

Cultural Disputes in the Gulf: Saudi-Iranian Dynamics and the Role of International Organisations

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ABSTRACT: The research examines the cultural conflicts between Saudi Arabia and Iran in the Gulf. Such conflicts result from historical, religious, and ideological differences. Conflict is rooted in sectarian cleavages, political differences, and contrasting political systems. Research posits that tensions heightened following the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and that this impacted regional conflicts, resulting in proxy wars in Yemen, Syria, and Iraq. The research employed a qualitative method, encompassing a literature review and primary sources like UN and ICJ declarations. Saudi Arabia and Iran should engage in diplomatic negotiations to resolve disputes peacefully, resolve humanitarian crises, diversify their economies, and employ international mediation to establish confidence. They ought to approach international organizations for collaboration and resolve tensions in the Middle East through openness and collaborative enterprises.

KEYWORDS: Arabia, Cooperation, United Nations, Dynamics

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Introduction

The complex and delicate dynamics between Saudi Arabia and Iran have shaped the political and security landscape of the Middle East for the last four decades. Saudi Arabia has been a Sunni majority monarchy, and Iran has a Shia majority from Komini since the 1979 Iranian Revolution (Alam, 2017). The sectarian division of Suni Shia between Saudi Arabia and Iran can cause between both states is not only a conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran but also a conflict in the Middle East (Mamadkul, 2014). Concerned about Iranian expansionism and the need to curb the revolutionary influence from Tehran, Saudi Arabia backed Iraq in its conflict with Iran. The Sunni-Shia divide, with deep historical roots, has been exploited by both powers for geopolitical gain. The sectarian competition has led to conflicts like the civil wars in Syria and Yemen, where Saudi Arabia and Iran have backed opposing factions based on sectarian affiliations, deepening divisions and perpetuating cycles of violence (Al-Thubetat, 2024).

The Yemen conflict highlights the Saudi-Iranian contention and its impact on regional stability. Saudi Arabia supports the internationally recognized government against Houthi rebels, allegedly backed by Iran. The conflict has evolved into a sectarian proxy war, deepening sectarian tensions and escalating the divide between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The nuclear deal between Iran and world powers, including the US, has been a focal point of contention in Saudi-Iranian relations. Saudi Arabia views Iran as a strategic rival and perceives a nuclear-armed Iran as an existential threat to its security and regional hegemony. The US withdrawal from

the nuclear deal in 2018 further exacerbated Saudi Arabia's security concerns, as Riyadh finds itself caught in the crossfire of escalating U.S.-Iranian hostilities (Al-Thubetat, [2024](#)).

Saudi Arabia and Iran have been embroiled in rising U.S.-Iranian hostilities, with occasional diplomatic overtures and attempts at dialogue. Nevertheless, these temporary collaborations have not tackled the fundamental causes of mistrust and conflict between the two nations. The contention between Saudi Arabia and Iran is influenced by outside players with their geopolitical interests, with the United States significantly impacting the regional power dynamics (Al-Thubetat, [2024](#)). Iran has sought to challenge U.S. dominance in the region through asymmetric tactics, such as support for proxy militias and the development of ballistic missile capabilities. The intensifying contention has far-reaching implications for regional stability and global geopolitics, as it exacerbates instability, fuels humanitarian crises, perpetuates cycles of violence, and undermines efforts to achieve lasting peace and security. The relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran is complicated by a combination of historical, religious, geopolitical, and strategic reasons. Any substantial shift in their relationship would have profound implications for the Middle East and global geopolitics, underscoring the importance of understanding and addressing the root causes of their contention to promote peace, stability, and cooperation in the region and beyond (Al-Thubetat, [2024](#)).

