor of Madinah, Abdulaziz al-Husein; and other officials at Madinah Airport. After that, Gül visited the Prophet's Mosque. He later attended the luncheon hosted by Amir Prince Faisal in his honor, where he met with the officials of Madinah. Thereafter, Gül proceeded to Mecca. He met with both Saudi senior officials, and the heads of state who were visiting Saudi Arabia to perform hajj.²⁹⁰ In Mecca, he performed hajj, conducted several high level bilateral talks, and celebrated Eid al-Adha with Turkish pilgrims.²⁹¹ During his visit, Gül also visited the Turkish frigate TCG Gökusu during his time in Jeddah, and praised the Turkish naval officers for their efforts in preventing piracy in the Gulf of Aden. While exchanging Eid al-Adha greetings with TCG Gökusu crew, he said: "I am very happy and proud to be visiting you and our ship in the waters of Saudi Arabia, today."²⁹²

Apart from Egypt, another area of conflict between Turkey and Saudi Arabia became Libya. After the fall of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, central authority in Libya has been weak. Libya became an arena of struggle between rival militias and other factions. Libyan army had far less control than the militias who led the rebellion against Gaddafi and have dominated Libya afterwards. General Khalifa Haftar, an exiled opposition leader before the civil war and a prominent figure of Libya after his return to the country in 2011, began an assault against Islamist Ansar al-Sharia in May 2014. He declared the offensive "Operation Dignity" and broadened it so that it was against all Islamist factions in Libya. Many of the Islamist militias that fighting Haftar united under an alliance called "the Dawn of Libya". United Arab Emirates, which was concerned about role of Islamist movements in Libya, launched two airstrikes against Islamists in Libya in August 2014. Emirati planes used Egyptian bases as a launch pad for the airstrikes. Saudi Arabia was among the

²⁸⁹ "Turkey treats relations with Saudi Arabia strategically", Today's Zaman, accessed April 30, 2015, http://www.todayszaman.com/diplomacy_turkey-treats-relations-with-saudi-arabia-strategically_329180.html.

²⁹⁰ "President Gül in Saudi Arabia", Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://www.tcgb.gov.tr/news/397/87396/president-gul-in-saudi-arabia.html>.

²⁹¹ "President Gül Meets with Turkish Pilgrims in Mecca", *abdullahgul.gen.tr*, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://www.abdullahgul.gen.tr/news/397/87409/president-gul-meets-with-turkish-pilgrims-in-mecca.html>.

²⁹² "Turkey treats relations with Saudi Arabia strategically", Today's Zaman, accessed April 30, 2015, http://www.todayszaman.com/diplomacy_turkey-treats-relations-with-saudi-arabia-strategically_329180.html.

countries who supported this act.²⁹³ While Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the Emirates were among the supporters of Haftar, Turkey preferred to support Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Justice and Construction Party since it was first established in March 2012. Turkey's support for the Brotherhood throughout the Middle East annoyed most of the Gulf States including Saudi Arabia –as we mentioned before- contributed to a broader opposition to the JCP in Libya. However, Qatar preferred to take sides with Turkey and the two supported the Libya Dawn Coalition.²⁹⁴ In response to this, in June 2014, Haftar accused Turkey and Qatar of supporting “terrorism” and urged all citizens of Turkey and Qatar to leave Libya within 48 hours.²⁹⁵

3.5. New Leadership in Saudi Arabia and Turkish-Saudi Relations

As we mentioned before, during King Abdullah's reign, Saudi Arabia was against Muslim Brotherhood parties gaining influence in the region, as Riyadh feared an Islamist democratic model to dominate in the Middle East. That is why Saudis backed the military coup led by al-Sisi on July 3, 2013. Riyadh's aim was to eradicate the Brotherhood from the Middle Eastern landscape. However, after King Abdullah's death, the new Saudi leadership moved its priorities away from the Brotherhood and focused on Iranian influence in the region.²⁹⁶ This would be a factor to a change for the better in Turkish-Saudi relations, which were damaged from different policies of two parties in Egypt.

