

Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Iraq Policies in the Post-Gulf War Era

Re-Thinking Foreign Policy Analysis in the Gulf at the Intersection of
Power, Interests, and Ideas

Dissertation zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades
an der Fakultät Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften,
Fachbereich Sozialwissenschaften
der Universität Hamburg

vorgelegt von

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Hamburg 2012

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Datum der Disputation: 27. Juni 2012

Das Promotionsvorhaben wurde gefördert durch ein Graduiertenstipendium der Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V..

Acknowledgements

Writing a doctoral dissertation is not a lonesome and insular undertaking. It involves many people to whom I owe my sincere thanks.

My first and special thanks go to my first supervisor, Prof. Dr. Cord Jakobeit, for his sincere and constant support, advice and confidence over the past years.

I sincerely thank my second supervisor, Prof. Dr. Michael Brzoska, for kindly reviewing my study on short notice.

I also thank Prof. Dr. Christian Martin (University of Hamburg) for his valuable scientific advice in the early stage of my work, Prof. Norrin Ripsman (Concordia University, Montreal) for discussing with me my theoretical framework, and Prof. Stephen Walt (Harvard University) for giving me valuable conceptual advice.

I have to sincerely thank the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung whose financial and academic support made this doctoral dissertation possible.

I thank the German Institute of Global and Area Studies (Hamburg), the Dubai School of Government (Dubai), the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (Berlin), the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (Abu Dhabi), the Gulf Research Center (Dubai), the Al-Qassimi Center for Gulf Studies (Sharjah), the King Faisal Foundation (Riyadh), and the Al-Nahda Philanthropic Society for Women (Riyadh) for their support and help.

I thank Johannes Reissner († pbuh) for his generous support and advice. I am grateful for the chance to have come to meet him and will remember him in deep respect.

I want to take this opportunity to thank A. Merabet (pbuh) for having taught me Arabic in a sustainable way and having made my master studies a lot more valuable and meaningful.

Many thanks go to Guido Steinberg for his comprehensive help and advice and Awadh Al-Badi for his generous help and hospitality throughout my stay in Saudi Arabia.

I also thank James Devine (Concordia University, Montreal), Derek Cooper (British Embassy, Bahrain), Thomas DeGeorge (American University of Sharjah), Rahman Ghahremanpour (Center for Strategic Research, Tehran), and Muhammad Mulla Salman (Delmon University, Bahrain) for sharing their time and views with me.

I am very grateful to all the people I interviewed and who patiently and openly shared their time, insights, opinions, and personal experience with me. In particular, I thank Hatoun Al-Fassi who introduced me to the female campus of King Saud University and the Faculty of Law and Political Science of King Saud University for allowing me to visit the male campus.

I thank Abdallah Askar, Saleh Al-Mani, Khalid Al-Dakhil, Souliman Toufik, Sulaiman Al-Hattlan, and Nicole Stracke for many fruitful discussions and conversations.

Warmest and countless thanks go to Amal and her family who hosted me in Dubai, introduced me to the local life, and shared old memories with me.

Many thanks go to my mother who strongly supported me through all stages of my project, to my brother, Till Omar, for giving me a ride through the Kingdom and joining me to Mecca, and to my father.

I thank Johannes v. A. for cheering me up, Rolf S. for his culinary treatment, Julia for the good community, Christina L. for her patient listening, Valérie H. for her valuable support, and Dalila for keeping in touch.

I thank Sandra, Natalie, Tina, Karolina, and Annette for the good memories we share.

Many thanks go to Andreas Wilhelm and Sandra Destradi for reviewing and proofreading major chapters of my work.

I am thankful to Capote, Auster, and Mahfouz who brought me through sleepless nights.

My special thanks go to André. He knows why.

To the people in the Middle East who shared their homes, ideas, and dreams with me, I dedicate this book.

Author's Notes

In order to serve the convenience of the reader, I have chosen a simplified phonetic spelling for the transcription of Arabic letters. When weighing correct phonetic transcriptions against reader-friendly spellings, I have preferred those spellings that are commonly used in English-language media and still offered a sufficiently accurate transcription.

For more specific terms, a correct transcription of the Arabic (or Persian) term will be added in parentheses and be further explained in the Glossary.

For an easier finding, the names of the members of the Saudi royal family have been reduced to the shortened appellations commonly used in the media and the public. In the bibliography they will be alphabetically ordered according to the first part of the family name (eg. Prince Turki Al-Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud will be listed under "Al-Faisal").

The name of Iran's current president, Mahmoud Ahmadi Nejad, will be written "Ahmadinejad" as commonly used in the international media.

All translations from sources in foreign language are mine unless otherwise indicated.

For the sake of neutrality, I will majorly use the term "Gulf" instead of referring to the "Persian" or "Arabian" Gulf, even though knowing that the simple term "Gulf" is similarly contested by many scholars.

Table of Content

<i>Tables and Figures</i>	X
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>Acronyms</i>	xiii
1. Introduction	1
2. Foreign Policy Analysis in the Gulf: Conceptualization of a Research Design	9
2.1 International Relations Theories and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA)	9
2.1.1 Neorealist Approaches to FPA	11
2.1.1.1 Neorealism as a Theory of Foreign Policy.....	12
2.1.1.2 Structural vs. Neoclassical Realism	13
2.1.1.3 Defensive vs. Offensive Neorealism.....	15
2.1.1.4 Hypotheses on Foreign Policy Behavior.....	17
2.1.2 Rational Institutional and Interdependence Theoretical Approaches to FPA	20
2.1.2.1 Re-Consideration of the State Environment	21
2.1.2.2 A Rationalist Logic of Action: Efficiency and Distributional Questions.....	22
2.1.2.3 Hypotheses on Foreign Policy Behavior in Structures of Interdependence	24
2.1.3 Constructivist Approaches to FPA	26
2.1.3.1 A Sociological Logic of Action	26
2.1.3.2 The Relationship Between Agent and Structure.....	27
2.1.3.3 Preconditions of State Behavior: Interest and Identity Formation.....	27
2.1.3.4 Material and Ideational Sources of State Behavior.....	28
2.1.3.5 Different Constructivist Strands	29
2.1.3.6 Hypotheses on Foreign Policy Behavior.....	30
2.2 Structural Particularities of the Gulf Region: A Contextualization of the Explanatory Variables	32
2.2.1 Operationalization of 'Power and Threat'	38
2.2.1.1 The Notion of Power: Approaches to its Meaning and Measurement.....	39
2.2.1.1.1 Power as a Property and Absolute Asset	40
2.2.1.1.2 Power as a Relational Value.....	42
2.2.1.2 The Notion of Threat	43
2.2.1.3 Regional Contextualization.....	49
2.2.1.3.1 The Constellation of Power and Threats in the Gulf Region.....	49
2.2.1.3.2 Saudi Arabia: Nature and Sources of Power and Threats	54
2.2.1.3.3 Iran: Nature and Sources of Power and Threats	57
2.2.1.4 Framework of Analysis: Tracing Threats from State Actors	60
2.2.2 Operationalization of 'Complex Interdependence'	61
2.2.2.1 Defining the Notion of 'Complex Interdependence'	62
2.2.2.2 Variations of Complex Interdependence: Density, Scope, and Quality	63
2.2.2.3 Regional Contextualization.....	65
2.2.2.3.1 Patterns of Interdependence in the Gulf Region.....	65
2.2.2.3.2 Saudi Arabia's Patterns of Interdependence	72
2.2.2.3.3 Iran's Patterns of Interdependence.....	76
2.2.2.4 Framework of Analysis: Tracing Multilevel Structures of Interdependence	80
2.2.3 Operationalization of 'Identity' and 'Foreign-Policy Role Conceptions'	81
2.2.3.1 The Notion of Identity and Foreign-Policy Roles	81
2.2.3.2 Levels of Analysis.....	82
2.2.3.3 The Interplay, Dynamics, and Inertia of Identities.....	83
2.2.3.4 Regional Contextualization.....	84
2.2.3.4.1 Identity and Foreign Policy in the Gulf Region.....	84
2.2.3.4.2 Saudi Arabia: A 'Statized' Arab-Islamic Identity.....	87
2.2.3.4.3 Iran: Ethno-Islamic Identity with Revolutionary Role Conception.....	92
2.2.3.5 Framework of Analysis: Tracing State Identities and Role Conceptions	97
2.3 Methodology	98
2.3.1 Overview of the Methodology and Major Research Purposes	98
2.3.2 Case Study Method	99
2.3.2.1 Criteria of Case Selection.....	100

2.3.2.2 The Synchronic (Cross-Country) Comparison	101
2.3.2.3 The Diachronic (Temporal) Comparison	103
2.3.3 Collection and Analysis of Data	104
3. Saudi Arabia's Iraq Policy	107
3.1 The 1990s: The Gulf War and Its Aftermath	108
3.1.1 Saudi Arabia's Iraq Policy in the 1990s: The Policy of Containment	108
3.1.2 Balancing Power and Threats: A Neorealist Analysis	112
3.1.2.1 Saudi Arabia's Constellation of Power and Threats	112
3.1.2.2 "Outsourcing" of Saudi Security: Forming an External Counterbalance against Iraq	113
3.1.3 Managing Interdependence: An Institutional Analysis	115
3.1.3.1 The Lack of Effective Indigenous Mechanisms of Conflict Resolution	115
3.1.3.2 Recourse to Pragmatic and Conventional Conflict Management	117
3.1.4 Complying with Foreign-Policy Roles and Norms: A Constructivist Analysis	120
3.1.4.1 The Saudi State's Understanding of an 'Appropriate' Response to Iraq	120
3.1.4.2 The Saudi Iraq Policy as a Religious Precedent: In Quest of a Post-hoc Legitimization	123
3.1.5 Interim Findings	125
3.2 From 2001 to 2005	127
3.2.1 The Saudi Iraq Policy between Evasion and Paralyzation	127
3.2.2 Balancing Power and Threats: A Neorealist Analysis	130
3.2.2.1 Historical Upheavals in the Regional Balance of Power	130
3.2.2.2 Saudi Iraq Policy as a Conservative Balancing Strategy	131
3.2.3 Managing Interdependence: An Institutional Analysis	135
3.2.3.1 The Rise in Multilevel Vulnerabilities	135
3.2.3.2 Trading-Off between External and Domestic Security Needs	137
3.2.4 Complying with Foreign-Policy Roles: A Constructivist Analysis	140
3.2.4.1 The Saudi State's Post-9/11 Discourse on a 'Legitimate' Iraq Policy	140
3.2.4.2 Saudi Arabia's Iraq Policy in a Credibility Trap?	142
3.2.5 Interim Findings	143
3.3 The Post-Occupation Period since 2005	144
3.3.1 Saudi Arabia's "New Iraq" Policy: Between Mediate and Assertive Engagement	144
3.3.2 Balancing Power and Threats: A Neorealist Analysis	148
3.3.2.1 The Regional (Im)balance of Power: A New Perilous Polarization?	148
3.3.2.2 Balancing External Influence in Iraq	150
3.3.3 Managing Interdependence: An Institutional Analysis	152
3.3.3.1 New Interlinked Threats in a Segmented Environment	152
3.3.3.2 "Omni-Managing" Multilevel Security Risks	155
3.3.4 Complying with Foreign-Policy Roles: A Constructivist Analysis	157
3.3.4.1 The Saudi State's Foreign-Policy Discourse after 2005: Re-Considering Iraq's Identity	157
3.3.4.2 Saudi Iraq Policy on the Basis of Conflicting Norms and Role Conceptions	160
3.3.5 Interim Findings	161
3.4 Saudi Arabia's Iraq Policy: Findings of a Diachronic Analysis	162
3.4.1 Continuity and Change in the Form and Content of the Saudi Iraq Policy	162
3.4.2 Continuity and Change of Structural Factors	163
3.4.3 Continuity and Change of Saudi Arabia's Foreign Policy Behavior	165
4. Iran's Iraq Policy	166
4.1 The 1990s: The Gulf War and Its Aftermath	167
4.1.1 Iran's Iraq Policy in the 1990s: "Cold Peace" and Pragmatic Rapprochement	167
4.1.2 Balancing Power and Threats: A Neorealist Analysis	170
4.1.2.1 Iran's Risks and Opportunities in a Re-Configured Balance of Power	170
4.1.2.2 Iran's Iraq Policy in the 1990s: A Cautious and Bidirectional Balancing Game	172
4.1.3 Managing Interdependence: An Institutional Analysis	174
4.1.3.1 Iran's Multi-Sectoral Vulnerabilities at Multiple Levels	174
4.1.3.2 Iran's Iraq Policy: A Paradigm Shift to 'Regional Self-Reliance'?	176
4.1.4 Complying with Foreign-Policy Roles and Norms: A Constructivist Analysis	178
4.1.4.1 Iran's Foreign-Policy Culture in the 1990s: From Islamic Resistance to 'Islamic Efficiency'?	178
4.1.4.2 Iran's Iraq Policy: Between Flexible Norms and Inherited Role-Conceptions	180
4.1.5 Interim Findings	182
4.2 From 2001 to 2005	183
4.2.1 Iran's Iraq Policy of 'Active Neutrality' and 'Managed Stabilization'	183
4.2.2 Balancing Power and Threats: A Neorealist Analysis	187

4.2.2.1 Iran's Constellation of Power and Threats: Unexpected Benefits or Relative Loss?	187
4.2.2.2 Iran's Iraq Policy: Between Confrontational and Cooperative Balancing	189
4.2.3 Managing Interdependence: An Institutional Analysis	192
4.2.3.1 Iran's Vulnerability to Transnational Spill-Over Effects	192
4.2.3.2 Iran's Iraq Policy Between 2001 and 2005: Soft-Power Manipulation and Issue-Linkage	195
4.2.4 Complying with Foreign-Policy Roles and Norms: A Constructivist Analysis	197
4.2.4.1 Iran's Foreign-Policy Thought Patterns between Ideological Renewal and Disillusion	197
4.2.4.2 Iran's Iraq Policy: Experimenting with New Foreign-Policy Roles	199
4.2.5 Interim Findings	200
4.3 The Post-Occupation Period Since 2005	202
4.3.1 Iran's "New Iraq" Policy: A Policy of Strategic Engagement	202
4.3.2 Balancing Power and Threats: A Neorealist Analysis	206
4.3.2.1 Iran's Regional Consolidation of Power under Increased Insecurity	206
4.3.2.2 Iran's Policy in Post-Occupied Iraq: From Defensive To Offensive Balancing?	209
4.3.3 Managing Interdependence: An Institutional Analysis	210
4.3.3.1 A New Quality of Regional Interdependence and Competition	210
4.3.3.2 Iran's Iraq Policy: Using Iraq as a Cross-Cutting Bargaining Chip?	213
4.3.4 Complying with Foreign-Policy Roles and Norms: A Constructivist Analysis	214
4.3.4.1 Iran's Foreign-Policy Narratives and Role Conceptions after 2005	214
4.3.4.2 Iran's Iraq Policy: Asserting Iran's "Legitimate" Regional Role	218
4.3.5 Interim Findings	219
4.4 Iran's Iraq Policy: Findings of a Diachronic Analysis	221
4.4.1 Continuity and Change in Form and Content of Iran's Iraq Policy	221
4.4.2 Continuity and Change of Structural Factors	222
4.4.3 Continuity and Change of Iran's Foreign Policy Behavior	223
5. FPA in the Gulf Region: Findings and New Perspectives for Further Research	225
5.1 Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Iraq Policies: Findings of a Comparative Analysis	225
5.2 FPA in the Gulf at the Intersection of Power, Interests, and Ideas	228
5.2.1 The Interplay of Multi-Level Security Interests	229
5.2.2 The Interplay of Material and Normative Structures	232
5.2.3 The Distributional Dimension in Foreign Policy	235
5.3 FPA in the Gulf Region: Vantages of a Cross-Theoretical Synapse	240
6. Summary and Perspectives for Further Research	245
<i>Map of the Persian Gulf and Middle East</i>	<i>253</i>
<i>Glossary</i>	<i>254</i>
<i>Overview of Political Events in Iraq (1990-2010)</i>	<i>255</i>
<i>Bibliography</i>	<i>257</i>
<i>Guideline for Interview Questions</i>	<i>280</i>
<i>Curriculum Vitae</i>	<i>281</i>

Tables and Figures

Table 1: The Level-Structure Matrix: Foci of Analysis in IR Theories	11
Table 2: Behavioral Strategies under Anarchy	20
Table 3: Level-Structure Matrix for FPA in the Gulf	38
Table 4: State Intentions and Pursued Distribution of Values.....	47
Table 5: Conceptualization of Power and Threat	49
Table 6: Classification of State-Actor Threats in the Gulf	61
Table 7: Foreign-Policy Motives and Mentalities.....	238
Figure 1: Levels and Dimensions of Complex Interdependence.....	71
Figure 2: Identity and Foreign Policy	83
Figure 3: Multi-Level Conception of Regime Security	232
Figure 4: Co-Constitution of Material and Ideational Structures	233
Figure 5: The Relationship between the Material and Ideational Structure	234
Figure 6: The Relationship between the State Agent and the Ideational-Normative Structure	235
Figure 7: Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Foreign-Policy Mentalities in the Gulf (since 1990)	239
Figure 8: A Cross-Theoretical Synapse for FPA in the Gulf.....	241
Figure 9: Threats to Regime Security.....	242

Preface

Looking for scientific truth inevitably involves personal prejudice and intuition, and requires a good deal of empathy for the object of study.

The giving up of solely searching for measurable or provable “hard” facts and universally valid paradigms opened my eyes for a more inclusive approach to reality. Relying also on empathy rather than solely on sheer observable facts often seemed to provide more suitable results and helped me to avoid analytical rigidity and fateful misjudgements.

By the time I was writing this, the world was witnessing a Middle Eastern “Arab spring” that wiped away two long-established autocratic regimes. The social revolts of 2011 have reminded us that scientific knowledge is in constant progress and remains a temporary truth in the Popperian sense.

Parameters change. While the Near East and North Africa have re-gained their dynamism, the Gulf region will continue to be one of the most dynamic parts of the Middle East and may continue to teach us ambivalent and unforeseeable lessons.

Ellinor Zeino-Mahmalat

Hamburg/Rabat 2012

Acronyms

AWACS	Airborne Warning and Control System
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross domestic product
GNP	Gross national product
GSD	Gulf Security Dialogue
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICG	International Crisis Group
IEA	International Energy Agency
IGC	Iraqi Governing Council
IHEC	Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq
ILSA	Iran and Libya Sanctions Act
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IR	International Relations
IRGC	Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps
ISCI	Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq
MOK	Mojahedin-e Khalq (People's Mujahedin of Iran)
NIE	National Intelligence Estimate
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
NSS	National Security Strategy
OAPEC	Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PD	Prisoner's dilemma
PKK	Parti Karkerani Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers' Party)
PSA	Production Sharing Agreement
SANG	Saudi Arabian National Guard
SCIRI	Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UN	United Nations
UNSCOM	United Nations Special Commission
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
U.S.	United States
WMD	Weapons of mass destruction

1. Introduction

With the fall of the Saddam regime in Iraq in 2003, Iraq has once more emerged as a regional site where diverse regional and extra-regional interests are re-negotiated and may come into conflict. While the U.S. foreign policy towards Iraq has enjoyed broad international attention of academic analysis, media coverage and public debates, the interests and strategies of the regional states have remained somewhat vague and obscure. The complexity of regional interests influencing and co-designing the political process in Iraq suggests the need to further study and understand the motives and strategies of the regional countries. Most notably Saudi Arabia's and Iran's motives and strategies in Iraq may be essential and exemplary for understanding the dynamics of regional foreign and security policies in the Gulf. As the "big" bordering neighbors of Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Iran will continue to follow up with the political events in Iraq.

Iraq has remained a major site and party of conflict in the Gulf region. The political and military events in Iraq over the past two decades have decisively shaped the political dynamisms and the security architecture in the Gulf region. Irrespective of the Arab-Israeli conflict, Iraq will continue to play a key role for peace and stability in the Gulf and Middle East region. In the past decades, the Gulf region experienced three Gulf wars, all in which Iraq was a major party of war. The looming regional conflicts in the Gulf region will to a large part take place in "New Iraq" while Saudi Arabia and Iran will unavoidably be at the center of these conflicts.

Iraq has also become a symbol and indicator of foreign, most notably U.S.-American, intervention and penetration in the Gulf region. The Iraq policies of the regional countries can therefore not only be understood as a policy towards the state of Iraq, but also as a policy towards the United States and the U.S. regional security architecture.

Foreign policy in the Gulf takes place in a highly conflict-prone environment. The Gulf region's centrality as one of the most important world energy hubs has made the Gulf one of the most dynamic regions in the wider Middle East, but also one with a high potential for conflict.

The Gulf region has been afflicted with irredentism and distributional conflicts over power, territory, resources, ideologies, identities and other values (see Hinnebusch 2003: 154). The looming "nuclearization" of the Gulf region, growing asymmetrical and transnational security risks such as separatist or terrorist and jihadist movements, an intensified political and ideological polarization and agitation of a perceived Sunni-Shia divide, and domestic political unrest and instabilities altogether form the structural setting in the region. The post-Gulf War order was marked by the inclusion of extra-regional powers in the Gulf (such as the United States) and the parallel exclusion of major regional players (such as revolutionary Iran or

Saddam Iraq). The post-Gulf war order in the Gulf so far has lacked an all-accepted regional balance of power, interests and ideas.

The resource endowment in the Gulf has guaranteed a sustainably high rent income for the regional resource countries. On the other hand, it has made the regional oil- and gas-exporting countries dependent on global energy markets, their relations to energy-importing nations, and their integration in the world economic system. The resource abundance has put the Gulf countries into the geo-strategic focus of external powers and provoked a political, economic, and military involvement of Great powers in the Gulf region. The regional countries have become highly exposed to extra-regional penetration, military interventions and a foreign “overlay” of power (Buzan 1991: 198) coming mainly from the sustained U.S. regional presence.

The foreign policies of the regional states in the Gulf and Middle East region have been subject to analysis and explanations through a wide spectrum of theoretical approaches and maxims. From the part of IR theorists, foreign policy in the Gulf and the wider Middle East has classically been considered to be a conventional balance-of-power or balance-of-threat policy (Walt 1987) and a function of regional power politics (Russell 2005). Other theorists have subordinated foreign policy to the economic strategy of rent-seeking and of securing oil and gas revenues (Beblawi/Luciani 1987; Harks/Müller 2007). Sociological and normative approaches have regarded regional foreign policy as preconditioned by identity (Telhami/Barnett 2002) or as a possibly sectarian policy guided by religious-sectarian considerations (Nasr 2007; Susser 2006). Some theorists tended to consider foreign policy in the Gulf to be idiosyncratic and a policy *sui generis*. Some Iranian scholars have viewed Iranian foreign policy as a form of justice-seeking (Moshirzadeh 2007) and as a mission-oriented policy guided by spirituality and a religious *raison d'état* rather than by material-secular interests (Rouhani 2010). From a critical-structuralist perspective, regional policy has been judged to be the result of structural pressures and asymmetrical core-periphery relations within a hegemonic international system (Meinaddini/Rezapour 2008).

Foreign policy analysis (FPA) of the Gulf region has been conducted either through generalist theories that postulate generally valid hypotheses on foreign policy behavior or through region-specific theories of a limited theoretical and explanatory scope. Region-specific theories postulate a regional uniqueness and exceptionalism of the Gulf and Middle East. The Middle East region is considered to distinguish itself substantially from other regions in terms of a unique culture, a distinct collective mentality and spirituality, singular

identities, and its own history of state formation.¹ According to the postulate of regional peculiarity, foreign policy in the Gulf is thought to be qualitatively different from foreign policy in other world regions. Regional policies can therefore only be adequately explained through region-specific theories² adapted for the particularities of the region.

Meta-theoretical approaches to foreign policy have posited generalist hypotheses that would equally apply to foreign policy in the Gulf and Middle East region. International Relations (IR) theories and in particular neorealist approaches to foreign policy deny a regional exceptionalism. IR theories tended to consider their theoretical hypotheses to be universally valid and all the same applicable to the Gulf and Middle East region.³ On the other hand, IR theoretical approaches to foreign policy have been prone to explanatory weakness. They proved to be too parsimonious or underspecified to address region- or country-specific phenomena.⁴

IR theorists have made previous attempts to render IR theories more applicable to the particularities of the Gulf and Middle East region. A specification of the environmental structures in the region and a refinement of IR theoretical hypotheses have offered more nuanced perspectives on foreign policy in the Gulf. Scott Cooper (2003/04), for example, has proposed a “state-centric” balance-of-threat theory that builds on the neorealist balance-of-threat approach. Cooper’s approach addresses the Gulf states’ particular sensibility to threats to regime stability. Similarly, Gregory Gause has proposed to pay more attention to the dual nature of threat in the Gulf and the existence of both external and domestic security dilemmas. According to Gause (2003/2004), neorealist theory has remained underspecified and cannot explain how states define and prioritize among different security threats. Others have advocated a theoretical synthesis between different IR theories to better explain regional foreign policy. Gareth Stansfield (2008) proposes to combine realist and constructivist insights for understanding Gulf security and foreign policy.

So far, international literature on foreign policy in the Gulf region has lacked a systematic approach to FPA that would catch the whole scope of regional peculiarities.

In addition, foreign-policy theorists have tended to blend and equate Gulf-specific structural factors with those of the wider Middle East region. IR-theorists and Middle East experts have usually treated the Middle East as a widely uniform region. Regional specificities and phenomena would apply to the Middle East region as a whole. In Middle Eastern studies, the Gulf region has mostly been defined as a sub-regional system or “subcomplex”

¹ For the specificities of the Middle East, see for example the works of Halliday (2005), Fawcett (2005), and Hinnebusch (2003).

² A regional theory of Middle Eastern politics is, for example, offered by Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori who elaborate on the notion of “Muslim agency” (Eickelman/Piscatori 1996).

³ Such as Stephen Walt’s neorealist balance-of-threat theory; In *The Origins of Alliances* (1987), Walt developed his IR-theoretical assumptions through the analysis of the Middle East region.

⁴ See, for example, the critique from Gregory Gause (2003/2004).

(Buzan/Wæver 2003: 51-52) embedded in and entangled with the wider Middle East region. Structural features of the Near and Middle East have therefore been considered equally applicable to the Gulf region. Other scholars such as Abdullah Al-Shaiji (2010) or Gregory Gause (2010) propose to assess the Gulf region as a regional security system that is distinct from the wider Middle East state system. Gause argues that the security dynamics in the Gulf have been quite different from the Arab-Israeli region where security and role-conceptions have been inextricably linked with the Arab-Israeli conflict (Gause 2010: 5).

The objective of this study is to make out the key factors that have determined Saudi Arabia's and Iran's foreign policies towards Iraq in the post-Gulf War order. The research interest of the study is two-fold. One aim is to explain variations in the foreign policy strategies in the last two decades both within and across the two countries. A second aim of this study is to evaluate the explanatory power of theoretical approaches to FPA in the Gulf region and to contribute to the theoretical refinement and adjustment of foreign policy theories according to Gulf-regional particularities.

The study will be guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What changes in the form and content of Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Iraq policy since the Gulf War of 1990/91 can be observed?
- 2) What structural and actor-specific factors have determined or co-influenced Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Iraq policies over the past two decades?
- 3) In what way have the Iraq policies shown qualitative changes in the foreign policy behavior of the two countries?

For the analysis of Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Iraq policies, this study will proceed from two major analytical premises. The first premise follows the hypothesis that the Gulf is not an exceptionalist region in the sense that its regional dynamics could only be explained by region-specific theories. Meta-theoretical and IR-theoretical approaches to FPA may offer equally valuable explanations of foreign policy behavior in the Gulf. This study will proceed from the idea that IR theories may offer adequate and useful theoretical frameworks for analyzing foreign policy in the Gulf region. The theoretical parsimony and analytical broadness of IR theories cover a conceivably broad field of empirical phenomena. Whereas region-specific theories address only particular problems and phenomena, IR theories are able to catch a broader and less biased picture of regional dynamics.

A contextualization of IR theories according to regional or country-specific particularities would still be necessary in order to enhance the theories' explanatory power and avoid rough and arbitrary results. For more accurate and nuanced results, this study suggests to combine the theoretical parsimony of IR theories with region- and country-specific expertise. This study will contextualize meta-theoretical hypotheses and specify the explanatory variables

according to structural and actor-specific particularities of the regional environment. An adaption of general IR-theoretical approaches for regional peculiarities is believed to help attain a more nuanced picture of foreign policy behavior in the Gulf region and a better understanding of how the regional states define their national interests and their conceptions of security. This study hence looks for a suitable balance between theoretical parsimony and complexity which would capture a realistic picture of empirical-factual phenomena. The research design conceptualized in this study aims to contribute to bridging the gap between IR theories, comparative politics and region-specific knowledge.

The second premise of this study is that the structural and actor-specific particularities of the Gulf region demand an analytical demarcation of the Gulf from the wider Middle East region. This study will regard the Gulf as a *distinct* (sub-)region within the Middle East, but not as an *exceptionalist* region. Even though the Gulf region does not remain unaffected by political developments in the wider Middle East, the particularities of the Gulf demand a different adjustment and operationalization of the explanatory variables than those in the Near East and North Africa would require. This study will therefore develop a separate analytical framework of FPA for the Gulf region. So far, the academic literature has lacked a comprehensive, Gulf-specific analytical framework for foreign policy. Middle Eastern studies have usually viewed foreign policy in the Gulf through explanatory frameworks designed for the larger Middle East region. These wider analytical frameworks for the Middle East region risk to overlook Gulf-specific forms of conflict, threat perception or definitions of security and national interests. This study will make out Gulf-specific forms of threat, vulnerabilities and dependencies, distinct identity and role-conceptions, and the particular quality of foreign penetration in the Gulf region.

The wide theoretical scope of IR theories combined with a specification of the explanatory variables according to the relatively small Gulf region is believed to give a broad but nuanced picture on foreign policy in the Gulf.

This study is strongly theory-motivated. The motivation of this study lies in sharpening the theoretical lens on foreign policy in the Gulf and in adding theoretical and explanatory value to IR theories when applied to the Gulf region. The goal of this study lies more in gaining new nuances of knowledge on foreign policy in the Gulf rather than offering revolutionary new insights.

The theory-guided analysis of Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Iraq policy serves the purpose of both theory testing and theory building. In a first step, the analysis will test "conventional" IR-theoretical hypotheses on foreign policy and review in how far each approach can explain foreign policy in the Gulf region. The study will look at Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Iraq policies through various analytical prisms and filters, and compare the explanatory value of different

meta-theoretical perspectives. In a second step, the study will re-think assumed theoretical and analytical dividing lines. This study will look for useful ways of theoretical synthesis and show advantages of a synoptic approach to FPA in the Gulf.

A Gulf-specific perspective on general foreign-policy theories and the designing of a more comprehensive analytical framework of FPA for the Gulf region is expected to fill various gaps in the academic literature on both FPA and the Gulf region. For this reason, the study will offer a specification of structural and actor-specific variables in the region. It will determine specific forms, types and classifications of power, threat as well as material and normative constraints or opportunities for state action.

The study is not only interested in the concrete foreign policy strategies chosen by the national governments, but also in classifying these strategies according to general patterns of foreign policy behavior. In the analysis of the Saudi and Iranian Iraq policies, the study will contribute to the scholarly debates about state goals and interests and about how state actors “calculate” or “understand” their national interest and security. The analysis of whether the countries define their national security through safeguarding, re-distributing, or enlarging state power and autonomy is believed to give a better picture of the scope and variance of foreign policy behavior in the Gulf. The study will therefore suggest to classify and to qualify state goals and behavior according to different notions of security and varying distributional intents.

For the theoretical framework, the study will select three meta-theoretical approaches to foreign policy that search for explanatory factors in different environmental structures and at various levels of analysis. Saudi Arabia’s and Iran’s Iraq policies are looked at from (1) a neorealist, systemic and state-centric, (2) an interdependence-theoretical, multi-level and multi-actor, and (3) a sociological normative-constructivist perspective. From each IR-theory approach, the study will make out core hypotheses on foreign policy that will serve as the working hypotheses in this study. The following hypotheses and assumptions on foreign policy will be reviewed in this study:

- (1) Foreign policy as a form of balancing systemic power imbalances and state threats: States are expected to adopt their foreign policy according to changes in their relative power position and their (perceived) constellation of state-actor threats.
- (2) Foreign policy as the managing of interdependence: States will primarily address those multi-level, multi-sector, and multi-actor risks and demands which they are most vulnerable to. Changes in the patterns of interdependence and the degree of vulnerability are expected to cause changes in foreign policy.
- (3) Foreign policy as preconditioned by and consistent with social role- and self-conceptions. Changes in foreign policy reflect changes in the normative content or in

the priority of foreign policy norms, and in the state's understandings of "appropriate" foreign policy behavior.

The study will conduct a synchronic (cross-country) and diachronic (temporal) comparison in order to review the hypotheses on foreign policy derived from IR theories. A "review" implies a retrospection of past events and not a prediction of the future.

The study will follow a *most similar systems design* and observe similar case units that show a difference in their foreign policy behavior. For the cross-country comparison, Saudi Arabia and Iran have been selected as case units. Saudi Arabia and Iran show a relative similarity in those aspects that are reviewed in this study while their foreign policy behaviors considerably differ in form and content. At the same time, The Saudi and Iranian foreign policies show no obvious bias towards a particular hypothesis.

Saudi Arabia and Iran underlie similar structural conditions. They enjoy a similarly strong geostrategic position and leading political, economic, and cultural role in the Gulf. Their geographic and demographic size, their resource endowment and oil-political weight in OPEC⁵ and the world energy markets, and their cultural-religious importance in the Islamic world make them similarly strong regional competitors. Both countries enjoy considerable religious influence in international affairs since each of them holds one of the leading religious centers in Sunni and Shia Islam, respectively.

At the same time, both countries underlie similar patterns of interdependence. As resource or rentier states, both Saudi Arabia and Iran are similarly dependent on the world energy markets and their relations to energy-consuming countries. Both Saudi Arabia and Iran are similarly sensitive and vulnerable to foreign penetration and interventions in the Gulf region, to transnational political ideas and movements, and to domestic social unrest and the mobilization of regime-critical opposition groups.

Both Saudi Arabia and Iran show a similar invocation to identity and role conceptions, and a similarly strong dedication to religious norms. Both countries claim to be Islamic states and vanguards of the Muslim *umma*. They put emphasis on missionary and messianic ideals, and on the need of religiously motivated and sanctioned action. Both countries understand their regional role of being one of the (if not the only) leading regional countries with respect to culture, religion and geo-strategic importance.

Saudi Arabia's and Iran's foreign policies in the Gulf region have shown differences and variations between the countries as well as over time. Their foreign policies have differed with respect to alliance choice, the inclination to cooperation or conflict, and the attitude

⁵ Within OPEC, Saudi Arabia and Iran have the largest proven oil reserves and the largest oil-production quota. Saudi Arabia ranks first in oil export, while Iran takes up the third rank of oil export within OPEC, just slightly behind the UAE (see CIA World Factbook).

towards the regional political-security order and status quo. This study will analyze the Iraq policies of both countries. For several reasons, the Iraq policy is an appropriate field of reviewing and comparing Saudi Arabia's and Iran's foreign policy behavior in the Gulf. For both the Saudi and Iranian leaderships, Iraq constitutes an area of critical interest. As Paul Salem (2008: 2; 10) put it, Iraq is an "epicenter" of regional tensions while at the same time being "one of the most central and significant states of the Arab-Islamic world." In the post-Gulf War era, Iraq has symbolized for Saudi Arabia and Iran both a serious regional rival and a victim of Great power interference. Saudi Arabia and Iran, respectively, have had difficult and intense relations with Iraq. Saudi Arabia and Iran not only share their longest international borders with Iraq, but are also culturally, historically, and religiously interconnected with their Iraqi neighbor. Foreign policies in the Gulf have largely taken place within the framework of complicated triangular power relations between Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Iraq. Since 1971, the Gulf region has come under sustained political and military influence of the United States. The Saudi and Iranian standpoints to the U.S. Iraq policy and regional presence will therefore inevitably be part of the analysis.

The study will compare the Saudi and Iranian Iraq policies over the past two decades of the post-Gulf War era. The time of the post-Gulf War order is generally characterized by a direct and visible U.S. regional presence and a growing "internationalization" (Koch 2007) of regional politics and relations in the Gulf.

For the temporal comparison, the study will select three time periods whose beginnings mark critical junctures in the political developments and the political-security order of the Gulf. The time periods stand also for general shifts in Saudi Arabia's and Iran's foreign policy behavior.

- (1) The 1990s: The time period from the Gulf War of 1990/91 until the end of the 1990s was marked by an international containment of Iraq and the direct and sustained military entering of the United States in the Gulf region.
- (2) 2001-2005: Following the events of 9/11, this time period was marked by a profound extra-regional intervention in the Gulf through the region-wide U.S.-led "war against terror". The U.S. anti-terror campaign in the region reached its peak in the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the occupation of Iraq until 2005.
- (3) 2005 until 2010: The post-2005 era in the Gulf has been characterized by the evolution of a new post-occupation Iraq following the Iraqi general elections in 2005 and by a gradual disengagement of the United States from Iraq. At the same time, this new era is marked by an enhanced regional intermeddling in Iraq's political reconstruction process and the further establishment of a Shiite-dominated government as witnessed again in the parliamentary elections of 2010.

The present study is divided into three major parts.

In the first part (chapter 2), the study will conceptualize a research design for FPA in the Gulf region. For this purpose, the study will in a first step (chapter 2.1) work out hypotheses on foreign policy derived from three major IR theories. IR theories are often more of a meta-theoretical approach concerned with the study of international relations. Their meta-theoretical core statements must therefore be rendered applicable to FPA. From the multitudinous strands and sub-schools of IR theories, the study will make out consistent sets of hypotheses on foreign policy.

In the following sub-chapter (2.2), the study will operationalize the IR-theoretical explanatory variables according to structural and actor-specific particularities of the Gulf region. The explanatory categories reviewed in this study are (a) power and threat, (b) patterns of interdependence, and (c) identity and role conceptions. For the contextualization of the explanatory variables, the study will specify Saudi Arabia's and Iran's domestic and external as well as material and social environment by the consideration of region-specific and country-specific peculiarities.

Chapter 2.3 will give an overview of the case study method applied in this study. It will outline the major research purposes and how the study will draw causal inferences from the collected data and the following empirical analyses.

In a second part (chapter 3 and 4), the study will conduct the empirical case studies of Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Iraq policies over the past two decades. For each time period, it will at first define the form (means and strategies) and content (goals and interests) of the Iraq policies. For the theory testing, the analysis will in a first step make out the structural-environmental and actor-specific factors that are relevant for the respective theoretical approach. In a second step, the analysis will study the extent to which the respective theoretical approach can explain for variations and changes in foreign policy behavior.

In the third part (chapter 5), the study will review the findings of the comparative analysis and outline new perspectives for FPA in the Gulf. The study will thereby consider the vantages of a synoptic, cross-theory, and region-specific approach to FPA that is based on the integration of different IR-theoretical assumptions. The study will look for possible ways of theoretical synthesis across inter-theory and intra-theory dividing lines. It will also show possibilities of a theoretical-synoptic approach adapted for the respective research interest.