Literature Review

Saudi Arabia and Iran's political relations have been debated since Saudi Arabia's formation in 1932 and an Iranian trade delegation's visit. Before the Islamic Revolution, both countries followed a bipolar foreign policy focused on supporting US interests and ensuring security. The discussion covered factors like oil, regional balance, Hajj, Arab and non-Arab confrontations, and the influence of political elites on bilateral relations. After the Islamic Revolution, the Islamic Republic faced opposition from Saudi Arabia, resulting in conflicting policies aimed at protecting the Al-Saud Kingdom. Domestic, regional, and international factors have always influenced the foreign policies of the two countries. Since the Islamic Awakening and increased instability in the Middle East, foreign policies have changed direction. This paper examines regional security, OPEC oil supply and pricing variations, takfiri backing, the Syrian crisis, Iran's nuclear problem, and the Hajj scenario. The most important foreign policies, objectives, and foundations of the two nations imply a competitive and combative relationship in the area (Moosavian et al., [2022](#)).

The murder of Saudi Shia Cleric Shaikh Nimr al-Nimr has sparked a foreign policy crisis between Saudi Arabia and Iran, continuing a long-standing contention that began with Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979. The contention derives from their quest for Middle Eastern hegemony and Muslim world leadership. Sectarianism has reinforced this contention, with the division of Sunni and Shia in state-level relationships and proxy war scenarios, particularly in Syria and Yemen. The execution of al-Nimr has raised concerns about its potential escalation to war between the two countries. However, it has confirmed their mutual rationality, focusing on supporting their allies rather than escalating confrontations. The consequences for Iran include a significant cut in diplomatic relations with Gulf States seeking economic cooperation, and the Hajj affair for Iranian pilgrims. Saudi Arabia has been blamed for human rights violations, particularly in the execution of Shaikh Nimr and the majority of Sunni terrorists. The most critical impact is a deeper sectarian division between Sunni and Shia in the region and its global expansion (Mamadkul, [2014](#)).

The United States and Saudi Arabia will interact going forward, given the strengthening ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran under Chinese sponsorship. The report focused on Saudi Arabia's collaboration with China in achieving reconciliation with Iran. The Arab Gulf and an explanation of the benefits to both parties, and what political stability in the Middle East may result from reconciliation. The study used the analytical rather than descriptive approach, a tool, and method for analysis, along with ancient sources and information that demonstrate the extent of competition between the two parties throughout history, as well as the historical approach to trace the course of historical profitable relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia (Al-Thubetat, [2024](#)).

In the post-colonial era, the conflict in Syria had been the worst of its type. Everybody has intervened in Syria, but most notably the regional giants, Saudi Arabia and Iran. Iran backed the regime, but Saudi Arabia had been aiding the rebels. Civilian rebellion that resulted in conflict formed a sectarian structure as a result of Iran's active involvement and its backing of those who fought for Bashar al-Assad. Unlike Iran, Saudi Arabia's rhetoric did not give the opposition the necessary backing; instead, it fanned the flames. As the Syrian conflict continued, tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran grew, leading to a cold war where both countries were fighting on the territory they desired (Alam, [2017](#)).

The 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, led by the Shi'ite ulema, significantly changed the relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The article examines the bilateral relations between the two countries since 1979, arguing that their contention in critical fields has affected their relationship. The contest between Iran and Saudi Arabia has been limited, allowing for a gradual reduction of tension and cooperation expansion in the late 1990s. However, the détente period ended abruptly after the 9/11 attacks, particularly the U.S. occupation of Iraq. The authors suggest that adopting a positive, proactive approach and relying on confidence-building measures can help diffuse ongoing tension and mutual suspicion, leading to the promotion of mutually beneficial policies and measures. Despite differences and difficulties, the authors believe that the two sides have the potential to explore practical ways to define shared interests, goals, and objectives (Sadeghi& Ahmadian, [2011](#)).

The relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran from 1929 to 2014 has been significantly influenced by pivotal events. This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of nearly a century of interactions and to elucidate how and why Saudi-Iranian relations evolved, focusing on the diverse factors that fostered either camaraderie or animosity. The objective is to identify strategies for enhancing this crucial regional partnership to promote stability and security across the broader area. Central to this examination is the profound impact of the Iranian Revolution on bilateral relations. The second chapter delves into the Iran-Iraq War and its repercussions for Saudi-Iranian ties. The third chapter analyzes the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which united Saudi Arabia and Iran against the shared threat posed by Saddam's regime. Chapter five discusses how reformist governance in Iran post-1990 facilitated a rapprochement, resulting in improved relations between the two nations. Finally, the sixth chapter scrutinizes the events and regional issues that shaped Saudi-Iranian relations from 2001 to 2014. The study concludes that Saudi Arabia's stance toward Saudi-Iranian relations has remained remarkably consistent since 1929. In contrast, shifts in Iran's government from secular to conservative have produced noteworthy changes in Iran's approach to these vital relations.

The elements that have shaped the strategies of Iran and Saudi Arabia in the Mideast region, emphasize the US influence and their political goals. It explores the recent divide between their positions and the obstacles and opportunities that exist between them. The increasing connections and foreign policies of these nations are resulting in a more profound transformation within the Mideast region. Globalization has made it unfeasible for any nation to exist in seclusion. The research presents a clear overview of the recent Gulf political landscape, which is contributing to a significant alteration in the scenario. The two countries in the Middle East hold distinct priorities and aims for regional peace and stability, rendering this qualitative study valuable in identifying their goals in addressing political turmoil and security challenges (Zehraa et al., 2018).

Research Methodology

The research employs historical, descriptive, and analytical approaches to proceed and draw a conclusion. The data collected would be analyzed using qualitative social science research techniques. Furthermore, the study incorporated secondary sources, such as expert opinions available on the internet. All the data given in this study are composed of released papers in print media, books, journals, and official reports of the organizations for instance secondary methods for the research were consulted and analyzed Cultural disputes in the gulf: Saudi-Iranian dynamics and the role of international organizations.

Historical Overview

Saudi Arabia and Iran, despite both being major players in the Middle East, have significant cultural and societal differences. In Saudi Arabia, the society is deeply rooted in conservative Islamic traditions, with strict gender segregation and adherence to Wahhabism. Meanwhile, Iran follows Shia Islam and has a more complex political system, blending theocratic elements with democratic ones (Mamadkul, 2014). These distinctions also encompass their methods of governance, foreign relations, and regional power. Saudi Arabia has close ties with the West, while Iran does not have any close ties with Western Countries (Jalal et al., 2023).

Cultural and Societal Differences between Saudi Arabia and Iran

Set of People	Saudi Arabia has Sunni majority people while Iran has Shia majority people living in it.
Gender Role	Saudi Arabia gave freedom to women, but Iran gave more freedom to women than Saudi Arabia.
Legal System	Saudi Arabia and Iran both have a legal system influenced by Islamic Sharia law, with civil elements, particularly in commercial and family matters.
Political System	Saudi Arabia's absolute monarchy is centralized, while Iran's complex political system combines theocracy and democracy, with the Supreme Leader and elected bodies.
Cultural Heritage	Saudi Arabia's culture is meaningfully shaped by Bedouin customs and Islamic legacy, whereas Iran's history is varied, merging ancient Persian empires, Islamic invasions, and modern-day progress.

Saudi-Iranian Ties Affect Global Alliances and Organizations

The relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran is really important for global groups and alliances. These conflicts can shake up the region's stability, making it tough for international efforts to promote peace and security. Since both countries are major players in the Middle East, their contention also shapes how other nations in the area team up (Ghasemi & Nasehi, [2019](#)).

For international organizations, navigating this complicated situation is no easy task. They have to balance their ties with both Saudi Arabia and Iran while considering their opposing interests. The proxy wars, particularly in Yemen, can lead to serious humanitarian crises. Often, global groups struggle to provide the help needed or to get peace talks going, which calls for some clever diplomacy and fresh ideas.