When King Abdullah passed away in January 23, 2015, President Erdoğan sent a message of condolence to Saudi Arabia. In his message, Erdoğan reminded that Abdullah tried so hard to solve problems of Islamic world and asserted that they would remember his contributions to the strengthening of the relations with gratitude. He also stated that he made the decision to visit Riyadh because of Abdullah's death, and after that, he would go

²⁹³ Ishaan Tharoor and Adam Taylor, “Here are the key players fighting the war for Libya, all over again”, *The Washington Post*, August 27, 2014, accessed April 30, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/08/27/here-are-the-key-players-fighting-the-war-for-libya-all-over-again/>.

²⁹⁴ Aaron Stein, “Turkey's Proxy War in Libya”, *War on the Rocks*, January 15, 2015, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://warontherocks.com/2015/01/turkeys-proxy-war-in-libya/>.

²⁹⁵ “Renegade general urges Turks, Qataris to leave east Libya”, Reuters, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/06/22/us-libya-security-idUSKBN0EX0DV20140622>.

²⁹⁶ Majed Azzam, “Saudi-Turkish alliance: will it change the region?”, *al-Araby al-Jadeed English*, April, 20, 2015, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2015/4/20/saudi-turkish-alliance-will-it-change-the-region>.

to Djibouti and Somalia as part of his program.²⁹⁷ Afterwards, he came to Riyadh and attended the funeral and performed the funeral prayer. After the end of funeral ceremony, he went to Djibouti by plane.²⁹⁸

After Abdullah passed away, the new king of Saudi Arabia became Salman bin Abdulaziz. Salman's era leaps to the eye as the era of a new recovery and to strengthen Turkish-Saudi relations. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's visit to Saudi Arabia is a good example.

Erdoğan came to Saudi Arabia at night in February 28, 2015. He was welcomed at King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah by governor Mishaal bin Majid and Turkish ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Yusuf Demirer. Erdoğan was accompanied by his wife, Emine Erdoğan; deputy prime ministers, Yalçın Akdoğan and Numan Kurtulmuş; economy minister, Nihat Zeybekçi; foreign minister, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu; journalists and businessmen.²⁹⁹ After Jeddah, Erdoğan visited the Kaaba in Mecca and performed umrah during the visit.³⁰⁰ Then, he went to Riyadh, where he was welcomed by the King Salman, crown prince Muqrin bin Abdulaziz, deputy crown prince Mohammed bin Nayef and top Saudi officials at Riyadh King Khalid International Airport. Erdoğan and Salman discussed "means of enhancing bilateral cooperation in various fields, issues of common interests and external developments, according to the official Saudi Press Agency."³⁰¹

Yemen is an important example of Turkish-Saudi cooperation on regional policies, where Iran-backed Houthi rebels took over the control of a big area. Both Turkey and Saudi Arabia considers Iranian influence in the Middle East as a problem. Riyadh is concerned over the Iranian influence on the Shiite population in Saudi Arabia and in Yemen, where a proxy war between Saudis and Iran continue. On the other hand, Turkey is troubled with Iranian policies in Syria and Iraq. The increasing influence of Iran in the

²⁹⁷ "Suudi Arabistan Kralı vefat etti", Habertürk, accessed April 30, 2015,

<http://www.haberturk.com/dunya/haber/1033881-suudi-arabistan-krali-vefat-etti>.

²⁹⁸ "Suudi Arabistan Kralı Abdullah son yolculuğuna uğurlandı", Hürriyet, accessed April 30, 2015,

<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/28028990.asp>.

²⁹⁹ "Leaders of Egypt, Turkey visit Saudi", İstanbulpost, accessed April 30, 2015,

<http://www.istanbulpost.com.tr/president-erdogan-in-saudi-arabia-in-bid-to-boost-bilateral-ties/>.

³⁰⁰ "President Erdoğan does umrah during Saudi Arabia visit", Doğan Haber Ajansı, accessed April 30, 2015,

http://www.dha.com.tr/president-erdogan-does-umrah-during-saudi-arabia-visit_886229.html.