2. Foreign Policy Analysis in the Gulf: Conceptualization of a Research Design

2.1 International Relations Theories and Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA)

Foreign policy has been an object of study in social sciences as well as in political consulting and policy advice. While in the political field, foreign policy analysis has been dedicated to

comprehend, explain and predict foreign policy as accurately as possible, social sciences have made efforts to understand from a broader and abstract perspective the fundamental logic of action behind foreign policy.

Academic approaches to foreign policy analysis (FPA) have been manifold and of varying theoretical thickness. International Relations (IR) theories have made attempts to predict and explain foreign policy behavior, but have lacked an appropriate and actor-specific approach that could properly explain the foreign policy of a specific country. Within IR grand theories, FPA has developed as a new theoretical sub-field (see Rezaei 2008: 20). FPA can be regarded as a “hub” and “bridging field” that links IR theories and comparative politics (Hudson 1997: 6). By combining theoretical parsimony of IR theories with region-specific or country expertise of comparative politics, FPA “grounds” IR theories and “theorizes” comparative politics (Hudson 1997: 6). At the interface of IR theories and comparative politics, FPA has developed interdisciplinary and reductionist approaches. While the field of FPA has incorporated major IR-theoretical assumptions, it has further applied a reductionist multi-factorial, multi-level, and actor-specific perspective on foreign policy.

Foreign policy as the object of study involves all sorts of external relations of a state actor. In a minimalist definition, Brian White (1989: 1) has defined foreign policy as “that area of governmental activity which is concerned with relationships between the state and other actors, particularly other states, in the international system”. Valerie Hudson (2008: 12) distinguishes between “foreign policy behavior” in terms of the “observable artefact of foreign policy” including also unintended and accidental behavior and “foreign policy” as “the strategy or approach chosen by the national government”.⁶

Since foreign policy refers to a state’s external relations, foreign policy theories will have to define their concepts on the relationality of state actors. Rationalist theories have conceived of both a positionalist and egoist logic of action. While the postionalist logic defines the relationship among actors in terms of competition and the pursuit of relative advantages, the egoist logic refers to an individualist conception of utility-maximizing and assumes atomized actors that are indifferent to the position and benefits of others. In a constructivist or sociological understanding of foreign policy behavior, the relationality of actors is not fixed and *a priori* defined, but is shaped and re-negotiated in social interaction. Nation-states are conceived of as social actors whose identities and role-conceptions define the relationship between “self” and “other”.

⁶ This study analyzes the strategies chosen by the national governments, but also looks at the countries’ general patterns of foreign policy (or state) behavior. By analyzing and comparing foreign policy strategies, this study aims to make generally valid conclusions on foreign policy behavior.

In the following, this study has chosen three IR grand theories that offer different ontological and epistemological approaches to FPA. The selection of a neorealist, interdependence-theoretical (rational institutionalist), and constructivist approach to FPA covers a broad and diverse range of perspectives on foreign policy. The selection includes different rationalist conceptions and a sociological-constructivist understanding of state behavior. The selected theoretical approaches have also laid their analytical focus on different structures and levels of analysis. IR theories have varied in their focus on material or ideational-normative structures and in their consideration of the systemic (global, regional) or sub-systemic (domestic) level of analysis.⁷

In order to later develop a research design for FPA in the Gulf region, this study will depart from IR theoretical assumptions on state behavior as a starting point. For this purpose, the following chapter will depict the core assumptions of IR theories on state behavior and on the states' logic of action. It will then shortly highlight the different strands and intra-theory dividing lines within the respective theory. At last, this chapter will isolate the dependent and independent variables and make out the respective IR-theoretical hypotheses on foreign policy behavior.

Table 1: The Level-Structure Matrix: Foci of Analysis in IR Theories

	Material structure (Military/Economic Assets and Liabilities)		Ideational structure (Ideas, Identities, Culture, Norms)	
Systemic level of analysis (international + regional system)	<div>Structural neorealism</div> <div>Interdependence Theory</div>			
Sub-systemic level of analysis (domestic regime or societal level)			<div>(Societal) constructivism</div>	

Source: Author's compilations

2.1.1 Neorealist Approaches to FPA

For foreign policy analysis, neorealism offers no single theory of state behavior but rather a "metascientific construct" (Elman 1996b: 18) that provides a set of core assumptions on state

⁷ For the different theoretical foci, see the level-structure matrix (Table 1).

interaction. Among IR theories, neorealism and its precedent realist theory share a pessimist view of a competitive, immutable world. The core tenet of neorealist thinking is that anarchy represents the ordering principle of the international system and conditions state interaction. In the anarchical self-help system lacking a world government or a central rule-making and law-enforcing authority, state actors are forced to ensure their security autonomously. From the anarchical environment follows that states are in constant competition and struggle for their survival as sovereign actors (Waltz 1986: 108; Gilpin 1996: 6-8). Due to the uncertainty about the other actors' intentions and their possible use of force, states are trapped in security dilemmas which are endogenous to the anarchical system. The imminent threat of force compels states to be primarily concerned about their relative power position and to behave like positionalist self-help agents.

2.1.1.1 Neorealism as a Theory of Foreign Policy

Although neorealist theory makes predictions about how the anarchical structure of the international system largely shapes patterns of state behavior, there has been a debate about whether neorealism can also offer a theory of *foreign policy*. Major proponents of neorealism like Kenneth Waltz have maintained the opinion that neorealism is a theory of *international politics* and hence cannot predict foreign policy. As a theory of international politics, neorealism merely explains general patterns of behavior, but not foreign policies of individual states.⁸ According to Waltz, a theory of international politics explains why similarly placed states in the international system behave similarly despite their internal differences. In contrast, a theory of foreign policy explains why similarly placed states behave differently on account of domestic differences (Waltz 1996: 54). In his structural-neorealist approach, Waltz deliberately neglects the domestic conditions of states and treats states as unitary actors. It is the international system that decisively shapes the interaction of states.

However, in contrast to Waltz's strictly systemic approach, other neorealist theorists have acknowledged the ability of neorealism to make adequate and specific predictions on foreign policy.⁹ Some neorealists argue that in order to carry out foreign policy analysis, neorealist theory needs to incorporate domestic factors and to open up the "black box" of sub-systemic features of supposedly unitary states (see Masala 2006: 92). Colin Elman, to the contrary, holds the opinion that also systemic approaches can make sufficiently specific predictions on

⁸ Waltz (1996: 57) has pointed out that "[...] a neorealist theory of international politics explains how external forces shape states' behavior, but says nothing about the effects of internal forces. Under most circumstances, a theory of international politics is not sufficient, and cannot be made sufficient, for the making of unambiguous foreign-policy predictions".

⁹ The building of neorealist foreign policy theories have been elaborated in the studies of Michael Mastanduno, David Lake, John Ikenberry, James Fearon, and Volker Rittberger (Mastanduno/Lake/Ikenberry 1989; Fearon 1998; Baumann/Rittberger/Wagner 2001). Colin Elman justifies why neorealism can be considered a foreign policy theory (Elman 1996b). Carlo Masala (2006: 92) considers it useful to make a distinction between neorealist theory and neorealist foreign policy analysis.

foreign policy.¹⁰ According to Elman (1996b: 47), neorealist theories are able to explain foreign policy, either by a strict systemic line of argument or by including unit-level factors. Nevertheless, whenever neorealism is used for foreign policy analysis it must be noted that different neorealist strands and sub-schools make different predictions and may come to varying explanations of foreign policy behavior.

2.1.1.2 Structural vs. Neoclassical Realism

One major divide in neorealist thinking lies between the sub-schools of structural neorealism and neoclassical realism.¹¹ In the first place, this divide refers to the question where to set the focus of analysis in order to search for explanations of state behavior. Structural or systemic neorealism is exclusively concerned with the international state structure as the sole independent variable for explaining patterns of state behavior. In contrast, neoclassical realists posit the need to include intervening unit-level factors in the analysis of state behavior.

In his *Theory of International Politics* of 1979, Kenneth Waltz as the founding father of structural neorealism has developed a strictly systemic theory of international politics that explicitly demarcates itself from so-called “reductionist” theories¹² of foreign policy. Structural neorealism deliberately excludes so-called unit-level or second-image variables (such as domestic state systems, perceptions, or political culture) and first-image¹³ variables like human nature. It is important to note that structural neorealists do not deny that domestic factors can have an effect on foreign policy behavior. However, structural neorealists accredit a distinctive explanatory value to the systemic analysis.¹⁴ The focus of a neorealist analysis therefore rests primarily upon the international system.

According to structural neorealism, the anarchical environment conditions and constraints state behavior and generates recurring patterns of behavior. Under the ordering principle of anarchy, each state underlies the imperative to preserve its security autonomously (Waltz 1995: 80). States as the interacting agents in the international system¹⁵ are treated as

¹⁰ According to Elman (1996b: 59), it is therefore possible that the dependent and independent variable pertain to different levels of analysis.

¹¹ Jeffrey Taliaferro (2000/2001: 135) proposes to understand the distinction between structural neorealism and neoclassical realism rather as a continuum than a concrete division.

¹² Reductionist theories regard international politics and social interaction as the sum of individual behavior (Zürn 1992: 99). Waltz's theory of international politics, on the contrary, explains international politics and state interaction by the study of the actors' external conditions.

¹³ In his study *Man, the State and War* (Waltz 1954), Waltz distinguishes three images of analysis which are (1) human nature, (2) the domestic nation-state level, and (3) the international system.

¹⁴ “[...] A wider understanding of international politics requires a systemic approach, which at once draws attention to third-image effects and enables one to comprehend all three ‘levels’” (see preface to the 2001 edition of Waltz's *Man, the State and War*).

¹⁵ In Waltz's theory, the international system is imagined to be composed of two elements, the international structure and states as interacting units. The international structure is featured by the ordering principle of anarchy and a particular distribution of power capabilities (Waltz 1979: 79; 88-101). The distribution of power capabilities is therefore not considered to be a special feature of state

functionally similar units that are first and foremost occupied with their survival. States are thereby believed to adopt their behavior to their placement and relative power position in the international system.

According to this logic, it is the international structure that “shapes and shoves” international politics and constrains state behavior (Masala 2005: 46). Systemic neorealism explains state behavior as a “systemic effect”¹⁶ which makes internally different states act in the same way when faced with equal systemic constraints. Some critics of Waltz’s “third-image” or “technical realism” therefore allege a deterministic bias to Waltz’s parsimonious theory because it explains state behavior as a mere reaction to the international structure and the alignments of (usually material) power capabilities.¹⁷

In contrast to structural neorealism, neoclassical realists posit the need to add unit-level factors as intervening variables in the analysis of state behavior.¹⁸ Similar to structural realism, neoclassical realism stresses the conditioning effect of the anarchical structure and considers state behavior to be first and foremost determined by the systemic distribution of power capabilities. Yet, in addition to structural realism, neoclassical realists posit that “systemic pressures must be translated through intervening variables at the unit level” (Rose 1998: 146). While a parsimonious structuralist perspective serves as an appropriate starting point of foreign policy analysis, contextual subtlety and theoretical complexity must be added in order to avoid rough and arbitrary results (Rose 1998: 166). Neoclassical realists therefore include in a subsequent analytical step further explanatory factors such as varying underlying state motives, perception,¹⁹ culture, values and ideologies as well as features of the domestic state structure (Schweller 1996: 108).²⁰

actors, but to be a characteristic of the international structure. While anarchy and unitary states are treated as constant features of the system, the distribution of capabilities and the overall polarity of the system are considered to be variable.

¹⁶ In his theory, Waltz has drawn an analogy to microeconomics. The systemic effect is imagined by Waltz to be similar to the self-regulating effect of the market. State actors are believed to adapt their behavior to the system’s balance of power, since any deviant behavior would be “punished” by threats to their survival.

¹⁷ Richard Ashley criticizes that “Waltz grants this structure a life of its own, independent of the parts, the states-as-actors” (Ashley 1986: 287).

¹⁸ Neoclassical realists have conceptually gone back to the ideas of Hans Morgenthau’s classical realism. In his study “Politics among Nations”, Morgenthau (1967: 4) depicts the way in which belligerent human nature and man’s *animus dominandi* generate power politics and fierce competition among state actors.

¹⁹ IR theorists have acknowledged that cognitive and socially constructed factors may as well pertain to the systemic level of analysis. Carlo Masala, for example, remarks that state perceptions may constitute either a structural or a unit-level variable. Whenever state perception refers to the power structure and shifts in the balance of power it can be treated as a structural variable (Masala 2006: 104).

²⁰ Taliaferro/Lobbell/Ripsman (2009: 23) define neoclassical realism as a theory that “builds upon the complex relationship between state and society found in classical realism without sacrificing the central insights about systemic constraints and opportunities found in neorealism”. Their book *Neoclassical Realism, the State and Foreign Policy* (2009) aims to develop the concept of the state

The consideration of unit-level variables in order to add nuance to crude balances of power implies that also ideational and socially constructed factors such as state identity and threat perception are brought up for the explanation of state behavior. Charles Glaser, for instance, holds the opinion that realist theorists should not confine their focus to material capabilities. Instead, they ought to include cognitive factors, motives, domestic politics and the possibility of misperception in case that a structuralist argumentation does not adequately explain the actual outcome (Glaser 1996: 159). Similarly, Thomas Christensen and Jack Snyder argue that even though the power distribution determines political choices and the outcome of international politics, other factors such as perception, domestic politics and ideology may interact with or even override material-structuralist factors (Christensen/Snyder 2003: 66). Gideon Rose (1998: 151) therefore even goes so far as to maintain that neoclassical realism “occupies a middle ground between pure structural theorists and constructivists”.

2.1.1.3 Defensive vs. Offensive Neorealism

Neorealist thinkers share a common pessimism about the possibility to attenuate the conflictual nature of anarchy. Yet, there exist divergent neorealist views about the behavioral strategies that state actors pursue in an anarchical environment. Even though neorealists tend to assume worst-case scenarios, they disagree about the extent to which the inter-state struggle for survival results in power politics and zero-sum games. These diverging assumptions refer to another major intra-neorealist division that lies between defensive and offensive neorealism. While defensive neorealists²¹ consider states to be security-maximizers, offensive neorealists²² argue that power maximization is the primary goal of states.

According to Waltz’s “survival-first school”, states first and foremost seek to maintain their position in the system and would not jeopardize their security for the benefit of additional gains in power (Waltz 1979: 126). This defensive security-seeking motive attributed to the states implies that states rather intend to avoid relative losses in power than seeking additional relative gains. Similarly, Joseph Grieco (1997: 167) proposes that the notion of “defensive positionalism” would best describe the patterns and logic of state behavior. He believes states to behave like positionalist actors that are permanently alert of their relative power position. The defensive orientation of states implies that states act as security maximizers that prefer to maintain their relative (power) assets without striving for more.

more fully by examining internal characteristics of the states such as politico-military institutions, the influence of domestic societal actors and interest groups, elite or societal cohesion, or the degree of state autonomy from society. The “state” is thereby treated as an intervening variable in FPA. Because neoclassical realism acknowledges that the international system is the dominant influence on foreign policy, it also distinguishes itself from liberal-pluralist *Innenpolitik* theories (Ripsman et al. 2009: 291).

²¹ Kenneth Waltz, Joseph Grieco, Jack Snyder, or Charles Glaser can be counted among defensive realists.

²² John Mearsheimer, Fareed Zakaria, and Robert Gilpin consider themselves to be offensive realists.

Charles Glaser confirms the maxim of defensive realists and presents an even more optimistic view for the possibility of cooperative state behavior. Glaser posits that power maximization might decrease security and goes further to argue that security preservation is better ensured through cooperation than through unilateral, competitive self-help (Glaser 1996: 131-133).²³ In his conception of “contingent realism”, Glaser illustrates cooperative behavior as one possible form of self-help in an anarchical environment. His main argument is that security can be an absolutely –not relatively– assessed good, because the increase in security of a state adversary might contain its offensive ambitions and thus contribute to the security of all.

Contrarily, offensive realists regard state actors as power-maximizers seeking to aggrandize their influence and power position. States strive after reaching a dominant or hegemonic position in the international system (Mearsheimer 2001: 21, 29). The argument behind this assumption is that only through a maximum of power states are able to secure their survival in an anarchical environment of permanent threat. On account of the uncertainty about the other actors’ intentions, states can never be confident of their security. States thus have to pre-emptively secure their survival by aggrandizing their power position. It is often claimed, though, that offensive realists regard power as the highest end of states. In fact, both defensive and offensive neorealists consider security and survival as the ultimate goal, but differ in their assumption on how states try to reach this goal.²⁴

Beyond the offensive-defensive divide in neorealist theory, Randall Schweller objects to the idea of fixed (either defensive or offensive) state interests. Instead, Schweller considers state goals to be variable on a continuum between the objectives of security and power maximization (Schweller 1996: 103; 114-116). In his “balance-of-interest theory”, Schweller (2003: 77) points out the importance of a differentiation between power-seeking, revisionist and security-seeking, status-quo states. By “bringing the interests of states back into the fold of realist theory” (Schweller 1996: 121, 1994: 85) Schweller breaks through the strictly systemic argumentation of structural neorealism and criticizes the “status-quo bias” of defensive neorealism.

Defensive and offensive neorealists agree upon the assumption that state actors are situated in a highly competitive environment that shapes and constrains their behavior. States are constantly concerned with their relative power position and therefore behave like positionalist

²³ Glaser points out that “although cooperation could be risky, competition can also be risky since the outcome of competition is often uncertain and losing a competition can damage a state’s security. Thus, [...] states weigh the risks of cooperation and of competition” (Glaser 2003: 268).

²⁴ Mearsheimer (2001: 31) as an offensive neorealist asserts that security is the primary goal of states. A maximum of power would only serve as a means to preserve survival.

actors. The debate between defensive and offensive neorealists relates to the question whether states act as defensive (security-seeking) or offensive (power-seeking) positionalists. An assumed defensive, security-seeking orientation of state actors could possibly imply more cooperative patterns of state behavior while presupposed power-seeking intentions could implicate rather conflictive and power-political strategies. The differences between defensive and offensive neorealists reveal once more that neorealism does not constitute a unified, homogeneous theory. Kenneth Waltz attempted to trivialize the divide by suggesting that neorealist theory ought to stay parsimonious and underspecified (Waltz 1996: 56), although he virtually aligns himself with the defensive realists' strand. Other neorealist theorists have proposed to look for a synthesis of defensive and offensive neorealism and to explain under which conditions states pursue revisionist or status-quo strategies (Masala 2006: 104). Schweller's balance-of-interest theory is a first step towards such a synthesis, even though it does not clearly determine the sources that cause different behavioral strategies.

2.1.1.4 Hypotheses on Foreign Policy Behavior

This study proceeds on the assumption that neorealism can be brought up for explaining foreign policy behavior. Although neorealists do not agree upon a unified neorealist theory that would comprise all aspects of neorealist thinking, they agree on fundamental core tenets. They share a pessimist view of a competitive, self-help environment which induces general effects on state behavior. They commonly doubt the possibility of overcoming the conflictual and competitive nature of international relations on a sustainable basis (Mastanduno 1999: 20).

The Constellation of Power and Threats as the Explanatory Variable

Neorealists proceed on the assumption that state behavior is first and foremost motivated by the pre-eminent goal of survival. Neorealists mainly assume states to be rational actors that pursue the goal of survival on the basis of rational cost-benefit calculations.²⁵

States are expected to respond to the distribution of power capabilities in the international system since any power asymmetry to one's own detriment would pose a threat to survival. States naturally behave as positionalist actors that are concerned about their relative power position. The international system would sanction any behavior that disregards systemic

²⁵ However, as Schweller and Wohlforth argue, rationalism is not essential to neorealism. Because of the emphasis on structural effects, neorealism is not considered to be a rationalist theory of state behavior (see Schweller/Wohlforth 2000: 70).

Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* allows that state actors behave non-rational and hence against systemic constraints. According to Waltz's line of argument, only foreign policy theories on the domestic level might explain this suboptimal and deviating behavior. Mearsheimer consequently concludes that a systemic theory of foreign policy must hence assume a rationality of state actors (Mearsheimer 2009: 244-246).

incentives and constraints (Wilhelm 2006: 50). States are therefore expected to “generally act according to the structural constraints of the international system” (Baumann et al. 2001: 39) and to move towards congruity with structural demands (Krasner 1993: 21).

Structural neorealists have tended to generalize each power asymmetry as a potential threat to survival. However, some neorealist theorists, like Stephen Walt, have come up with the idea that state actors respond only to those power capabilities that constitute a substantial threat to their survival. In his balance-of threat theory, Walt’s consideration of threat perception and possible aggressive intentions adds a cognitive element to the otherwise strictly structural-materialist argumentation in neorealist theory. For this reason, Walt has been accused of blurring the structural neorealist line of argument with unit-level factors (see Waltz 1996: 56). However, the inclusion of threat perception and actors’ intentions does not necessarily open the “black box” of states and enter the unit-level of analysis. As long as the states’ perception refers to the systemic power distribution it might be treated as a systemic variable (Masala 2006: 104).

Similar to Walt, Joseph Grieco includes the idea of threat in a structural neorealist analysis. Grieco postulates that the states’ sensitivity to the other states’ relative power positions varies according to the actual or perceived threat the others pose.²⁶

Balancing and Bandwagoning as Behavioral Strategies

Structural neorealism hypothesizes that state actors are induced by the international system to respond to dangerous concentrations or imbalances of power. Neorealism generally expects states to prefer self-help strategies and to avoid cooperative engagement and commitments that would too much curtail their autonomy. Mainstream neorealists consider balancing behavior as the dominant and natural state strategy to contain perilous power asymmetries.

Neorealists have made out a variety of balancing strategies. ‘Internal balancing’ expresses the idea of autonomous self-help in its purest sense (Mearsheimer 2001: 157). It refers to the mobilization of indigenous capabilities and resources through military armament or investments in strategic technologies (Wohlforth 2008: 36).

‘External balancing’ means that a state aggregates its power capabilities with other states through alliances, diplomacy, or strategic partnerships. Alliance formation is understood as a form of self help with the purpose of jointly balancing power asymmetries and common threats. Also regional integration may constitute a form of external balancing if it is meant to act as a counterbalance to an external power (Rolloff 1998: 77). External balancing can be based on an uneven burden-sharing among the alliance partners. John Mearsheimer considers “buck-passing” as one of the states’ preferred balancing strategies (Mearsheimer

²⁶ Threat perception may vary according to the states’ long-term relationship and to whether states are allies or adversaries (Grieco 1993: 45-46).

2001: 149; 159). Buck-passing means that a state actor passes the responsibility for the costly and time-consuming balancing job to its alliance partners or third states without offering appropriate compensations.

Balancing may even occur as a form of cooperation with the power to be balanced out (see also Link 1998: 137). This phenomenon will be called in this study “pre-emptive cooperation”. Pre-emptive cooperation is usually temporary and lacks long-term commitments.

Proponents of both balance-of power and balance-of-threat theories regard balancing as the dominant behavioral strategy in the international system. Balance-of-threat theorists, however, consider it possible that a state aligns with a more powerful state in order to balance out a weaker but more threatening adversary (see Walt 1987: 21).

Some neorealist theorists have questioned the predominance of balancing strategies. They posit that state actors may choose to bandwagon with more powerful and potentially threatening states. States could therefore not only agree to “pre-emptive” cooperation but also enter a strategic partnership with the stronger side. Proponents of this strategy regard bandwagoning less as a form of appeasement vis-à-vis the powerful state, but rather as a form of profit-seeking. Since balancing out a great or hegemonic power is usually a costly and venturous enterprise, smaller states may find it more profitable to align with the stronger side.²⁷ Randall Schweller²⁸ has forged the notion of “bandwagoning for profit” as an economically induced strategy. This type of bandwagoning aims to enlarge the own capital or resource endowment by raising military or economic aid from more powerful alliance partners.

Even if neorealists disagree about the predominant behavioral strategy, they unanimously assert that state behavior is inherently power-oriented and is in the first place a response to systemic constellations of power and threats. Neoclassical realists, however, acknowledge the influence of unit-level factors on state behavior in addition to systemic constraints coming from the polarity and power structure of the international system. Neoclassical realists, such as Randall Schweller, not only acknowledge a wider spectrum of explanatory factors but also allow for a larger variety of foreign policy strategies.

²⁷ William Wohlforth (2002: 103), for example, expects states to only resort to a balancing strategy if it is thought to be less costly than bandwagoning.

²⁸ Schweller posits that states choose to balance or bandwagon according to their domestic motivation. The behavioral strategy of states is therefore less a result of systemic constraints, but must be traced to the unit-level of analysis. According to Schweller, states with revisionist intentions are thought to resort to bandwagoning in order to accumulate further gains. Status-quo oriented states, on the other hand, tend to pursue a balancing strategy (Schweller 1994: 104-106).

Table 2: Behavioral Strategies under Anarchy

Internal Balancing	
Mobilization of indigenous capabilities and resources (e.g. military armament, investments in strategic technologies)	
External Balancing	
Alliances	Strategic partnerships, integration against external power Buckpassing: passing the burden of balancing to the alliance partner
Cooperation	“Pre-emptive” cooperation with state to be balanced out (similar but not identical to bandwagoning)
Bandwagoning	
“for profit”	“Fundraising” from more powerful states (e.g. economic or military aid)
as appeasement	Usually assumed by proponents of a balancing theory

Source: Author’s compilation

2.1.2 Rational Institutional and Interdependence Theoretical Approaches to FPA

Institutionalism has established itself as a broad and dominant line of thinking within IR theories. Multitudinous and heterogeneous theoretical strands and sub-schools have originated from institutionalist thinking.²⁹ The manifold institutionalist strands have been founded on the basic idea that the process of globalization and a steadily growing and complex interconnectedness of states, economies, or societies in the information age have formed areas of complex interdependence among states and non-state actors. These structures of interdependence have redefined the nature of anarchy and induced states to look for new behavioral strategies to cope with interdependence. Since the beginning of the 20th century, international relations have witnessed an enduring process of institutionalization and international cooperation, but also new forms of conflicts as a response to growing interdependence.

Robert Keohane’s and Joseph Nye’s theory of “complex interdependence” from 1977³⁰ was one of the early seminal approaches within the new institutionalist thinking. It focused on the evolution and new developments of the international structure. A plurality of institutionalist and cooperation theories and approaches followed.³¹ All of them proceeded from the idea of

²⁹ Institutionalism has often been equated with neoliberal theory and treated as a variant of the Grotian tradition of liberalism. However, it is by now regarded as an independent line of thinking that has established itself between realism and liberalism. Robert Keohane, for example, prefers the label “(rational) institutionalism” to “(neo)liberal institutionalism” (Keohane 1993: 298, Fn. 3).

³⁰ As depicted in their book “Power and Interdependence - World Politics in Transition” (Keohane/Nye 1977).

³¹ The new institutionalist and interdependence-theoretical thinking was in particular followed by neoliberal regime theories that have focused on international cooperation and the progressing establishment of international rules and norms in international relations. The broad school of neoliberal regime theory has engendered various cooperation-theoretical approaches, such as Keohane’s

a qualitative change of the international environment and thereby seriously challenged the dominant influence of (neo)realist thinking.

2.1.2.1 Re-Consideration of the State Environment

The most important theoretical renewal that came from institutionalist and interdependence theoretical approaches was the reconsideration of the international structure. Institutionalists have made out a qualitative change of the international environment. Their environmental assumptions have shown to be more specific and differentiated than the neorealist assumption of anarchy and security dilemmas thought to be endogenous to the international system. The international environment in which foreign policy and external relations take place is considered to be much more complex than structural neorealists would admit. Institutionalists have focused on three major criteria and characteristics that define the nature and quality of the international environment: (1) The quality of interdependence, (2) international norms, rules and processes of institutionalization, and (3) the quality of information. Changes in interdependence, norms and information account for the qualitative change of the international environment.

A growing transnational, regional, or global interconnectedness in the globalization era³² has led to areas of various forms and structures of interdependence. An increasing level of interdependence between state actors generates mutual vulnerabilities to the action of and developments in other states. Under conditions of interdependence, unilateral self-help or conventional power politics of state actors may become less effective and less useful.

The institutionalization of international norms and rules in the international system has partly changed the nature of the international environment. Within rational institutionalist thinking, the international system is still thought to be anarchic, but not *anomic* in terms of lack of rules (Little 2006: 297). States are believed to operate both within a decentralized anarchical and a partly institutionalized environment (see Keohane 1989: 1). In those areas where (state) actors have been able to establish international sets of rules and norms, the conditions for (state) action will be different from those under pure anarchy.

Another crucial institutionalist specification of the neorealist conception of anarchy is the institutionalist consideration of different degrees and qualities of information. Rational institutionalists treat information as a variable and have largely focused on the role of

functional (contractualist theory), game-theoretic, situation-structural and problem-structural approaches, or Oran Young's institutional bargaining theory. For a detailed overview and analysis of cooperation-theoretical approaches see Hasenclever/Mayer/Rittberger (1997).

³² The term "globalization" commonly refers to the processes of growing global social, economic, and political interconnections that have set in the post-Second World War era, in particular since the 1970s and 80s (see, for example Müller 2002). However, first observable processes of globalization are thought to have set in as early as the beginning of the 15th century, the time of European trans-oceanic "discoveries".

international institutions in the provision of information about the other actors' intentions and activities (Keohane/Martin 1999: 4-5). A change in the informational environment may help to reduce the state of uncertainty about the other actors' intentions and stabilize the expectations of (state) actors.

Rationalist institutionalist thinkers have made out a more complex and dynamic international environment compared to the rather static neorealist assumptions of anarchy, but not necessarily a more benign environment. Even though institutionalist theorists tended to emphasize the benign and cooperation-prone aspects of the international environment, the observed changes in the international system may foster both conflict and cooperation. Asymmetries in the patterns of interdependence, asymmetries in the set up of international rules and norms that benefit only a few, or asymmetries of information may just as well path the way for new forms of conflict.

2.1.2.2 A Rationalist Logic of Action: Efficiency and Distributional Questions

Rational institutionalism is sometimes characterized as a "half-sibling of neorealism (Keohane/Martin 1999: 3) or, by neorealists critics, as "neorealism by another name". Similar to neorealism, rational institutionalism considers states to be rational self-regarding, goal-oriented utility maximizers. Just like in neorealist theory, rational institutionalism neglects the search for the genesis of state preferences and treats interests and preferences as exogenously given. Rational actors have consistent and ordered preferences. They calculate costs and benefits of alternative courses of action in order to maximize their utility in view of those preferences (Keohane 1984: 27).

What distinguishes the institutionalist state-actor model from the neorealist model is the consideration of state actors as rational *egoists*. Egoism means that the states' "utility functions are independent of one another: they do not gain or lose utility simply because of the gains or losses of others" (Keohane 1984: 27). States are atomistic, rational egoists that calculate their utility independently from one another and are only interested in their own individual situation.³³ It is thus the assumed egoism - not the rationality of actors - that distinguishes institutionalist actor-models from neorealist theory.³⁴

³³ The utility formula expressing the calculation of utility by rational egoists actors is therefore simply $U=V$, where (U) signifies the actor's utility and (V) the actor's own payoffs or benefits in a given situation.

³⁴ In contrast to the rational-egoist model, neorealists have advocated a positionalist-actor model. Positionalism means that state actors are concerned about their relative position which implies that the utility of other actors reduces - at least to a certain degree - one's own utility. A positionalist "worst-case" zero-sum calculation would mean that the gains of one state actor would be at the full expense of another actor. The utility function would be $U=V-W$, where (V) are one's own payoffs and (W) the other actor's payoffs. By now, neorealists theorists have tended to assume attenuated zero-sum calculations. In an attenuated zero-sum game, one's own benefits are only partly reduced by the benefits of others, dependent on one's own *sensitivity* to relative gains. Joseph Grieco has introduced

Even though egoist actors calculate their utility independently from the benefits of others, they may all the same be sensitive to the (absolute) distribution of benefits. Early institutionalist approaches have tended to neglect distributional questions that could possibly guide state actors. The first and foremost concern of rational institutionalists has long-time been connected to the question of *whether* and *how* rational egoist actors in mixed-motive games can reach an efficient, pareto-optimal solution that would maximize the utility of all. The traditional focus of rational institutionalism has rested on the likelihood and genesis of international cooperation and to a lesser extent on the specific outcome of cooperation in terms of the distribution of the benefits among the cooperating states.³⁵ Early functional institutionalist approaches focused on the efficiency function of international institutions. International institutions were supposed to help state actors to avoid pareto-suboptimal results by the provision of information, the guaranty of reciprocity, and the monitoring of the states' compliance.

Lisa Martin has proposed that institutionalist theory should further study other cooperation problems such as distributional, bargaining or coordination problems (Martin 1999: 82). According to Martin, the main effect of international institutions is not only an efficiency effect that enables state actors to reach a collectively efficient solution (Pareto-optimum). Institutions also produce a distributional effect. International institutions also fulfil the function of distributing the realized cooperation gains and thereby determine *which* of the possible pareto-optimal solutions will be realized (Martin 1999: 90).³⁶ In distributional issues, international institutions could help to supersede state-to-state bargaining, identify possible distributional equilibriums, and monitor the distribution of benefits (Martin/Simmons 1998: 745-46).

Likewise, Stephen Krasner argues that institutionalist research has all too much focused on the issues of market failure and collective-action problems. To his opinion, an anticipated asymmetric distribution of cooperation gains that is disproportional to the relative power capabilities of the actors might be an even stronger impairment to cooperation than collective-action problems or concerns about cheating. Krasner therefore advocates a more power-oriented approach to international relations that would take the impact of power capabilities and relative gains into account (Krasner 1991: 360-366).

a sensitivity coefficient (k) to the utility function of (defensive) positionalist actors. This function is expressed as follows: $U=V-k(W-V)$ where $k>0$.

However, Grieco's function neglects the ratio between one's own payoffs (V) and the other's payoffs (W). I would therefore alternatively propose to add the ratio of (W/V) to Grieco's formula in order to better express Grieco's ideas. The modified formula would be as follows:

$$U = V - k(W-V)(W/V).$$

³⁵ Rational institutionalists have widely studied the role of international institutions in overcoming collaboration problems such as the Prisoner's Dilemma (PD) and have paid less attention to coordination problems concerning distributional issues.

³⁶ Particularly in cases of long-term cooperation agreements (iterated games), collaboration problems are thought to become less important and rather shift to coordination problems and distributional conflicts.

By now, rational institutionalists have recognized the importance of distributional conflicts (but rather about absolute gains) and suggest that international institutions could play a prominent role in solving as well distributional conflicts (Keohane/Martin 1994: 45).

2.1.2.3 Hypotheses on Foreign Policy Behavior in Structures of Interdependence

Interdependence-theoretical approaches may offer valuable explanations of foreign policy under various structures of interdependence *before* any significant institutionalization process has set in. The interdependence approach may explain how rational state actors forge their foreign policy strategies in a complex and changing environment of growing interdependence.

Interdependence-theoretical approaches expect state actors to form their behavioral preferences in response to the incentives and constraints of (complex) interdependence. The scope, degree, and asymmetries of interdependence co-determine the behavioral strategies of states. At multiple levels, state actors underlie varying sector-, issue-, and actor-specific structures of interdependence. They face various demands and vulnerabilities in their domestic, regional, or global environment. States are considered to be the dominant, but not the only actors in international relations. State actors may therefore also be vulnerable to the actions of domestic, transnational or global non-state (e.g. societal) actors.

Interdependence-theoretical approaches understand foreign policy as a function of meeting a variety of state interests. They acknowledge that states have to meet multi-level, multi-actor, and multi-sector demands and interests.

As Robert Keohane (1984: 23) has mentioned in his early studies, states experience a continuous trade-off between the pursuit of power and the pursuit of wealth. Robert Gilpin has referred to this trade-off between “guns and butter” as a classical allocation problem of state actors.³⁷ Similarly, Peter Liberman posits that states seek both welfare and security assets and contests the primacy of security concerns over economic interests. Even though the concept of a trade-off between economic and security interests may be too simplistic and even erroneous³⁸ to explain foreign-policy strategies, it acknowledges more diverse state interests than the pure pursuit of power or a simple definition of security through (political or military) power assets.

³⁷ According to Gilpin, the ratio of security objectives to economic objectives “may vary depending on internal and external factors. [...] The state will not seek to maximize power [...] or welfare [...] but will endeavor to find some optimum combination of both objectives” (Gilpin 1981: 22, 20).

³⁸ In many cases, wealth and economic prosperity forms the basis of security. In addition, economic gains may be converted into military or other security assets. For the relationship between economic and security interests see also the studies of Jonathan Tucker (1991) and John Matthews III (1996).

The consideration of diverse state interests emanating from different levels and environments of the state may better capture the formation of foreign-policy strategies. In contrast to systemic neorealist theories, states are not thought to be unitary actors, but to be fragmented and semi-autonomous actors. Diverse and possibly difficult state-society or intra-regime relations at the state's domestic level may account for varying policy strategies at the external level.

The idea of complex interdependence is a neutral term with regard to the states' propensity to cooperation and peaceful conflict management. Structures and relations of interdependence may be managed in both a cooperative or conflictual manner. Mutual vulnerabilities in international relations can either induce states to cooperate for the sake of joint gains and mutual benefit, encourage state efforts to escape (inter)dependence, or engender (distributional) conflicts.

The growing complexity of relations and state vulnerabilities necessitates more nuanced and sophisticated state strategies to manage interdependence. The classical use of (military) force may become less effective and usable (Keohane/Nye 2003: 23-25). Even though power remains an important category for action, its meaning will become more complex and diffuse. Issue-specific forms of power or power attained through asymmetries in interdependent relationships will become more significant.

Foreign policy under conditions of interdependence will therefore become a prism of diverse and nuanced behavioral strategies. States could increasingly seek to link their issue- or sector-specific advantages to other issues or try to negotiate favorable package deals in other affairs. States may exploit or manipulate vulnerabilities of other actors to strengthen their own bargaining position.

In case of unfavorable, strongly asymmetric or risky relations of interdependence, states may be endeavored to seek a larger degree of autonomy through the diversification of relations or through pursuing self-sufficiency in the respective realm. On the other hand, states could also choose to negotiate or enforce a re-distribution of benefits and interests in the current order.

The collective management or institutionalization of interdependent relations is only one option among others of how to manage interdependence. A high degree and quality of institutionalization may alter the states' behavioral preferences towards collective action.³⁹ Once established, international institutions are thought to have an independent influence on state behavior and may foster cooperation on a durable basis (Keohane/Martin 1994: 395).

³⁹ Botcheva and Martin have discovered that international institutions may have both convergence and divergence effects on the behavior of the member states (Botcheva/Martin 1999).

Also highly asymmetrical interdependence may engender institutionalized cooperation, but will possibly also establish an asymmetrical distribution formula.

2.1.3 Constructivist Approaches to FPA

Constructivist thinking offers no coherent theory of foreign policy and thus has to be made applicable for foreign policy analysis.⁴⁰ Since constructivism is first of all a meta-theory⁴¹ just the same as rationalism or rational-choice approaches, its core tenets will have to be worked out in order to formulate specific hypotheses on foreign policy behavior.