Saudi Arabia and Iran have both shown interest in nuclear technology, which has raised alarms over nuclear proliferation in the area. Preventing nuclear escalation necessitates global collaboration and diplomatic interactions between both nations. Saudi Arabia and Iran are significant oil producers, and their competition may influence global energy markets. Interruptions in oil production or shipping lanes caused by regional conflicts can significantly impact global energy security and economic stability (Sadeghi & Ahmadian, [2011](#)). Although Saudi Arabia and Iran both stand against extremist entities like ISIS, their animosity can hinder global counterterrorism initiatives. Collaboration between the two nations on security matters is restricted, hindering attempts to tackle mutual threats efficiently.

Figure 1



Source: Stimson Centre

The connection between Saudi Arabia and Iran has complex effects on global organizations and alliances, influencing regional stability, humanitarian initiatives, nuclear proliferation issues, energy security, and counterterrorism cooperation. Diplomatic involvement and multilateral strategies are essential for addressing and alleviating these obstacles.

Regional Stability

The competition of regional influence between Saudi Arabia and Iran have intensified regional tensions and added to instability in nations such as Yemen, Syria, and Lebanon. In Yemen, Saudi Arabia backs the government in its fight against Houthi rebels, resulting in a humanitarian disaster. The participation of outside parties, such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, has extended the conflict and complicated the path to a resolution. In Syria, Saudi Arabia has backed rebel factions aiming to topple the Assad government, whereas Iran has offered military and financial assistance. This has exacerbated the conflict, leading to significant casualties, dislocation, and damage to infrastructure. In Lebanon, opposing political factions receive support from Saudi Arabia and Iran, with Saudi Arabia favoring the Sunni-led Future Movement and Iran backing the Shia militia Hezbollah (Jalal et al., [2023](#)). This power struggle has led to political instability and intermittent violence, hampering attempts to uphold peace and stability. Successful mediation and diplomatic interaction are crucial for tackling the underlying issues of these conflicts and promoting discussions among the participating parties.

Alliance Dynamics

The competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran influences the alliances and collaborations of other nations in the Middle East, along with the strategies of international organizations active in the area. Numerous nations in the Middle East align themselves with either Iran or Saudi Arabia due to religious, political, or strategic factors. For instance, countries with a Sunni majority like Egypt, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) frequently back Saudi Arabia because of common religious ties and worries about the Iranian impact in the area. Countries like Iraq and Bahrain, which have mostly Shia populations, often have closer ties with Iran. This might be because they share similar religious views or to counterbalance the influence of Sunni countries. The same goes for non-state groups and militant organizations. For instance, Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen are pretty much seen as aligned with Iran, while groups like the Free Syrian Army in Syria get support from Saudi Arabia. All these relationships complicate things in the geopolitical scene and can lead to more instability in the region (Mohaddes, & Pesaran, [2016](#)).

In the realm of conflict resolution, international organizations should step in as mediators between factions backed by Iran and Saudi Arabia to facilitate peace accords. Similarly, during humanitarian crises such as the Yemeni civil war, entities like the United Nations must work in simultaneously with both Saudi Arabia and Iran to ensure the effective distribution of humanitarian aid while navigating their political differences (Alsultan & Saeid, [2016](#)). They need to have good diplomatic skills, be able to mediate well and know how to resolve conflicts if they want to help create a stable and cooperative environment in the region.

Humanitarian Concerns

The ongoing conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran, especially in Yemen, has led to a serious humanitarian crisis. People are facing food shortages, they're getting displaced, and access to basic services has become super tough. The situation is complicated, with bombings, blockades, and fighting making things even worse for everyone. International organizations are struggling to get help to Yemen due to these challenges and the dangerous environment, including issues with getting humanitarian aid and safety concerns. The ones getting hit the hardest are everyday people, especially kids and vulnerable groups. International groups must focus

on protecting them by pushing for adherence to humanitarian laws and making sure there are safe places, and the necessities people need (Coppi, [2018](#)). The proxy nature of the conflict severely obstructs mediation efforts and exacerbates the suffering of the Yemeni people. Yemen's path to long-term rehabilitation and growth will be a formidable challenge, necessitating the support of foreign organizations that must invest in infrastructure, healthcare, education, and economic development. To effectively tackle the humanitarian crises fueled by proxy conflicts, international organizations must synchronize their efforts. This includes diplomatic engagement, advocacy for humanitarian access, civilian protection, mediation in peace negotiations, and the implementation of comprehensive long-term reconstruction initiatives (Coppi, [2018](#)).