³⁰¹ "King Salman and Erdogan hold talks in Riyadh", Al Arabiya News, accessed April 30, 2015,

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/03/02/Erdogan-arrives-in-Riyadh-for-talks-with-Saudi-king.html>.

region is a reason of convergence between Turks and Saudis.³⁰² As a matter of fact, when Saudi-led military intervention called “Operation Decisive Storm” started in Yemen, president Erdoğan expressed his support to Saudi Arabia, in March 26, 2015. In an interview by France 24, Erdoğan stated: “We support Saudi Arabia’s intervention.” He even remarked that Turkey may consider providing logistical support to Saudis based on the progress of the situation.³⁰³ In the interview, Erdoğan sharply criticized Iran. He referred directly to al-Quds brigade commander Qassam Soleimani, stating: “This person is someone I know very well...He is part of all operations being conducted in Iraq...What do they want to do? To further increase the power of Shia in Iraq.” He also added: “They want to fill the places vacated by [ISIS].”³⁰⁴

Erdoğan continued his criticism of Iran in a press conference and said: “Iran is trying to dominate region. Could this be allowed? This has begun annoying us, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries. This is really not tolerable and Iran has to see this.”³⁰⁵

3.6. Conclusion

During the JDP era, bilateral relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia which were increased in the 1980s and declined through the end of 1990s, started to render an important rise. Because when JDP came to power, it declared significant principles on its foreign policy, such as zero-problem with neighbors and maximum cooperation. Furthermore, it introduced a pro-active and multidimensional foreign policy, which aimed at solving bilateral problems and to increase cooperation with other countries. This foreign policy vision helped Turkey to improve its relations with the Arab world and apart from that, it led to a serious improvement in Turkey’s relations with Saudi Arabia, which is in harmony with our main argument.

³⁰² Sinem Cengiz, “The benefits of a stronger Saudi-Turkish relationship”, Al Arabiya News, February 27, 2015, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2015/02/27/The-benefits-of-a-stronger-Saudi-Turkish-relationship.html>.

³⁰³ “Erdoğan: Turkey may provide logistics support to Decisive Storm”, Al Arabiya News, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/03/26/Erdogan-Turkey-may-provide-logistics-support-to-Decisive-Storm.html>.

³⁰⁴ Svante E. Cornell, “Turkey and the Sunni Bloc: Ankara Adjusts Its Middle East Policies”, *The Turkey Analyst*, April 8, 2015, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/385-turkey-and-the-sunni-bloc-ankara-adjusts-its-middle-east-policies.html>.

³⁰⁵ “Erdoğan: Turkey may provide logistics support to Decisive Storm”, Al Arabiya News, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/03/26/Erdogan-Turkey-may-provide-logistics-support-to-Decisive-Storm.html>.

While number of bilateral visits by officials rose up and a revival in economic relations was detected, there were other milestone developments taking place in the history of Turkish-Saudi relations, such as King Abdullah's visit to Turkey or Erdoğan's gain of King Faisal Award. Since the Arab Spring began, two countries showed a stable alliance against Syrian regime, however, adopted different policies on Egypt after the military coup in 2013 and on Libya after internal conflicts in this country. Now, under new King Salman's rule, a consensus between Turks and Saudis revealed itself again in regional matters, and Yemen is a good example of that.



CONCLUSION

Turkey and Saudi Arabia, which were established at the beginning of the 20th century in the Middle East, had a long history of bilateral relations as old as their own existence. Both countries have similar characteristics like bearing an important position in the Middle East region and being allies of the United States of America. They also have differences that originates from their different sociological structures and religious interpretations.

Contemporary Saudi Arabia is the third state of the Saudis in the history. There were also two Saudi states which were established before it. First Saudi State, which was established based upon an agreement between the founder of Wahhabism and the leader of the Saudis in 1744, put up a fight against the Ottoman Empire - predecessor of the Turkish Republic - and was destroyed by Ottoman troops in 1818. A new Saudi state was established in 1821, which was limited only to Najd and was not seeking to expand its territories, thus, which came to an end by Ibn Rashid of Shammar tribe after 70 years of existence.