2.1.3.1 A Sociological Logic of Action

The relatively new constructivist thinking has introduced a sociological understanding of international relations to IR theories.⁴² It stresses the importance of shared norms, ideas, and beliefs, as well as culture and identity in the analysis of state behavior and international relations (Burchill 2005: 186). Constructivism does not neglect material (power) structures. It rather underlines the influence of ideas and social norms that interpret the material world and attribute a certain meaning to the otherwise void notion of material power capabilities.⁴³

Constructivist thinking has offered a new ontological and epistemological approach to the understanding of state behavior and paved the way for a grand debate between utilitarian-rationalist and normative-reflectivist thinking in social sciences. Whereas utilitarian-rationalist theories consider state actors to hold individual ideas and beliefs according to the principle of methodological individualism, constructivists postulate the notion of intersubjectivity. Constructivism not only stresses the existence of shared norms, values and meanings. It also allows for possible a “collective intentionality”⁴⁴ that overcomes the states’ self-interested calculation of interests.

In the constructivist conception of a socially constructed, norm-pervaded world, state actors are enmeshed in a social web of rules and norms (Frederking 2003: 364). States are

⁴⁰ There have been some attempts to develop constructivist approaches to FPA. Boekle, Rittberger and Wagner elaborated a constructivist foreign policy theory that proved to have explanatory power in the analysis of Germany’s foreign policy since unification (Boekle et al. 2001). Other theorists such as Checkel, Finnemore, and Sikkink have worked out constructivist research programs for FPA (Checkel 2008; Finnemore/Sikkink 2001).

⁴¹ Many theorists regard constructivism not as a theory, but rather as a method or an approach in social science (Checkel 1998: 325; 342). There is still dissent about whether constructivism is an IR theory, a meta-theory, or a method (Zehfuss 2002: 8).

⁴² Constructivist thinking was initially grounded on and influenced by Hedley Bull’s normativist-institutionalist idea of a “society of states” (Bull 1977).

⁴³ Emanuel Adler (1997: 322), for example, has defined constructivism as a “[...] view that the manner in which the material world shapes and is shaped by human action and interaction depends on dynamic normative and epistemic interpretations of the material world.”

⁴⁴ John Searle (2001: 56) acknowledges the existence of both individual and collective intentionality.

believed to be social actors that act according to a normative “logic of appropriateness” (Finnemore 1996: 29; Zürn 1992: 69). Through the process of the internalization of social norms and rules and the assumption of and identification with certain roles, state actors develop an understanding of “appropriate”, norm- and role-consistent action. States act as “role players” complying with their assumed and previously socially constructed roles.

2.1.3.2 The Relationship Between Agent and Structure

Constructivist thinking not only denies the immutability of a specific anarchical structure that would predetermine a naturally given self-help system, but also ascribes an autonomous causality to the international structure. Constructivists treat the social structure of shared norms and beliefs as a causal and constitutive variable that constitutes the preferences, identities and ultimately the behavior of state actors. To the contrary, actor- or agent-oriented approaches regard the international structure as non-generative and an epiphenomenon of predetermined state preferences.⁴⁵ Although constructivism is sometimes accused of overstating the constitutive effects of the (social) structure and of lacking a theory of agency (Checkel 1998: 325), it actually views agents and structures as co-constitutive that interact and construct each other. In a constructivist understanding, social actions and social structures presuppose each other. Socially interacting agents construct an ideational structure of rules and norms and are, in turn, re-constructed and constrained by the structure.

2.1.3.3 Preconditions of State Behavior: Interest and Identity Formation

One of the major achievements and qualities of constructivist thinking are usually seen in the explanation of the formation and change of interests and identities (Checkel 1998: 346). Constructivists have effectively opened up the “black box” of identity formation by explaining the making of the social environment that affects behavior. Utilitarian-rationalist theories, to the contrary, treat state interests as constant and exogenously given and do not consider the formation of various interests and identities to be relevant for FPA (Wendt 1996: 62). Rational choice theories and behavioralist models merely explain changes in behavior, but not of interests and identities.

⁴⁵ In the agent-structure debate within IR theories, David Dessler (1994: 328-332) distinguishes between the Waltzian agent-oriented approach “positionalist model” and a structure-oriented “transformational model”. Whereas the first treats the international structure as an “unintended by-product” and as a mere environment of interaction, the latter considers structure as both outcome and medium of action.

Walter Carlsnaes (1992: 254) has proposed a tripartite approach to overcome the agent-structure problem in FPA. He advises to conjoin an *intentional* (foreign policy choice, preferences), *dispositional* (values, perceptions), and *structural* dimension (objective conditions, institutional setting) to explain foreign policy action. Between the different dimensions exists either a *causal* or *teleological* relationship.

Constructivists not only problematize how norms and ideas affect state behavior, but also how they emerge and change. In constructivist terms, state behavior is the result of malleable identities and interests which remain to be explained. Interests and identities of state actors are thought to be constructed and re-shaped through social interaction. The formation of a specific social structure of identities and interests is based on the regular practice of interaction and the principle of path dependence. In case of the actors' dissatisfaction and lack of identification with the current modes of interactions, the involved actors might again give rise to a new ideational structure (Wendt 1992: 86).

Alexander Wendt underlines the social and co-constitutive genesis of identities and interests, but additionally considers pre-social (objective) interests that are intrinsic to states and do not have to be socially constructed. Referring to Robert Keohane's classification of national interests, Wendt classes among them physical survival, autonomy, economic well-being, and collective self-esteem (Wendt 1999: 233-235). Nonetheless, these primal interests of states may be interpreted and pursued in various ways and translated into different foreign policy behaviors.

Constructivism has re-considered the rationalist concept of a constellation of fixed and solely materially and economically grounded interests. State interests are believed to be formed and shaped through social experience and processes of socialization in terms of an internalization of social roles, rules, and norms. The constructivist consideration of social learning through the process of social interaction has contributed to the explanation of identity and interest formation which has so far been neglected by rationalist IR theories. By the integration of material and ideational structures as well as the assessment of how they might co-act and influence each other, constructivism may furthermore provide a more comprehensive assessment of state interaction and shed a more nuanced light on the *sources* of foreign policy behavior.

2.1.3.4 Material and Ideational Sources of State Behavior

Constructivist thinking has been accused of overstating the relevance of ideational structures and in return neglecting material power structures. As a matter of fact, constructivist analysts have usually more strongly focused on the effects of ideational and normative structures on state behavior. However, genuine constructivist thinking does not prioritize the effects of ideational over material structures, but equally acknowledges the existence and relevance of a material and social reality. What distinguishes constructivism from rationalist or neorealist thinking is that constructivism assumes a co-constitution of material and social structures. Both material and ideational or social structures can have causal and constitutive effects.

Material (power) structures can, for example, have constitutive effects on the formation of interests and identities.⁴⁶

While from a neorealist perspective, norms and ideas are rather exploited as instruments and sources of 'soft power' by rational agents and have no constitutive effect on their own, constructivists hold the opinion that ideas and social norms are not "simply epiphenomenal reflections of the distribution of material power" (see Thomas 2000: 133).⁴⁷

The difference between rationalist and constructivist thinking is therefore less grounded on a "material-ideational divide"⁴⁸, but on epistemological questions. In order to avoid the accusation of a theoretical bias and over-statement of the social reality, constructivists should pay more attention to a balanced and equitable consideration of a material-ideational co-constitution.

2.1.3.5 Different Constructivist Strands

Constructivism has remained a fragmented theoretical approach including diverse theoretical strands. Constructivists hold different opinions about the extent to which state action and international relations are reducible to a socially constructed reality. They also put different emphasis on where to make out relevant social norms and normative instructions to behavior.

A major divide in constructivist thinking lies between "conventional" theorists⁴⁹ and "critical postmodernist", "post-structural", or "post-positivist" thinkers⁵⁰ (see Burchill 2005: 185; Ruggie 1998: 881). Conventional constructivists do not deny the existence of an independent material reality vis-à-vis a social structure of ideas, norms, and intersubjective understanding. Conventional constructivists may at times tend to treat norms and ideas as causal variables in a positivist logic of cause and effect.⁵¹ Postmodernists, to the contrary, negate the intelligibility of reality (Müller 2002: 382) and the possibility of objective knowledge (Frederking 2003: 364). While critical constructivists are merely sceptical of the possibility of formulating general covering laws", post-positivist constructivists deny the "firm foundation for any knowledge" (Katzenstein et al. 1999: 37).

⁴⁶ The moderate constructivist thinker, Alexander Wendt, for example acknowledges that "material structures can have sui generis effects on collective identity formation" (Wendt 1996: 55).

⁴⁷ Interestingly, also neoclassical realists such as Randall Schweller and William Wohlforth have analyzed how an altered material power position led to a change in state perception and the national self-conception (Schweller/Wohlforth 2000; Wohlforth 1994/5).

⁴⁸ Petrova proposes that the consideration of a co-constitution of material and social or normative structures would help to bridge the gap of the "material-ideational divide" in IR-theory (Petrova 2003: 123, 146).

⁴⁹ Among them are counted Alexander Wendt, Martha Finnemore, Friedrich Kratochwil, John Gerard Ruggie, or Emanuel Adler.

⁵⁰ Such as David Campbell

⁵¹ A positivist logic implies that a valid explanation of social phenomena - just as in natural science - has to underlie the principle of empirical validation and falsification (Zehfuss 2002:3).

Critical and post-positivist constructivists have accused conventional constructivists of adhering to a rationalist, materialist, and “purely interactionist” (see Pasic 1996: 86) understanding of state interests and identities. Even though conventional constructivism partially acknowledges pre-social and material-based interests,⁵² it still allows for more variance and change of state interests compared to a rationalist and economically grounded notion of state interests.

Social norms, roles, and identities may exist at the domestic, transnational, or international level. Constructivism can therefore also be categorized into different strands according to their focus on a particular level of analysis. IR theorists have roughly distinguished between societal and systemic constructivism.

Societal constructivism examines domestic societal norms which are shared within a state’s society. These domestic norms in terms of “societal expectations of appropriate behavior” can be derived from the national political culture, national identity or the shared beliefs of “epistemic communities” (see Boekle et al. 2001: 121).

Systemic constructivism has proceeded from the idea of an “international society” as an international value community that defines the behavioral roles of its members (see Boekle et al. 2001: 116-118). Systemic constructivists, such as Martha Finnemore or Alexander Wendt, have focused on how state behavior is shaped by the international social structure and international or transnational social norms.⁵³ Within the international social structure, international institutions and regimes could as well engender or convey social norms and help to establish consolidated patterns of behavior (see Zürn 1992: 141).

Both societal and systemic constructivist approaches do not necessarily exclude one another. However, in case that domestic, transnational or international norms and values contradict each other, societal and systemic constructivist approaches would come into competition.

2.1.3.6 Hypotheses on Foreign Policy Behavior

Constructivists consider foreign policy to be norm-consistent. State actors are expected to be role-players that act according to their social role and comply with their foreign-policy norms and principles. Constructivists hold a neutral stance on foreign-policy behavior (see Krell

⁵² See, for example Alexander Wendt’s definition of a materially based “corporate identity” and of “pre-social national interests” (Wendt 1999: 224-225; 233-235). According to Lapid (1996: 89), Wendt has chosen a realist and materialist starting point for the formation of further interests and identities. Inayatullah and Blaney have accused Wendt of presuming motivations to be “rooted in the materiality of agency” and of merely distinguishing between a competitive or cooperative pursuit of power and material gain (Inayatullah/Blaney 1996: 73).

⁵³ See Finnemore/Sikkink 2001: 399; Finnemore 1996.

2003: 332). Since the state agent can internalize all conceivable foreign-policy norms and roles, foreign-policy behavior can take many different forms and patterns.⁵⁴

Norms are defined as “shared expectations about appropriate behavior held by a community of actors” (Finnemore 1996: 22). They “specify standards of behavior” (Thomas 2000: 133) and give “immediate orientation to behavior”. In a constructivist understanding, norms do not only have a regulative effect in terms of regulating state behavior by increasing or reducing the cost of a certain action. They may as well have a constitutive effect in terms of constituting and legitimizing state goals (Boekle et al. 2001: 107).

In constructivist thinking, behavioral norms and principles originate from the culture, identity and a state’s role- and self conception. While culture remains a rather “fuzzy” concept (Boekle et al. 2001: 107), national role- and self-conceptions may give more detailed information about “appropriate” behavior.

When forming constructivist hypotheses on foreign-policy behavior, it is important to note that constructivism allows for multiple causal pathways between identity and foreign policy. Within constructivist thinking, Stephen Saideman has identified various “consequential pathways” between identity and foreign policy.

The purest constructivist relation between identity and foreign policy would be the role of identity in shaping the ‘possible’ and ‘legitimate’. An identity may define state interests and construct state preferences by “legitimizing some courses of action while making others unimaginable” (Saideman 2002: 179).

As well, identity may serve as a prop or justification for state behavior. The state leadership may appeal to social norms and values and refer to particular identities to justify its policies even if more material interests have all the same driven state behavior. Although this relationship comes close to an instrumentalist notion of identity, it does not mean that identity is reduced to a mere disposable tool in the hands of a self-interested state actor. A concurrent independent influence of identity and social norms limits the actor’s free disposal of identity constructs.

Another causal relationship between identity and foreign policy can be seen in the role of identity to impose “costs” on certain behavior. These costs can be either in form of material or ideational “legitimacy costs” (Hinnebusch 2003: 69) as a result of “identity violations” (Saideman 2002: 180).

⁵⁴ According to Wendt, culture in terms of shared knowledge and ideas may constitute both conflictive and cooperative state behavior, depending on whether the actors share a culture of enmity, competition, or friendship (Wendt 1999: 247-258). International anarchy therefore does not predetermine worst-case scenarios for state behavior.

Constructivism as a meta-theory holds various opinions on how agents and structures as well as ideational and material structures interact with each other. The divide within constructivism between positivist or conventional thinkers on the one hand, and post-modern thinkers on the other hand, reveals different epistemological approaches to reality.

This study will apply a reflectivist constructivist analysis that follows a middle ground between strongly positivist⁵⁵ and post-modern⁵⁶ constructivist thinking. This study acknowledges the mutual construction and transformation of a social and material reality and allows for more than a one-to-one or unidirectional relationship between agents and structures. The major research interest in this study lies in the examination of multiple causal and constitutive effects of social and material structural variables on state behavior. The study will thereby look at the different ways in which foreign policy is determined and constrained by normative structures and social role conceptions.

2.2 Structural Particularities of the Gulf Region: A Contextualization of the Explanatory Variables

The analysis of this study rests upon approaches to FPA derived from IR theories. From the three IR-theoretical approaches observed in this study, the study has made out the analytical categories of (1) power and threat, (2) patterns of interdependence, and (3) identity and role conceptions as explanatory variables for foreign policy. In the following chapter, the study works out measurable indicators for each of these explanatory categories.

Even though IR theories claim to make generally valid hypotheses on foreign policy, regional structural and actor-specific particularities may require a specific regional contextualization of IR theories. The analysis expects to enhance the explanatory power of IR theories by linking the IR-theoretical clarity and parsimony with region- and country-specific knowledge from area studies. This study will make IR theories more “applicable” to FPA through a regional contextualization of the explanatory variables. The operationalization of the explanatory variables therefore demands their precise adjustment according to the specificities of the regional environment.

Observers of the Middle East state system⁵⁷ have identified manifold regional particularities that would allow for a variety of conceivable explanations of regional foreign policies. Among the generally noted peculiarities are (1) the region’s endowment with vast fossil energy

⁵⁵ In positivist terms, social norms – be it domestic, transnational or international social norms – derived from collective identity constructs or role conceptions causally determine state behavior in a one-directional way.

⁵⁶ Postmodern thinkers basically deny the possibility of causal explanations.

⁵⁷ Such as Raymond Hinnebusch (2002) or Louise Fawcett (2005).

resources, (2) the long-term engagement and penetration of extra-regional actors,⁵⁸ (3) the salience of transnational identities and ideas that penetrate the societies of the regional states, (4) problematic state-society relations and the lack of congruency between nation and state, as well as (5) irredentism and the lack of a generally accepted territorial and political status quo.⁵⁹

Foreign policy experts of the Middle East region have usually defined the Gulf region as a sub-regional system⁶⁰ or “subcomplex” (Buzan/Wæver 2003: 51-52) embedded in and entangled with the wider Middle East region. Structural features of the Near and Middle East have been considered equally applicable to the Gulf region. Other Middle East experts, however, have proposed to assess the Gulf region as a distinct (sub-)region that underlies specific structural conditions. Gregory Gause proposes to regard the Gulf region as a regional security system that is distinct from the wider Middle East state system.⁶¹ Gause argues that the security dynamics in the Gulf have been quite different from the Arab-Israeli region where security and role-conceptions have been inextricably linked with the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Gulf region does not remain unaffected by political developments in the wider Middle East. However, the subordination of the Gulf to the wider region might risk the analytical error of reducing policies and conflicts in the Gulf to a mere extension of the Arab-Israeli conflict and of having Arab-Israeli questions determine the Gulf foreign-policy agenda (Gause 2010: 5).

Paul Salem (2010) has made out an “Eastern Middle East” as a regional sub-system including Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Turkey. Salem (2010: 2) argues that recent developments in Iraq “have created a new web of interests, risks and interactions among states of this ‘Eastern Middle East’ sub-region.” The countries of this sub-region are believed to be increasingly interconnected by structures of “positive interdependence” (trade, political contacts, and security cooperation) and “negative interdependence” (risk perceptions, and proxy conflict).

⁵⁸ External interventions and Western penetration has been marked an “enduring recognizable feature” of the Middle East and has provoked behavioral responses by the regional states (see Roberson 2002: 56).

⁵⁹ Hinnebusch makes out a correlation between supra-state identities, incongruence between nation and state, and irredentism in the Middle East (Hinnebusch 2002: 7-8).

⁶⁰ Bassam Tibi divides the Arab state system into three sub-regional units, the *Mashreq* (Near East), the *Maghrib* (the Arab West), and the (Arab) Gulf. It must be noted that Tibi counts Iraq to the *Mashreq* on account of Iraq’s institutional and cultural exclusion by the GCC states (see Tibi 1996: 75-76).

⁶¹ Also other scholars such as Abdulkhaleq Abdulla and Muhammad al-Said Idris use the term of a distinct Gulf regional security system (see Gause 2010: 5).

Abdullah Al-Shaiji, Kuwait University, claims that the Gulf region has remained for a long time largely “understudied” and “upstaged” by ethnocentric approaches. While former studies of the Arab world mainly focused on Egypt, the Levant and Iraq as the Arab “heartland”, Al-Shaiji has detected a new international recognition of the Gulf region in the past years (see Al-Shaiji, *Gulf News*, December 27, 2010, page 9).

This study will proceed from the conception of the Gulf as a *distinct*, but not *exceptional*, regional (sub-)system. This study counts Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia as the three “natural” leading countries of the Gulf as well as the smaller Arab monarchies of the GCC to the Gulf sub-region.⁶² The structural particularities of the Gulf are believed to qualitatively differ from those of the Near East or North Africa and require a precise, Gulf-specific adjustment and operationalization of the explanatory variables. The Gulf regional system shows distinct features of threat perceptions, balance-of-power processes and political dynamisms (see Gause 2010). The regional distinctiveness of the Gulf can be largely (but not exclusively) referred to the region’s abundance of strategic natural resources. The Gulf region holds two-thirds of the world’s proven oil reserves and more than 30 percent of the world’s proven gas reserves.⁶³ The resource abundance accounts for the region’s unique geo-economic and geo-strategic importance. The Gulf is considered to be the only world region with significant spare capacity to meet growing international fossil energy demands (see Koch 2007: 5-6). On account of its rich endowment with strategic natural resources, the Gulf has also been subject to a distinct form and quality of foreign penetration and intervention. The degree to which the foreign, extra-regional presence has ruptured indigenous processes of regional security building in the Gulf may even be characterized as an external “overlay” of power (see Buzan 1991: 178). In addition, the regional countries’ endowment with natural resources has engendered a distinct quality of energy export dependence at the global level and a distinct socio-economic structure at the domestic, sub-state level. The considerable degree of oil (and gas) revenues flowing to the national budgets of the state regimes has formed a distinct quality of “rentier states” (Beblawi/Luciani 1987). The regional states’ free disposal of oil and gas rents has shaped and buttressed a specific form of a social pact between the political regimes and their societies.

The Gulf region has also shown indigenous developments in culture and identity formation. One could even argue for a distinct “Gulf” identity of the people and countries in the Gulf. Despite manifold sectarian-religious, ethnic, and tribal divides in the Gulf, the states in the Gulf have equally defined themselves - either positively or negatively - as belonging to the Gulf region. The recent re-erupted dispute between Iran and the Arab Gulf states over the name of the Gulf may suggest that the states in the Gulf perceive themselves as being part of a specific region.⁶⁴

⁶² The Republic of Yemen as the poorest and least-developed country of the Arab world and a comparably resource-poor country without direct access to the Persian Gulf waterway takes up an exceptional position in the Arabian Peninsula.

⁶³ The Persian Gulf and its coastal areas are the world’s largest single source of crude oil. The world’s largest offshore oilfield (Safaniya) is located in the Persian Gulf. Iran and Qatar hold two of the world’s three largest gas reserves (Koch 2007: 6).

⁶⁴ Iran persists on the notion of the ‘Persian Gulf’ whereas the Arab Gulf countries usually refer to the region as the ‘Arabian’ or ‘Arab’ Gulf. In February 2010, Iran’s transport minister threatened to ban

This study will analytically demarcate the Gulf region from the wider Middle East. In the following chapter, the study will offer a Gulf-specific contextualization of the explanatory variables that is believed to give more accurate explanations of the regional foreign policy in the Gulf.

Each IR theory approach advocates its own framework of analysis and offers differently promising explanations for foreign policy. The aim of this chapter is to conceptualize a neorealist, interdependence-theoretical and constructivist framework of foreign policy analysis, respectively, that are each able to explain foreign policy in the context of the Gulf region.

IR and foreign policy theories hold differing views on where to set the focus of analysis in order to search for the key factors that determine foreign policy. State actors are embedded within multi-level, material and normative structures that evolve and change, or at times are deeply ruptured from outside. IR-theoretical approaches to foreign policy have put their emphasis and analytical foci on different levels and structures of the states' environment.

Structural or systemic theories such as structural neorealism suggest a strictly systemic and state-centric analysis. They expect to find explanations for state behavior in the nature of the international or regional state system and in state-to-state relations. Accordingly, regional policies in the Gulf are the result of structural constraints or incentives to state behavior emanating from the regional and international state system.

As opposed to this, non-systemic, interdependence-theoretical, and to some extent modified neorealist theories⁶⁵ see the need to problematize state-society relations since foreign policy is rooted in the domestic politics of the state. Non-systemic approaches thus take the states' divergence in domestic conditions and properties as well as sub-state or societal peculiarities into account.

The divide between systemic and non-systemic theories has been one of methodological dogma. Systemic approaches proceed from the theoretical fiction about the state as a unitary actor regardless of domestic state conditions (see Waltz 1979). More recent neorealist approaches to foreign policy have re-considered the trade-off between theoretical parsimony and complexity in favor of theoretical sophistication. One of the earliest - though only moderate - neorealist relaxations of the unitary-actor model has been Walt's balance-of-threat theory (Walt 1987) that considers variable state intentions. The question in how far the neorealist postulation of the homogenization of the state may be relaxed in order to add

airlines from flying into Iranian airspace if they use the term "Arabian" instead of "Persian" Gulf on their in-flight monitors (see Duraïd Al Baik in: gulfnews.com, February 23, 2010).

⁶⁵ In their analytical framework for foreign policy analysis of Middle East states, Hinnebusch and Ehteshami, for example, advocate a "modified form of realism". This modified realist approach acknowledges anarchy in the regional system as a dominant factor shaping foreign policy, but at the same time seeks to avoid the "imposition of an overly rigid and artificial symmetry" (Hinnebusch/Ehteshami 2002: vii).

some nuance and complexity to neorealist explanations has since then occupied neorealist thinkers.

In modified structuralist approaches, the state-centric analysis of foreign policy has slightly shifted from the concept of the state as a unitary actor to one of the state as an autonomous actor.⁶⁶ The autonomous-actor model suggests that the state seeks the maintenance of its autonomy not only in external relations, but as well in the domestic domain. Although the state enjoys some degree of autonomy from society, it is continuously alert to any curtailments of its autonomy and freedom of action at both the domestic and external level. The autonomous-actor model does not question the primacy of the state in foreign policy and international relations.⁶⁷ It rather suggests that the state has to equally take societal forces and pressures next to external vulnerabilities and interdependencies into consideration when making foreign policy decisions. Scott Cooper (2003/04) has elaborated on a “state-centric balance of threat theory” that is supposed to better comprehend the constellation of threats in the Middle East by complementing a systemic approach with an analysis of state-society relations. Scholars of Middle East area studies have in many ways recognized the duality of both external and domestic threats to state security and autonomy as a common feature of both the Gulf and Middle East state system.

Besides the systemic/sub-systemic divide, foreign policy theories give different priority to ideational factors such as ideas, identity and culture in contrast to the material (power) structure. Sociological, constructivist, and cultural approaches to foreign policy have explored the “cultural dimension” of foreign policy in the Middle East. Cultural approaches went further into the question to what extent regional policies in the Middle East might be of a nature *sui generis* that is quite different from those of other regions and value systems.⁶⁸ Regional policies in the Gulf and Middle East region thus might be of a distinctively ‘Arab’, ‘Persian’, or ‘Islamic’ character.⁶⁹

From the fact that ideas and culture are of paramount importance in sociological and cultural approaches does not follow that utilitarian-rationalist understandings of foreign policy neglect or underestimate ideational factors. The difference between sociological-constructivist and rationalist approaches lies not in the inclusion and exclusion of ideational factors. The

⁶⁶ The notion of the autonomous state actor stems from Stephen Krasner’s statist approach to FPA (Krasner 1978: 5).

⁶⁷ Hinnebusch’s approach of “modified” neorealist theory, for example, assumes that the state is the main actor in foreign policy, while state elites have an interest in maximizing the autonomy and security of the state (Hinnebusch 2002: 1).

⁶⁸ See for example the English School approach to the Middle East that comprises a strong cultural dimension (Buzan/Gonzalez-Pelaez 2009) or Halliday’s approach of “historical sociology” (Halliday 2005). Gonzalez-Pelaez examines whether the Middle East constitutes a regional international society on account of a distinct regional value system (Gonzalez-Pelaez 2009).

⁶⁹ The question of a distinctively ‘Arab’ nature of politics is discussed by Valbjørn and Bank (Valbjørn 2009; Valbjørn/Bank 2010).

analytical dividing line is rather of methodological and epistemological nature. The question is hence less *whether*, but *in what way* do ideas and identity influence regional policies and state-to-state relations.

Utilitarian-rationalist and instrumentalist approaches to state behavior suggest that salient ideas, identities, or ideologies respectively, become part of the state actors' cost-benefit calculations. In a purely instrumentalist understanding, ideas and other ideational factors are hardly more than instruments in the hands of state actors. Rationalist and neorealist scholars have acknowledged that strong and persuasive ideas may be equally effective power assets within the states' arsenals of (hard and soft) power capabilities. Accordingly, powerful ideas and ideologies have been recognized as important sources of power and threat in the Middle East state system (see Walt 1987).

Constructivists, to the contrary, posit that foreign-policy making "is seldom simply a matter of rational actors weighting costs and benefits to identify the one obviously best course of action" (see Hinnebusch 2003: 93). State interests and threats are far from being self-evident, but are rather 'constructed' and understood through the states' definition of 'self' and 'other'. Foreign policy choices are "filtered" by the states' identities and foreign-policy role conceptions (ibid.). In the constructivist understanding, ideas and identity have an independent and constitutive influence on state behavior. Role- and self-conceptions may define what is possible and legitimate in foreign policy. Constructivist observers of the wider Middle East region posit that identity, past experiences and narratives about history have forged foreign policy norms and role conceptions from which the states in the region may find it difficult to deviate from (Telhami/Barnett 2002). The states in the Gulf have exhibited persistent foreign-policy role conceptions that might determine their foreign policy orientations in various respects. Foreign policy roles and norms in the Gulf and Middle East may define 'friends' and 'foes', give information about which external power constitutes a 'threat' or possible 'patron', and lay the basis for an overall revisionist or status quo orientation towards the regional state system at large (see Hinnebusch 2003: 93).

The following matrix structure below illustrates the scope and focus of analysis of the IR theories applied in this study. IR theories partly cover the same analytical categories such as power, threat and vulnerability, ideas and identity, but give them different priorities and attach different meanings to them. The explanatory values of foreign policy theories may become particularly evident at the points of the theories' analytical intersection or dividing lines. Ideas and identity, for example, are looked at either from an instrumentalist, constructivist, or culturalist perspective. Likewise, the constellation of threat may be rooted in either a rather technical notion of a balance of power and a rational power calculus, in (economic, societal, or military) dependencies and vulnerabilities, or be to some extent socially constructed. It is

thus along the theories' epistemological dividing lines where their explanatory power may later become manifest.

Table 3: Level-Structure Matrix for FPA in the Gulf

	Material structure (military/economic assets and liabilities)	Ideational structure (Ideas, Identities, Culture, Norms)
Systemic level of analysis (inter-state relations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hard power capabilities - military and economic security threats emanating from the state system - economic, military, or security (inter)dependence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - soft power capabilities - ideological security threats emanating from the state system - international or transnational ideas and identities - Institutional norms, international law
Sub-systemic level of analysis (state-society relations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - material-economic needs and performance of the state - hard security threats emanating from domestic opposition groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - societal norms, ideas and culture - national and state identity - foreign-policy role conceptions - security threats emanating from domestic oppositional (political or religious) ideas and ideologies

Source: Author's compilations

2.2.1 Operationalization of 'Power and Threat'

The objective of this sub-chapter is to conceptualize a comprehensive neorealist framework of analysis for the operationalization of power and threat. Although the notions of power and threat constitute the two major analytical categories in neorealist theory, approaches to the meanings and measurements of power and threat remain multitudinous and ambiguous. The particular difficulty of developing a neorealist analytical framework lies in comprising the complexity and multidimensionality of the notions of power and threat without infringing the neorealist postulation of theoretical parsimony. The theoretical parsimony of neorealist theories is based on (1) a strongly systemic perspective⁷⁰ and (2) a state-centric approach⁷¹ that treats states as the primary actors in international politics.

⁷⁰ In a neorealist systemic analysis, the level of the international system serves either as the only level of analysis (strictly structural neorealism) or as the dominant level and starting point of analysis (neoclassical realism).

In accordance with a systemic approach, this study defines the constellation of power and threat as a feature of the international system. Neorealist thinkers conceive of power as a systemic feature although it stems from the unit (sub-state) level. Similarly, the notion of threat is equally "systemized" in this study.

⁷¹ A neorealist state-centric approach neglects possible independent causal effects from non-state (e.g. transnational or sub-state) actors.

The inclusion of the notion of threat as an explanatory variable into a neorealist framework of analysis constitutes a further development and contextualization of the notion of power and is based on Walt's theoretical advancement of structural neorealist balance-of-power theories. In his work *The Origins of Alliances*, Walt has tested his balance-of-threat theory on international politics and alliance choice in the Middle East. This study will use Walt's balance-of-threat approach as a starting point for the operationalization of power and threat. Since the category of threat is mainly derived from power, the notion of power remains central in Walt's balance-of-threat theory. Yet, Walt qualifies the concept of power with subjective and cognitive elements such as 'intentions' and 'perceptions' of state actors. The definition of threat as understood by Walt is thus basically constituted by two fundamental elements which are referred to in this study as the elements of (1) potency (power) and (2) volition (intent).

Scholars studying foreign policy have repeatedly raised the question whether states should be judged by their intentions or their capabilities (Cordesman 2008: 49). Kenneth Waltz, the founding father of structural neorealism, has remarked in this context that the inclusion of threat and elements of state perceptions and intentions infuses theories of international politics with unit-level factors (Waltz 1996: 56). Other theorists have acknowledged, however, that ideational and cognitive factors might equally pertain to the systemic level of analysis. According to Masala, state perception might constitute either a structural or a unit-level variable. Whenever state perception refers to the power structure and shifts in the balance of power it can be treated as a structural variable (Masala 2006: 104). Similarly, Keohane has proposed a "modified structural research program" that would combine external and internal factors in a *systemic* way (Keohane 1989: 60). According to the latter perspective, Walt's balance-of-threat theory might therefore still fit into a structuralist analysis.

In the following, the study will start from the assumptions of Walt's balance-of-threat theory which discusses the correlation of power and threat. The analysis conducted in this study does not exceed a systemic line of argument insofar as the origins of power and threat at the unit-level are not further problemized. With the help of Randall Schweller's and Jason Davidson's elaborations on state intentions, the study will concretize Walt's theory and further qualify the notion of threat. Subsequently, the study will adapt the theoretical concepts of power and threat to the specificities of the Gulf region in order to make out Saudi Arabia's and Iran's general constellations of power and threats.

2.2.1.1 The Notion of Power: Approaches to its Meaning and Measurement

In IR theory and neorealist thinking, there exists no consensus on the definition and measurement of power. As Stephen Walt states, "the concept power is central to realist

theory, yet there is still little agreement on how it should be conceived and measured”.⁷² According to Rittberger, Baumann and Wagner, the term of power refers to “the availability of political, economic and military capabilities which allow a state to assert its interests in dealings with other actors” (Baumann et al. 2001: 43). Power is therefore based on both power *resources* and the *capability to influence* outcome in one’s own interest (Wilhelm 2006: 97). Keohane and Nye define power according to this two-sided concept as both “control over resources” and “control over outcomes” (see Wilhelm 2006: 98). David Baldwin, on the contrary, equates power in a broad and generic sense with “influence” and “control” (Baldwin 2002: 178).

Approaches to power have been largely divided between those which conceive power as a resource or property and ‘relational-power approaches’ which understand power as an actual or potential relationship between actors (see Nolte 2006: 10; Baldwin 2002: 178). Baldwin describes the shift from the traditional property concept of power to the relational one as “a revolution in power analysis” (Baldwin 2002: 178). Other scholars, such as Nolte, accentuate the need to combine both approaches in order to comprehensively capture the notion of power (Nolte 2006: 16).

2.2.1.1.1 Power as a Property and Absolute Asset

Power can be assessed either in terms of a resource and absolute asset or in terms of a relational asset within a power relationship (see Nolte 2006: 10). The first approach that conceives of power as a property and absolute asset has classically defined power in material terms. In his traditional material conception of power, Gilpin defines power as military, economic, and technological capabilities (Gilpin 1981: 13). The traditional neorealist notion of power hence largely associates the sources of power with tangible values and gives priority to military power capabilities. Offensive neorealists like John Mearsheimer define military capabilities as the decisive power resource and military force as “the ultima ratio of international politics” (Mearsheimer: 2001: 56). Kenneth Waltz lists seven possible sources of power: The size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence (Waltz 1979: 131). These capabilities may be measured with reference to the size and quality of the armed forces,⁷³ the gross national product (GNP), the export volume and a state’s terms of trade, size and strategic location of a state’s territory, and the availability of natural resources (see Bauman et al. 2001: 44).

⁷² Cited by Detlef Nolte (2006: 9).

⁷³ A common indicator to measure military power has also been the national defense budget. Some scholars, however, use much more complex indexes of indicators to measure power (see Nolte 2006: 11).

As another important source of power apart from classical military and economic sources of power, Joseph Nye has identified 'soft power' (see Nye 2004: 30). Nye's conception of "soft power" has greatly contributed to the conceptualization of ideational power resources. Nye measures soft power, as opposed to hard power, by the extent to which a state's culture, ideas and ideologies are able to attract and co-opt other countries and to set agendas in the international arena. Soft power is hence grounded on attraction rather than coercion (Keohane/Nye 1998: 86). Hard power (or 'command power') is "the ability to shape what others *do*" by means of material coercion and threats or inducements and rewards. Against this, soft power (or 'co-optive power') is "the ability to shape what others *want*" by means of attraction.⁷⁴ Soft power thus influences the preferences of other state actors (Nye 2004: 5; Keohane/Nye 1998: 86).

The resources of a state's soft power are intangible assets such as an attractive culture, institutions, political values and a state's (foreign) policies when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority (Nye 2004: 6, 11). Highly universalistic cultures that champion universal values may enjoy a particularly high attractiveness to others.

According to Nye, soft power cannot only be understood in terms of resources or power assets that produce attraction, but also in behavioral terms (Nye 2004: 6). Likewise, many scholars comprehend soft power not as an ideational power *resource*, but as a *way of exerting* power. The exertion of power describes a continuum between coercion (=hard power) and persuasion/attraction (=soft power) that distinguishes hard and soft power by the degree of the tangibility of their resources. The implementation of both hard and soft power is therefore not mutually exclusive (see Nolte 2006: 14). In fact, hard power and soft power can be inextricably intertwined in the exertion of power. Means of hard and soft power commonly interplay in a state's use of power. Yet, soft power does not depend on a state's hard power resources, but may exist independently from the state's military or economic posture (Nye 2004: 30, 9). As well, hard and soft power may reinforce or interfere with each other. In this context, Nye makes up the notion of "smart power" which is the ability to combine hard and soft power in the most effective way (see Nye 2004: 32). Smart power is insofar a behavioral conception of power as it requires skilful leadership and strategies of a state actor to achieve the desired outcomes. As opposed to this, the power-as-a-resource approach may at this point suffer from explanatory weakness since power resources are not always perfectly fungible and may not be converted into the preferred outcome (see Nye 2004: 3).

Recent studies have increasingly acknowledged multi-dimensional sources of power and a mounting significance of non-military and also non-material power resources. Walt acknowledges the crucial role of ideology as a power resource in the Middle East when

⁷⁴ Nye 2004: 7 (emphasis added)

ideology is used by states as a tool to discredit and weaken their rivals (Walt 1987: 204; 215-16). Ferguson makes out a multitude of power dimensions which comprise military, economic, financial,⁷⁵ diplomatic⁷⁶ and soft power⁷⁷ as well as brainpower⁷⁸ and demography as power (Ferguson 2003). In addition, Ferguson (2003) emphasizes what he calls the 'psychological dimension' of power which refers to state legitimacy (in the eyes of the state's members of society) and credibility (in the eyes of other states). Similar to Nye who depicts soft power as being dependent on willing receivers, Ferguson argues that only those projections of power which are perceived as legitimate and credible by the receivers will be effective. This psychological dimension of power hence conceives of power as a social category and exceeds the materialist and absolute notion of power. Power thus becomes a relational value that is contingent on the recognition from others.

2.2.1.1.2 Power as a Relational Value

The relational-power conception assesses power through the context of power relations. According to this approach, power cannot be reduced to the factual power resources, but must be contextualized (Nolte 2006: 11). David Baldwin (2002: 178) argues that power is multidimensional and hence attains different meanings in the varying contexts of multi-level systems and across different issue areas. According to Baldwin, power must be assessed through its scope, domain and weight as well as through the costs and means of the exertion of power (Baldwin 2002: 178-179). The scope of power refers to the issue-areas in which power is effective whereas the domain of power refers to the number of actors in various world regions that can be effectively influenced. The weight of power is understood as the probability to influence the behavior of others. Power can as well be assessed through the costs that are incurred by both the actor that exerts power and the one who has to react. According to Baldwin, power can achieve effectiveness through different means, such as symbolic,⁷⁹ economic, military, or diplomatic means.