Nuclear Proliferation

Saudi Arabia and Iran's interest in nuclear technology raises fears about Middle Eastern nuclear proliferation. This might spark an arms race, aggravating tensions and heightening war risk. The existence of nuclear weapons might alter geopolitical calculations, perhaps encouraging Saudi Arabia and Iran to adopt strong foreign agendas (Russell, [2012](#)). The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) responsibilities have been enhanced. Addressing this issue involves international collaboration, diplomacy, verification, and regional stability. International institutions such as the International Atomic Energy Agency play an important role in ensuring compliance with nuclear safeguards and monitoring the peaceful use of nuclear technology. A comprehensive strategy is required to resolve security concerns, increase transparency, and promote regional peace and stability (Jalal et al., [2023](#)).

The development of nuclear energy in Saudi Arabia and Iran represents a key security challenge in the geopolitical scope of the Middle East, impacting global non-proliferation strategies as well as regional balance of power. This research analyzes the logic behind nuclear proliferation in the Gulf and looks at possible escalation scenarios along with multilateral risk-reduction strategies. Key concerns around pursuing nuclear options include security, status, and possible other escalatory pathways. Risks in the near term include the presence of breakout scenarios, attacks on nuclear facilities, and high-stakes or miscalculated conventional warfare. The shift to long-term risks may involve the acceptance of some states as nuclear-armed, the rise of additional nuclear-armed states, and the erosion of global treaties to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. Potential measures are imposition of IAEA safeguards, UN resolutions to cease proliferation, and funding aimed at. Recommended modifications suggest passive regional observation from non-aligned states alongside greater power guarantee assurances.

Energy Security

The contention between Saudi Arabia and Iran, both major oil producers, has significant implications for global energy security and economic stability. Here's an elaboration on how disruptions in oil production or shipping routes due to regional tensions can have far-reaching consequences:

- ▶ **Oil Market Volatility:** Any escalation of tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran, or in the broader Middle East region, can lead to increased volatility in global oil markets. Oil prices are necessary for geopolitical developments, and any perceived threat to oil production or transportation routes can cause prices to spike, affecting consumers, businesses, and economies worldwide (Mohaddes & Pesaran, [2016](#)).

- ▶ **Disruptions to Supply:** Saudi Arabia and Iran together account for a significant portion of global oil production. Any disruption to their oil production, whether due to direct conflict or indirect effects of regional tensions, can lead to supply shortages and impact global oil markets (Edwards, [2019](#)).
- ▶ **Impact on Global Economy:** Oil prices have a tremendous impact on the global economy, impacting production costs, inflation, consumer spending, and investment choices. Sharp increases in oil prices resulting from regional tensions can strain budgets, dampen economic growth, and contribute to economic instability, particularly for oil-importing countries (Mohaddes & Pesaran, [2016](#)).

The contention between Saudi Arabia and Iran poses significant risks to global energy security and economic stability. Disruptions in oil production or shipping routes due to regional tensions can lead to market volatility, supply shortages, and economic downturns, highlighting the importance of diplomatic efforts to mitigate conflict and promote stability in the Middle East. Additionally, efforts to diversify energy sources and reduce dependence on fossil fuels can enhance resilience to geopolitical risks in the long term.