Third Saudi State, which was the core of contemporary Saudi Arabia, was established by Abdulaziz Ibn Saud in 1902. After a series of battles, Ibn Saud succeeded to capture an important part of Arabian Peninsula, which includes Ottoman territories. He got in contact with the British as well as developing good relations with them. When World War I embarked, he refused offers of the Ottoman Empire to join the World War I as an ally. After the decline of the Ottoman Empire, he completed his conquests by capturing Hejaz from Sharif Hussein - the man who led the Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire during World War I, and focused on developing positive relations with newly-established Turkish Republic. In 1926, when Ibn Saud declared himself as the King of Hejaz, the first country to recognize him was Turkey. In the same year, the Kingdom of Hejaz and Najd was also recognized as a sovereign country by Turkey, in the first instance. When the kingdom changed its name to "Saudi Arabia", Turkish Republic was the first to recognize and congratulate came from.

Turkey and Saudi Arabia continued to improve bilateral relations during their initial years. Turkey's attendance to the congress of Mecca and Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal's visit to Turkey in 1932 are notable examples. Despite their internal differences, common points in their foreign policies paved the way for positive relations between two countries.

During this era, there were only a few independent Arab countries (Saudi Arabia was one of them) and Turkey chose to develop positive relations with them.

During World War II, Turkish-Saudi relations did not make any progress, except some Turkish efforts to protect interests of third countries in Saudi Arabia. After World War II, Turkey's policy did not pay much attention to Arab world and Saudi Arabia. Turkey's convergence to the West after World War II is an important factor which affected Turkish-Arab relations negatively. Turkish-Saudi relations were also affected negatively in this context.

During the 1950s, Turkish-Saudi relations remained limited with two important topics: The Baghdad Pact and Turkish-Syrian conflict. Then, Turkish government decided to unite Middle Eastern states under an organization against the Soviet Union, and led to the establishment of the Baghdad Pact. However, except Iraq, none of the Arab countries chose to join this pact. Saudi Arabia was also among the countries which objected to this pact and preferred to support anti-Baghdad Pact campaign in the Arab world. Accordingly, the Baghdad Pact remained as an unsuccessful attempt in history. Moreover, in another important development in the Middle East - the Turkish-Syrian conflict - Saudi Arabia chose to hold a mediatory position. Syria's military agreements with the Soviet Union drove Turkey to regard Syria as a threat. High tension between Turkey and Syria reflected itself in a tension between the United States and the Soviet Union. However, King Saud of Saudi Arabia took initiative to reconcile Turkey and Syria. When King Saud made an offer to be the mediator, it was accepted by Turkey and refused by Syria. Thus, the mediation attempt did not achieve its goal as to Syria's refusal. Conflict between Turkey and Syria was resolved after unification of Syria and Egypt under United Arab Republic and Turkey's recognition of this new state. Saudi approach on both issues (the Baghdad Pact and Turkish-Syrian conflict) showed that Turkey could not maintain positive relations with Saudi Arabia while its relations with the Arab world was in a bad condition.

In the 1960s, Turkey's policy towards Arab countries started to change due to Turkey's problems with the West. For instance, Turkey did not receive the enough support expected from Western countries on Cyprus conflict. Also Khrushchev's efforts to normalize Turkish-Soviet relations were a factor in changing Turkish-Arab relations positively. Thanks to the change in Turkish foreign policy towards the Arab world, Saudi Arabia started to support Turkey in Cyprus conflict. Also for the first time, a Saudi king, Faisal visited Turkey in 1966. Two years after this visit, Cevdet Sunay became the first

Turkish president who visited Saudi Arabia. As it is seen, general improvement in Turkey's policies towards the Arab world reflected credit upon Turkish-Saudi relations.

After March 12, 1971 military coup, implementation of a foreign policy that was close to the United States was prominent for a short time. However, when Bülent Ecevit became prime minister, Turkish-Arab relations started to improve again, as Turkey had important economic problems at that time and was in need of the oil and loans of Arab countries. In this context, economic side of Turkish-Saudi relations started to improve during the 1970s. Turkish workers who went to Saudi Arabia and Turkish businessmen winning full-scale construction contracts there are two notable examples.