The relational approach to power views power as the ability to cause change of both the behavior and behavioral predispositions of other actors. Power may hence also affect the beliefs, attitudes, opinions, expectations and emotions of others (Baldwin 2002: 178).

In a similar way, although not on a sociological or inter-subjective basis, neorealists have argued that the notion of power cannot be viewed as an absolute asset. Power attains its

⁷⁵ Financial power may be exerted through financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF (Ferguson 2003).

⁷⁶ Diplomatic power can be conceived as the ability to form alliances and achieve desired outcomes through diplomatic skills (see Ferguson 2003).

⁷⁷ Ferguson (2003) considers soft power a "Janus-faced phenomenon" since cultural attraction of a state frequently comes along with cultural aversion.

⁷⁸ Brainpower is understood as knowledge, information and human capital (Ferguson 2003).

⁷⁹ Symbolic means of power include appeals to normative symbols and the provision of specific information (Baldwin 2002: 179).

meaning only in relation with the other actor's power capabilities. Vital to the neorealist definition of power is therefore that power must be understood in relative terms. Only the relative power position of an actor within the power relations of the international system reveals the actual power of an actor.

The neorealist conception of the relativity of power attaches special meaning to power polarity and the distribution of power capabilities in the international system (see Baumann et al. 2001: 44-45). Neorealists usually distinguish between bipolar, multipolar and unipolar systems⁸⁰ according to the number of power poles in the international system. The assessment of power through the rough power polarity in a system reveals a quite parsimonious understanding of the relativity and relationality of power. Recent neorealist studies have therefore further conditioned and contextualized the relative power position and acknowledged that states may have differing power positions across various regions and issue areas. Mearsheimer, for instance, has emphasized the idea of regional hegemony which is confined to a particular regional sphere of influence.⁸¹

2.2.1.2 *The Notion of Threat*

The neorealist balance-of-power theory had been prominently qualified by adding the notion of threat to the analytical category of power. Contrary to conventional balance-of-power theories, Walt's balance-of-threat theory considers power capabilities not by themselves threatening. In Walt's approach, the notion of threat, and not simply power, becomes the decisive factor that determines state behavior. Whereas Waltz generally assumes states to balance power, Walt expects states to balance only those power disparities that constitute a (present or future) threat. Walt's approach hence refines the traditional balance-of-power theory insofar as it contextualizes and qualifies the notion of power according to its threat potential.

The level of threat, according to Walt, is determined by the element of power (*potency*) and the element of intentions (*volition*) on the part of the other. The element of power has to be contextualized in order to assess its threat *potential*. By further qualifying power capabilities with the element of intent, Walt finally expects to make out the *actual* threat posed by the other actor's power capabilities.

⁸⁰ Under bipolarity, two great powers oppose and balance each other. Structural neorealists have tended to ascribe greater systemic stability to bipolar systems. In a unipolar system, a single hegemon predominates and is thought to create a hierarchical structure of hegemonic norms and rules that substitutes the anarchical structure. Neorealist proponents of the hegemonic stability theory, such as Robert Gilpin, have stressed the virtues and stability of unipolar systems whereas most neorealists regard unipolarity merely as a transition stage. In a multipolar system, multiple states are considered to create a balance of power as no state is able to predominate.

⁸¹ According to Mearsheimer, a unipolar system with a global hegemon is unlikely to emerge. To him, only regionally restricted hegemony may be possible. Mearsheimer therefore does not speak of unipolarity but of "unbalanced multipolarity". In "unbalanced multipolarity", a *potential* hegemon is existent while "balanced multipolarity" is characterized by the absence of any dominant power (Mearsheimer 2001: 40-44; 337).

In order to assess the threat potential of state actors, Walt names “aggregate power” to begin with. Aggregate power refers to conventional tangible power properties and resources such as military and economic capabilities, natural resources, technological skill, and population size (see Walt 1987: 22). Furthermore, Walt qualifies a state’s power position according to the actor’s “offensive power capabilities”. Offensive power is defined as the ability to “threaten the sovereignty or territorial integrity of another state at an acceptable cost” by virtue of the state’s military or geographic posture (Walt 1987: 24, 165). Offensive power is therefore interlinked with aggregate power and geographic location. Walt further contextualizes power capabilities with the element of “geographic proximity”. Although Walt does not assume a linear relationship between geographic proximity and threat potential, he ascribes a higher threat potential to proximate power capabilities. In return, the ability to project power and thus the threat potential of a state actor declines with geographic distance (Walt 1987: 23, 179).

Other neorealist theorists have discerned further qualities and contextual factors that influence a state’s threat potential. The nature and history of inter-state relationships may determine the threat potential. As stated by Grieco, the power capabilities of a long-time adversary or enemy constitute a greater threat potential than those of trusted allies or partners (Grieco 1993: 45-46). Another contextual quality of power is its fungibility which refers to the convertibility of power resources across issue-areas (see Baldwin 2002: 180). The crucial question in this connection is whether power resources in realms such as finance or economics can be converted into military power or leverage in other issue-areas. Power capabilities may also be temporally contextualized. As stated by Ferguson (2003), power is all about monopolizing as far as possible the means of projecting power. The notion of ‘cumulativity’ of power capabilities refers to the ability to monopolize and advance means of projection of power for the future. Those power capabilities that promise to grow and cumulate in the future due to a monopolization of means and sources of power, hence constitute a greater threat potential.⁸²

Walt’s strongest innovation of structural neorealist theory can be less seen in his inclusion of non-material factors. Neorealists have acknowledged and studied the power of ideology and other ideational forces that constitute effective tools in a state’s arsenal of power resources. Walt’s theoretical development must rather be seen in his relativization of Waltz’s theoretical fiction of the state as a unitary actor. While Waltz strictly neglects any kind of sub-state (unit-

⁸² John Matthews has studied “cumulation effects” with respect to relative cooperation gains and identified agreements of conventional arms control, the establishment of technological standards, and the obtaining of market shares as realms where gains and power assets may accumulate in the future (Matthews III 1996: 114-117).

level) factors for the sake of higher theoretical abstraction and parsimony, Walt sees the need to distinguish between states according to their intentions and threat perceptions. According to Walt, perceptions of state intent play a crucial role in alliance choice and state behavior. States with (perceived) aggressive intentions pose a higher threat to others than those with assumed benign intentions but greater power capability (Walt 1987: 25-26). The determination of state intentions is problematic and afflicted with uncertainty and may have to include a focus on domestic characteristics of the state. The problematization of state intentions and perceptions may hence possibly trespass a systemic framework of analysis and the structural neorealist unitary-actor model.

The notions of “aggressive” or “benevolent” intentions mentioned in Walt’s study are a quite elusive concept and have not been further specified by Walt. In realist literature, there have been made various distinctions between different state goals and intentions. The classical dichotomy between “satiated” and “unsatiated” states or “revisionist” and “status-quo states” may give some more detailed indication of what may mean “aggressive” or “benevolent” intent.⁸³ While Walt’s definition of state intentions remains underdetermined, this study will draw in the following on Randall Schweller’s and Jason Davidson’s differentiation of state intentions in order to further operationalize Walt’s balance-of-threat theory.

Randall Schweller has emphasized the need to distinguish between different state interests and intentions. In contrast to Waltz who holds goals and intentions of unitary states as constant, Schweller problematizes state goals and considers them to be variable. In his balance-of-interest approach, Schweller applies a classical dichotomy between revisionist and status-quo states. Schweller refers to status-quo oriented states as defensive security-maximizers. Revisionist states, to the contrary, are defined to be offensive power-maximizers (Schweller 1996: 92; 114; see also chapter 2.1.1.3).

Similarly, Jason Davidson advocates a distinction of state interests according to the revisionist-status-quo-scheme. Yet, he objects to Schweller’s equation of revisionist intention with power-seeking and status-quo intention with security-seeking. Davidson points to the fact that security maximizers may seek a revision of the status quo in case that the status quo poses a security threat. In turn, power maximizers may accept the status quo if they have reached a maximum of power or if a further aggrandizement is a liability rather than an asset to their power position (Davidson 2006: 13). As an alternative, Davidson proposes to define status quo states as actors seeking the maintenance of values and of the actual distribution of goods. Revisionist states, by contrast, seek a change in the distribution of

⁸³ Former IR theorists and statesmen have made dichotomous distinctions of state intentions that follow the revisionist-status-quo scheme. For example, Frederick Schuman (1948: 416) has distinguished between “satiated”, “defensive” and “unsatiated” powers dissatisfied with the status quo. Henry Kissinger (1957: 316-21) has made out “revolutionary” and “status-quo” states.

goods and values. Davidson conceives of values as all kinds of valued or desired things such as territory, markets, status, ideology, international law and institutional rules.

According to Davidson, defensive security-seeking intentions may combine with either status-quo or revisionist aspirations. Likewise, offensive power-maximizing intentions may be linked to either status-quo or revisionist aspirations. As a result of these combinations, four possible types of state intentions can be differentiated:

- (1) defensive status-quo
- (2) defensive revisionist
- (3) offensive status-quo
- (4) offensive revisionist.

In fact, Schweller had already made out various sub-types of revisionist and status-quo states. Schweller's subtypes of state intentions may fit well into the four combinations, regardless of Schweller's deviating definition of revisionist and status-quo intent. Schweller proposes to distinguish between states according to their motivation of preserving or overcoming the status quo in the international system and according to their ultimate goal of either security- or power-maximization. He classifies states into the categories of *lions*, *lambs*, *jackals*, and *wolves* (see Schweller 1996: 101-104). *Lions* are understood to be great powers or powerful states that have a vested interest in preserving the status quo. *Lions* hence act as defensive security-maximizers with status-quo intent. *Lambs* are defined to be weak states that lack the capability to defend or overcome the status quo. Their behavioral strategy is rather opportunistic. *Jackals* are referred to as relatively weak states unsatisfied with the current status quo. Since they are understood to be risk-averse they might fall into the category of defensive revisionist states. *Wolves*, on the contrary, are defined to be predatory and revisionist states seeking hegemony or domination over others. They have thus offensive revisionist intent.

The following classification of state intentions in this study draws on Schweller's distinction of state interests.⁸⁴ In combination of Schweller's and Davidson's conceptions on state intentions, this study makes out major types of state intent according to the desired distribution or balance of values.⁸⁵ The distinction between status-quo and revisionist intents in this study refers to the propensity to change the existent balance or distribution. The

⁸⁴ The classification made in this study leaves out Schweller's category of *lamb* states since lambs lack the capability to follow an independent behavioral strategy. Other states thus do not have to take the intentions of *lamb* states into consideration.

⁸⁵ The combination of offensive status-quo intent as a fourth possible category is left out in this study for reasons of simplicity. An offensive status-quo state might be a hegemon that seeks to preserve its dominant position. It is thus a *wolf* state that has reached predominance over others, but fears to lose its dominant position. On the other hand, a state could nourish offensive-status quo intents towards an aggressor state that seeks to threaten the current balance of power.

distinction between defensive and offensive intents refers to the aspired distribution of values. An offensive state actor is understood in this study to define national security through clear power disparities and a dominant (military, political, economic, cultural, etc.) position. A defensive state actor is understood to define its national security through a more equalized balance of power and values.

The study distinguishes in the following between three major types of state intent:

(1) defensive-status-quo intent

The category of states with defensive status-quo intent includes those state actors that favor a conservative and proportionate distribution of values. Their aim is to preserve the distributional status quo and safeguard their enjoyed values and security.

(2) defensive-revisionist intent

The second category of defensive revisionist states includes those states that seek a compensative re-distribution of values in order to enjoy further values and security.

(3) offensive-revisionist intent

As a third category, this study has made out an offensive-revisionist intent referring to states that aspire to a cartelized balance of values in terms of domination and a maximum of power.

Table 4: State Intentions and Pursued Distribution of Values

State intention	(1) Defensive Status quo (<i>lion</i>)	(2) Defensive Revisionist (<i>jackal</i>)	(3) Offensive Revisionist (<i>wolf</i>)
Desired distribution of values	<p><i>Conservative:</i></p> <p>Preservation of (balanced) Asymmetries</p> <p>through proportionate distribution</p>	<p><i>Compensative:</i></p> <p>Reduction of Asymmetries</p> <p>through disproportionate distribution to the benefit of the weaker</p>	<p><i>Cartelized:</i></p> <p>Reinforcement of Asymmetries</p> <p>through disproportionate distribution to the benefit of the stronger</p>

Source: Author's compilation, see also Zeino-Mahmalat (2008: 14)

The distinction between power capabilities and state intentions may allow for a more accurate understanding of the constellation of power and threat in the international system. The consideration of variable state intentions comes into conflict with Waltz's postulation of unitary state actors and the strictly systemic approach of structural neorealism. Although the inclusion of varying state intentions may conflict with the conception of states as unitary actors, this study argues that it does not necessarily trespass a systemic and power-based line of argument. In Schweller's typology, state intentions are closely related to the state's power position in the international system. Volition and intent are closely interlinked with and contingent upon one's own potency and power capabilities. According to this logic, a severe

lack of capability may not even let revisionist intentions to be formed. As well, a convenient and favorable power position might attenuate revisionist ambitions. In return, a disadvantaged and unfavorable power position and the capability to revise the situation could encourage revisionist intentions.

If the subjective element of state intent is thought to be contingent upon the state's systemic power position, the consideration of state intentions may allow for a more sophisticated picture of state behavior without leaving the systemic line of argument. In this manner, this study will include the element of state intentions in its systemic analysis of power and threats. State intentions are hence "systemized" since the analysis does not search for explanations of the origins of state intentions at the sub-state or unit-level.

In summary, this study operationalizes power and threats according to the scheme of analysis suggested by Walt's balance-of-threat theory. Walt's approach is based on the elements of power (*potency*) and intent (*volition*) of state actors. However, since Walt's definition of state intentions remains underdetermined, this study has in addition worked out a more detailed classification of state intentions.

As concerns the concept of power, scholars have approached the meaning of power in various ways and proposed to classify power according to its nature and scope. On account of the complexity of power, this study conceptualizes the notion of power in a broader and comprising sense. Only the combination of actual power resources - either hard or soft power resources - and the context of power relations may give full meaning to the concept of power. In addition, this study comprehends power both as 'resource power' and 'behavioral power' (see Keohane/Nye 1998: 86). The linking of power resources with the ability to project power in order to achieve the desired outcome therefore leads to the notion of 'smart power'.

For the operationalization of threat, this study will add the element of state intentions to the component of power. This study classifies state intentions according to the status-quo/revisionist scheme and according to security- or power-maximizing intentions. To simplify matters, the study distinguishes among three different types of state intentions, (1) defensive-status-quo, (2) defensive-revisionist, and (3) offensive-revisionist. The type of state intention expresses the respective desired distribution of (material or ideational) values within the state system. State intentions are not considered to be unconditionally variable, but contingent on the states' placement in the international system. State intentions thus primarily result from the distribution of power assets in the state system and may be treated as a systemic variable. The balance-of-threat approach still remains a power-based approach since the balance of power serves as a starting point of analysis. The inclusion of varying state intentions only supplements the otherwise too parsimonious concept of power balancing.

The following table once more illustrates the conceptualization of power and threat that has been worked out in this chapter.

Table 5: Conceptualization of Power and Threat

Power (<i>Potency</i>)	
Hard power	Military, economic and technological capabilities, financial leverage, size of population and territory, natural resources, stable political system/regime
Soft power	Attractive culture, ideology, diplomatic skills, knowledge, legitimacy and credibility
Smart power	Skilful leadership and strategies combining means of hard and soft power (= behavioral power)
Contextual factors	Nature and history of inter-state relationships, geographic proximity, fungibility across issue-areas, temporal cumulativity, state-society relations
=> Threat potential	
Intent (<i>Volition</i>)	
intentions	Defensive (security-maximizing), offensive/aggressive (power-maximizing) Status quo, revisionist (1) <i>lion</i> (2) <i>jackal</i> (3) <i>wolf</i>
=> Threat	

Source: Author's compilation

In the following, the study will contextualize the above-elaborated concepts of power and threat according to the specificities of the Gulf region and work out Saudi Arabia's and Iran's constellations of power and threats.

2.2.1.3 Regional Contextualization

2.2.1.3.1 The Constellation of Power and Threats in the Gulf Region

A systemic neorealist analysis requires a clear definition and demarcation of the international or regional system to be examined. A "regional system" is defined by Paul Salem as a group of states "that have a high level of interaction with each other - positively or negatively - and that influence each other by relations of power, interest, economics, ideology, or otherwise" (Salem 2008: 2). The Gulf region's strategic importance on account of its vast fossil energy resources which make up for 60 percent of the world's proven oil reserves and cover one quarter of world oil production and nearly one third of world oil consumption (Koch: 2007: 5), its strategic location and role as the world energy hub, and great power rivalries over assets and influence in the Gulf, make the Gulf a distinct region interconnected in terms of security and threat.

Gregory Gause argues even further for considering the Gulf region as a 'regional security complex' as conceptualized by Barry Buzan.⁸⁶ 'Regional security complexes' include states

⁸⁶ Although Buzan's regional security complex theory is rooted in the tradition of the English school, it is useful to conceptualize and demarcate regional security systems within systemic (e.g. neorealist) frameworks of analysis.

with intense security interdependence over time within a regional system.⁸⁷ A regional security complex is defined by the mutuality of threat felt among the members toward each other. The primary security focus of the states is one another. According to Gause, the Gulf states may form a regional security complex since their security policies first of all focus on one another and their security is closely interlinked. Gause counts Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq and the smaller GCC states⁸⁸ among the states forming the Gulf regional security complex.⁸⁹ The members of a regional security system do not necessarily equally determine the regional security architecture and agenda. The Gulf regional security system has traditionally been a triangular system shaped by Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Iraq.⁹⁰ Within the tripolar power structure, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Iraq have longly been competing for the leading role in the region. Although the regional structure has traditionally been marked by tripolarity, it does not mean that structure is immutable. The Iraq War of 2003 has neutralized Iraq as an important pillar of power in the Gulf and hence possibly brought the triangular system in “dysfunction” (Fürtig 2008: 121).

There have been some considerations about whether the United States can be counted among the members of the Gulf regional security system (see Gause 2010: 5-8). The United States constitutes one of the most influential actors in Gulf security affairs. Many scholars of the Gulf region therefore count the United States as a member of the Gulf security system. Other scholars have questioned the U.S. role as a member of the regional system. There may be several arguments for *not* including the United States as an equivalent member, such as the lack of proximity and permanence,⁹¹ or the existence of indigenous security dynamics independent from U.S. involvement. No matter whether one comprehends the United States as an equivalent member and integral part of the Gulf security system or as an ordinary extra-regional actor, the U.S. influence and co-determination of events in the Gulf cannot be denied. The assessment of the impact of U.S. involvement in the region will therefore be part of this study.

This study departs from the general ideas of Walt’s balance-of-threat theory in order to work out the overall constellation of power and threats in the Gulf regional system. For this

⁸⁷ While the original definition of a security complex was state-centric, the newer conception includes different actors and various sectors of security (see Buzan/Wæver 2003: 44).

⁸⁸ Gause does not include Yemen in the Gulf security complex. Yemen’s security policy intensely focuses on Saudi Arabia, but only marginally on the other members of the Gulf (Gause 2010: 4).

⁸⁹ Buzan treats the Gulf region as a “subcomplex” of the wider Middle East regional security complex (see Buzan/ Wæver 2003: 51-52).

⁹⁰ According to Fürtig, the smaller Gulf monarchies have been added in strategic terms to Saudi Arabia by the formation of the GCC. Saudi Arabia and the other GCC states thus form the third corner of the triangle (Fürtig 2008: 121).

⁹¹ Iranian scholars, in particular, argue with the criterion of permanence. Although the United States has reached a high level of physical proximity due to sustained military presence throughout the region, its presence is regarded as a temporary and extrinsic one.

purpose, Walt's balance-of-threat approach will be refined and modified in two respects. Firstly, this study will incorporate domestic conditions as contextual factors that may determine a state's power potential and co-influence another state's threat potential. Previous studies have made out a "dual security dilemma" in the Gulf that refers to the co-existence of a classical external and a domestic security dilemma. The consideration of the domestic environment such as state-society relations may hence give a better understanding of the impact and nature of threat in the Gulf. Secondly, this study will focus more strongly on the impact of ideational, non-military threats and thus add more nuance to its threat analysis. The impact of transnational identity factors as a form of threat to state security has recently gained more attention as opposed to conventional neorealist analyses which usually attached more weight to military or hard power threats.

The analysis of classical military or hard power security threats may serve as a reasonable starting point in any neorealist analysis. The Gulf region has usually been sorted as a region exemplary for the prevalence of classical military security dilemmas. Military arms races, nuclear and missile proliferation and border disputes over strategic, resource-rich territories or transit routes make the Gulf region a highly conflictual region that carries various external security risks for the state members. The region's endowment with cross-border fossil resources in the Gulf has laid the foundation for potential conflicts in three respects. First of all, it may trigger potential conflicts over the ownership and boundaries of resource-rich territories and waters and over the control of strategic transit routes. In the second place, exuberant oil and gas revenues have enabled all of the major regional states to finance their military buildup and engage in region-wide arms races. Last but not least, the Gulf energy wealth has provoked the political, economic, and military involvement of great powers in the region and induced hegemonic contests over the control of the Gulf energy resources (see Gause 2010: 245-46).

Conventional military threats and external security dilemmas are only one part of the region's multifaceted threat environment. Apart from threats to their external security, the leaderships of the regional states have been highly sensitive to all kinds of threat to regime stability that may emanate from abroad. More recent studies of the Gulf region have therefore proposed a further refinement and modification of Walt's notion of threat.

Scott Cooper (2003/04), for example, advocates a "state-centric" balance-of-threat theory.⁹² According to Cooper's approach, the regional states conceive of the notion of threat in

⁹² Cooper regards his approach as a combination of Krasner's emphasis on the autonomous state and Walt's explanation of alliance formation (Cooper 2003/04: 325). The concept of the autonomous state comprehends the state as an actor with autonomy from society. Hence, one of the state's main goal is

particular as a threat to regime stability. All kinds of external intervention in a state's domestic affairs such as attempts of subversion, propaganda, espionage, and ideological exertion of influence constitute a potential threat to regime security. The classical external security dilemma may thus be combined with and aggravated by an internal security dilemma.⁹³ In Cooper's approach, "state-centric" means opening the "black box" of the state by the inclusion of sub-state factors.⁹⁴ Cooper sees the need to complement the analysis of state-to-state relations with an examination of state-society relations (Cooper 2003/04: 309).

Similar to Cooper, Gregory Gause proposes to view the notion of threat in particular through the lens of regime security rather than solely through conventional external-security considerations. Regional states may be highly vulnerable to ideological influence and external mobilization of societal groups emanating from other states. Gause underlines that regional states have been highly sensitive to all kinds of external exertion of influence on their domestic affairs, even though the regional states may tend to over-estimate external threats to their regime stability. Gause considers Walt's balance-of-threat theory to be underdetermined and sees the need for further specification of how states define and prioritize among threats. He regards his approach as a contextualization of (neo)realist theory and does not negate essential realist premises about anarchy, power politics and the centrality of the state (Gause 2003/04: 273).

Transnational ideologies and identities have largely defined the regional states' consideration of threat. These ideational factors may pose serious threats to the legitimacy and stability of the domestic regimes. The seriousness and impact of ideational threats can therefore only be comprehensively understood through the consideration of state-society relations and the states' need to cope with both external and domestic security concerns. Walt has already acknowledged the threat of ideological subversion emanating from abroad as an external security threat that may be more common than threats of direct military conquest. But in his balance-of-threat theory, Walt merely "subsumes" ideological factors under his otherwise material and state-centric explanation (Walt 1987: 215-16).

Classical security dilemmas originating from contests over strategic cross-border resources may be exacerbated by the existence of transnational political identities and ideas that penetrate the states and societies of the Gulf region. Transnational ideas and ideological appeal may be used as a power resource to discredit the other's regime legitimacy or incite domestic opposition forces of one's political enemy. It is therefore possibly along

to maintain its societal autonomy and political integrity (see Cooper 2003/04: 323. Krasner 1978: *Defending the National Interest*).

⁹³ Cooper refers to David Priess, Stephen Krasner, or Mastanduno, Lake and Ikenberry who have stressed before the salience of both internal and external security concerns (see Cooper 2003/04: 319-25).

⁹⁴ "State-centric" in this context means precisely *not* the strictly systemic analysis of interstate relations and the 'homogenization of the state' as postulated by conventional neorealism.

transnational ethnic, sectarian and religious faultlines, that regional states may in part define their sources of power and threat.

Gause conditions the threat potential of transnational identity factors on the coexistence of hard power resources. Only if transnational ideas about identity are matched to tangible power resources, they become a forceful power resource in the hands of ambitious state leaders (Gause 2010: 12). This combination of both conventional power capabilities and transnational identities and ideologies form the “dual nature of threat” (Gause 2002: 197) in the Gulf region.

The conception of ideas and identity as a power resource reveals an instrumentalist understanding of identity. Rather than considering an independent force of identity and ideas, identity becomes an instrument of the state which employs ideas about transnational identities to project its power. Yet, the state holds “no monopoly on the use of transnational identities and ideologies”. Other non-state actors may exploit as well the power of identity for their own purposes (Gause 2010: 242).

On account of the dual nature of security dilemmas and the power of transnational identities in the Gulf region, structural neorealism has to add some complexity to its parsimonious understanding of power, threat and state security. The multifaceted threat environment in the Gulf therefore suggests that the notion of threat is best understood through the interplay of both domestic and external security threats as well as through both hard and soft power threats.

Many modified neorealist approaches to foreign policy and international relations of the Gulf region have stressed the importance of including state-society relations.⁹⁵ The systemic neorealist approach of this study will identify threats to both external and regime security that emanate from other state actors of the international or regional system. It remains a systemic state-to-state approach insofar as threats from non-state actors and threats originating from domestic or societal actors will not be problemized. The focus of analysis will thus rest on the ability of state actors to penetrate and exploit the weaknesses of each other’s state-society relations.

For a further enhancement of Walt’s notion of threat, this study proposes a more comprising conception of ideational threats. Walt has only referred to ideological threats based on state-constructed ideologies such as pan-Arab nationalism. However, all kinds of transnational feelings of belonging - whether ethnic, sectarian/religious or tribal - may potentially be used and manipulated by state actors for their projection of power. The Gulf region offers a wide range of cross-border, transnational identities that carry the potential for inter-state conflict.

⁹⁵ Stansfield, for example, underlines the interconnectivity of levels and factors that requires an analysis of substate, transnational and systemic elements. He proposes the combination of realist and constructivist insights for a comprehensive understanding of Gulf security (Stansfield 2008: 117-119).

Arab, Persian, Kurdish, Sunni, Shia identities or political Islam and Baathist ideologies (see Gause 2007: 121) are among the most salient transnationally shared identities and ideologies which have been used to either threaten and pressure other states or to construct images of threat.

A comprehensive conceptualization of the regional states' constellation of power and threats requires an examination of how threat and security are understood and prioritized at the intersection of transborder identities, military power, natural resources or other tangible interests. The sources of power, the nature and hierarchy of threats, and thus the meaning of national security may vary from state to state.

In the following, Iran's and Saudi Arabia's nature and sources of power and threats will be derived from the countries' status and position in their external environment.

2.2.1.3.2 Saudi Arabia: Nature and Sources of Power and Threats

Saudi Arabia used to be one of the weakest three pillars in the Gulf triangular state system. Its military capabilities with armed forces fewer than 200,000 men have been rather weak compared to the manpower and military hardware of Iran and former Iraq.⁹⁶ Demographically, Saudi Arabia is the smallest country of the three leading states of the Gulf. Saudi-Arabia's population of 28 million (among which are only 23 million Saudi citizens) is slightly outweighed by the Iraqi population of nearly 29 million and by far surpassed by the Iranian population of 66 million people.⁹⁷

Saudi Arabia is therefore termed an "unconventional power" (Gause 2002: 193). In contrast to its military and demographic weakness, the Saudi Kingdom constitutes the largest Arab economy in terms of GDP. Saudi Arabia is the world's largest exporter and producer of oil.⁹⁸ Thanks to its possession of 25 percent of the world's proven oil reserves, Saudi Arabia enjoys a credible leverage in the oil market by holding the world's greatest spare production capacity. Despite all its fossil and financial power and its investment in arms purchases and sophisticated military hardware, Saudi Arabia has not been able to convert its economic strength into strategic military weight that would balance Iran and Iraq (Rathmell et al. 2003: 2). Saudi Arabia's weight in the Gulf is therefore first and foremost measured by its oil reserves and its overwhelming influence in OPEC (Raphaeli 2009).

⁹⁶ According to Cordesman, limited manpower has been the key problem to Saudi military capabilities. Reasons for that can be traced to both Saudi Arabia's total male population as well as to tribal and regional rivalries within the Kingdom (Cordesman 1997: 97-98). In particular, fears of domestic instability and revolts have made the Saudi regime opt for small military forces and a volunteer army. Saudi Arabia is the only Middle Eastern country that does not require military service (Gause 2002: 202).

⁹⁷ See CIA World Factbook (accessed on January 30, 2010).

⁹⁸ Saudi Arabia is by far the world's largest exporter of oil. In its oil production rate, Saudi Arabia is closely followed by Russia (see CIA World Factbook).

Saudi Arabia possesses as well a considerable quality of soft power resources. As the cradle of Islam and the custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, the Saudi Kingdom enjoys domestic religious legitimacy and international prestige. Its status from the role as the host of the annual Muslim pilgrimage (*hadj*) makes Saudi Arabia potentially a natural religious leader of the (Sunni) Muslim world. The Saudi Kingdom enjoys prestige and influence as a founding member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and a member and major sponsor of the World Muslim League (*Rabita al-'Alam al-Islami*). In addition, Saudi Arabia has established itself as the political leader in the Arabian Peninsula holding the dominant position within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and as a political agenda-setter in the Middle East state system.

Saudi Arabia's external state environment imposes both "hard" and "soft" threats on Saudi security. These threats are directed against Saudi Arabia's both external and domestic security. The threats to Saudi external security have been overwhelmingly (but not necessarily) hard power threats. In return, threats to Saudi domestic security are rather (but not exclusively) based on soft power threats.

As concerns threats to external security and credibility, Saudi Arabia has been faced with a complex set of hard power threats to its external security. These threats have been of conventional military and strategic nature. Saudi Arabia is highly vulnerable to any disruption of its oil export routes and strategic waterways. Iran's naval capabilities and its repeatedly uttered threat to close the Strait of Hormuz therefore pose a potential threat to Saudi security (McInnis 2005: 176). As well, regional WMD proliferation and nuclear ambitions such as the Iranian (officially civilian) nuclear program have the potential to further upset the region's military balance to the detriment of Saudi Arabia. Any change in the balance of strategic weapons risks to provoke regional arms races and to reduce Saudi Arabia's political maneuverability and strategic weight.⁹⁹

What makes power disparities and strategic advantages of other actors so dangerous to the Saudi Kingdom is the prevalence of revisionist ambitions in the region. Saudi Arabia has been situated in an environment that lacks a generally accepted balance of power or status quo by the regionally involved actors (Rathmell et al. 2003: 2). Saudi Arabia's external security has thus been indirectly threatened by state actors with revisionist or hegemonic intentions and expansionist or territorial ambitions. Iraq's invasion and annexation of Kuwait in 1990 or Iran's continuous territorial claims of strategic UAE islands (Mattair 2007: 133) represent only one of the most polarizing conflicts of irredentism in the Gulf. Saudi Arabia has witnessed a long history of hegemonic aspirations by Iran and Iraq in the Gulf and of

⁹⁹ El-Hokayem and Legrenzi see the risk that a nuclear armed Iran might reduce the margins of political and diplomatic maneuverability of the Arab Gulf states in the realm of regional oil or security policies (El-Hokayem/Legrenzi 2006: 10).

difficult or hostile relations with its Gulf neighbors. Its external environment has thus not only been hostile and insecure but also continuously volatile and unstable.

The lack of an all-accepted Gulf security system, persistent discontent over the regional security architecture on the part of the other actors and external state endeavors to revise the existent order have exposed the Saudi state to considerable dangers. In particular the involvement of extra-regional actors, most prominently of the United States, is met by other regional actors with vehement refusal. Saudi Arabia's long-time security alliance with the United States has therefore put the Saudi state in the frontline of external and domestic critique. The United States as the Saudi Kingdom's major security guarantor thus constitutes both an asset and a liability to Saudi security (see Niblock 2006: 143).

In addition, Saudi Arabia's security threats have been to a large part threats to domestic security and legitimacy. Political and ideological threats to domestic stability in terms of subversive efforts of other states against the Saudi regime have had prominence in Saudi threat calculations (Gause 2003/04: 302). Saudi Arabia has had a long experience with aggressive-revisionist intentions of other actors in the Gulf directed against the stability and legitimacy of the Saudi regime. Since 1979, the Iranian Republic has repeatedly used its Islamic appeal to the Saudi and Muslim people in the Gulf monarchies to call for domestic revolt against their regimes. Iran's threat to "export" its revolution to its neighbor countries and its rhetorical degradation of the monarchical Gulf regimes¹⁰⁰ has constituted a major security concern for the Saudi leadership until the mid-1990s (Gause 2003/04: 278, 288). Iraq under the Baathist rule has posed a threat to Saudi domestic security in a similar but less sustained and consistent way. In the early 1990s, Iraq has used Arab nationalist and Islamic rhetoric to pressure the Saudi regime and called on the Saudi people to overthrow its government (Gause 2002: 197).

Even though there are today less open and direct state efforts of subversion against the Saudi regime, it does not mean that Saudi concerns for threats against regime stability have become less salient. Saudi Arabia is still concerned about the spread of internal unrest enforced and manipulated from states abroad. It is the various ways and means of state instrumentalization of societal groups throughout the Gulf region that may have possible negative repercussions and spillover-effects on Saudi domestic security. A major type of threat perceived by the Saudi state is the substantial Iranian influence over Iraqi Shiite parties and groups in combination with the recent eruption of Sunni-Shiite conflicts in Iraq and beyond. The Saudi fear of an Iranian-backed regional 'Shia awakening' has its origin in the state-society relations in Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf states (see Cooper 2003/04: 310). On account of the political and societal marginalization and dissatisfaction of Shiites in

¹⁰⁰ Ayatollah Khomeini has confirmed the incompatibility of Islam with monarchy or hereditary succession (see Gause 2003/04: 288).

Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf states, the Saudi state is concerned about the political mobilization of Shiite forces (see Ottaway 2009: 9-10).¹⁰¹

Apart from the political empowerment of Shiites in the Gulf, Saudi Arabia fears the spillover of all kinds of ideas that might undermine the legitimacy of the Saudi leadership. These could be possibly democratic, pluralist, or secular ideas from a re-built Iraq (see Fürtig 2008: 139-140) or revolutionary-Islamist ideas from Iran. Iran's appeal to the Muslim-Arab public in the wider region by its defiant, anti-Western rhetoric could, for example, undermine the legitimization of the pro-U.S. policy of the Saudi government (see El-Hokayem/Legrenzi 2006).

Saudi Arabia finds itself strategically in an evermore "deteriorating regional environment" (Russell 2006: 123-24). Its financial power and economic strength cannot offset its strategic vulnerabilities, external dependencies and security dilemmas. Saudi security is a paradigm example that suggests a broader definition of security including domestic and economic security and political legitimacy. Only the consideration of the dual nature of security threats may give an accurate understanding of Saudi Arabia's constellation of threats. As well, the Saudi case demands a more nuanced view on power and threat that contemplates on the interplay of ideational or cultural and material or military assets in the regional security structure.

2.2.1.3.3 Iran: Nature and Sources of Power and Threats

Within the tripolar system of the Gulf, Iran's geography and size of population allow for a naturally dominant position of Iran vis-à-vis Iraq or Saudi Arabia (Rathmell et al. 2003: 2). Iran's centrality and power in the regional state system is for one thing referred to Iran's tangible resources such as geographic location, its population, and its natural and human resources (see Reissner 2008: 7-8). Iran has by far the largest population among the Gulf states. It is the second largest Gulf country after Saudi Arabia by its vast size of land. Iran has the world's second largest proven oil and gas reserves and is (after Saudi Arabia) the second largest oil producer within OPEC.¹⁰² Iran's quantity and quality of natural and human resources, its strategic location at the world energy hub, the Strait of Hormuz, where one third of the world's oil production passes every day, and its technological know-how accrue to Iran's geostrategic, geopolitical, geo-economic power position in the Gulf region.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ The perceived security threat from the 'Shiite question' in Saudi Arabia is aggravated by the fact that Shiites form almost 50 percent of the population in the Saudi oil-rich Eastern province of Al-Hasa. In total, Shiites make up between 5 to 12 percent of the Saudi population (see Steinberg 2004b: 144).

¹⁰² Iran's proven oil reserves are just ranked behind those of Saudi Arabia and Canada (whose reserves are poorly accessible). Iran's gas reserves just come behind those of Russia (see World Energy Outlook 2006: 89; 93; 114).

¹⁰³ See Moeinaddini/Rezapour 2008: 103; Ottaway 2009: 3

In the military realm, Iran has a substantial missile defense capability and maintains its own strategic industry. Its ambitious (officially civilian) nuclear program is designed to catch up with the last technological standards and to make up for the nuclear gap in the Middle East. As well, Iran's nuclear program might serve as a possible bargaining chip in other policy realms and help Iran becoming the foremost regional power (see El-Hokayem/Legrenzi 2006: 10).¹⁰⁴

Besides the obviousness of Iran's tangible power resources, Iranian scholars have in particular emphasized the prominence of Iran's soft power resources and attached higher value to non-material sources of power (see Mohammadi 2008). Iran's soft power and force of attraction are ascribed to civilizational greatness and cultural integrity as well as to spiritual and religious strength. The sources of Iranian soft power are thus thought to be religious faith and values, the universality of its cultural and religious norms, a rich and dynamic culture and ideology as well as self-belief and self-confidence. Iranian analysts underline fearlessness, persistence and endurance on the basis of Iran's resistance culture as essential Iranian soft power resources.¹⁰⁵

Iran's soft power resources have been largely considered to be a basis for behavioral power through which Iran is able to influence the preferences and hence the behavior of others. Mohammadi (2008: 6) depicts a variety of ways of exerting soft power that may advance Iran's international influence and clout. Among these are "the application of international and external multi-faceted channels of communication", the construction of "universal cultural and intellectual discourses", the promotion of "public trust and awareness", the "planning and dissemination of information", and the teaching of one's own "customs and cultural, social and political ideals in form of universal norms".

Another sort of behavioral soft power is the ability to shape the international or regional public opinion by means of public diplomacy. Moeinaddini and Rezapour (2008: 109; 117) mention in this context Iran's recently applied "people-oriented" diplomacy that has the potential to win the approval of the international publics. As well, Iran's application of independent and alternative political-security strategies may appear more appealing and legitimate to others and may hence help Iran to attract international backing and support.

Recently, there have been a wide range of discussions about Iran's scope and implementation of soft power. Iran's various ties to transnational political-religious or radical groups have been rated among Iran's most prominent power-political assets. Iran's direct

¹⁰⁴ A further power asset in its foreign affairs may be Iran's attributes of a real state and the resilience of its political regime. Iran is a real and well-institutionalized state compared to its poorly institutionalized Arab neighbor countries in the Gulf (Ottaway 2009: 3).