Counterterrorism Effects

The contention between Saudi Arabia and Iran complicates international counterterrorism efforts despite both countries opposing extremist groups like ISIS. Here's how:

- ▶ **Limited Cooperation:** Saudi Arabia and Iran don't get along, and their different goals in the region make it tough for them to work together on important stuff like security and fighting terrorism. There's a lot of mistrust and suspicion between them, which makes it hard for both sides to share information and team up against terrorist groups.
- ▶ **Proxy Wars:** Saudi Arabia and Iran often support different sides in regional fights, leading to proxy wars in places like Yemen, Syria, and Iraq. These conflicts help extremist groups gain a foothold, making it tougher to fight against terrorism and keeping the region unstable (Russell, [2012](#)).
- ▶ **Diverted Resources:** The contention between Saudi Arabia and Iran can divert resources and attention away from combating terrorism. Both countries may prioritize efforts to undermine each other's influence, leading to a neglect of shared security threats posed by terrorist organizations.
- ▶ **Radicalization Narratives:** The contention between Sunni-majority Saudi Arabia and Shia-majority Iran contributes to sectarian tensions, which extremist groups like ISIS exploit to advance their radicalization narratives. Sectarianism fueled by regional rivalries can fuel recruitment and support for terrorist organizations (Zehraa et al., [2018](#)).
- ▶ **Regional Destabilization:** Tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran contribute to regional destabilization, creating ungoverned spaces and weak institutions that facilitate the activities of terrorist groups. The lack of a unified regional approach to addressing the root causes of extremism allows terrorist organizations to exploit vulnerabilities (Russell, [2012](#)).

Both Saudi Arabia and Iran oppose extremist groups like ISIS, their contention complicates international counterterrorism efforts by limiting cooperation, fueling proxy conflicts, diverting resources, perpetuating sectarian tensions, and contributing to regional destabilization. Effective counterterrorism strategies require addressing underlying geopolitical tensions and promoting cooperation among all stakeholders in the region.

Table 1

Role of International Organizations

Organization	Description
United Nations (UN)	<p>Through its agencies such as UNESCO and UNDP, the UN fosters cultural dialogue and understanding among nations. Moreover, it assists initiatives that seek to lower sectarian tensions in the Gulf region and fosters appreciation of cultural diversity.</p> <p>By emphasizing the conservation of intangible cultural heritage and the encouragement of cross-cultural activities, UNESCO acts as a neutral and respected international cultural exchange platform that supports diplomacy even among states with strained relations, for example, Saudi Arabia and Iran. The two countries have even indirectly engaged in the operation of the "Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage", which is administered by UNESCO. In 2010, the global institution of UNESCO together with the countries of Iran, Bahrain, and parts of eastern Saudi Arabia wielded its power such that it declared the Nowruz festival (Persian New Year) that occurs in Iran to be alongside the Gulf nations like Bahrain and eastern Saudi Arabia as a part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (Heritage & Rii, 2020). This demonstration of culture being identical became the channel for cooperative non-political and cultural diplomacy without being obliged to eliminate the political conflict; it also enabled them to explore other global cultural platforms. Thus, UNESCO's neutral platform becomes the opportunity for two cultures to coexist without having to create any tensions, bringing in the much-needed cultural exchange and mutual respect among the people within the regional tension (Heritage & Rii, 2020).</p>
Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)	<p>The OIC, as an organization representing Muslim nations includes both Saudi Arabia and Iran and has a pivotal role in fostering intra Muslim cultural and religious disputes. The organization frequently promotes togetherness and peaceful resolution of sectarian tensions, in particular, between the Sunni (Saudi) and Shia (Iranian) communities. The role played by the OIC, representing 57 Muslim-majority countries, is very significant because it can handle intra-Muslim cultural and religious disputes such as the Sunni-Shia conflict (Akbarzadeh & Ahmed, 2018). The OIC achieves this by serving as a platform for dialogue that addresses the tension between the two denominations and spreads a message of unity in the Islamic world. The OIC hurried to have an emergency meeting in Jeddah to call for restraint and open dialogue between the two nations. Additionally, the OIC is in the habit of hosting various interfaith and intra-faith initiatives like the International Islamic Conference on Peace and Moderation, which stands for the defying of sectarian narratives and the promotion of the concept of "Islamic solidarity" among its member states. These actions are the cause of a peaceful community and mutual respect between the different Islamic sects (Akbarzadeh & Ahmed, 2018).</p>