In the 1980s, as to regional developments, the two countries started to converge in comparison to older times. Bilateral visits rendered an important increase. The era of Özal's prime ministry was a period when Saudi Arabia's importance in Turkish foreign policy increased. Turkey's increasing interest in Arab countries during the 1980s also strengthened Turkey's bonds with Saudi Arabia, a fact which proves our main argument. Turkish-Saudi economic relations also gained new dimensions by introduction of Saudi companies to the banking sector in Turkey as well as Turkish use of Saudi loans in some important projects. In response to this, Turkish contracting companies in Saudi Arabia continued to be a source of foreign currency for Turkey.

The 1990s started with Turkish-Saudi cooperation on the Gulf crisis. Saudis supported Turkish government economically with the purpose of ensuring Turkish support to the struggle against Saddam Hussein. However, except President Demirel's visit to Saudi Arabia in 1993, rest of the 1990s was a time of rupture in Turkish-Saudi relations. Turkey's problems with Arab countries, which arised from Turkish-Israeli alliance and water dispute, affected Turkey's relations with Saudi Arabia negatively. Before, during and after the 28 February military intervention, official reports prepared by Turkish government agencies were accusing Saudi Arabia and some other Arap countries of cooperating with Islamists in Turkey. In 2002, demolishing of an old Ottoman fortress in Mecca caused an important crisis.

Justice and Development Party's rule, which started in 2002, opened a new page in the history of Turkish-Saudi relations. Improvement in bilateral relations during this era surpassed even the improvement in the 1980s, so a golden age started for Turkish-Saudi relations. Foreign policy vision of JDP attached importance to the improvement of Turkish-Arab relations, which would also affect Turkish-Saudi relations positively. US

invasion of Iraq in 2003, Al-Qaeda problem and instabilities in the Middle East paved the way for improved convergence in Turkish-Saudi relations, too. Increasing bilateral visits, which started with Turkish Prime Minister Abdullah Gül's visit to Saudi Arabia in January 2003, outnumbered the visits during the 1980s. King Abdullah's visit to Turkey in 2006 is a notable example, which happened after 40 years, since King Faisal visited Turkey. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, during his prime ministry, also visited Saudi Arabia many times. He was also granted a prestigious prize by Saudis: King Faisal International Prize.

The Arab Spring paved the way for Turkey and Saudi Arabia to cooperate on new areas. Both countries had a similar approach to the events in Libya (in beginning) and Syria. Especially on Syria, a consensus on supporting the opposition was rendered between two countries, despite the fact that the both were in support of different opposing groups.

First serious disagreement on a regional issue between Turkey and Saudi Arabia emerged because of the military coup which ousted Mohamed Morsi, president of Egypt. Turkey's leadership continued to provide support to him after he was ousted. However, Saudi Arabia was in favor of the leader of the coup, al-Sisi, and regarded the Muslim Brotherhood, one of the members of which was Morsi, as a terrorist group. Another disagreement between Turkey and Saudi Arabia showed itself on internal conflicts in Libya.

It should be noted that, despite their disagreement on Egypt and Libya issues, Turkey and Saudi Arabia continued to be on the same track in Syrian problem. Common attitude of Turkish and Saudi foreign ministers on the issue of chemical strikes on August 21, 2013 was a reflection of this fact.

After King Abdullah passed away on January 2015, Salman bin Abdulaziz ascended the throne. His era leaps to the eye as the era of a new recovery in Turkish-Saudi relations. Unlike his predecessor, Salman's priority on the regional issues is not the Muslim Brotherhood. He is mainly focusing on Iranian influence in the region, and this fact is an essential factor to improve the relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, which were damaged from different approaches of two sides to Egypt.

In the present study, we analyzed Turkish-Saudi relations from the late 19th century to 2015 within the scope of Turkey's relations with Arab world. Our main goal was to fill the gap in English literature about Turkish-Saudi relations while giving detailed information and to show the main parameter which has shaped the course of Turkish-Saudi relations during its long history. We detailed the relations between Turkey and Saudi

Arabia since the establishment of the Saudi Kingdom and tried to show that the two countries actually have a very long history of bilateral relations, while the course of these relations were not independent from developments in Turkey's relations with the Arab world. Learning this fact while examining the historical examples will help researchers who are interested in Turkey's foreign policy to discover an unknown side of it and this will make this thesis achieve its objective.



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