¹⁰⁵ As a testament of the power of endurance, Mohammadi names the example of Iran's nuclear policy. Due to its steadfastness Iran was so far able to pursue its nuclear program against all international pressure (Mohammadi 2008: 10-13).

political access to Iraqi officials in post-Saddam Iraq and its indirect co-influence on the political processes in other Middle East states (Salem 2008: 10) are largely thought to be founded on soft power sources. Iran has proved to be very skilled in establishing regional and international networks with state and non-state actors. Most vigorously discussed are Iran's close ties to transnational Shiite groups (such as *Hizbollah*) and to Shiite parties in Iraq (such as *ISCI*, *Islamic Dawa Party*). Through Iran's ideological and cultural leverage over major political groups in Iraq, Iran may create new hard facts in Iraq and accumulate essential power assets for the future.

Iran's prominent role and position in the Gulf and wider region is met with various vulnerabilities and threats to Iranian security. The threats emanating from Iran's external environment in the Gulf have been first and foremost threats to Iran's external security and credibility.

Considerable hard and soft power threats to the political and military maneuverability of the Iranian Republic have come from hostile U.S. policies and U.S. ambitions of regime change in Iran. The present Gulf regional system is featured by a direct, sustained and permanent U.S. military presence along Iranian borders. The United States has been able to "institutionalize its hegemony" (Moeinaddini/Rezapour 2008: 115) in the Gulf region through the large-scale buildup of military forces throughout the region and the maintenance of close U.S. military and defense ties with each country of the GCC.¹⁰⁶ Since the Iraq War of 2003, Iran has found itself completely encircled by U.S. military forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Arab Gulf region (Moeinaddini/Rezapour 2008: 128).

From the U.S.-American side, Iran has encountered long-term hostile intentions that aimed to both contain and isolate Iran in the wider region and to facilitate a regime change within Iran. The threats from the United States have been of military, economic, political and psychological nature. The U.S. menace of possible airstrikes against Iran (possibly in collaboration with Israel), the longstanding imposition of economic sanctions, U.S. efforts to forge regional and international containment and consensus against Iran, and various kinds of psychological warfare form a comprehensive threat to Iran's external security, international credibility, and domestic regime security (see Moeinaddini/Rezapour 2008: 119-120).

Iraq has constituted another long-time and "the most obvious traditional security threat" to Iran (Chubin 2002: 45). Iran shares its longest international border with Iraq,¹⁰⁷ has experienced a long traumatic war with Iraq and maintained an uneasy, partly hostile, relationship with its Iraqi neighbor. The Iraqi menace used to be majorly of military nature. In

¹⁰⁶ The United States maintains ground troops in Kuwait on a regular basis, airforce installations in Qatar duplicating U.S. airforce facilities in Saudi Arabia, and naval facilities in Bahrain where the headquarter of the U.S. naval presence in the Gulf is hosted. In addition, the United States receives military access to Oman and the UAE (Gause 2003: 20).

¹⁰⁷ Iran shares 1,458km of borderline with Iraq (see CIA factbook).

the past, Iraq had not only been ambitious in acquiring weapons of mass destruction, but had also been willing to use WMD against Iran.¹⁰⁸ On a low-level basis of violence, Iran has been faced with attacks from Iraqi Kurdish areas and from Iranian opposition forces hosted by Iraq. Iraq has in particular used the Iranian opposition force Mojahedin-e Khalq (MOK) to pressure the Iranian leadership by allowing MOK-fighters to conduct from Iraqi territory guerrilla-like activities and assassinations against Iranian targets.¹⁰⁹ In addition, Iraq also constitutes a potential political-ideological and religious rival that has spurred -and may do so in the future- sectarian or Arab-Persian division.

Since the existence of the Islamic Republic, Iran has been situated in a heterogeneous and instable threat environment. Iran faces no urgent existential threat to its territorial integrity, but rather a set of multiple concerns (Chubin 2002: 43). The common basis of Iranian security concerns is Iran's virtual exclusion from the formal political participation in the regional security system. As a non-Arab, Shia country in an Arab and Sunni dominated region, Iran has to cope with various forms of regional exclusion. In the past, Iran has been excluded from regional political, military, or defense cooperation initiated by Arab Gulf states or by their U.S. protector.¹¹⁰ As such, Iran may see its position and potential as an active and integral member of the Gulf regional security system impeded and denied.

2.2.1.4 Framework of Analysis: Tracing Threats from State Actors

The Gulf region harbours multi-faceted types of state-actor threats.¹¹¹ The complexity of the threat environment in the Gulf region suggests a classification of threats that covers the whole spectrum of security risks emanating from other state actors.

In the Gulf region, the following four types of security threats in a neorealist sense may become salient.

- (1) A classical hard-power threat to external security that includes military invasions, territorial annexations, military buildups and arms races by other state actors.
- (2) A soft-power threat to external security such as another state's forging of international pressure by means of diplomatic or soft-power skills.

¹⁰⁸ Iraq has used WMD against Iran during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s.

¹⁰⁹ In return, Iran has hosted Iraqi opposition parties such as the SCIRI during the rule of Saddam (Chubin 2002: 46).

¹¹⁰ Regional forms and efforts of cooperation under exclusion of Iran have been the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Damascus Declaration of 1991 aiming at establishing indigenous regional defense structures, or the U.S.-endorsed GCC+2 initiative meant as an anti-Iranian alliance between pro-U.S. Arab countries and the United States (see Steinberg 2007a: 181).

¹¹¹ In accordance with a neorealist emphasis on state-centered, systemic explanatory factors, the study will make out security threats in the Gulf that emanate from other state actors of the regional or international system. Asymmetrical security threats such as non-state threats from terrorism, organized crime, climate change or environmental pollution, and societal dissident groups, are left out.

(3) A hard-power threat to domestic security consisting of another state's military or financial support to domestic subversive or oppositional groups.

(4) A soft-power threat to domestic security in terms of another state's ideological penetration of the domestic society. This might occur in form of ideological incitement of societal groups by the "exportation" of subversive ideas or ideologies, or the manipulation of already existing ethnic, religious-sectarian, or socio-economic dividing lines by another state actor.

The table below once again shortly illustrates the spectrum of possible security threats in the Gulf, emanating from other state actors.

Table 6: Classification of State-Actor Threats in the Gulf

		<i>Direction of Threat</i>	
		Threat to external security and credibility	Threat to domestic security and legitimacy
<i>Nature of Threat</i>	Hard power threat	(1) - military invasion, territorial annexation - arms race, military buildup	(3) - military/economic support to domestic oppositional groups
	Soft power threat	(2) - forging international pressure against other government by diplomatic or soft power means - damage other state's external moral-political or economic credibility	(4) - discredit other regime's domestic legitimacy, e.g. by ideological incitement of societal groups - manipulation of existing ethnic, religious/sectarian, socio-economic divides

Source: Author's Compilation

As elaborated before, the threat potential of a competing state actor is understood to be a function of the state's capabilities and intentions. For the question in how far a state will respond to a security threat depends on its individual *perception* of power and threat. Foreign policy analysis will therefore have to study the categories of power and threat from each state perspective and power calculations respectively.

2.2.2 Operationalization of 'Complex Interdependence'

The aim of this sub-chapter is to operationalize the concept of "complex interdependence" with regard to the specificities of the Gulf region. The chapter will develop a multi-level and multi-sector approach to the various patterns of complex interdependence that the regional countries are enmeshed in.

The concept of complex interdependence, firstly introduced by Keohane and Nye in the 1970s, has introduced a new paradigm in the study of international relations that challenges

the neorealist paradigm of crude power politics under the prevailing condition of anarchy (see Milner 2009: 3). It proceeds from the idea that transformed environmental conditions in the international system have laid the basis for a qualitative change in international relations and state behavior. The rising density and quality of transnational relations and the cross-border flow of information due to multiple channels of interstate, transgovernmental and transnational contact connecting different states and societies in various ways (Keohane/Nye 2001: 21; 271) have created zones of complex interdependence that may induce different foreign policy strategies than the neorealist assumption of pure anarchy would suggest.

The notion of complex interdependence was defined by Keohane and Nye as a new ideal type of the international system as opposed to the neorealist image of unregulated anarchy. Most situations in which foreign policies are made fall somewhere on a continuum between the ideal types of unregulated anarchy and utmost complex interdependence (Keohane/Nye 2001: 271). Variations in the scope, density and quality of complex interdependence may thus explain for changes and variances in the foreign policy choices of state actors.

This chapter will define the meanings of complex interdependence, classify the concept according to the scope (issue areas), degree (density of interdependent relations), and quality (asymmetries, institutionalization) of interdependence and relate it to the conditions of the Gulf region.

2.2.2.1 Defining the Notion of 'Complex Interdependence'

'Interdependence' is a very broad and widely used term. Whereas 'dependence' means the state of "being determined or significantly affected by external forces", 'interdependence' in terms of mutual dependence refers to situations characterized by the reciprocity of costly effects among two or more actors (Keohane/Nye 2001: 7). These reciprocal costly effects must be understood in terms of 'consequential effects'. They may reduce or impose costs, or provide benefits for the involved actors (Keohane/Nye 2001: 236). They refer not only to economic costly effects, but to all kind of costs that result from international transaction and cross-border flow of money, goods, people or information. Social effects and effects on non-economic values such as moral standards may therefore have equally consequential and costly effects on the actors (ibid.). Because of its emphasis on reciprocal costly effects, the notion of interdependence exceeds a mere interconnectedness of (state) actors which refers to transnational interactions that have no significant costly effects (Keohane/Nye 2001: 8).

'Complex interdependence' was conceived of by Keohane and Nye as an ideal type of the international system that was meant to demarcate itself from neorealist assumptions about the nature of the international system and politics. As such, complex interdependence must be distinguished from conventional notions of interdependence (Keohane/Nye 2001: 271). The concept of complex interdependence refers to situations in which military force becomes less effective as means to exert power and in which the traditional hierarchy of issue areas

with security affairs on top erodes (ibid.). Yet, complex interdependence is not viewed as necessarily benign or conflict-free. It may induce both international cooperation and conflict. Complex interdependence involves as well competition even when large net benefits of cooperation can be expected (Keohane/Nye 2001: 9). The crux of complex interdependence therefore lies in the conception that

- (1) issue areas and concerns other than external security may predominate the states' national interests,
- (2) that power becomes more diffuse, and
- (3) that the dividing line between domestic and foreign policy becomes blurred.¹¹²

2.2.2.2 Variations of Complex Interdependence: Density, Scope, and Quality

In order to make complex interdependence an operable concept for foreign policy analysis, it must be qualified according to variations in its density, scope, and quality.

The conditions of complex interdependence leave all actors sensitive or vulnerable to the actions of others. The degree and density of complex interdependence is therefore measured in terms of the actors' sensitivity and vulnerability to outside changes. Sensitivity is understood as the "liability to costly effects imposed from outside in a given situation". It refers to the degree to which policy changes in one country impose costly effects on another state actor. Vulnerability by contrast is defined as "continued liability to costly effects imposed from outside, even after efforts have been made to alter or escape the situation" (Nye 2004a: 155). Vulnerability thus means the "costliness of making effective adjustments to a changed environment". It is determined by the availability and costliness of alternative courses of action in order to avoid costly effects in a particular situation. In an interdependent relationship, vulnerability interdependence is of more significance than sensitivity interdependence since it imposes long-term costly effects in case of unfavorable policies of the other part (see Keohane/Nye 2001: 13).

Interdependence refers to mutual, but not necessarily symmetric costly effects. In most interdependent relationships, reciprocal costly effects are not equal on all parties. The degree of asymmetry¹¹³ of interdependence becomes the critical factor in the policies of interdependence. Asymmetrical vulnerability is an important source of power in the hands of the less vulnerable player (Keohane/Nye 2001: 238). The less vulnerable part of a relationship will have greater ability to influence and shape the interdependent relationship and the contents of potential cooperative arrangements (see DeSombre 2009). Highly vulnerable players with more immediate and intense preferences, on the contrary, will have to sacrifice relatively more during the bargaining process in order to get what they desire.

¹¹² See Keohane/Nye 2001: 21-22; Milner 2009: 16.

¹¹³ The degree of asymmetry may vary from nearly symmetry of costly effects to a virtual dependence of one party.

The asymmetry of interdependence therefore determines who can set the rule of the game within the bargaining process on a particular issue (see Moravcsik 2009: 249-50).

The density and level of asymmetry of interdependence between two or more state actors does not apply to all of the countries' policies and relations likewise. Spatial variations of the density and asymmetry of interdependence between different issue areas require individual issue-wise analyses of interdependence. The patterns and forms of interdependence may be of economic, military-security, or societal nature. Senghaas (1994) even distinguishes between eight different forms of interdependence according to issue area, asymmetry of power capabilities, level of institutionalization, or proneness to conflict. These forms are (1) symmetric and (2) asymmetric interdependence, (3) international ecological and (4) economic interdependence, (5) confrontational,¹¹⁴ (6) cooperative-functional,¹¹⁵ (7) institutional,¹¹⁶ and (8) normative-ethical interdependence.¹¹⁷ The patterns and forms of (complex) interdependence may vary both within issue areas over time and between issue areas.

The rising density of complex interdependence and thickening transnational relations "make policy processes more 'pluralistic', 'complex', and 'fragmented'" (Moravcsik 2009: 245). A clear and fixed hierarchy of state goals may erode and other state preferences than national security may become more salient. More complex and issue-specific vulnerabilities and forms of power constrain or enable policy choices and suggest a more multifaceted understanding of power under conditions of complex interdependence (see Nye 2004a: 159). The costs of interdependence reflect the degree to which interdependence restricts state autonomy both in the state's external relations and in domestic policies (see Keohane/Nye 2001: 8; 278). State actors will have to consider during the formation of their foreign policy strategies the costs resulting from various patterns of economic, security and societal interdependence.

In the following, the scope and asymmetry of interdependence, and the degree of institutionalization in the Gulf region will be looked at.

¹¹⁴ Confrontational interdependence is understood as the power-political or ideological competition between two or more interdependent actors (Senghaas 1994: 198).

¹¹⁵ Cooperative-functional interdependence refers to functional cooperation in the realm of cross-border communication or transport, e.g. (Senghaas 1994: 211-14).

¹¹⁶ Institutional interdependence refers to cross-linkages through regional or international institutions. The degree of institutionalization, however, does not automatically correlate with a decrease in violent conflicts (Senghaas 1994: 209).

¹¹⁷ Normative-ethical interdependence is grounded on and consolidated by international 'hard' and 'soft' law. International law generates international interdependence despite the absence of a coercive sanctioning mechanism (Senghaas 1994: 215).

2.2.2.3 Regional Contextualization

2.2.2.3.1 Patterns of Interdependence in the Gulf Region

Manifold forms of interdependence fatefully connect the various states and societies of the Gulf region and make them mutually vulnerable to the political, economic, and social developments of the others. Despite various forms of interdependent relations in the Gulf region, it is questionable in how far one may speak of conditions of 'complex interdependence' in which classical balance of power considerations have become less salient and traditional military force has turned out to be less effective in the pursuit of state interests. In order to "measure" the existence, forms and quality of interdependence in the Gulf, it is useful to break down the concept of complex interdependence into the following variables and indicators:

- (a) the hierarchy or priority of various state interests in a globalizing and interdependent environment
- (b) the level of institutionalization of interdependence
- (c) the asymmetry of reciprocal costs and benefits of interaction
- (d) the interplay of the domestic, regional, and global level

(a) Hierarchy and Priority of State Interests

The conception of complex interdependence allows for a variety of state interests and concerns that may overlap and condition each other in a state's pursuit of its foreign policy strategy. Due to various types of transnational societal and intergovernmental interconnectedness and permeability of state entities as well as the overlapping between internal and external politics, state actors have to cope with various issues and concerns in an increasingly globalizing and interdependent environment. The assumption of the prevailing goal of national security classically measured in terms of military power and threats may lose its accuracy when issues and concerns other than military security become more urgent. An erosion of the traditional hierarchy of state goals or a variation of the hierarchy and priority of state interests may thus be the result. In the Gulf region (as elsewhere), the states proved to be no impermeable "hard-shelled sovereignties" (Korany 1997: 144) that are immune against any sort of external influence. To the contrary, states and societies in the Gulf have been highly penetrated by external or transnational ideas, streams of cash and consumer goods, foreign investments, expatriate labour or the transnational flux of political refugees or activists, terrorists and foreign jihadis. Manifold forms of economic, societal, and security interdependence in the region account for the "multidimensionality" (Korany et al. 1993: 10) of security concerns such as territorial integrity, economic and military vulnerability, transnational political or ideological pressures, or domestic societal fragmentation.

The density and nature of economic and security interdependence in the Gulf is as well due in a large part to the regional peculiarity of 'petro-political rentierism'. Thanks to the endowment with huge oil (and gas) reserves, the majority of the regional states in the Gulf have become oil "rentier states" (Beblawi/Luciani 1987) that derive large parts of their national revenues from oil (and gas) exports. Oil-financed inefficient public sectors, arms purchases, welfare programs and populist distribution policies have made the local regimes economically and existentially dependent on the constant flow of oil and gas revenues which accrue to the national budgets (Hinnebusch 2003: 85). The oil- and gas-exporting countries of the Gulf are therefore highly vulnerable to the level of production and exportation of oil and gas, the access to energy transport routes, and the developments on the international energy markets.

The second aspect of regional rent income must be seen in the context of regime stability and legitimization. Political authoritarianism in the Gulf region has been buttressed on the regimes' free disposal of oil and gas rents. The use of oil and gas rents for both legitimizing and repressive purposes such as the spending on popular social and welfare programs, patronization of loyal societal clients, or on the buildup of a repressive security apparatus exacerbates the regimes' dependence on a continuously high rent income. Rent-seeking in the Gulf region has thus become a strategy of both external and domestic (regime) survival and a way to compensate for the lack of democratic legitimacy.¹¹⁸

The countries in the Gulf region face a variety of vulnerabilities at the domestic, regional, and international level. The hierarchy of state goals varies according to which particular needs and threats at a particular level become most urgent and immediate. Scholars of International Relations have acknowledged a wide range of state interests due to the complexity of what means 'national security' (see Korany 1993). Robert Gilpin (1981: 20) has acknowledged the fact that state actors not only pursue the interest of power maximization (or at least maintaining their power position), but have to "find some optimum combination" of both power and welfare objectives. The classical "guns vs. butter" trade-off between welfare and security interests emphasized by Gilpin (1981: 20-22), however, might be slightly misleading for the Gulf region since here welfare becomes the major buttress of domestic

¹¹⁸ Lots of literature has been written on the correlation in authoritarian rentier states between regime stability and the lack of democratic accountability on the one hand and the free disposal of large amounts of rents on the other hand. This causal mechanism has been labelled by Michael Ross as "the rentier effect", "the repression effect", and "the modernization effect" (Ross 2001: 332-337). Further exemplary works on this phenomenon are the studies of Beck and Schlumberger (Beck/Schlumberger 1999; Beck 2002; 2007). Misallocation problems or the so-called "Dutch disease" have been counted among the (negative) economic effects of high rent income. Steffen Hertog (2005) has modified the classical assumption of the rentier state theory with his approach of "segmented clientelism". The rentier state theory assumes a high degree of state autonomy on the domestic level due to the regime's free disposal of rents. Hertog, however, makes out a constrained state autonomy on account of numerous parallel interests and institutions and complex state-society links.

security. The trade-off between different state interests in the Gulf region may rather occur along the considerations of domestic and external security needs. The autocratic regimes in the Gulf basically have to cope with a “dual security dilemma” (Janssen 2005) comprising a classical external security dilemma due to regional arms races and external military or political threats and a domestic security dilemma based on the potential lack of regime legitimacy or societal fragmentation. At the international and regional level, the leaderships of the Gulf countries have to attract and content international investors and energy consumers, appease or attract external allies and security guarantors, and contain external military or ideological adversaries. At the domestic level, the state leaders must at the same time meet societal needs and avert domestic security risks. Both socio-political and socio-economic factors such as political and social exclusion of societal groups, unemployment and general economic underachievement may be the causes of possible threats to domestic security and regime stability. The autocratic ruling elites of rentier states with poor economic performance and a low level of industrialization therefore heavily rely on oil and gas revenues in order to meet their diverse security needs at the domestic, regional and international level.

(b) Institutionalization of Interdependence

The various forms of interdependence among the states in the Gulf region and the interconnectivity of their security as such do not give information on how these patterns of interdependence are handled by the state actors. Only the (usually state-crafted) building of conditions that provide a cooperative and conflictive-free handling of interdependence may lead to zones of “complex interdependence” in which the classical rules of realist balance-of-power politics are mitigated by cooperative patterns of collective action. The level of institutionalization in terms of established mechanisms of collective action and regionalization in terms of a multidimensional process of regional integration may serve as important indicators of the quality of complex interdependence in the Gulf region.

Some observers of the Middle East and Gulf region have made out first beginnings of a sense of regionalism that may replace the state-to-state “confrontational interdependence” (Senghaas 1994) of the past by a new form of “complex interdependence” that involves various actors and interests and allows for cooperative, peaceful forms of conflict resolution. The term “regionalism” generally refers to regional integration and institutionalization as a response to increasing regional interconnectivity and the loss of state autonomy of action (Spindler 2005: 17). Regionalism may occur as a comprehensive and multidimensional form of regional integration that embraces economic, cultural, political, and social aspects (Farrell 2005: 8). According to a more sophisticated understanding,¹¹⁹ regionalism goes beyond a mere functional integration such as the creation of free-trade agreements or security

¹¹⁹ Mary Farrell considers regionalism as a more diverse form of integration than suggested by other theories (Farrell 2005: 8).

regimes. In this sense, regionalism serves as well the goal of “region-building” by establishing regional coherence and identity (ibid.).

Bahgat Korany makes out a “declining state monolithism” and growing transstate relations and societal interconnectedness that limit crude power politics in the Gulf and Middle East region (Korany 1998: 57). To him, regional politics in the Middle East oscillate between realist politics of “warfare” and cooperation-prone politics of “welfare”. Under favorable conditions of interdependence, regional balance-of-power politics may give way to a “balance of benefits”. In reality, both realist and institutionalist conceptualizations of regional politics are not mutually exclusive but rather coexist (Korany 1998: 54; 36). While the politics in the Middle East still heavily follow the logic of power-balancing, regional interstate relations cannot be reduced to pure zero-sum games. Korany therefore advocates a more nuanced view on regional politics that considers the complexities of regional politics and the coexistence of unregulated anarchy and patterns of interdependence and cooperation in the Middle East and Gulf region.

Other scholars of the Gulf and Middle East region share a more pessimist view on the opportunities of cooperative patterns of behavior and the taming of regional contests over power. While forms of complex interdependence led to foundations of collective-security institutions and the spread of “zones of peace” in other world regions, the decade of globalization in the Gulf “was ushered in by war” (Hinnebusch 2003: 204). In the last century, a respectable number of regional organizations has emerged in the Gulf and Middle East, such as the Arab League, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC), or the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). In the Gulf region, the GCC constitutes the most institutionalized form of regional cooperation embracing the Arab monarchies of the Gulf. The Vienna-based institution of OPEC constitutes another international organization that has successfully shaped cooperation and collective-action among the oil-exporting countries of the Gulf, regardless of its global reach and register of member countries. Both the GCC and OPEC have been established for the purpose of coping with problems of economic and security interdependence in order to strengthen the bargaining position of the member countries vis-à-vis outside interests and ambitions.

However, from the mere number of regional organizations and inter-state forums cannot be inferred the level and quality of regional institutionalization and integration. Simon Murden (2009: 118) measures the level and quality of institutionalization and the emergence of an international society in the Middle East according the level of ‘practical integration’ and the level of ‘normative collegiality’ among state actors. ‘Practical integration’ between states ranges from political or economic independence or autarky to a high degree of political and economic interdependence. ‘Normative collegiality’ among states ranges from limited self-

interest to forms of solidarism and integrationism.¹²⁰ Despite a respectable level of “practical integration” due to the existence of economic, socio-political and security interdependence between the countries of the Gulf, the region shows deficits in “normative collegiality” in terms of inter-state solidarity. According to Murden (2009: 117), regional cooperation and integration has been based on narrow state interests and “‘dead-letter’ regimes” rather than on true commitments and regional solidarity. Another deficit of regional security integration is the fact that Iraq and Iran as two leading states in the Gulf have been kept excluded from the GCC and other processes of regional institutionalization. The integration of Iraq and Iran into cooperative mechanisms of security-building and -keeping would be a precondition of a more inclusive regional security system in the Gulf. According to Richard Russell (2005), regional attempts of integration or collective security in the Gulf must be considered a “mirage” that masks the political-military realities and the underlying logic of power politics. Despite some lip service and rhetoric of collective security, the Gulf region lacks a true system of collective security.

Until now, it is questionable whether the anarchical state system in the Gulf has undergone any effective transformation and has made first steps towards a cooperative system that would follow the idea of regional solidarity and collegiality. The Gulf region remains highly fragmented in political, socio-economic and cultural-religious aspects. So far, the states and societies of the region have not succeeded in forming effective and concerted indigenous responses to regional issues and crises, but instead have mainly relied on extra-regional alliances and security guarantees. Regional cooperation in the Gulf, be it in the security of economic realm, has mostly been “limited, transitory, and self-regarding” in nature and often came along in the form of *ad hoc* and bilateral alignments (Fawcett 2005: 191; 184). According to Russell, a real collective-security system and true regional integration in the Gulf would presuppose precedent political and societal transformations within the countries of the region. Unless there is no fundamental, in-depth transformation, cooperative mechanisms such as confidence-building measures or arms control would rather ‘manage’ than replace regional power politics (Russell 2005: 80-81).

All in all, the Gulf region must be considered a lowly institutionalized region with regard to the scope, quality and success of institutionalized collective action and conflict resolution and the rather low level of regional inter-state solidarity. Yet, it may be worthwhile to focus in more detail on the first steps towards regional integration and institutionalization and on first signs of a more comprehensive regional identity which would define commonly accepted terms and modalities of regional security.

¹²⁰ Murden’s conceptualization of regional institutions in the Middle East is based on the thinking of the English School and the idea of an international society.

(c) Asymmetry of Interdependence

The model of “complex interdependence” cannot be applied to the Middle East and Gulf region without reservation and qualification (Korany 1997: 141). Strongly asymmetrical patterns of interdependence and rather hierarchical relations in the region imply a lack of reciprocity when it comes to the distribution of costs and benefits. The patterns of interdependence in the Middle East and Gulf region take on core-periphery structures and virtual dependence of the regional periphery rather than mutual dependence or ‘interdependence’ (Korany 1991: 142). Regional state and societal actors have been highly exposed to external, in particular Western, penetration of their regional spheres of influence. Since the 1970s, the regional actors proved to be highly sensitive and vulnerable to the influence and policies of the United States, be it in their socio-political, military, or economic realm. The increasing U.S.-American exertion of influence on the definition of the terms of regional trade and security led to growing local perceptions of a “Westcentric” form of globalization and a “U.S.-imposed” regional order “at the possible expense of indigenous interests and identity” (Hinnebusch 2003: 88).¹²¹ The strengthened U.S. predominance in the Gulf region following the Gulf War of 1990/91 resulted in an increasing security dependence of U.S. regional allies (e.g. Saudi Arabia) on the one hand, and the further regional exclusion of U.S. adversaries (e.g. Iran and Saddam Iraq) on the other hand. The awareness among the local protagonists of a growing asymmetry of power and interests and of deepening regional fragmentation¹²² brought up the question about the distribution of costs and benefits in the processes of both globalization and regionalization. Although the coordination of transnational activities and the institutionalization of regional interdependence may offer net benefits to all parties, regional interdependence and cooperation could also consolidate and institutionalize a regional imbalance of interests. Regional interdependence and institutionalization could thus establish or further strengthen regional asymmetries or hegemony according to which particular terms and interests form the basis of the regional security and economic order.¹²³

(d) Interplay of the Domestic, Regional, and Global Level

Saudi Arabia’s and Iran’s patterns of economic, societal, and security interdependence at the domestic, regional, and global level may have effects on their regional policies in general and their Iraq policies in particular. The interdependent structures in which both countries are

¹²¹ Hassan-Yari argues that external interests differ fundamentally from indigenous interests. He advocates an inclusive regional security system embracing the GCC members, Iran and Iraq, and based on regional needs (Hassan-Yari 2008: 60). Likewise, Taeb proposes a “regional security partnership” based on native values (Taeb 2008: 28).

¹²² Schulz and Schulz make out a “growing sense of American neo-imperialism” in the region on account of heightened U.S. interference in regional affairs after 9/11 (Schulz/Schulz 2005: 2000).

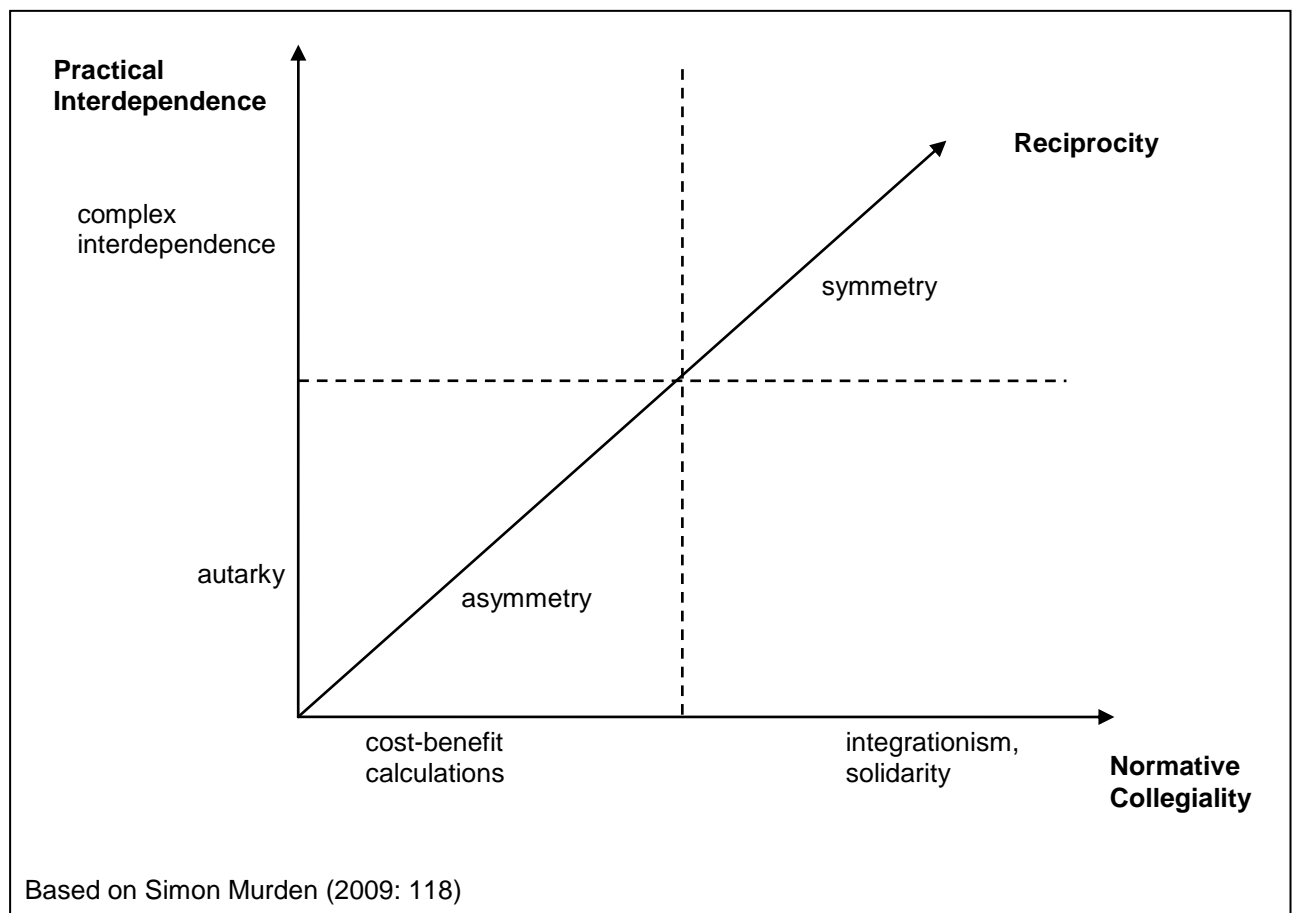
¹²³ Korany, for example, considers the possibility that interdependence in the Middle East may be used to consolidate Western-Israeli hegemony by non-military means (Korany 1997: 149).

embedded generate various forms of vulnerabilities and security concerns on the one hand and incentives for international cooperation and collective action on the other hand.

The various interdependencies, pressures and demands coming from the domestic, regional and global level form the hierarchy and priority of Saudi Arabia's and Iran's state interests according to which particular security needs become more urgent and immediate. Although each level has its own specific demands and patterns of interdependence, all three levels are deeply intertwined. Interdependencies and vulnerabilities at the global level may have top-down effects on the regional and domestic level while at the same time domestic pressures and demands may impact Saudi Arabia's and Iran's regional and international relations. Economic and security interests are inextricably interlinked while domestic and external security considerations may have equal priority in the calculation of Saudi Arabia's or Iran's national interest.

Since the patterns and asymmetries of interdependence at the global level differ in quality from these at the regional level, it is useful to look at first at each level separately before dissecting how these levels are actually closely and inextricably interlinked. Perhaps even more importantly, pressures and demands coming from Saudi Arabia's and Iran's domestic levels decisively impact their patterns of interdependence in the regional and global arena.

Figure 1: Levels and Dimensions of Complex Interdependence



2.2.2.3.2 Saudi Arabia's Patterns of Interdependence

Saudi Arabia's regional interdependence is a result of the interconnectivity of manifold security concerns among the regional actors. State borders in the Gulf are porous. Destabilizing elements such as the cross-border flow of terrorists and insurgents, refugees, or subversive ideas make Saudi Arabia and the other states in the Gulf mutually vulnerable. The national security of each state in the Gulf is highly interdependent with the overall regional security situation. Despite military conflicts and escalations and conflictual inter-state relationships in the Gulf, levels of national security of the regional states are not per se negatively interdependent in terms of zero-sum relations. On many points, Saudi Arabia's national security positively depends on the level of national security and stability in Saudi Arabia's neighboring countries. The development of Iraq's national security situation in particular has been a major security concern for Saudi Arabia and Iraq's other neighboring countries likewise. The common interest in regional stability and security provides the regional actors with a general incentive for regional cooperation and collective action in regional security affairs.

As well in economic and oil-political matters, Saudi Arabia finds itself in an interdependent relationship with the other Gulf countries. The oil-producing countries of the Gulf have an utmost incentive to coordinate their oil-policies for their common benefit. Any single-handed attempt of a major oil-producer state could curtail the profits and imperil the market positions of the other producer countries. Saudi Arabia therefore has a vested interest in a functioning oil-political cooperation among the OPEC (or OAPEC) members and is particularly sensitive to the oil-political strategies of Iraq and Iran which hold one of the world's largest (proven) oil reserves after Saudi Arabia. Through the collaboration within OPEC, the Saudi regime aims to stabilize the international oil price at a moderate, but yet satisfying, level which would secure Saudi Arabia's long-term market share at the international oil markets. Thanks to its huge oil reserves (20 to 25% of the world's proven reserves) and its low absorption rate, Saudi Arabia can afford to forgo immediate oil price maximization for the sake of a comfortable market position (Nonneman 2005: 321).

At the domestic level, the rentier nature of the Saudi state makes the Saudi regime economically almost totally dependent on a constantly high influx of oil revenues. Saudi Arabia receives between 70 and 80 percent of its national revenues from the oil export what presumably makes the country a "prototype" of a rentier state (Steinberg: 2007 54). The oil sector accounts for up to 45 percent of the Saudi GDP.¹²⁴ Thanks to the free disposal of huge amounts of oil revenues, Saudi Arabia has become a distributive state. The distribution of the oil wealth via a vast social welfare program and the build-up of a wide public sector have served the purpose of patronizing large parts of the Saudi society. However, a

¹²⁴ According to CIA World Factbook (retrieved on 05/25/2010).

population growth of around four percent and the maintenance of an inefficient public sector have exceedingly absorbed Saudi Arabia's oil revenues over the past decades (see Malik/Niblock 2005: 86; 103). The stability of the Saudi regime and social harmony therefore essentially rest upon constantly high and stable oil prices. Only the continuously high flow of oil revenues may help the regime to financially compensate for social discontent over rising unemployment,¹²⁵ falling per capita income, social disparities and inequalities, or for political discontent over unpopular state policies, state corruption, and the lack of political participation and representation (see Peterson 2002: 54-55).

At the global level, Saudi Arabia is highly dependent on the developments at the international energy markets and its relations with major oil consumer states, on the one hand, and on the military cooperation with and protection from the United States, on the other hand. This so-called "oil-for-security" interdependence between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the USA has left the Saudi state extremely vulnerable to the shape and status of its external relationship with the United States.¹²⁶ According to this "oil-for-security" pact,¹²⁷ the Saudi Kingdom is supposed to consistently supply the world oil markets with crude oil at moderate prices, while the United States in return has been committed to guarantee the national security of the Saudi state. Saudi Arabia's generous arms purchases from the United States and Great Britain¹²⁸ and the Saudi "recycling" of petrodollars through Western banks have further deepened its interdependence with the industrialized West (see Hinnebusch 2002: 215; Schultz/Schultz 2005: 189).

In order to meet domestic and external security needs and cope with the various vulnerabilities and interdependencies at the domestic, regional, and global level, the Saudi state may choose between international cooperation and collective action or unilateral self-

¹²⁵ Saudi Arabia's unemployment rate ranks at 11.6 percent in 2009. However, the rate refers to Saudi males only. Inofficial estimates range as high as 25 percent (see CIA World Factbook).

¹²⁶ In addition to the security realm, Saudi Arabia has close trade relations with the United States and imports major consumer goods and technology from the U.S.. Between 2006 and 2008, Saudi-U.S. trade has grown 70 percent (see Saudi Gazette, May 30, 2009, page 12).

¹²⁷ See also Rachel Bronson (2005) who argues that the "oil-for defense" caricature is too simplistic since oil alone does not explain the intimacy of the Saudi-US relationship. According to Bronson, other common interests and threats such as former Communism or recently Islamist terrorism substantially determine the interdependent relationship.

¹²⁸ Great Britain has always been the "junior partner" of the United States in the relations with Saudi Arabia (Steinberg 2007b: 71). The Saudi-British Yamamah arms deal of 1985 (and again of 1993) as the world's largest "oil-for-arms deal" shifted the dependence structure of the Saudi air force from the USA to Great Britain (Nonneman 2005: 345). The present envisaged Saudi-U.S. arms deal may re-put the emphasis on the United States as the only remaining important security guarantor of the Saudi Kingdom. In 2010, Saudi Arabia held out the prospect of buying U.S. military aircraft worth up to U.S. \$ 60 billion (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 15, 2010).