Organization	Description
Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)	<p>Albeit without Iranian membership, the GCC shapes Saudi attitudes and policies. The council sometimes concerns itself with regional security and cultural issues which impact the identity conflict and help promote a unified Gulf identity.</p> <p>Although Iran is not a part of it, the GCC with the SA, the UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman as its members exerts significant influence over the Saudi Arabian policy-making and the regional spread of ideas. The Council actively deals with the problems of the economy and security as well as humanitarian matters that are concerned with the identity creation in the Gulf. The GCC Cultural Strategy (2016–2026) is a case in point in this regard as it was developed to support the establishment of a shared "Gulf identity" based on similar language, heritage, and religious values and to resist the divisive voice of the sects and the ideological influences inside and outside the region, including Iran (Veicy, 2018). One example from the plan is the combined action in the field of educational reform, the establishment of media partnerships, and the organization of cultural festivals, such as the Annual GCC Cultural Festival, which sees literature, music, and traditional arts as the ambassadors of regional unity and diversity. Such initiatives are key to re-establishing the unity of the Gulf and consequently strengthening the intra-regional solidarity in the face of both external and internal sectarian challenges.</p>

Recommendations

- ▶ Saudi Arabia and Iran should prioritize diplomatic engagement and constructive dialogue to address underlying grievances and resolve conflicts peacefully. Direct communication channels and multilateral forums should be utilized to foster mutual understanding and trust-building measures.
- ▶ International efforts should tackle humanitarian crises in Syria and Yemen, focusing on aid, peace negotiations, and essential service delivery to alleviate suffering and promote stability.
- ▶ To reduce their dependency on oil, increase resilience, invest in non-oil industries, foster innovation, and enhance regional connectivity, Saudi Arabia and Iran should diversify their economies.
- ▶ To encourage peace and ease tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the international community, including powerful nations and organizations should step up mediation efforts.
- ▶ To build confidence and handle regional issues, Saudi Arabia and Iran must engage in conversation and diplomacy with the assistance of unbiased mediators or international organizations.
- ▶ Encourage communication and collaboration between Saudi Arabia and Iran by utilizing multilateral organizations such as the UN, the Arab League, and Organization of Islamic Cooperation.
- ▶ Through openness, exchange programs, and cooperative projects, address the underlying causes of Middle Eastern conflicts, advance social justice, and cultivate trust between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Conclusion

Saudi Arabia and Iran's contention has been a recurring problem in the Middle East since the Iranian Revolution in 1979. A combination of theological conflicts, divergent philosophies, and ambitions for regional hegemony are the root causes of this war. The Sunni-Shia conflict and economic competition, particularly in

the global oil market, have increased tensions. Despite communication attempts, these conflicts persist, contributing to the region's ongoing instability and violence. Addressing the root causes of this contention requires diplomatic efforts, confidence-building programs, and constructive communication. By lowering tensions and promoting cooperation, the region may achieve long-lasting peace and security. The contention between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which has its roots in religious, ideological, and geopolitical disputes, is the source of sectarian tensions, proxy conflicts, and power struggles in the Middle East. Because it protects the two most sacred places in Islam, Saudi Arabia supports Sunni Muslim movements around the world and encourages Wahhabism. Iran aspires to increase its influence among Shia people to offset Saudi Arabia's Sunni dominance. Significant barriers have stood in the way of efforts to achieve lasting reconciliation. Despite diplomatic attempts, animosity and mistrust continue to exist. For enduring peace and stability, regional and global participants must try to ease these tensions, promote cooperation, and increase understanding between parties. Effective diplomacy and conflict resolution techniques are necessary because the competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran complicates the dynamics of alliances in the Middle East. Addressing humanitarian concerns and promoting regional stability are necessary for managing these problems.

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