According to Mamdouh Anis Fatih, the United States keeps Saudi Arabia militarily dependent on further arms purchases in two ways, by spare parts and ammunition (personal interview on March 15, 2009 in Abu Dhabi).

help and bilateral alignments in the logic of power-balancing. For Saudi Arabia, the GCC and OPEC constitute major inter-state institutions that shape Saudi Arabia's relations and cooperation with leading regional countries in the Gulf. Saudi Arabia's formal membership in and commitment to these two institutions, however, does not simultaneously imply Saudi Arabia's "normative collegiality" towards the other members. With regard to the GCC, Saudi Arabia, just as the other GCC member countries, has formally acceded to the principle of collective security which pledges mutual solidarity in times of attack on a member country.¹²⁹ As well, Saudi Arabia has contributed to the establishment of the *Peninsula Shield* forces (*dir'a al-jazeera*), the first and rudimentary joint defense forces of the GCC. Even though there formally exists a collective-defense guarantee between the GCC member countries, Saudi Arabia's level of commitment to and compliance with the idea of regional collective security and collective action during times of crisis has been relativized and undermined by its bilateral security partnership with the USA. For Saudi Arabia, as well as for other GCC members, the external alliance with the USA constitutes the ultimate security guarantee. The regional states' preference of extra-regional and bilateral security alignments hence hindered or lowered the dynamism of regional projects to establish an indigenous security regime, such as the GCC or the *Damascus Declaration* regime.¹³⁰ As well, concerns of smaller GCC members over Saudi Arabia's predominant position on the Arabian Peninsula and intra-Gulf disputes over the preferred modalities of regional integration have been obstacles to further integration of the GCC states, be it in economic or military security affairs.¹³¹ The GCC has thus appeared both as a first example of regional integrationism and solidarism and as an instrument for Saudi Arabia to foster its hegemony on the Arabian Peninsula.

Within the cartel-like framework of OPEC,¹³² Saudi Arabia and the oil-exporting countries of the Gulf have successfully coordinated their oil-policies with leading global oil-exporting countries for the sake of strengthening their market power vis-à-vis global oil-consumers. Thanks to its position as the world's largest oil exporting country¹³³ with the world's greatest

¹²⁹ In December 2000, the GCC member countries signed the *GCC Joint Defense Agreement* that confirms their mutual commitment to collective defense in case of an attack on any member state or any danger threatening a member (see "The GCC. Process & Achievement", GCC Information Center, 2009, p. 29).

¹³⁰ Damascus Declaration of the GCC states, Syria and Egypt, issued in 1991, was meant as an indigenous project to handle regional security issues.

¹³¹ The decisions and policies of the GCC often appeared to be dominated by rather short-sighted, national interests and fears of the smaller member states about a Saudi predominance in GCC affairs. The project of the GCC monetary union, for example, suffered a serious setback in 2009 due to a UAE-Saudi disagreement over the location of the future Gulf Central Bank.

¹³² Beck classifies OPEC as a "cartel-like international regime" (see Beck 1999: 39).

¹³³ Russia has slightly overtaken Saudi Arabia's position as the greatest oil *production* country. Saudi Arabia now ranks second in world oil production (see CIA World Factbook).

spare production capacity,¹³⁴ Saudi Arabia has been the de facto leader of OPEC. Saudi Arabia has used its oil-political leverage in OPEC to discipline OPEC members in case of violation of their production quotas¹³⁵ and to negotiate an all-accepted oil-political strategy with its OPEC partners. In view of different oil-political interests within OPEC,¹³⁶ Saudi Arabia has maneuvered to manage the divergence of interests and enforce the members' compliance in order to promote the common interest of keeping the oil price above a hypothetical market price (see Nonneman 2005: 332). Nonetheless, in the future, competitions over the definition of a common oil-political strategy cannot be precluded.¹³⁷ Saudi Arabia's oil-political cooperation within OPEC has been guided by pure economic interests and rational cost-benefit calculations. Since the oil embargo of the Arab OPEC members in 1973, Saudi Arabia has never again used its oil policy as a political weapon (Steinberg 2007b: 67). Saudi Arabia has functioned like a leading cartel member in OPEC with the goal of realizing monopoly profits. Its cooperation has therefore been less based on solidarity and collegiality rooted in a potential common identity or community of non-Western, resource-rich developing countries, but on economic considerations.

Saudi Arabia's patterns of interdependence at the regional and global level are a function of core-periphery structures. In the economic and security realm, Saudi Arabia underlies asymmetrical patterns of interdependence to the advantage of the industrialized West (Nonneman 2005: 328). In the past fifty years, Saudi Arabia's dependency on world powers and the global economy has strongly increased (ibid.). As a result, the Saudi leadership has been pressured by Western political demands for economic and domestic reforms of liberalization and democratization, or for pro-Western stances in foreign policy issues. While in economic and financial affairs Saudi Arabia has gained some room to maneuver thanks to its oil-political leverage, it is almost completely dependent in military and external security affairs. Saudi Arabia has not been able to accomplish an own defense capability against

¹³⁴ Saudi Arabia enjoys a unique oil-political position as a swing producer since it holds the single largest spare production capacity. It is the only country that could produce 1-2 billion barrels of crude oil per day additionally (Steinberg 2007b: 68).

¹³⁵ OPEC has shifted from a policy of a target oil price to a policy of fixed production quota.

¹³⁶ Different oil-political interests may lead to conflicts within OPEC. Potential conflicts among OPEC members can be classified into (1) a distributional conflict over the definition of the overall production quota and the oil price level (*distributional conflict in a broader sense*), (2) a distributional conflict over the allocation of quotas among the OPEC members (*distributional conflict in a strict sense*), and (3) conflict over quota violation (*collective-action problem of defection*), (see Zeino-Mahmalat 2008: 19-20).

¹³⁷ Some observers see Iraq as a potential oil-political rival to Saudi Arabia. If Iraq manages to revive its oil industry with the help of foreign investments, it might decisively co-determine the developments on the global oil markets in the future (see Gold 2010). In addition, Iraq's introduction of *Production Sharing Agreements (PSA)* that offer more attractive conditions for foreign investors and oil companies could prospectively enforce different terms and modalities in the oil-political agreements of the other OPEC members. Yet, according to Aarts, Iraq is unlikely to become a "linchpin of a new [U.S.-determined] oil order" that would marginalize Saudi Arabia's influence in OPEC (Aarts 2005: 411; 415).

military security threats. The Saudi leadership has instead 'sourced out' the safeguarding of its external security to the United States. Through extensive arms purchases from the United States, the Saudi regime hopes to buy loyalty from the U.S. and deepen the Saudi-U.S. security partnership (Steinberg 2007b: 69). At the same time, the Saudi arms imports have exacerbated the Saudi security dependence on the United States due to the consequential need to import spare parts, military training and technical service, and services for the overall maintenance of its military infrastructure.

Nonetheless, militarily weak and small states at the periphery do not necessarily lack autonomy in their foreign policy and external relations. In the case of Saudi Arabia, the Saudi leadership has been able to "carve out a significant degree of relative autonomy" (Nonneman 2005: 317). Saudi Arabia's structures of asymmetrical interdependence take on the form of "(managed) multi-dependence" (Nonneman 2005: 319). In the past decade, the Saudi leadership has been eager to avoid "mono-dependence" (Nonneman 2005: 350) by further diversifying its economic and security relations and keeping options and alternative (non-Western) channels in its external relations open. Saudi Arabia has deepened its economic and oil-political ties with China and East Asia through King Abdullah's "Look East" policy.¹³⁸ In security affairs, Saudi Arabia has cautiously cooperated with Pakistan on nuclear and security questions. All these policy steps reveal the ambition to keep as many options as possible open in external relations. Yet, despite all measures of political and economic diversification, Saudi Arabia is no less dependent from the United States than at the beginning of the 1990s (Steinberg 2007b: 71).

2.2.2.3.3 Iran's Patterns of Interdependence

The patterns and structures of interdependence that Iran underlies at the regional and global level are quite distinct from those of Saudi Arabia on account of Iran's long-term international containment and regional isolation. Nonetheless, Iran is similarly affected by the forces of interdependence and globalization, and Iran's national security is no less interdependent with the developments in Iraq and the Gulf region.

At the regional level, Iran shares manifold transnational economic, religious, and cultural links with Iraq and the wider Gulf region. Iranian societal links with Iraq have been particularly intense. Both societies are multiethnic including a Kurdish minority and hosting transnational refugees and expatriates from one another. Since both societies are of a Shiite majority, historical Iranian-Iraqi religious ties run strong and have institutionalized inter-state

¹³⁸ In 1999, China declared a "strategic oil partnership" with Saudi Arabia. By 2004, Saudi Arabia became China's principal oil supplier and opened its gas sector for the Chinese national energy company Sinopec (see Nonneman 2005: 344-45). Yet, according to Steinberg (2007b: 71), China is unlikely to be a real competitor to the U.S. in the near future. Despite the sustained U.S. presence in the region, Christian Koch (2007: 14-16) has made out an ongoing internationalization of external relations in the Gulf.

pilgrimage and exchange of religious scholars. The existence of a vast number of Persian residents in Iraq¹³⁹ or the long-time Iranian exile of Iraqi scholars has strengthened Iranian-Iraqi relations at the societal level. Until today, Iran maintains strong clandestine networks (Fattouh 2007) at the religious and political level in Iraq and the Gulf region. Yet, the turbulent and tragic history of Iranian-Iraqi relations with the eight-year Iran-Iraq War as the bloodiest war the region has seen in the last century, had complicated for a long time any form of political, cultural, economic, or military interaction and cooperation between Iran and Iraq.

Iran's territorial disputes with some Arab Gulf neighbors,¹⁴⁰ various political tensions with pro-American Arab Gulf countries, and U.S. endeavors to render Iran irrelevant for the future economic and security order in the Gulf have deepened Iran's isolated role in the Gulf region. Nonetheless, Iran shares with its Arab neighbors a general interest in regional stability, albeit defined on different terms.

At the domestic level, Iran is - similarly to Saudi Arabia - economically dependent on oil (and gas) revenues. Iran's oil-dependent economy is highly vulnerable to the developments at the international oil market. Oil and gas make up 80 percent of Iran's export revenues and 10 to 20 percent of the Iranian GDP. More than half of Iran's national budget (59 percent) is made up from oil and gas revenues (Reissner 2007: 37). Although Iran is among the world's six largest oil-producing and eight largest oil-exporting countries¹⁴¹ it has to import 40 percent of its needed fuel due to its insufficient refinery capacity (Reissner 2007: 42). Similar to the Saudi Arabian state, Iran has developed into an oil-rentier state with clientelist networks which function like patrimonial clan structures (Reissner 2007: 39). Thanks to the availability and distribution of oil revenues, the Iranian regime may be able to "buy off" potential dissent on unpopular policies" (Green et al. 2009: 15). The Iranian regime depends on a constantly high income from oil and gas rents in order to maintain the high level of government spending on public subsidies or arms purchases. The Iranian economy belongs to the most subsidized economies in the region (Looney 2007: 424). The social justice-oriented government program and the new form of "petro-populism" under the presidency of Ahmadinejad (Looney 2007) are based on a populist policy of high subsidies in particular on food, fuel and medicine (Reissner 2007: 41). However, population growth, an increasing

¹³⁹ The International Crisis Group (2005) distinguishes between "Iraqi Shiites of Persian origin" and "Persian-speaking Iraqis" (Middle East Report No. 38, pp. 4-5).

¹⁴⁰ Iran has, for example, territorial disputes with the UAE about the Tunb Islands. Various Iranian officials or semi-officials have repeatedly claimed Bahrain as an Iranian province. The recent conflict about the name of the Gulf (either 'Persian' or 'Arab' Gulf) exemplifies a more deeply rooted Arab-Iranian antagonism in the Gulf region.

¹⁴¹ See CIA World Factbook, 2010

unemployment rate¹⁴² and a reduced per capita income exacerbate the Iranian regime's existential dependence on oil and gas revenues.

At the global level, Iran is exposed to international economic and political pressure and underlies global interdependencies in the economic and financial sector. Iran needs an estimated amount of 100 to 150 billion U.S.-dollars of foreign investments to renew its oil and gas and petrochemical industry (see Perthes 2008: 41). For this purpose, the Iranian regime would have to attract international donors and investors. At the same time, the Iran Republic is pressured by international sanctions and the U.S.-American containment policy against its regime.¹⁴³

Iran's hierarchy of national interests is a function of various economic and security needs and vulnerabilities at the domestic and international level. Iran's prime foreign-policy goals are the maintenance of Iran's territorial integrity, regime stability and the pursuit of (economic or military) self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency has enjoyed priority in Iran's definition of its national interests and implies a reduction of (inter)dependencies and vulnerabilities in the economic or military-political realm. Self-sufficiency is pursued by Iran economically through the government's program of supporting national production and output,¹⁴⁴ politically through the search of new, world-wide allies and partners, and strategically through the controversial Iranian nuclear program.

In strategic economic and military realms, the Iranian Republic has preferred the seeking of autarky and self-reliance rather than of cooperation and collective action. When it comes to questions of national security, Iran has relied on its unilateral capability to act rather than on collective action or mutual consultation on common security issues. Although Iran has proposed on various occasions the fostering of indigenous security cooperation to the regional countries of the Gulf, Iran's normative commitment to the idea of collective security has not appeared to be trustworthy to Iran's neighbor countries. Iran's conceptions of collective regional security have been drawn on the barely acceptable condition of the withdrawal of all extra-regional forces and the termination of external security guarantees on the part of the Arab Gulf countries. As a result, Iran has been kept excluded from regional projects of collective security or collective defense. The failure or success of any future arrangement of collective security that would involve Iran depends on whether Iran (and the other Gulf countries) cherishes serious regional solidarity or solely pursues individual self-

¹⁴² The official unemployment rate lies at almost 12 percent (see CIA World Factbook). Independent economists, however, estimate the unemployment rate to lie between 20 and 30 percent (see for example Kooroshy 1999: 45).

¹⁴³ The U.S.-American *Iran Sanctions Act* (formerly *Iran and Libya Sanctions Act*) restricts U.S. investment in Iran.

¹⁴⁴ Among President Ahmadinejad's main economic objectives were the attainment of self-reliance in national production and output, and the achievement of self-sufficiency for basic consumer goods (see Looney 2007: 423).

interested goals or hegemonic ambitions. So far, Iran and the countries of the Gulf have not procured a level of normative collegiality and a sense of integrationism that would be needed for any substantial form of security cooperation.

In contrast to regional security affairs, Iran has for a long time cooperated successfully with its regional neighbor countries on oil-political matters. As a founding member of OPEC, Iran has been committed to collective action in oil politics since the foundation of OPEC in 1960. Iran's oil-political solidarity and cooperation with the other oil-exporting countries of OPEC has been based on clear economic considerations and pragmatic cost-benefit calculations. Iran has weighed its interest of earning monopoly profits through coordinating its oil policy with other OPEC members against the difficulty of cooperating with otherwise political or ideological antagonists such as Saudi Arabia or former Iraq.¹⁴⁵ Iran has never been willing to sacrifice its oil-political profits for political, ideological, or less profane goals. Regardless of some Iranian rhetorical threats of a possible use of 'the oil weapon', there has not been a politicization of Iran's oil policy within OPEC so far. Iran under the Shah did not participate in the Arab oil boycott of 1973. But also the anti-American mindset of the new revolutionary regime in Iran did not have any significant impact on Iran's oil policy or cooperation in OPEC. Conflicts in OPEC occurred rather along the question of the distribution of the monopoly profits. Although Iran has a strong economic incentive to coordinate its oil policy with its OPEC partners, it may disagree with the oil-political goals of other OPEC members. Compared to Saudi Arabian interests, Iran tends towards a higher oil price for the sake of increasing its oil rents in the short run.¹⁴⁶ All in all, Iran's oil-political cooperation with OPEC members has been successful despite political, socio-economical, or ideological cleavages or even belligerent conflicts between OPEC member states.

Iran's considerably high economic and security vulnerability to the international energy markets, to external economic or military pressure, and to the extra-regional penetration of the Gulf region illustrate the asymmetry of Iran's structures of interdependence. Although Iran's resource abundance gives the Iranian regime some freedom of action at the domestic and international level, it does not lead to effective autonomy from domestic, regional, or global constraints (Reissner 2007: 53).¹⁴⁷ The achievement of self-sufficiency in terms of reducing various forms of vulnerabilities and (inter)dependencies has been - on varying degrees - a primary goal of the Iranian state since the Iranian revolution. The strategic diversification of Iran's energy exports towards new costumers in East Asia or the political

¹⁴⁵ OPEC functioned almost normally during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s when the two major OPEC members - Iran and Iraq - were at war (see Zeino-Mahmalat 2008).

¹⁴⁶ Nonetheless, Robert Mabro notes that all OPEC members have a common interest in prolonging their oil rents since none of their reserves will be finished before the next 20 or 30 years (Mabro 2001: 409).

¹⁴⁷ Bassam Fattouh, for example argues that the Iranian 'oil weapon' is a "myth" since a boycott of Iran's oil would harm Iran more than the oil-consumer countries (Fattouh 2007).

diversification of Iran's security relations towards new like-minded partners in Africa, Latin America, or Central Asia open new opportunities of action for the Iranian regime (see Reissner 2007: 47). In a similar way, the Iranian nuclear program aims to attain a strategic economic, political, or military advantage within - from the Iranian perspective - strongly asymmetric international relations.¹⁴⁸

'Globalization' that entails even denser structures of interdependence at the economic, political, or cultural level has been an ambivalent term in Iran. 'Globalization' has been assessed positively in terms of new opportunities to spread Iranian culture and universal Islamic norms, or negatively in terms of a loss of Iran's cultural, political, or economic norms and values (see Reissner 2007: 44-45). The process of globalization and increasing interdependence has been majorly depicted by Iran as an increase in global economic, political, or cultural asymmetries to the disadvantage of local culture and interests.¹⁴⁹ Iran has so far partly managed asymmetric forms of globalization by forging some autonomous rooms of action or areas of self-sufficiency and by claiming an Islamic "counter-globalization" (see Fürtig 2003: 47-48) as a response to Western pressures.

2.2.2.4 Framework of Analysis: Tracing Multilevel Structures of Interdependence

By means of a multi-level, multi-sector, and multi-actor perspective, the study will make out changes in the forms, degrees and asymmetries of Saudi Arabia's and Iran's interdependence over the past two decades.

At the global, regional, and domestic level of analysis, the study will look for various (issue- or sector-specific) vulnerabilities of the Saudi and the Iranian state. At the global level, the analysis will put its focus on the states' vulnerability to the global energy markets, their level of integration into the global economy, and the quality of their interdependence with international trading or security partners. At the regional level, the study will make out various forms of economic, political or security interdependence with other regional states. Regional patterns of interdependence are also critically shaped by the way in which the regional states are vulnerable to the demands and actions of external great powers engaged in the Gulf region. The analysis will also assess the regional state of integration and institutionalization of interdependence. The study will look at Saudi Arabia's and Iran's state of regional integration or marginalization within the regional political-security order, and make out the existence and quality of mechanisms for peaceful conflict management in the Gulf region. In addition to state-to-state relations and interdependencies, the analysis will make out non-

¹⁴⁸ If a sole economic intention is assumed, the Iranian nuclear program could help Iran to become less dependent on energy sources (see Asisian 2007: 150).

¹⁴⁹ The Iranian leadership has portrayed the process of economic globalization as a second round of hegemonization of the world markets after the era of imperialism. The disputed foreign direct investments in the Iranian energy sector have been condemned as a "sell-out" of Iran (see Reissner 2007: 44-45).

state, asymmetric security risks. Regional states may be particularly vulnerable and sensitive to transnational subversive political or religious ideas and loyalties. At the domestic, sub-state level, the study will take material-economic needs of the state as well as societal demands into consideration. The degree to which the state regime is autonomous from its society defines the state's sensitivity or indifference to societal demands and the domestic public opinion.

The look at multi-level forms of interdependence, state vulnerabilities, and changes in asymmetries will tell about which needs and demands have become most urgent and salient in forming state interests.

2.2.3 Operationalization of 'Identity' and 'Foreign-Policy Role Conceptions'

2.2.3.1 The Notion of Identity and Foreign-Policy Roles

The notion of 'identity' is shortly defined by Michael Barnett as "the understanding of oneself in relationship to others" (Barnett 2002: 62). Identity is defined and shaped by the actor's interaction with others. Identity is not only formed with reference to one's self, but "as much by whom or what we reject as different". Identity is therefore "inherently relational" and "highly contingent" (Maloney 2002: 93). The relational character of identity suggests its relevance for foreign policy and international relations (Saideman 2002: 183). Identity refers to the actor's self-conception and all kinds of feeling of belonging of the actor. Identity reflects the beliefs and self-understanding of a state actor and gives direction to its interests (Wendt 1999: 231).

Identity must be distinguished from the notion of 'ideology' (see Telhami/Barnett: 10-11). The concept of ideology has been traditionally used in realist or materialist¹⁵⁰ inspired research. Ideology is reduced to a tool or instrument of the state leadership and belongs to the leadership's arsenal of soft power capabilities. Ideology can be utilized by the state in order to mask material state interests or to exert power without the resort to direct or military force. Identity, by contrast, is not reducible to material or power-political interests and calculations. Identities are defined within the framework of the actor's social interaction (Barnett 2002: 62) and construct historically bounded social roles (Telhami/Barnett 2002: 11) for state actors. Identity may thus offer a normative guidance for behavior or even put a normative constraint on the state actor, rather than providing a power-political tool.

Identity ascribes certain social roles to the actor in its relationship with others. The concept of role refers to a "coherent set of 'norms' of behavior". Role is a normative concept that informs the actor of expected or appropriate behavior, regardless of the manner in which the role is actually enacted in a specific situation (Wahlke et al. 1962: 8-9). Kalevi Jaakko Holsti (1970)

¹⁵⁰ Materialist approaches to foreign policy may not necessarily deny an impact of immaterial factors, but ideology is reduced to a supplement of a state's material power capabilities.

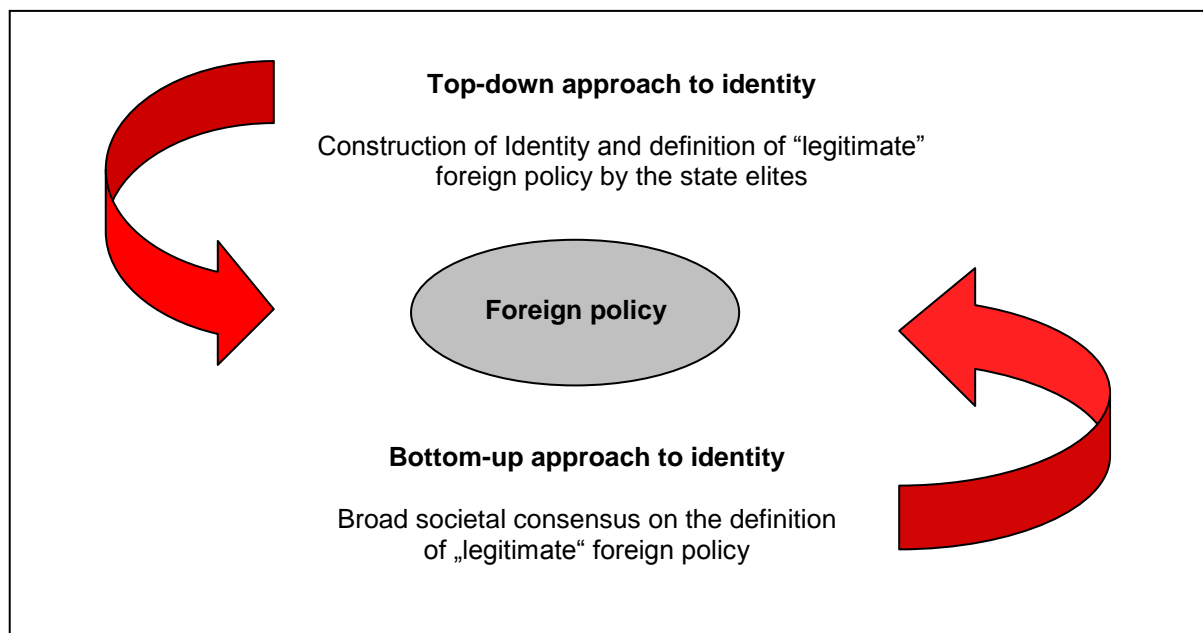
has proposed to use the insights of role theory and the idea of national role conceptions to study foreign policy.

2.2.3.2 Levels of Analysis

Constructivists resort to various levels of analysis in order to identify social norms (see chapter 2.1.3.5). Any constructivist foreign policy analysis therefore has to decide where to look for social norms that might prove relevant to explain foreign policy behavior. Constructivism acknowledges both social norms originating from the domestic level and international or transnational social norms shared by an international or regionally confined social community. At the domestic level, Telhami and Barnett have found it useful to differentiate between 'state identity' and 'national identity' (Telhami/Barnett 2002: 8-9). Both identity concepts may comprise quite different normative contents within a single state unit. State identity is understood as "the corporate and officially demarcated identity linked to the state apparatus" (Telhami/Barnett 2002: 8). National identity refers to the commonly shared historic culture, homeland, myths or historical memories within a political community. The differentiation between state and national identity leads us to the sources of political identity. Any study of the concept of state identity is related to top-down approaches to identity and requires the analysis of the ruling elite in power. A study of the national identity, by contrast, would primarily rely on bottom-up approaches that focus on societal forces and trends.¹⁵¹ When choosing between the analysis of domestic societal or domestic elite norms, transnational social norms, and international social norms, the selection criteria may be based on precedent research on contextual factors such as domestic state-society relations or specificities of the region and the state's external environment.

¹⁵¹ Telhami and Barnett differentiate between power elite/instrumental forces, societal forces, and international forces as the three primary sources of political identity (Telhami/Barnett 2002: 12).

Figure 2: Identity and Foreign Policy



Source: Author's Compilation

2.2.3.3 *The Interplay, Dynamics, and Inertia of Identities*

Constructivists acknowledge multiple layers of identities that pertain to state agency. The relationship between various categories and layers of identities can be either hierarchically and complementary ordered or conflictive. In case of a hierarchy of identities, the predominant identity constitutes the core whereas the others fit into or supplement with the core and can occasionally be “activated” during certain social situations (Telhami/Barnett 2002: 15). “Divisive debates” over national or state identity can be characterized as moments of “identity conflicts” (Barnett 2002: 62). In case of identity conflicts, the hierarchical order of identities and the question which identity should be most salient are disputed. The various layers of identities may compete for an alteration of the hierarchical normative order. Identity conflicts do not only refer to the hierarchy of competing identities, but also to the contest about the content and meaning of identities (see Saideman 2002: 195). Identity conflicts over the normative content may occur whenever competing definitions and interpretations for one collective identity exist. Another case of identity conflicts occurs when the normative content of collective identity has become obsolete or unacceptable under new historical and social conditions (see Telhami/Barnett 2002: 15; Barnett 2002: 63).

Identity conflicts allow for a high degree of dynamism among collective identities. Dynamic interactions between various layers of identities generate a permanent (re)construction and reinterpretation of identity. National or state identity “is being shaped and reshaped every moment” within discourse and social interaction (Hudson 2007: 105). The dynamisms of identity conflicts have led to shifts in the hierarchy of identities. The Gulf and Middle East

region has witnessed in the last century a rise in the salience of political Islam that was partially to the detriment of other identity conceptions based on ethnic or secular rationales.¹⁵² The process of nation-building in Iran, for example, constitutes a generic case in which the collective identities of Islamism and nationalism have superseded or infiltrated each other.¹⁵³ Other identity dynamics have generated shifts in the meaning and normative contents of particular identity concepts. One of these dynamics has been the shift of the “normative balance” in the Gulf and Middle East towards state sovereignty (Hinnebusch 2003: 66) that has “statized” and to some respect “moderated” supra-state identities.¹⁵⁴ Collective identity conceptions may attain different meanings for different actors at different times.¹⁵⁵ Telhami and Barnett acknowledge the possibility of multiple and fluid identities and their capacity to “morph and interpolate with one another” (Telhami Barnett 2002: 19). However, the dynamics of identity formation and reformation in an ever-evolving normative structure do not imply an “infinite malleability” of identities (see Chafetz et al. 1999: xi). Chafetz, Spirtas and Frankel stress the resistance of identities because “actors tend to change their concepts about their roles only reluctantly and with difficulty” (Chafetz et al. 1999: xii).¹⁵⁶ The state’s recourse to a particular identity conception and the drawing of “ideological red lines” by the political leadership may constrain present and future foreign policy choices (Telhami/Barnett 2002: 24). The invocations to identity create “path dependencies from which future policy makers may find it politically painful to stray” (Maloney 2002: 108). Despite the constructivist principal assumption of the malleability and fluidity of state identities, the normative structure may hence be subject to inertia.

2.2.3.4 Regional Contextualization

2.2.3.4.1 Identity and Foreign Policy in the Gulf Region

Within Middle East regional and area studies it has been discussed whether the Middle East region constitutes a region *sui generis* or a generic region. Arguments of regional uniqueness and exceptionalism come particularly from constructivist studies that assume Middle Eastern politics to be qualitatively different from international politics of “conventional state systems”

¹⁵² The rise of political Islam in the Middle East led to a partial Islamization of the state. However, whether political Islam constitutes a “functional substitute” for Arabism as a supra-state identity in the Arab state system is a matter of debate (Hinnebusch 2003: 67-68). The “Islamic Revolution” of Iran probably constitutes so far the most evident manifestation of the rise and ‘statizing’ of political Islam.

¹⁵³ During the reigns of Reza Shah Pahlevi (1925-41) and Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlevi (1941-79), Persian nationalism and Iran’s pre-Islamic heritage were activated during the process of re-building state identity. In turn, the pre-Islamic heritage was temporarily repressed in the aftermath of the Revolution (see Reissner 2008: 9).

¹⁵⁴ Arab nationalism, for instance, has lost most of its radical zeal. The former ideal of ‘Arab unity’ has been moderated to ‘Arab solidarity’.

¹⁵⁵ Telhami and Barnett point to the case of Arabism (Telhami/Barnett 2002: 18-19) that has vacillated within in the range of radical Arab nationalism and a moderate, more general form of feeling attached to the Arab world.

¹⁵⁶ Chafetz Spirtas and Frankel note that “identities contain non-social, physical and other elements such as size, race, and language, which strongly resist change” (Chafetz et al. 1999: xi).

(see Hinnebusch 2003: 61-63) due to distinct regional culture, identities and historical experience in the Middle East. Neorealists to the contrary tend to advocate a strictly generalist point of view and deny the uniqueness of Middle Eastern politics. In his seminal work *The Origins of Alliances*, Stephen Walt postulates the universality of neorealist rules that are applicable to all regions including the Middle East (Walt 1987). Walt's balance-of-threat theory is based on the assumption that Middle East state actors equally underlie the logic of power politics.

A constructivist analysis of Middle Eastern politics, however does not necessarily have to adhere to the postulate of cultural and political exceptionalism. Telhami and Barnett argue that the relevance and influence of culture and identity in the Middle East and the relationship between identity and regional policies is transferrable to other regions (Telhami/Barnett 2002: 4). Likewise, Halliday acknowledges the explanatory power of IR theories for the Middle East region. Although Halliday conceives of the Middle East as a "relative distinct subsystem", he dislikes any exaggerated and mystified discussion about the peculiarity of the Middle East region (Halliday 2009: 13-15).

Similar to the argumentation of Telhami, Barnett, and Halliday, this study assumes that the Gulf region, despite its regional particularities, does not constitute an exceptional region that would require an analysis through specific regional theories.¹⁵⁷ Conventional IR theory approaches to foreign policy may therefore be equally applicable to the region of the Gulf. Yet, for the operationalization of the explanatory variables and the development of a research design, an analysis of regional policies requires a preceding consideration of regional peculiarities in order to determine the level and focus of analysis.

Scholars of Middle Eastern studies have basically detected three distinctive features of the Middle East region that may as well apply to the Gulf. One of it is the prominence and virtue of identity (Telhami/Barnett 2002: 2) and identity politics (Zweiri/Zahid 2007: 7) in particular. Another one is the prominent role of transnational or "supra-state" (Hinnebusch 2005: 160) identities such as Arabism and Islam and "sub-state" identities based on tribe, kinship or religious sect. The third distinct feature is the enduring incongruity between state, sub-state and (trans)national identity.

The salience of transnational or supra-state identities in the Middle East and Gulf region has been accompanied by tensions between transnational identities and the principle of state sovereignty (Hinnebusch 2003: 58; 64). The awakening of a transnational pan-Arab identity that developed in the 1950s in Egypt and the Levant and spread within the Arab state system as a result of mass education and standardized Arab media, on the one hand, and the

¹⁵⁷ A regional theory of Middle Eastern politics is, inter alia, offered by Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori. In their book *Muslim Politics*, Eickelman and Piscatori elaborate on the notion of "Muslim agency" (Eickelman/Piscatori 1996: 162).

parallel rise of a transnational movement of political Islam, on the other hand, posed a challenge to the logic of *raison d'état*.

In the tribal and conservative societies of the Arab Gulf, both transnational movements and sub-state (e.g. tribal) affinities proved to be more compelling than the identification with the state (see Hinnebusch 2003: 59-60).¹⁵⁸ The Gulf and Middle East state system has witnessed an ongoing contest between *qawmiyya* (nationalism) and *wataniyya* (statism).¹⁵⁹ Despite the enduring appeal of transnational or sub-state identities, the Gulf state system underwent a process of “statizing” (Hinnebusch 2003: 57) supra- and sub-state identities. The ruling elites of the Gulf have on the one hand been able to redefine transnational or sub-state norms as compatible with the principle of state sovereignty and on the other hand incorporated sub-state and transnational norms (most notably Islamic principles) into the official state identity of the individual states. The Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the most evident cases where a transnational Islamic identity has been transformed into a distinct identity of the Iranian state. However, the general rise of statism (Telhami/Barnett 2002: 20) in the Gulf has not removed the vulnerability and sensitivity of the state actors with regard to the lacking overlap of (trans)national, state and sub-state identities.

Because of problematic state-society relations in the Gulf that are rooted in the incongruity of (trans)national, state and sub-state identity, the development of a constructivist research framework will have to take the domestic institutional structure and the underlying state-society relations into consideration. Ibrahim Karawan suggests that future research on the impact of norms and identity on foreign policy should distinguish between the relevant identities in “ruling-elite circles”, among “attentive publics” and in “the wider society at large” (Karawan 2002: 167). In the Arab state system, the domestic political systems are marked by “restricted political pluralism” (Karawan 2002: 168) and “the lack of a public as a political force” (Khuri 1997: 136) that could effectively hold the government accountable for its policies. The Iranian political system allows for a higher degree of political pluralism and participation compared to the Saudi political regime. Yet, its democratic and republican elements are limited and outweighed by the “authoritarian-theocratic” (Gholamasad 1999: 27) component of the *velayet-e-faqih*, the guardianship of the religious jurist.¹⁶⁰ Both the

¹⁵⁸ An early challenge to state sovereignty came from (pan-)Arab nationalism. Former pan-Arab rhetoric downgraded sovereign Arab states by labelling them ‘domestic states’ (*al-dawla al-qitriya*) in contrast to the desired ‘Arab nation-state’ (*al-dawla al-qawmiya*) which was supposed to constitute a visionary pan-Arab state as a product of Arab unity (see Tibi 1999: 93).

¹⁵⁹ The notion of *qawmiya* (from Arabic ‘*qawm*’ meaning ‘people’) indicates the unifying elements of an Arab people. In the concept of *wataniya* (from Arabic ‘*watan*’ meaning ‘fatherland’) the territorial factor becomes essential (Rodinson 1981: 105).

¹⁶⁰ Despite a democratically elected president and parliament, the ultimate state authority resides with the religious leader (Maloney 2002: 98). The Islamic Republic of Iran therefore forms a “hybrid political system” (Reissner 2007a: 38) that fuses republican and theocratic elements.

Saudi and the Iranian state are marked by a weak or virtually absent civil society in their state-society relations.¹⁶¹

The limited political pluralism in the Gulf and the predominant role of the political elites in defining and interpreting state identity suggest a “top-down” approach to foreign policy analysis in the Gulf region.¹⁶² The analysis in this study will therefore focus on state identity conceptions that are constructed in and conveyed through the foreign policy discourses of the ruling elites.

With regard to the Saudi Kingdom and the Iranian Republic, ethnicity and Islam are two fundamental sources of state identity. Saudi Arabia’s and Iran’s political elites have amalgamated both religious and ethnic-nationalist elements of self-conception in quite different ways for the purpose of forging a distinct state identity. Whereas Saudi Arabia’s state identity almost completely subordinates the ethnic category of Arabism to an orthodox notion of Islam, in Iran’s state identity the Islamic state religion is intermingled with strong revolutionary, anti-imperialist and Persian-nationalist ideas.

In the following, the sources and construction of Saudi Arabia’s and Iran’s state identities will be elaborated. Their identity-based foreign-policy norms and role conceptions may give some important indication and information about the possible and legitimate framework of action in Saudi-Arabia’s and Iran’s external relations.

2.2.3.4.2 Saudi Arabia: A ‘Statized’ Arab-Islamic Identity

Despite Saudi Arabia’s remarkable ethnic and religious homogeneity¹⁶³ the Saudi Kingdom is a generic case where the nation in terms of an “imagined political community” (Anderson 1991: 6) at first had to be fostered and defined by the ruling elite and still remains a diffuse and contested notion (see Partrick 2009: 34).

The sources of a possible Saudi national or state identity pertain to both sub-state and supra-state levels. Various layers of identities, such as Arab, Islamic, *Khaleeji* (Gulf) or sub-state

¹⁶¹ Zweiri stresses elementary similarities in Saudi Arabia’s and Iran’s state-society relations but also acknowledges relevant differences with respect to the holding of public elections and the development of civil society institutions. In Iran, civil society has been able to expand its activities with the reform movement by 1997, whereas Saudi Arabia widely lacks civil society institutions (see table in Zweiri 2008: 258).

One rudimentary form of civil society in Saudi Arabia would be the ‘National Society for Human Rights’ (not to be confused with the governmental commission on human rights). The Society founded in 2004 observes among others the issues of political prisoners, domestic violence, and the treatment of expatriates (personal interview with Saleh Al-Khathlan, Riyadh on June 7, 2009).

¹⁶² Since identity is progressively seen as ‘invented’ rather than as innate, as Maloney remarks, scholarly analysis has shifted from ethnic and religious categories to the roles of elites and institutions in the social construction of identity (Maloney 2002: 92).

¹⁶³ Ninety percent of the Saudi nationals are of Arab origin while ten percent are of Afro-Asian origin. Of the around 28 million inhabitants living in the Kingdom are about five million non-national residents (according to CIA World Factbook). All Saudi nationals must be Muslim by law. The large Sunni-Wahhabi majority of the Saudi population account for the high degree of denominational homogeneity. Only about 5 to 12 percent of the Saudis confess the Shiite faith.

(e.g. tribal) feelings of belonging are intertwined with each other. Even though sub-state group solidarities (*'asabiyya*) or a specific "Gulf" identity (*haweeya khaleejeeya*)¹⁶⁴ may be a vital part of a Saudi national identity, they remain secondary in the official state-led narrative about the meaning of "national" (*al-watan*). The most salient points of reference to national and state identity have been Arabism and Islam. In the Middle East region and Gulf Arab state system, the Arab-Islamic identity has proved to be more emotionally compelling and to enjoy greater popular credibility over alternative identity constructs (Hinnebusch 2003: 57). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in today's boundaries has been "the cradle of Islam and the Arabs" (Korany 1991: 318) and hence defines itself as an "Arab Islamic state".¹⁶⁵ As a result, Arabism and Islam in the Saudi Kingdom are "hardly separable or even distinguishable" (Korany 1991: 318). Arabism in terms of a feeling of belonging to a distinct Arab World (*al-'alam al-'arabi*) has been wide-spread within the Arab state system (Hinnebusch 2005: 155). The Saudi state encompasses the homeland of the Arabs and constitutes one of the oldest fully independent Arab states. Its ethnic Arab identity has therefore never been a matter of contest or self-questioning (Humphreys 2000: 79). Yet, the official state identity has always been more religious than national (Humphreys 2000: 79) in a sense that Islam forms the over-arching core collective identity of the Saudi state. Arab identity which is defined by the commonality of language is thereby "intimately linked" to Islam insofar as Islam has "made sacred" the Arabic tongue (Partrick 2009: 6-7).

Saudi state-building and the defining of what is included to and excluded of the official state identity has been a selective top-down process. In the tribal societies of the Arab Peninsula where the concepts of both statehood and nationhood were relatively new ideas, the ruling families of the Gulf have become the central force in constructing a collective national and state identity for the purpose of fostering the people's loyalty to their rule and territorial entity.¹⁶⁶ According to Partrick, the "inventing" of a national community and the telling of a national narrative by the ruling elites have been based on a selective reconstruction, "re-imagining" or "re-inventing" (Hobsbawm 1983)¹⁶⁷ of the past and the exclusion of controversial trans- or sub-national identities that did not fit into the constructed national narrative (see Partrick 2009). For the sake of national and state coherence, the Saudi ruling

¹⁶⁴ Partrick suggests that Gulf identity should be less seen as a "political construct" but rather in a sense of sharing a common Gulf personality (*shakhseeya khaleejeeya*), such as common cultural traits (Partrick 2009: 31).

¹⁶⁵ See King Fahd's speech on the occasion of issuing the Basic Law of Governance (*al-nizam al-asasi li-l-hukm*) on March 1, 1992

¹⁶⁶ Sulaiman Al-Hattlan considers the Saudi unification of different tribes and regions and the keeping of a tribal society under the umbrella of the Saudi Kingdom to be a "unique experience in the Arab world" (personal interview on March 11, 2009).

¹⁶⁷ Hobsbawm considers the "inventing of traditions" - meaning the internalization of certain behavioral norms and values by repetition - as a response to novel situations in the modern world (Hobsbawm 1983: 1-2).

elite has not equally “imagined” sub- and trans-state communities and thereby created a less “inclusive” statehood.¹⁶⁸ Sectarian, tribal, or (Arab) nationalist feelings of belonging are rejected by the Saudi state as sources of religious division within the Muslim *umma* (community) and would lead to social disintegration (see also Al-Rasheed 2002: 191).

Saudi Arabia’s state historiography narrates in its official national founding myth the expansion of the Saudi Kingdom and the expunging of “polytheistic” belief and practices in the Arabian Peninsula as “the growth of Islamic belief” and as “an emancipatory act for Islam” (Partrick 2009: 6). The religious mission to overcome Islamically unacceptable *fitna* (strife, dissent) and tribal division is officially presented by the Saudi state “as something akin to nation-building” (Partrick 2009: 7). Islamic faith and unity thus form the fundamental essence of the Saudi state and national identity.

The predominance of the Islamic identity over other state identities manifests itself in the Islamic constitution of the Saudi Kingdom.¹⁶⁹ The Holy Qur’an forms the Constitution of the Saudi state and the Shari’a (Islamic law) is the source of all laws and regulations¹⁷⁰ (Korany 1991: 316). Saudi rulers consider their role to be the “defender of the true faith” (Steinberg 2005: 12) and hold the title of “custodian of the Two Holy Mosques” (*khadim al-haramain*).¹⁷¹ Since the king is as well subject to the rule of Shari’a, the king may be - in theory - less prone to the charge of monarchical absolutism or theocracy (Nevo 1998: 45).

The Islamic identity of the Saudi state has been decisively shaped by the historical political compact of the ruling family of al-Saud with the *‘ulama* (religious jurists). This political compact gave the *‘ulama* “a de facto partnership role in governance” and in turn religiously legitimized and sanctioned the Saudi leadership (Partrick 2009: 33; 6). On account of this compact, the official state religion has been based on the religious interpretation of the Sunni Hanbali school of *fiqh* (jurisprudence)¹⁷² and on the puritan doctrine of the *Wahhabiyya*¹⁷³ in

¹⁶⁸ Partrick has made out an “inward-facing” nationalism or chauvinism in the Arab Gulf states because “identity is partly measured against internal demographic ‘threats’” (Partrick 2009: 28). In the Saudi Kingdom, the Shia minority would constitute such a domestic potential “threat” from the perspective of the Saudi leadership.

¹⁶⁹ The Saudi state claims as well the responsibility of “policing” the Islamic virtue with the help of the ‘Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice’ (*hay’a al-amr bil-ma’ruf wa al-nahi ‘an al-mankar*) which directs the religious police (*al-mutawa’a*).

¹⁷⁰ In order to avoid any proximity to profane sources of legislation, the terms of *qanun* (law) and *musharri’* (legislator) are replaced by the less meaningful terms of *nizam* (regulation) and *marsum* (decree) (Nevo 1998: 35).

¹⁷¹ The King’s title “custodian of the Two Holy Mosques” is of symbolic importance since it underlines the religious legitimacy and identity of the Saudi state (Steinberg 2004b: 66). In 1986, King Fahd was the first Saudi King to assume this title.

¹⁷² The *Hanbaliyya* is the smallest of the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence (Hanbaliyya, Malikiyya, Shafi’iyya, and Hanafiyya) and predominates in the Nadj, the central part of Saudi Arabia (see Steinberg 2004b: 27). In February 2009, some modest religious reforms were announced that will allow representatives of other Sunni schools of jurisprudence than the Hanbali school into the Council of Senior ‘Ulama for the first time. Representatives of Shia jurisprudence will not be included (see Partrick 2009: 26).

particular. As a result of the “symbiotic relationship” (Steinberg 2005: 12) between the ruling House of Saud and Wahhabi scholars, Wahhabi Islam has become more “statist” whereas the state was able to prevent an autonomous religious domain (Nevo 1998: 41). The institutionalization of Wahhabi Islam as the official state religion has made Wahhabism more conformist and has reduced the role of the official ‘ulama to “agents of state religion” (Nevo 1998: 43; Gause III: 135) and “junior partners” (Steinberg 2005: 13) of the Saudi government. Since the 1930s, Saudi ‘ulama have no longer been able to autonomously implement strict Wahhabi doctrine or to shape important policy decisions, but have instead interpreted Islamic traditions in the interest of the rulers (see Steinberg 2005: 24). Whereas the political role of the ‘ulama has become increasingly limited in domestic politics, their influence has been even almost completely excluded within the realm of foreign policy. At the same time, the institutionalization of Wahhabi ideology has enforced the dual and ambivalent character of Wahhabism in terms of being both a fundamental, radical reform movement and a conformist state religion. This inherent ambivalence has hence led to tensions between “official” ‘ulama endorsed by the Saudi state and “unconventional”, critical Wahhabi scholars (see Nevo 1998: 40).

The Saudi state identity generates foreign policy roles and norms that give an idea about what is considered “appropriate” in foreign policy and that may impact the content or way of conduct of Saudi foreign policy. The main sources of Saudi Arabia’s foreign-policy role-conceptions are the Saudi state’s (Wahhabi)-Islamic identity and a ‘statized’ form of Arab identity attached and subordinated to Islam. The Arab-Islamic self-conception of the Saudi state may for one thing, in the form (positive) policy suggestions, give an idea about what is considered ‘possible’ or ‘desirable’ within the realm of foreign policy. For another thing, it may determine in terms of (negative) policy rejections what is regarded to be ‘un-imaginable’.

The Saudi state has shown specific commitment to the role of being the defender of “all-Muslim” and “all-Arab” interests and has in addition sought to assume the role of being an advocator of “Gulf” interests (see Al-Rasheed 2002: 194).

Arabism and Islam have endorsed political role-conceptions based on what is called here an “inclusion-exclusion formula”. The Arab-Islamic inclusion-exclusion scheme basically refers to an inward-facing commitment to Arab-Islamic solidarity (inclusion), on the one hand, and the repelling (exclusion) of foreign influence, on the other hand.

¹⁷³ The term *Wahhabiyya* refers to the doctrine of the puristic reformer Muhammad bin Abdelwahhab with whom Mohammed bin Saud, ruler over the city-state of Dir’iya, forged an alliance in the 18th century. The adherents to the Wahhabiyya however refer to themselves as *muwahhidun* in accentuation of their maxim of absolute monotheism (*tawhid*) (see Steinberg 2004b: 36). According to Khalid Al-Dakhil (2009: 24), the Wahhabiyya was not simply a religious reform movement, but a “powerful, political urban movement in the state formation process” that launched the notion of the central state.

Both Arabism and Islamic thought patterns share similar foreign policy norms and preferences (see Hinnebusch 2005: 166) and therefore recommend similar foreign policy choices. For one thing, Arabism and Islam positively prioritize the idea of an Arab or Islamic *umma*¹⁷⁴ (community) - either in terms of Arab/Islamic unity or Arab/Islamic solidarity - over the individual reason of state (Hinnebusch 2003: 69).¹⁷⁵ For another thing, Arabism and Islam negatively reject on a general basis the foreign and particularly Western penetration of the Arab-Muslim region. The areas of rejection of Western presence and influence in the wider region mainly refer to the Western military presence in the Gulf, the “victimization of Iraq” since 1991 and Western support of Israel to the detriment of the Palestinian people (Hinnebusch 2003: 69). The Palestinian cause and the rejection of Israel’s political legitimacy have thereby constituted Muslim-Arab core concerns.¹⁷⁶ The invocation to an Arab-Islamic inclusion-exclusion formula hence advocates political, cultural and economic autonomy from Western influence or domination by means of Arab-Muslim solidarity and the enhancement of intra-regional cooperation.

The Islamic roots of this inclusion-exclusion scheme become visualized in the classical Islamic images of *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb*. In the classical Islamic theory of international relations, the realization of a *Pax Islamica* within an Islamic *umma* has been based on the notional dichotomy between *dar al-islam* and *dar al-harb* (lit. ‘house of Islam’ and ‘house of war’) that separates the Muslim community of believers from that of non-believers outside the realm of *Pax Islamica*¹⁷⁷ (see Sabet 2008: 126; Korany 1991: 317). According to the tenets of a Wahhabi-Islamic worldview, the mere presence of non-Muslim foreigners on the Muslim soil of the Arabian Peninsula has hence been convicted by Saudi scholars as a violation of Islamic norms and a threat to the Muslim community (*jama’*) (see Steinberg 2005: 24-25). The ‘statized’ version of Saudi Wahhabi Islam, however, has sanctioned and restricted foreign military and civilian presence to certain domains.¹⁷⁸ These protected non-Muslim

¹⁷⁴ While the nation-state (*watan*) is limited to the territory of separate states, the term of an Arab or Islamic *umma* (community) is not limited by state boundaries (Partrick 2009: 29). The term *umma* originally referred to the Islamic community, but is now also used to refer to the Arab “nation” (Khouri 1997: 136).

¹⁷⁵ Arab nationalism and political Islam have suffered from a sense of Arab or Muslim “weakness” which is seen as a cause of Western “divide and rule” strategy in the Middle East. Historical memories of “greatness under unity” such as the 1973 war and the use of the oil weapon in the 1970s reaffirm the need of joint Muslim-Arab action (see Hinnebusch 2003: 59).

¹⁷⁶ Suliman Toufik, for example, views the Arab-Israeli conflict and the U.S. position on it as the most delicate foreign policy issue for the Saudi people (personal interview with Toufik on May 29, 2009 in Jeddah).

¹⁷⁷ The *dar al-Islam* includes as well protected non-Muslim communities residing under the *Pax Islamica* (Sabet 2008: 126).

¹⁷⁸ Saudi ‘ulama have for instance sanctioned foreign military presence for the protection of the state and allowed residence permits for foreign workers and the erection of residence compounds for foreigners. In very rare cases, work permits have also been stretched to the Holy Sites of Mecca and Medina for the purpose of urgent and temporary work tasks.

communities hence reside under the umbrella and rules of *Pax Islamica*. Their existence, however, remains a sensitive issue in Saudi Arabia's state-society relations.

Saudi Arabia along with the Gulf Arab monarchies has cherished a "Gulf-specific" understanding and practice of the Islamic inclusion-exclusion formula. The Arab-Islamic identity of the Arab monarchies in the Gulf has turned out to be rather flexible and moderate with regard to the countries' external relations. This "Gulf-specific" state identity of the Gulf monarchies demands a traditional conservatism on domestic Islamic values and a strict abidance by the Islamic code of behavior *within* their societies. On the other hand, it allows for a flexible foreign-policy practice in external relations, well *outside* their indigenous societies. In a consequent but pragmatist way, the Saudi state complies with this "Gulf-specific" inclusion-exclusion formula by separating between a domestic and external realm of affairs and by shunning its Muslim society from external influence.

As concerns Saudi Arabia's alliances and cooperation with extra-regional and non-Muslim countries, the 'statized' Arab-Islamic norms of the Saudi regime have proved to be quite elastic. Even though the issue of Western and non-Muslim presence in the Kingdom has caused the most critical objections among the Saudi religious establishment, the Saudi state has adhered to a flexible practice of dealing with foreign, non-Muslim alliance partners.¹⁷⁹

Saudi Arabia's state identity has legitimized a limited engagement with foreign powers that is reserved to certain domains of the state. Rather than requiring full autonomy from and non-cooperation with Western powers, the Saudi Kingdom's foreign-policy role conception merely demands the maintenance of informality¹⁸⁰ of and discretion¹⁸¹ about alliances with non-Muslim partners.

2.2.3.4.3 Iran: Ethno-Islamic Identity with Revolutionary Role Conception

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, a strong sense of national and cultural identity rooted in the consciousness of common origin, shared religion and language and collective memory of the survival of various foreign invasions since ancient history (Ramazani 2008: 3) suggests the availability of various strong ideational sources to draw on in the definition of Iran's state identity.

¹⁷⁹ Partrick (2009: 33) remarks that resistance to foreign power is not part of Saudi Arabia's national identity due to the fact that Saudi Arabia as well as the Arab Gulf monarchies lacks the experience of colonialization comparable to that of other states in the Middle East region.

Similarly, Falah Al-Faleh deduces from the lack of colonialization that the Saudi and Gulf Arab people nurture less conspiracy theories and suspicion towards the West compared to other Arab countries in the Middle East (personal interview with Al-Faleh on May 31, 2009 in Riyadh).

¹⁸⁰ So far, Saudi Arabia has denied a formal security agreement with the United States despite its de facto close security alliance with the USA.

¹⁸¹ The Saudi state has been endeavored to keep external military (but also civilian) presence "out of sight".

Persian nationalism and Islam constitute the two major components of Iran's state identity (Maloney 2002). The integration of the notion of ancient Persian civilization with Shiite Islam in the formation of Iranian identity make Iran's state identity both historical and religious (Dehshiri/Majidi 2008/2009: 102-103). The Islamic Republic has thereby accomplished the balancing act of fusing two contradictory elements of identity within the rationale of the state. As Maloney remarks, the various layers of identity in Iran such as the idea of Islamic universalism and divine sovereignty on the one hand and Persian nationalism based on the logic of state sovereignty on the other hand are "intensely contradictory" (Maloney 2002: 102). Since the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the Iranian state has added a prominent religious dimension of identity to the "territorial nationalism" of the state (Ehteshami 2002: 287). Yet, an analysis of Iran's identity conception should not be prone to overstating the role of Islam,¹⁸² since the religious rationale in Iran's foreign policy "has always been mitigated and exacerbated by a strong sense of nationalism and revolutionary antipathies" (Maloney 2002: 115). The elements of Persian nationalism and Islamism are complemented and intermingled by the element of revolutionary anti-imperialism as the third major component of Iran's state identity (Maloney 2002: 94). Another interesting perspective offers the argumentation of Ali Ansari who depicts Iran's contemporary state identity as a combination of national, Islamic and Western culture.¹⁸³ The concepts of 'republic' and 'revolution' are, according to Ansari, actually conceptions forged in and borrowed from the West (Ansari 2006: 30-31).

The existence and interplay of various layers of identity in the Islamic Republic of Iran lead us to the question about the meanings and the role- or self-conceptions attached to Iran's "multi-dimensional" (Maloney 2002: 93) state identity.

In the realm of Persian nationalism, Iran's self-conception is that of a cradle of ancient great civilizations and cultures (Dehshiri/Majidi 2008/09: 102) and that of being one among the few "natural states" (Ehteshami 2002: 286) in the Middle East enjoying a remarkable legacy of territorial integrity. Iran's memorization of a glorious past when it used to be a leading civilization and power for several millennia since pre-Islamic times (Moshirzadeh 2007: 529), its geographical centrality and its endowment with natural resources underpin Iran's self-conception of being a "natural" leader in the region (Reissner 2008: 5; 7-9). Iran's foreign policy role-conception as a leading civilization and power has been formulated more assertively and chauvinistically under Mohammad Reza Shah in terms of defining Iran as a "Great Civilization" with a hegemonic mission (Maloney 2002: 96) and at times more

¹⁸² In the Islamic Republic, the political leaderships in particular under Rafsanjani and Khatami, have repeatedly stressed the importance of Iran's both Islamic and pre-Islamic heritage (see Reissner 2008: 10).

¹⁸³ Ansari bases his argumentation of a "triple cultural heritage" on Abdolkarim Soroush's notion of Iranian culture that derives from national, religious, and Western origins (see Soroush 2000: 156-170).

defensively in terms of being a “stronghold of stability” and a “key to regional peace and stability” (see Reissner 2008: 9).

Iran’s Islamic self-conception of being the pioneer for and “role model” of Islamic democracy is a relevant part of its foreign policy role conception. This religious dimension of identity implicates at the same time the conception of leadership in a spiritual way. The Islamic Republic cherishes the aspiration of being an ideological and inspiring leader not only for a limited national or sectarian community, but for a universal cause.¹⁸⁴ In Iran’s “Strategic 20-Years vision” that became formally binding in 2005, Iran formulates the aim to become an “inspiring” and “influential” or “effective” cooperation partner in the Islamic world (see Reissner 2008: 15).

Iran’s feeling of importance due to its geographic and cultural centrality and its strategic endowment with natural resources is intimately linked with a sense of vulnerability and victimization (Moshirzadeh 2007: 529) and the fear of falling prey to foreign invasions and interventionism. Likewise, Iran’s sense of uniqueness and superiority with regard to its self-conception of being an unprecedented model of an Islamic state is combined with a sense of isolation and exclusion (Rezaei 2008: 26). Within the Arab and Sunni-dominated region of the Middle East, the Islamic Republic as a non-Arab and Shia Muslim state perceives itself as a rare and special case and has had a long-time feeling of regional exclusion (Maloney 2002: 93).

The third element of Iran’s state identity, revolutionary anti-imperialism, is rooted in the Iranian sense of vulnerability, victimization and exclusion. A long history of memorized historical injustices and traumatic events (Reissner 2008: 10-11) caused by external interference, imperialist encounters and Iran’s semi-colonialization¹⁸⁵ in the modern era has forged a “foreign-suspicious collective memory” (Moshirzadeh 2007: 529). Revolutionary anti-imperialism hence addresses past and present injustices of the international system. Since revolutionary anti-imperialism expresses its dissatisfaction with the existing conditions of the international order and ultimately aims to overcome current injustices, it is in its essence based on an anti-status quo morale. In a negative sense, this conception derives from an “enduring sense of rejection of the other” rather than from Iranian culture and the reflection of self (Maloney 2002: 100). The collective self is thus understood as “non-submissive” and “resistant” (Moshirzadeh 2007: 536-537). In a positive sense, revolutionary anti-imperialism not merely negates the contemporary order. It also strives for actively

¹⁸⁴ In Khomeini’s worldview, Islam’s ultimate goal is to bring humanity “under the umbrella of its justice” (Ramazani 2008: 8). The Islamic Republic hence claims for itself to pursue a global and also supra-Islamic mission (see Reissner 2008: 17).

¹⁸⁵ Although Iran has never been fully colonized, it has had in the modern era a long experience of foreign penetration. Iran was subject to foreign imposed treaties and concessions such as the tobacco concession of 1890 or the oil concession of 1901 with Great Britain, foreign occupation by the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union in the 1940s, and foreign interventions such as the U.S.-British-led coup of 1953 against the government of Mossadeq.

shaping and co-designing an alternative, “anti-colonial” modernity (see Reissner 2008: 29-30) and thus aims to redefine the political status quo.

From the interplay between various layers of Iranian identity follows the question of the guiding principles of action in Iran’s foreign policy. Dehshiri and Majidi have made out six ‘fixed principles’ of Iran’s foreign policy (Dehshiri/Majidi 2008/09: 109). These are (1) the principle of invitation¹⁸⁶ which means that the Islamic Republic should be an attractive model rather than a coercive force in its goal to create an Islamic world order, (2) the principle of opposing tyranny, (3) the principle of pacifism derived from Islam, (4) guarding autonomy in order to secure or enhance independence (5) achieving supremacy based on the Islamic principle of justice and human dignity and (6) Islamic unity. Dehshiri and Majidi remain rather vague concerning the formulation and inter-relation of these principles.

Other scholars have identified more general foreign-policy principles of the Iranian Republic. Moshirzadeh (2007) has made out (1) independence, (2) justice, and (3) resistance as three recurrent narratives in Iran’s foreign policy discourse.¹⁸⁷ The guiding principles of independence, justice, and resistance constitute three fundamental principles of Iran’s foreign policy and are derived from Iran’s multi-layered identity. Independence is the guiding principle of Iranian nationalism, justice constitutes a genuine Islamic principle, and resistance serves as the underlying principle of Iran’s revolutionary anti-imperialism. In Iran’s role- and self-conception, these fundamental principles do not rest separate categories, but may fuse, interpolate and be interpreted in various ways.

As Moshirzadeh’s study reveals, the discourses of independence and justice have proved to be persistent hegemonic discourses that may account for the continuity in Iran’s policies. The discourse of resistance, by contrast, becomes at times more dominant and remains less salient at other times and is hence associated with change in Iran’s foreign policy (Moshirzadeh 2007: 538-539). In Moshirzadeh’s conception, the principle of resistance can be therefore rather understood as a variable that explains for change in Iran’s foreign policy. According to Maloney, the principle of revolutionary anti-imperialism has infiltrated the traditional conceptions of Persian nationalism and Shia Islam and upset “the historic balance between them” (Maloney 2002: 96). The revolutionary principle of resistance hence combines with and modifies the principles of both independence and justice. Although the idea of resistance in Iranian anti-imperialism became, according to Maloney, the third element of Iran’s identity, it has remained more volatile and can be activated during certain times and for particular issues.

¹⁸⁶ The principle of “invitation” refers to the Islamic principle of *da’wa*, meaning the missionary call or invitation of non-Muslims to follow Islam.

¹⁸⁷ Moshirzadeh (2007) identifies three meta-discourses in Iran’s foreign policy and its nuclear policy in particular. These meta-discourses are the discourses of independence, justice, and resistance.

Moshirzadeh (2007: 528) considers independence and justice to be the “constitutive elements” of Iran’s identity. They give meaning and guidelines to Iran’s foreign policy. Independence as a foreign policy principle of the Iranian state is defined as true sovereignty and autonomy from foreign influence and control. Economic and political independence (*esteqlal*)¹⁸⁸ from foreign powers is thought to be the precondition of freedom (*azadi*) in terms of self-determination of one’s own destiny (Ehteshami 2002: 285). Only independence and self-sufficiency (*khod kafaye*)¹⁸⁹ guarantee freedom from foreign dominance and oppression. The pursuit of independence and self-sufficiency has several implications for foreign policy. Independence requires power (*ghodrat*) and to some extent supremacy in order to counter the oppressive power (*solteh*) of subduers and imperialists. The Iranian Republic has therefore always revealed to varying degrees the foreign policy goal of becoming the first leader in the region, be it in the economic, political, technological or cultural sphere. Iran’s ‘Strategic 20-Years vision’ that was elaborated during the Khatami government, formulates the goal to take the political, economic and technological first place in the region until 2025 while simultaneously preserving Iran’s Islamic and revolutionary identity and cultural authenticity.¹⁹⁰ The principle of independence when combined with the element of resistance gives as well the foreign policy directive of staying neutral and keeping a non-aligned and defiant stance in its external relations.¹⁹¹

The goal of independence has been subject to different interpretations which range from the acknowledgement of ‘bounded independence’ to the notion of what Moshirzadeh calls “hyper-independence”. Under the presidency of Rafsanjani, Iran appreciably abandoned the ideal of becoming a self-sufficient island and acknowledged that independence is bounded and limited to some extent by global *interdependence*. From this more pragmatic point of view, independence and sovereignty require to some extent the integration into the world community and economy (see Ramazani 2008: 9). Even Ayatollah Khomeini already distinguished independence from isolation by emphasizing that isolation would mean ‘defeat’ and ‘annihilation’ (see Ramazani 2008: 9).

A maximalist understanding of independence, termed “hyper-independence”, outweighs more pragmatic notions of bounded independence in times when the Iranian discourse of resistance becomes predominant. The idea of “hyper-independence” is rooted in a deep suspicion of foreign influence. It over-emphasizes national self-reliance and advocates the

¹⁸⁸ The Iranian constitution of 1979 also names cultural, social and military independence as foundational principles (Articles 2 and 9).

¹⁸⁹ The Iranian constitution lists the goal of attaining scientific, technological, industrial, agricultural, and military self-sufficiency (Article 3).

¹⁹⁰ Reissner considers this strategic document as an “elite consensus” on Iran’s strategic orientation in foreign and domestic policy (Reissner 2008: 14).

¹⁹¹ The revolutionary slogan “neither East nor West” expresses the call for non-alignment. In reality, however, this formula often had the appearance of antagonism rather than neutrality (see Maloney 2002: 104).

emancipation from all forms of international hegemony.¹⁹² Hyper-Independence requires active counter-hegemonic measures (Dehshiri/Majidi 2008/09: 110) and a non-compromising stance (see Moshirzadeh 2008: 536) in foreign policy.

The principle of justice has been a prominent narrative in Zoroastrian and Islamic belief systems (Moshirzadeh 2007: 533). The avowed goal of establishing a just Islamic society at the domestic level is transferred to the international level and serves as a template for a just Islamic world order and a global Islamic community (*umma*). The Iranian constitution mentions “Islamic brotherhood”, “fraternal commitment to all Muslims” (article 3) and the cultivation of “friendship and unity of all Muslim peoples” (article 11) as foreign policy maxims. In the Iranian discourse of justice, the notion of resistance becomes a prominent feature when “double standards” and “oppression” in the existing international system are denounced as “unjust”. According to the Manichean dualism between good and evil postulated in Zoroastrian and Islamic faith, the victory of the good would mean the triumph of justice over oppression and injustice (Moshirzadeh 2007: 533). The assumption of “justice-seeking” as opposed to power- or interest-seeking in Iran’s logic of action (see Moshirzadeh 2007: 533, 538) would presume the concept of “mission-oriented” rather than “interest-oriented” agency. Yet, Iran’s “mission” and the principle of justice have not solely been defined in religious terms. In the Iranian constitution, Iran’s foreign policy role is defined not only as the defender of the Muslim cause, but also as the supporter of “just struggles of freedom fighters against the oppressors in every corner of the globe” (article 152). Iran’s logic of “justice-seeking” thereby combines the idea of resistance with religious sacrifice at a both global and universal reach.

2.2.3.5 Framework of Analysis: Tracing State Identities and Role Conceptions

This study will look for state identities and role conceptions that are constructed in and conveyed through the foreign policy discourses of the ruling elites. By examining statements, references to identity, and foreign-policy debates of the state elites, the study will make out normative instructions to foreign policy behavior. The focus of analysis will rest upon “statized” identities and role conceptions at the domestic level. The analysis is confined to state-centered role and identity constructs of the state regimes. State and national identities may notably differ, and the official foreign-policy debate of the state regimes may enormously deviate from the broader societal discourse. Since this study is interested in the foreign-policy culture and the self- and role-conceptions of the state regimes, this study will only take note of those popular societal trends and debates that are incorporated in the official discourse of the state.

¹⁹² Dehshiri and Majidi define emancipation from hegemony in the sense of “having autonomy, freedom of action and security, as well as freedom from domination and repression” (Dehshiri/Majidi 2008/09: 106).

The study will make out the normative content of state identities and roles and the range of “possible” and “legitimate” policy options. While certain fundamental foreign-policy principles and parameters may enjoy a continuous common consent across changing state leaderships, other principles, roles, and norms may change over time. At certain historical junctures, the study will look at whether the prior hierarchy of state identities and roles has altered and in what way the normative content of state identities and role-conceptions has changed or been “re-interpreted”. The study will also consider possible tensions and antagonisms between contradicting norms and roles, or “discursive antagonisms” (Larsen 1997: 20) between two or more state discourses.

2.3 Methodology

The key question of methodology is “how best to draw causal inferences” (Bennett/Elman 2006: 457) - whether of theoretical or empirical nature - from the studied phenomena. The aim of this study is not only to search for causalities of Saudi and Iranian foreign policies in the Gulf but also to review and refine the explanatory value of foreign policy theories for the Gulf region.

The study adheres to a qualitative research design. Qualitative methodology, as opposed to quantitative research designs, assumes a complex social world featured by interaction effects, path dependence, or complex and two-directional forms of causality (Bennett/Elman 2006: 457). The complexity of the social world necessitates a theory-open, interpretative approach to causality and an “iterative” procedure in terms of a constant review and specification of the involved hypotheses during the research process in accordance with the qualitatively selected data (see Blatter et al. 2007: 29, 138). Qualitative research designs frequently make use of the case study method. A case study is an in-depth analysis of one or few cases. The case study method does not only gather detailed knowledge about an observed case, but may contribute as well to both theory testing and theory development in terms of generating new theoretical hypotheses (George/Bennett 2005: 19).

This study will resort to the case study method as means to test neorealist, interdependence-theoretical and constructivist hypotheses on foreign policy behavior and to offer theory-guided explanations of Saudi Arabia’s and Iran’s Iraq policies. In a second step, the study will search for refinements and qualifications of the tested hypotheses on foreign policy behavior in order to offer new perspectives for a region-specific FPA in the Gulf.

2.3.1 Overview of the Methodology and Major Research Purposes

In the first part, the study tests in a deductive way neorealist, rational institutionalist and constructivists hypotheses on foreign policy behavior with regard to Saudi Arabia’s and Iran’s

Iraq policies. For the testing of the explanatory power of foreign policy theories, the study resorts to the method of a comparative “cross-country time-series” case study. It has selected Saudi Arabia and Iran as units for a synchronic cross-country comparison. Three different time periods (the 1990s, 2001-2005, and 2005-2010) constitute the cases of the diachronic comparison.

In the second part, the study discusses the explanatory value of each theoretical approach and the possibility of syntheses of the different theoretical ontologies and epistemological approaches. The study expects potential for refinement and progression of foreign policy theories particularly along the fault-lines of IR theories. In an inductive way, the study refines and qualifies the tested hypotheses on foreign policy behavior. Its purpose is thereby to offer new theoretical hypotheses of middle-range scope that may give region-specific explanations to the foreign policies of the regional states in the Gulf.

The major research purpose and motivation of this study lies in providing new and significant theoretical and empirical insights into the regional foreign policies of Saudi Arabia and Iran as two leading players in the Gulf region. A second and following major purpose of this study lies in drawing region-specific theoretical inferences from IR theory which would be useful and beneficial for a Gulf-specific research on foreign policy. For future research, this study sees greater value in contributing further to the making of IR theories more “applicable” to the specificities of the Gulf region, rather than in using or testing mid-range foreign-policy theories of a limited theoretical scope. One of the aims of this study is therefore the effort to make a further and more nuanced contribution to such a “regional contextualization” of IR theories.

2.3.2 Case Study Method

Although case study methods are widely used in social sciences there is no standard definition what exactly a case study is (or is *not*) composed of. John Gerring (2004: 342) defines a case study as an “intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units”.

In general, the notion of case study is linked to the number of cases (N) investigated and the amount of detailed information collected about each case (Hammersley/Gomm 2002: 2). The case study method refers to the investigation of a few cases (or just one) in considerable depth and detail.¹⁹³ Some methodologists have argued that a case study as a small-N study is confined to the examination of a single case as opposed to large-N statistical or comparative studies. However, many researchers allow for the comparison among a small number of cases in their case study work. It is in particular the combination of within-case

¹⁹³ The “sample” of studied cases is comprised of several “units”. Each unit is observed at discrete points in time (Gerring 2004: 342).

analysis and cross-case comparison that enables the case study method to draw theoretical conclusions and make out causal relationships from the case study (see George/Bennett 2005: 18). Gerring (2004: 343) acknowledges that a case study may employ cross-sectional (cross-unit), time-series, or comparative-historical methods depending on the purpose of analysis. The research design of this study will resort to a typical “cross-country time-series” analysis in which ‘units’ are countries and ‘cases’ are country-years (see Gerring 2004: 342-43). The observed units of this study are thus the countries of Saudi Arabia and Iran and the cases are time periods selected from the timeframe between the Gulf War of 1990/91 and 2010. In the following, the criteria of case selection of this study will be revealed.

2.3.2.1 Criteria of Case Selection

The problem of case selection is most challenging in case study research. The revelation of the chosen criteria of case selection in a research design is crucial in order to avoid the accusation of selection bias. Selection bias may possibly occur when cases are selected according to their historical importance, when cases of a particular outcome are deliberately chosen to confirm a certain hypothesis while ignoring contradicting cases, or when the sample cases are over-limited (Bennett/Elman 2006: 460-63). Selection bias may result in an overstatement or understatement of a causal relationship, or in an over-generalization of features of a single unit to a larger population of units (George/Bennett 2005: 22-24). A “controlled” case selection is especially important when theory testing is one of the main purposes of the case study (Blatter et al. 2007: 129).

This study bases its criteria of case selection on the method of a ‘*most similar cases design*’ in combination with a theory-oriented case selection. In the *most similar cases design*, the selected units show different outcomes on the dependent variable but are most similar in other aspects (Barrios 2006: 40). In a counterfactual approach, these similar worlds (systems or units) are compared in order to find out whether their differences in the outcome which rest to be explained, can be attributed to a change in a particular cause (Bennett/Elman 2006: 457).

The countries of Saudi Arabia and Iran have been selected in this study as similar units in order to isolate the determinants that explain variations in the countries’ foreign policy behavior towards Iraq. In the last two decades, Saudi Arabia’s and Iran’s foreign policies in the Gulf have been antipode in many respects. Saudi Arabia is one of the most important allies of the United States in the region and pursues a conservative, stabilizing and status-quo oriented regional policy. Iran, to the contrary, has become the most salient state antagonist of the U.S. regional order and pursues a defiant foreign policy aiming to change the regional status quo. However, when it comes to the material and ideational structures and conditions that the two countries underlie, Saudi Arabia and Iran have shown remarkable similarities.

The criterion of similarity is based on a theory-oriented understanding of similarity. Although it is difficult and in many points questionable to attest similarity¹⁹⁴ between the countries of Saudi Arabia and Iran, the selected units will suffice the criterion of similarity if they prove to be similar in those conditions and factors that are relevant to the theoretical hypotheses reviewed in this study. This means that similarity is problem-centered and only refers to the theory-based aspects which are to be reviewed. The observed units hence must not be biased toward a particular theoretical hypothesis. Since this study reviews neorealist, interdependence-theoretical, and constructivist explanations of Saudi and Iranian foreign policy, Saudi Arabia and Iran should show sufficient similarity with regard to (1) their systemic power position and constellation of state-actor threats, (2) their patterns of interdependence at the regional, global, and domestic level, and (3) their invocation to identity and social norms in their actions. When a similarity in Saudi Arabia's and Iran's material and ideational conditions and structures can be attested, those factors that remain most salient in explaining the difference in the countries' behaviors may be filtered out. By means of a synchronic (cross-country) and diachronic (temporal) comparison, the study will look out for crucial co-variations between the theory-based explanatory variables and foreign policy behavior as the dependent variable. The following two chapters will give a short overview of the units and cases that are compared in this study.

2.3.2.2 The Synchronic (Cross-Country) Comparison

Saudi Arabia and Iran constitute the units of the synchronic, cross-country comparison. According to the *most similar cases design*, Saudi Arabia and Iran should show maximal, theory-guided similarities in their external and domestic conditions and structures while pursuing different foreign policy strategies.

As concerns the neorealist focus on the systemic constellations of power and threats, Saudi Arabia and Iran must underlie similar systemic conditions. Saudi Arabia and Iran share a similar geostrategic and geo-economic power position in the Gulf region. Saudi Arabia and Iran are the two major players within the Gulf power triangle shaped by Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Iraq. Both Saudi Arabia and Iran are potential regional powers that have longly been competing for regional leadership in the Gulf. As the two leading oil-producers within OPEC and the owners of the world's largest oil reserves, they enjoy political and economic leverage at the regional and global level. In the past, both countries have been endowed with geo-political power when they used to form the "twin pillars" of the U.S. regional policy during the 1970s.

¹⁹⁴ Similarity can only be understood as approximate similarity. For the determination of similarity, the whole context of the similar units must be considered (Barrios 2006: 41-42).

As well, Saudi Arabia and Iran are challenged by a similar constellation of threats. For both countries, Iraq has been a major security concern in various respects. Saudi Arabia and Iran, that both share their longest international borders with Iraq, have been threatened by Iraq's military and ideological posture. In a conventional military sense, the former Iraqi Baathist regime posed a serious security threat on account of its strongly revisionist and expansionist ambitions, its possession of biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction and its readiness to use these weapons against its neighbors. In an ideological sense, Iraq posed a major ideological threat on account of its transnational ideological appeal to regional societal groups in the Gulf countries, and its attempts to undermine the domestic legitimacy of the Saudi and Iranian regimes. Even after the fall of the Baathist regime in 2003, both Saudi Arabia's and Iran's national security is still heavily affected by the socio-political developments in post-Saddam Iraq.

In the review of interdependence-theoretical approaches to foreign policy, this study focuses on multi-level patterns of interdependence. Saudi Arabia and Iran should thus underlie similar patterns of (socio-economic or security) interdependence that generate sensitivities and vulnerabilities as well as incentives to cooperate.

Saudi Arabia and Iran are faced with patterns of interdependence in economic and security realms that expose the states to similar vulnerabilities at the domestic, regional and global level. At the regional level, Saudi Arabia and Iran share a high level of security interdependence on account of an inextricably interconnection of multiple security threats and interests. The Saudi and Iranian states are highly vulnerable to transnational security risks, most prominently to the mobilization of subversive trans-societal groups and ideas. The states are thus similarly vulnerable to the socio-political and economic developments in Iraq and the Gulf region. Both Saudi Arabia and Iran have a hypothetical incentive to coordinate and institutionalize their regional security policies in order to avoid the risks and costs of unilateral security provision and self-defense.

At the domestic level, the Saudi and Iranian states are exposed to delicate state-society relations and are particularly vulnerable to societal threats to their regime stability. Both countries are classical "rentier states" governed by authoritarian regimes that heavily rely on oil (and gas) revenues for their domestic survival. In order to secure a constantly high income through oil rents, Saudi Arabia and Iran have a vital interest in recruiting global trading and security partners.

At the global level, Saudi Arabia and Iran are highly vulnerable to oil prices, access to energy transport routes, and the developments on the international energy markets. In addition, Saudi Arabia and Iran are equally exposed to external penetration in their regional spheres of influence. Both countries are highly sensitive and vulnerable to the extra-regional influence

and policies of the USA in the Gulf region, be it in the socio-political, military, or economic realm.

As concerns the constructivist accentuation on identity, culture and inter-subjective factors that pre-condition foreign policy behavior, Saudi Arabia and Iran must show an equally strong invocation to identity and social norms as the basis of their foreign policy decisions. Both countries make strong references to identity, values and social norms in their policy decisions.

Saudi Arabia and Iran claim to be Islamic states and to some extent theocracies.¹⁹⁵ While Saudi Arabia can be considered to be the most theocratic state in the contemporary Sunni Muslim world (Nevo 1998: 35), Iran has developed a semi-theocratic state model based on Shiite Islam as the state religion. The Saudi and Iranian regimes are both representatives of a reformist, political Islam. Their state religions are based on reformed versions of traditional Islam that prescribe religious norms for political and public behavior.¹⁹⁶

The Saudi and Iranian states strongly seek a religiously and culturally grounded legitimization of their foreign policies and allow religion to define “appropriate” foreign policy behavior. As Muslim countries, they basically refer to similar foreign policy norms which are (1) Muslim solidarity and support of the *umma* concept, (2) political, economic and cultural independence from non-Muslim, Western influence, and (3) support of the Palestinian cause and confirmation of the illegitimacy of the Israeli state.

Within the Gulf and wider Muslim region, both countries view themselves as legitimate leaders and role models for the Muslim community.

In summary, Saudi Arabia and Iran share general similar features in their systemic position, underlie similar patterns of interdependence and exhibit a similar commitment to religious and social norms and roles. In the cross-country comparison, this study analyzes why a similar systemic position, similar patterns of interdependence and equally strong invocations to identity and social norms have not formed similar foreign policy preferences and strategies. The synchronic comparison may help to isolate those factors that best explain the differences in the states’ behavior.

2.3.2.3 *The Diachronic (Temporal) Comparison*

The diachronic comparison is a temporal pre-post comparison (Blatter et al. 2007: 144) that is used in this study to make out policy variations over time. Through a longitudinal analysis

¹⁹⁵ Zweiri (2008: 247) makes out fundamental similarities between Saudi Arabia and Iran due to the fact that “in both countries the *‘ulama* (religious scholars) have an unchallenged influence in the political life of the state”.

¹⁹⁶ As such, Saudi Arabia’s and Iran’s ideological and religious conception of the state contrasted with that of the former nationalist-secular Baathist Iraq.

of Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Iraq policies, the study will look out for co-variations between potential explanatory factors and the countries' foreign policies over time. The diachronic comparison may help to identify causal factors or mechanisms that explain for the policy changes.

As cases of the diachronic comparison, the study has selected three time periods whose beginnings mark critical junctures for the developments in the Gulf region:

- (1) The 1990s: The first observed case is the time period from the Gulf War of 1990/91 until the end of the 1990s marked by international, multilateral containment of Iraq and a U.S.-guaranteed military and political status quo of the Gulf region.
- (2) 2001-2005: The second case is the period of profound regional change and external penetration of the region. This period was marked by the U.S.-led Iraq War following the events of September 11, and the U.S. occupation of Iraq.
- (3) 2005-2010: The third observed case is the time period from the Iraqi national elections of 2005 until the Iraqi parliamentary elections of 2010. This time period was characterized by the evolution of a post-occupation and Shiite-ruled "New Iraq", a gradual disengagement of the United States from Iraq and a parallel deepened involvement of the regional neighbor countries in the political affairs of Iraq.

The three time periods mark crucial turning points in Saudi Arabia's and Iran's regional policies towards Iraq. The Saudi Iraq policy varied from containment during the 1990s, over a phase of evasion, indecision and paralyzation between 2001 and 2005, to a period of wary engagement in Iraq combined with a more active regional posture after 2005. Iran's Iraq policy, on the other hand, varied from a policy of "cold peace" and pragmatic rapprochement during the 1990s, over a policy of "active neutrality" and managed stabilization before and after the Iraq War, to a policy of active engagement since 2005 that aims for a strategic partnership with Iraq.

2.3.3 Collection and Analysis of Data

Qualitative research designs prefer a less structured collection of data and a more open and interpretative analysis of data.

For the collection of primary sources, this study has conducted over 40 semi-structured expert interviews. Further primary sources in this study have been governmental documents, international declarations (e.g. Closing Statements by the GCC Supreme Council), official speeches and interview transcripts, yearbooks (e.g. *Nahost Jahrbuch*), regional newspapers (e.g. *Al-Hayat*, *Al-Riyadh*, *Al-Watan*, *Gulf News*, *Arab News*, *The National*, *Aftab news*), and news agencies (e.g. *Reuters*, *IRNA*, *Mehrnews*).

The data collection of primary sources has been focused on sources from government officials and academic elites since foreign-policy making generally involves state elites. Particularly Saudi and Iranian foreign policies are determined by small groups within the state elites which enjoy a high degree of autonomy from the society and public at large.

For the conduction of expert interviews, interview partners have therefore been sampled from the political and academic elites of the Gulf region which included government officials, diplomats, journalists, university professors, scholars from local think-tanks and free researchers. The selection of interview partners has for one thing been based on the criteria of a preferably high level of diversity of perspectives. The study has thus as well included more “critical” interview partners and foreign policy experts that are not affiliated with a government. For another thing, the field research of this study has been based on the criterion of geographical broadness. For this reason, interviews have been conducted in Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf region (UAE, Bahrain, Oman), Europe and North America. It was thereby guaranteed that the interview partners are not recruited from one personal network around a single personality.¹⁹⁷

The semi-structured expert interview conducted for this study represents a qualitative interview which is usually less structured and requires low interference in the conversation process. The semi-structured interview is based on a rough interview guideline that has been drafted on the basis of previous studies and theoretical assumption on the object of study (Blatter et al. 2007: 61-62).¹⁹⁸ The interview guideline of this study has been based on previous theoretical and empirical studies on IR theories and regional policies in the Gulf. The guideline was slightly altered according to the background of the respective interviewee.

Difficulties of data collection have especially occurred with respect to Iranian sources due to recent restrictions on researchers following the Iranian presidential elections of June 2009. The author has therefore resorted to informal and anonymous sources such as informal conversations with Iranian scholars at international conferences or with members of the UAE-based *Iran Regional Presence Office* of the U.S. State Department. In addition, the study has made use of further primary sources such as Iranian news agencies (e.g. *IRNA*, *Fars News Agency*, *Mehrnews*), newspapers (e.g. *Ettela'at*, *Tehran Times*, *Iran Daily*), or speeches of Ayatollah Khamenei and President Ahmadinejad published at the homepages of

¹⁹⁷ The selection method for the conducted interviews has been the “snowball” or “chain-referral” method. According to this method, an initial set of relevant interviewees has been identified as starting points. Each interviewee has been requested for further potential interview partners that could be valuable for the object of the study and which may give further contacts to other relevant interview partners. Through this process, a large sample of interviewees could be selected in a relatively short space of time. In order to avoid homogeneity, the interview partners have been selected through different networks and locations simultaneously.

¹⁹⁸ This semi-structured interview is therefore problem-oriented. The interviewer points at specific issues, may introduce new questions and may slightly intervene or interrupt the interview in case that the interview gets off the topic.

the Supreme Leader (<http://www.leader.ir>) and Iran's Presidency (<http://un.president.ir>). Articles of Iranian scholars published in the Tehran-based *The Iranian Journal of International Affairs* and the *Iranian Review of Foreign Affairs* have as well given very fruitful insights into Iranian perspectives on regional politics.

The qualitative data analysis of this study oriented itself by the qualitative content analysis comprehensively depicted by Philipp Mayring. According to Mayring (2003: 12-13), a qualitative content analysis is a theory-guided, systematic interpretation of fixed data. The interpretation must take into consideration information on the communicator such as his/her professional and socio-cultural background, his/her purposive orientation and his/her target audience as well as the context in which the data was collected (Mayring 2003: 47, 42). In this study, the analyzed data originate from both official sources affiliated with a government or institute and "free", non-affiliated sources. The sources stem from different national or ethnic backgrounds and thus roughly reflect "Arab", "Iranian", or "Western" perspectives. With regard to the context of the data collection, interviews were conducted under very different circumstances such as during official, private, anonymous, and illicit¹⁹⁹ meetings. Many of the interviews were recorded by dictaphone allowing for a subsequent detailed and literal transcription while others were only drafted manually during the conversation.²⁰⁰

The systematic, theory-guided interpretation of the sources was made with regard to the research question of the study (see also Mayring 2003: 45, 43). For this purpose, relevant passages, core statements, and the essence of the sources were initially filtered from the multitude of data. The core statements were then compared with the state of the art and the own hypotheses of the author. The sources were eventually used to review or rethink previous theoretical or empirical hypotheses while keeping at the same time a critical distance to the sources (see Blatter et al. 2007: 78; 182).

The author of this study has used the method of the qualitative content analysis for evaluating transcripts and drafts from previously conducted interviews as well as for the analysis of relevant primary and secondary sources. Further primary sources used in this study have been speeches from Saudi officials (Saudi Kings, senior Princes)²⁰¹ from the time period between 1990 and 2009, Closing Statements by the GCC Supreme Council, and statements of Iranian officials (e.g. of the Supreme Leader, the President) that were accessible in the internet. Primary sources and more "critical" secondary literature were

¹⁹⁹ In Saudi Arabia, many interviews had to be conducted in a covert and "illicit" way, since a mixing of the sexes is officially prohibited.

²⁰⁰ For the conduction of the interviews, the author had to trade-off the advantages of more detailed, accurate and literal transcripts from recorded interviews against the more "outspoken" and "frank" information from non-recorded interviews.

²⁰¹ Transcripts of these speeches are widely accessible on the website of the Saudi embassy in Washington, D.C. (www.saudiembassy.net/archive).

thereby evaluated in comparison with more “conventional” perspectives and the state of the art of relevant secondary literature.

3. Saudi Arabia’s Iraq Policy

Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy towards its northern neighbor of Iraq was shaped by the past three Gulf Wars in all of which Iraq was involved as a major actor and party of war. During the first Gulf War, the Iran-Iraq War from 1980 to 1988, the Saudi Kingdom supported the Iraqi Saddam regime against the “Islamic threat” coming from the only just proclaimed Islamic Republic of Iran. In the face of a perceived Iranian menace, the conservative but pro-Western Saudi monarchy joined forces with the Baathist Arab republic of Iraq. Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 and the beginning of the (Second) Gulf War ushered in a new era of Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy towards Iraq. This is when this study sets in.

In the following, this study will look at the continuities and changes of Saudi Arabia’s Iraq policy in the post-Gulf War era.

The following chapter is chronologically structured. The study analyzes three time periods in which the Saudi Iraq policy underwent general shifts from a “policy of containment” (1990s), over a “policy of evasion” (from 2001 to 2005), to a policy oscillating between “mediate and assertive engagement” in Iraq (after 2005).

Before searching for theoretical explanations for the shifts in Saudi Arabia’s Iraq policy, it is necessary to look at what actually characterized the Saudi Iraq policy and how it is related to the structural changes in the Saudi state’s environment or in the Saudi role- and self-conception. For each time period, this study will in a first sub-chapter take a look at the form (means and strategies) and content (goals and interests) of the Saudi Iraq policy.

Saudi Arabia’s major goals and interests vis-à-vis Iraq will be worked out. The study distinguishes between status quo and revisionist intentions and looks at whether Saudi Arabia’s Iraq policy has supported, rejected, or challenged the regional (territorial, political, or military) status quo. The study will also look at whether the Saudi Iraq policy pursued defensive (security-oriented) or offensive (power-oriented) motives.

A look at the means and strategies of Saudi Arabia’s Iraq policy will examine whether and when the Saudi policy was rather assertive and pro-active or passive, reactive, indecisive, and lacking a positive and coherent strategy. The study will also look at whether and to what extent the Saudi Iraq policy was embedded in a multilateral framework, in a (bilateral) alliance, or whether and when it was rather pursued through a unilateral and autonomous strategy.

In the following sub-chapters of each time period, this study will examine the variance of Saudi Arabia's structural environment at various levels of analysis and how the Saudi state responded to structural change. The analysis of the structural conditions includes (1) the balance of power and constellation of state threats at the regional level of the Gulf state system, (2) the structures of multi-level and multi-sector interdependence at the global, regional and domestic level, and (3) the ideational-normative structure of the Saudi state at the domestic level.

In a respective qualification of Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy, the study will make out the Saudi foreign-policy behavior and logic of action. The study will look at in how far and in which way the Saudi Iraq policy was a function of (1) balancing power imbalances and state threats, of (2) managing patterns of complex interdependence, and a product of (3) domestic state norms, roles and self-conceptions.

In a final chapter of the interim findings, the study will compare the alternative theoretical explanations and look at which theoretical approach could best explain for the continuities and shifts in Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy.

3.1 The 1990s: The Gulf War and Its Aftermath

3.1.1 Saudi Arabia's Iraq Policy in the 1990s: The Policy of Containment

Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy in the 1990s can be characterized as a defensive status-quo policy that went through three stages:

(1) From the Iraqi invasion and annexation of Kuwait in August 1990 until the international defeat of the Iraqi occupation in February 1991, Saudi Arabia pursued an assertive status-quo policy towards Iraq with the aim of restoring the pre-invasion *status quo ante bellum* in the Gulf. The Saudi leadership acceded to military action against Iraq, under the condition that it is legitimized by UNSC resolutions and endorsed by the international community.

(2) From the international defeat of Iraq in 1991 until the mid-1990s, Saudi Arabia unconditionally supported the U.S.-led containment policy against Iraq and agreed to multilateral, UN-legitimized sanctions and operative measures against Iraq. At the same time, Saudi Arabia's containment policy aimed to preserve the political pre-war status quo, what also meant to safeguard Iraq's sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity.

(3) From the mid-1990s on, the Saudi leadership became increasingly reluctant to the harshness of the international sanctions regime against Iraq and the military means of containment. The Saudi regime preferred a less offensive containment policy against Iraq, but refrained from leading an autonomous Iraq policy which would be independent from the U.S.-British assertive strategy against Iraq.

In the aftermath of Iraq's invasion and annexation of Kuwaiti oil fields in August 1990, Saudi Arabia pursued an assertive status-quo policy towards Iraq. The primary goal of Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy was the restoration of the territorial, military, and political pre-war status quo in the Gulf by ending the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and restoring Kuwait's territorial integrity and state sovereignty. For this purpose, Saudi Arabia endorsed military force against the Iraqi regime, yet embedded within a multilateral and UN-legitimized framework of an international coalition.

Saudi Arabia acceded to a close military cooperation with the United States which headed and decisively organized the coalition forces against Iraq. The Saudi leadership played a key role in helping to consolidate the international coalition of forces against Iraq and especially in persuading other Arab and Muslim nations to join the U.S.-led coalition. In the U.S.-led coalition of 34 states, Saudi Arabia actively supported the military air and land operations of the United States against Iraq. Saudi Arabia's support of the U.S. operations *Desert Shield* and *Desert Storm*²⁰² was also to a large part financial. Saudi Arabia paid for almost half of the 61 billion U.S. dollars of war costs of the United States and contributed in total more than any other member of the coalition (Niblock 2006: 152).

In addition, Saudi Arabia decided for an open and large-scale military engagement with the United States on a *bilateral* basis. In a decision that was unprecedented in the history of Saudi Arabia's foreign policy, the Saudi leadership invited - if only reluctantly - large amounts of U.S. troops²⁰³ to be temporarily stationed on Saudi soil for protection against a possible Iraqi attack.²⁰⁴ Saudi Arabia thereby agreed to the establishment of the U.S. Combat Air Operations Center at an air force base in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province. The U.S. and Saudi military operated through a joint command structure and closely coordinated their activities vis-à-vis Iraq (Bronson 2005: 385).

In the post-Gulf war years, Saudi Arabia adhered to a conservative status-quo policy towards Iraq. Saudi Arabia's support of the disarmament and containment of Iraq aimed to stabilize the political and territorial status quo in the Gulf and to prevent any further Iraqi territorial ambitions or military build-up. Saudi Arabia demanded from Iraq the entire removal of its alleged program of biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction (according to the UNSC resolution 687) and endorsed a disarmament process under the inspection regime of

²⁰² "Operation Desert Shield" was a defensive mission in which the United States moved troops to Saudi Arabia ordered by King Fahd on August 7, 1990, in order to defend the Saudi Kingdom against a possible Iraqi invasion. "Operation Desert Storm" was the U.S. name of the air and land operations against Iraq in order to drive Iraqi forces out of Kuwait.

²⁰³ From mid-August of 1990, around 200,000 U.S. soldiers were sent to the Saudi Kingdom (Steinberg 2004: 70) while, by the end of 1991, some 5,000 U.S. military personnel stayed throughout the following decade.

²⁰⁴ Following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2nd, 1990, the King Fahd of Saudi Arabia declared on August 9, 1990 that the Kingdom had invited U.S. troops to be temporarily stationed on Saudi territory (Rieck 1991: 137)

the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM). At the same time, the Saudi leadership respected Iraq's national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Saudi Arabia pursued both an assertive and multilateral strategy. It endorsed the imposition of UN sanctions on Iraq and acceded to UN legitimized military operations to monitor and assure Iraq's compliance with the UN resolutions. Although the Saudi leadership also decided for *bilateral* military cooperation with the United States on a large scale, the Saudi-U.S. joint strategy was substantially embedded within the multilateral regime of UNSC resolutions.

After the end of the Gulf War, Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy did not only show an active endorsement of the UN containment and disarmament policy against Iraq, but also a close bilateral military cooperation with the United States. Although King Fahd formerly only agreed to a temporary stationing of U.S. troops, Saudi Arabia eventually allowed U.S. military personnel to remain stationed at Saudi bases in order to enforce the no-fly zone over southern Iraq (Klare 2004: 53-54). The establishment and maintenance of the southern no-fly zone²⁰⁵ under the U.S. *Operation Southern Watch* were only made possible by Saudi support. Throughout the 1990s, the U.S.-led monitoring of Iraq's military activity was largely carried out from Saudi territory and supported by Saudi AWACS (Cordesman 1993: 604). Saudi Arabia is also assumed to have allowed U.S. bombings of Iraqi installations to be executed from bases in Saudi Arabia (Niblock 2006: 151).

Saudi Arabia repeatedly approved of the wide-range sanctions²⁰⁶ imposed on Iraq by the UN Security Council and agreed to the later relaxations of the sanctions through the UN "Oil-for-Food Programme".²⁰⁷ With regard to the immense economic and humanitarian suffering in Iraq caused by the UN sanctions regime,²⁰⁸ the Saudi leadership repeatedly held the Iraqi government accountable for the suffering of the Iraqi people.²⁰⁹ In official statements to the UN General Assembly, in joint communiqués of the Gulf Cooperation Council, or in official

²⁰⁵ The southern no-fly zone was established in August 1992 and prohibited Iraqi aircrafts over southern Iraq.

²⁰⁶ Through various resolutions, the UN Security Council had imposed on Iraq one of the toughest and most comprehensive trade embargos, only excluding medical goods, food and items of humanitarian needs.

²⁰⁷ Due to mounting international criticism of the humanitarian impacts of the UN embargo policy, the sanctions were relaxed through the UN "Oil-for-Food Programme" under the Security Council Resolution 986 from April 1995. The "oil-for-food programme" allowed an Iraqi oil sale up to a fixed U.S. dollar amount for purchasing food and medicine. The resolution was accepted by Iraq in November 1996. In December 1999, the UNSC resolution 1284 lifted the limits on Iraqi oil sales under the "oil-for-food programme" (see Gause 2010: 125).

²⁰⁸ The near-total financial and trade embargo imposed on Iraq caused international controversies about the impacts of the sanctions on the Iraqi people. The most controversial debates were about the increased infant and child mortality and poverty as a result of the sanctions.

²⁰⁹ See, for example, the statement of the Saudi foreign minister Saud Al-Faisal at the 46th Session of the UN General Assembly on September 30, 1991; the statement by Saudi representative to the UN at the 48th Session of the UN General Assembly on October 13, 1993; the joint communiqué of the 16th conference of the Damascus Declaration countries on November 12, 1998; the joint communiqué at the 20th summit of the GCC on November 29, 1999.

addresses at OIC summits,²¹⁰ the Saudi leadership repeatedly proclaimed its ongoing support for the international embargo and containment policy against Iraq.

After the mid-1990s, especially when the U.S.-American containment policy became more assertive, Saudi Arabia showed first signs of reluctance with regard to the military component of the international containment policy against Iraq. In 1996, Saudi Arabia withheld for the first time its support for U.S. operations inside Iraq (Bronson 2005: 386). During a U.S. missile attack against Iraq in September 1996, the Saudi regime did not allow the U.S. forces to use Saudi territory for the military operation and advised the United States to cease attacking Iraq (Koszinowski 1996: 140). As well, in December 1998, prior to the U.S.-British *Operation Desert Fox*, Saudi Arabia denied the use of its local bases for the purpose of air strikes against Iraq. In February 2001, Saudi Arabia banned further offensive operations against Iraq from its territory, after allied forces of the United States and the United Kingdom had mounted a raid against Iraq from a Saudi airbase without giving prior notice to the Saudi government (Pollack 2002: 86). The withheld support for the U.S. operation in Iraq was sensed by some observers as an indicative of an ongoing “military divorce between Washington and Riyadh” (see Simon 2007). It showed that Saudi Arabia’s Iraq policy was no longer in full accordance with the U.S. strategy. By the end of the 1990s, it became evident that there was no longer a U.S.-Saudi agreement on how to deal with the Iraqi threat. Saudi Arabia was deeply upset and concerned about the failure and counter-productive effects of the international containment and sanctions regime against Iraq.²¹¹ In 2000, Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah was frank enough to openly criticize the U.S. regional policy²¹² and to call for a lift of the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq²¹³. Although Saudi Arabia did not give up its general containment strategy against Iraq, some scholars have argued that Saudi Arabia by then pursued a policy of “rehabilitating” Iraq (see Al-Rasheed: 2006: 154).

Saudi Arabia’s Iraq policy in the 1990s was dedicated to the guarding of the pre-war regional status quo through the military and economic containment of the Iraqi regime. For this

²¹⁰ See, for example, the statement of the Saudi foreign minister Saud Al-Faisal at the 46th Session of the UN General Assembly on September 30, 1991; the statement by Saudi representative to the UN at the 48th Session of the UN General Assembly on October 13, 1993; the communiqué of the Arab Summit in Cairo from June 21-23, 1996; the joint Saudi-Pakistani statement at the Saudi Crown Prince’s visit to Pakistan in October 1998; the joint communiqué of the 20th session of the GCC Supreme Council in Riyadh from November 27-29, 1999.

²¹¹ During a meeting with the Egyptian President Mubarak in 1995, the Saudi general, Prince Sultan, already considered the sanctions against Iraq to be ineffective. The Saudi government however, still adhered to supporting the maintenance of the sanctions (Koszinowski 1995: 141).

²¹² After the Al-Aqsa Intifada of 2000 and in consideration of the deteriorated situation in Palestine, the Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah warned U.S. President Bush in a letter from August 2001 that Saudi Arabia could go its own separate way from the United States. This was one of the most direct warnings ever issued by a Saudi leader to the United States (Bronson 2005: 389).

²¹³ See the speech of Crown Prince Abdullah at the OIC Summit in Doha on November 12, 2000.

purpose, Saudi Arabia resorted to both multilateral, UN-legitimized sanctions and operative measures against Iraq, and to a first-time open and full-scale military cooperation with the United States. The Saudi leadership conducted an Iraq policy which was largely supportive of the U.S. policy rather than pursuing an independent or autonomous strategy. Only when the UN embargo policy for the purpose of disarming the Iraqi regime showed no success and when the United States more frequently resorted to military strikes against Iraq, Saudi Arabia became increasingly reluctant to the international sanctions regime and the military means of containment. In its Iraq policy, Saudi Arabia thus generally complied with the U.S. strategy towards Iraq, but did not fully agree with the United States on the extent to which economic and military force should be used against Iraq.

3.1.2 Balancing Power and Threats: A Neorealist Analysis

3.1.2.1 Saudi Arabia's Constellation of Power and Threats

In the relatively stable, tripolar balance of power in the Gulf of the 1990s, Saudi Arabia was positioned between a widely isolated but still strong Iran and a protesting, possibly revanchist Iraq. Threats to the regional balance came first and foremost from Iraq's irredentist and expansionist ambitions. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 and Iraq's continuous ideological, hegemonic claims constituted an external threat to the regional balance of power in general and to Saudi Arabia's national security in particular.

For one thing, Iraq's invasion had the potential to seriously threaten the regional stability in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia's strategic position in the regional balance of power. Before and after the Gulf War, the balance of power in the Gulf was a tripolar balance constituted by Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Iran. Without a noteworthy military force of its own, Saudi Arabia used to be the militarily weakest actor compared to the military powers of Iraq and Iran (Steinberg 2007: 174). While Iran and Iraq used to counterbalance each other by military manpower and by pure demographic size, Saudi Arabia was able to preserve a considerable financial power position thanks to its oil wealth and strategic partnerships with Western energy-importing nations. The threat from the Iraqi aggression against a Saudi neighbor country had the potential of cumulating into a perilous regional imbalance of power in military, political, and geo-economic respects.

The Iraqi occupation of Kuwait was widely perceived to be driven by territorially expansionist ambitions and the desire to gain control over strategic oil fields in the region. The annexation of Kuwaiti oil fields would have made Iraq one of the dominant oil producers in OPEC, enabling it to dictate its oil policy to the other OPEC members (Hinnebusch 2003: 214). Since the control of the most strategic oil fields in the Gulf represents a strategic asset with the

ability to determine the course of regional politics, the Iraqi coup challenged both the regional balance of power in general and Saudi Arabia's oil-political power position in particular.²¹⁴

For another thing, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait posed an immediate threat to Saudi Arabia's national security (Fawcett 2005: 272). The surprising Iraqi assault of Kuwait and Iraq's geographic proximity to Saudi Arabia's national territory and oil fields make for the immediacy of the Iraqi menace. The invasion not only revealed the effectiveness of Iraq's offensive military capabilities, but also Iraq's willingness to use military force.²¹⁵ Iraq's conventional and strategic military clout in combination with its aggressive intentions, intransigent attitude, and readiness to violate the territorial status quo and national sovereignty of other states formed the seriousness of Iraq's threat potential.

In the course of the Gulf War, Iraq had built up troops at the Saudi-Iraqi border and launched missile attacks against the Saudi Kingdom (Cordesman 1998: 8; 1999: 8). The Saudi leadership therefore had every reason to fear that Iraq might as well nurture expansionist ambitions towards Saudi oil fields.

Within the regional balance of power of the post-Gulf war years, Iraq still constituted a serious actor and an enduring potential threat to Saudi security. Even though severe international sanctions had economically and militarily weakened the Iraqi regime, Iraq continuously threatened Saudi Arabia's external security by build-ups of troops and critical incidents at the Saudi-Iraqi border. The Iraqi reluctance to fully cooperate with UNSCOM left Saudi Arabia exposed to the potential threat of a possibly rearmed and revanchist Iraq. In addition, the Iraqi regime also tried to weaken the Saudi leadership domestically by anti-Saudi campaigns that questioned the domestic legitimacy of the Saudi ruling elite.²¹⁶

During the 1990s, Iraq thus constituted a continuous security threat to Saudi Arabia on account of its possible rebuild of military capabilities, its unpredictable behavior, and its potentially revanchist and revisionist intentions vis-à-vis the existing balance of power in the Gulf (Rathmell et al. 2003: 2).

3.1.2.2 "Outsourcing" of Saudi Security: Forming an External Counterbalance against Iraq

During the 1990s, Saudi Arabia contained external threats to the regional balance of power and to its national security with the help of external security provision. This strategy of

²¹⁴ The combined oil reserves of Iraq and Kuwait would make up 20 percent of the world's proven oil reserves and would be only marginally smaller than the Saudi oil fields (Humphreys 1999: 105).

²¹⁵ Saudi Arabia's historical experience with Iraq confirms Iraq's threat potential. During the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s, the Iraqi regime had already demonstrated that it was ready and willing to use WMD against its own Kurdish population as well as against its Iranian neighbor country.

²¹⁶ In 1998 and 1999, Iraq repeatedly called for an overthrow of the Saudi Kingdom after Saudi Arabia had held the Iraqi regime responsible for the Iraqi domestic crisis (Koszinowski 1999: 139; 2000: 140).

strongly relying on the external provision of security is labelled by the author of this study as "sourcing out" the the task of security provision. In the form of a modern political division of labor, the Saudi Kingdom largely "sourced out" the responsibility for its national security to the United States as its external protector and alliance partner.

On account of the combination of Iraq's military capability, offensive-revisionist intentions, and geographic proximity, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait constituted a considerable hard power threat to Saudi Arabia's external security. The urgency of the Iraqi threat demanded an immediate Saudi counterbalance to the Iraqi threat.

Saudi Arabia did not possess an effective military force that could be mobilized to avert a military offense against Saudi territory or to restore the pre-war status quo. Since Saudi Arabia had largely "sourced out" the responsibility for its external security to the United States as its ultimate security guarantor, it did not have sufficient indigenous power capabilities of national defense. Saudi Arabia therefore chose the strategy of external balancing in the form of building an alliance with partner states to counter the Iraqi aggression. A coalition with the neighboring forces of the GCC countries could have been the most obvious solution, since the GCC had been largely built as a security alliance under the exclusion of Iraq and Iran. However, the GCC countries alone did not constitute an effective military counterbalance to Iraq.

The urgency and seriousness of the Iraqi threat explains for the historical decision of the Saudi leadership to engage in an open and large-scale military cooperation with the USA. The Saudi invitation of U.S. troops to be stationed on Saudi territory and the Saudi alignment with the U.S. Iraq policy functioned as a counterbalance against an Iraqi military menace and Iraq's disruption of the regional balance of power. Even though the Iraqi invasion was defeated by international and UN-legitimized coalition forces, the Saudi leadership heavily relied on its bilateral security alliance with the United States. Only the United States as the most powerful actor in the Gulf region proved to have the capability to sustainably contain the Iraqi threat and restore the pre-war balance of power. Since the United States had been a long-time ally and the ultimate security guarantor for the Saudi royal family, it enjoyed a credit of trust on the part of the Saudi leadership.²¹⁷

After the successful restoration of the pre-war status quo in the Gulf, Saudi Arabia continuously sought to balance and contain the remaining threat from a possibly revanchist and rearming Iraq. Since Saudi Arabia had to fear that a revanchist Iraq could rebuild its conventional weapons and resume its efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction, Saudi Arabia strongly supported the UN sanctions imposed on Iraq and repeatedly opposed to a

²¹⁷ U.S. President Roosevelt pledged as early as in 1945 that the United States would at all times guarantee the territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia (Aarts 2005: 404).

lifting of the sanctions. In addition, the Saudi leadership logistically assisted the U.S.-led military operations against Iraq that served as preemptive strikes to prevent future military threats. The Saudi leadership was alert to prevent any perilous military power imbalances in the Gulf. By its assertive joint containment and disarmament policy, Saudi Arabia would not let Iraq set a regional military and territorial *fait accompli* nor let Iraq accumulate further power assets in the future.

A military counterbalance from the GCC states did not prove to be effective since their proposed military target agreements and cooperation were not achieved. As a consequence, Saudi Arabia did not have any militarily effective indigenous allies in the Gulf available (Cordesman 1993: 603). Saudi Arabia hence sought the further backing of its U.S.-American ally as a counterbalance to Iraq.

The later Saudi reluctance to the U.S. strategy of enforced military containment of Iraq may be explained by the failure of the United States to significantly reduce the threat posed by Iraq (Bronson 2005: 387). Since Iraq continued to threaten the regional status quo and denied full cooperation on the issue of non-proliferation,²¹⁸ the United States has lost some of its capability and credibility as the stabilizer of the regional balance of power and as the security guarantor of the Saudi Kingdom. Saudi Arabia therefore reconsidered the costs and benefits of its external-balancing strategy.

Notwithstanding, throughout the 1990s, Saudi Arabia chose to remain under the security umbrella of its U.S. ally. The military depth of the Saudi-U.S. security alliance during and following the Gulf War had no precedent in the history of the Saudi-U.S. security partnership. The Saudi Iraq policy of the 1990s therefore stands for Saudi Arabia's heavily "outsourcing" of security to external protectors.²¹⁹

3.1.3 Managing Interdependence: An Institutional Analysis

3.1.3.1 The Lack of Effective Indigenous Mechanisms of Conflict Resolution

Throughout the 1990s, Saudi Arabia's relations with Iraq and its neighbor countries remained lowly institutionalized. Indigenous projects of collective security or defense such as mutual security guarantees within the GCC or the *Damascus Declaration* regime lacked the commitment for further integrative steps of the member states.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) offered the furthest level of regional institutionalization with regard to Gulf security. Following the Gulf War, the GCC, as an exclusive organization of the Gulf Arab monarchies, developed some further integrative steps in the realm of

²¹⁸ In 1998, Iraq suspended its cooperation with UNSCOM and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) which has been mandated for the Iraqi nuclear file.

²¹⁹ The Gulf War unveiled more clearly than ever the close security ties and intertwined interests that both countries have acknowledged since the establishment of the alliance in 1945.

collective defense. In 1994, the GCC member states affirmed with reference to the Iraqi aggression that the security of the GCC member states was “indivisible” what meant that an attack on a GCC member would be an attack on all members (Krech 1995: 181). The “Peninsula Shield” (*dir’a al-jazeera*) as the GCC joint troops stationed in Saudi Arabia, has been one of the first GCC projects of collective defense. On various occasions during the 1990s, the enlargement of the *Peninsula Shield* has been declared a designated target for the near future (see Krech 1995: 181; Alkazaz 1999: 184). The GCC states achieved to hold the *Desert Shield* joint maneuvers and decided in 1998 to establish a joint early-warning system (Alkazaz 1999: 184). The GCC Common Defense Agreement of 2000 codified a collective military defense obligation which was supposed to guarantee the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of each GCC member.²²⁰ However, a further integration of the Gulf Arab armed forces or the establishment of a broader collective security system among the Gulf Arab monarchies have so far remained far projects for the future.

Parallel to GCC projects of collective defense and security among the Gulf Arab monarchies, the *Damascus Declaration* of 1991 was an attempt to strengthen indigenous regional security structures as an alternative or supplementation to extra-regional security guarantees and to establish an indigenous Arab regional security system. Issued on March 6th, 1991, right after the end of the Gulf War, the Damascus Declaration was designed as a first indigenous security regime in the form of a 2-plus-6 arrangement between Syria, Egypt and the six GCC member states.

At the core of the Damascus Declaration was the project of a joint Arab peace troop composed of Syrian, Egyptian and GCC forces (see Steinbach 1992: 187). In the declaration Syria and Egypt agreed to contribute to the defense of Saudi Arabia and the GCC countries in exchange for financial support (Kienle 1994: 386). However, the initial idea that Syria and Egypt would deploy a force of 100,000 troops in the Gulf in return for financial aid proved to be complicated and politically unfeasible. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain were reluctant to a permanent stationing of Arab troops on their soil. The Damascus Declaration therefore remained a framework resolution without an operative military component (see Alkazaz 1992: 179).

The 1990s rather marked a time period of intensified extra-regional security provision on a bilateral basis. In the course of the 1990s, the Arab Gulf states concluded bilateral security and defense agreements with the United States, Great Britain and France. The readiness to conclude bilateral security agreements with extra-regional states contrasted with the hesitancy and scepticism with regard to indigenous collective defense or security projects.

²²⁰ See the Closing Statement of the 21st Session of the GCC Supreme Council and Saudi Arabia's Public Statement on the Manama Declaration, both issued on December 31st, 2000.

Saudi Arabia's deepening of its security relationship with the United States intensified the asymmetry within the Saudi-U.S. partnership, for one thing, and left the Saudi state vulnerable to domestic discontent, for another. Although the USA and the Western countries remained dependent on Saudi Arabia's cooperation for international oil security, Saudi Arabia's external security, in return, became existentially dependent on security guarantees from the USA. The stationing of 10,000 U.S. troops on Saudi soil during the war, and the remaining 5,000 U.S. troops that remained in the country throughout the 1990s symbolized the high level of asymmetry that the Saudi-U.S. security partnership had reached. Among the GCC states, Saudi Arabia has been the only country that did not sign a *formal* security agreement with the United States. The informality of the Saudi-U.S. security partnership, however, hides the fact of the actual large military scale and depth of the partnership that went well beyond any other Saudi security arrangements with intra-regional states.

At the societal level, the Saudi state became increasingly vulnerable to a broad domestic discontent about the degree of external, military engagement in the Arabian Peninsula. During the 1990s, the Saudi leadership had to cope with the formation and mobilization of a domestic opposition movement against the U.S. military presence in the Kingdom, ahead of all the formation of the Salafist *Al-Qaeda* network under Usama bin Ladin. Alongside with further domestic challenges such as a rising public debt due to declining oil revenues and simultaneously high military and social expenditures and a rising unemployment rate, the Saudi leadership had to respond to both external and domestic security demands. In the course of the 1990s, the Saudi leadership had increasingly difficulties in finding a reasonable balance between the interest of domestic regime security and legitimacy, on the one side, and the interest in the provision of external security by the United States, on the other side.

3.1.3.2 Recourse to Pragmatic and Conventional Conflict Management

At the time of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia's relations with Iraq and its neighbor countries were only lowly institutionalized. Saudi Arabia's foreign-policy decision makers could not resort to regulated bilateral or regional mechanisms of joint conflict resolution. Mediation efforts of regional institutions such as the League of Arab States and the GCC proved to be ineffective to negotiate an Iraqi withdrawal. The failure of an "Arab" or indigenous solution resulted in a largely extra-regional operation led by the United States and legitimized by the United Nations. In addition, the Saudi Kingdom requested ongoing military protection from the USA on a bilateral basis.

On the outside, Saudi Arabia and its GCC partner states were endeavored to find a common stance toward Iraq and pursue a common Iraq policy during the 1990s. Their declarations of intent and their joint demands on Iraq, however, were subject to low collective commitment and engagement. In the course of the 1990s, it became increasingly difficult for Saudi Arabia

and the GCC countries to find a common ground in their Iraq policy, not to mention the difficulty of developing effective regional mechanisms of collective security.

Saudi Arabia and the GCC countries, as well as the countries of the Damascus Declaration formally agreed on general goals and principles of their Iraq policy. The Iraqi occupation of Kuwait was unanimously condemned by the Saudi Kingdom and the other GCC members as a violation of Arab and international law, notably the Charter of the Arab League, the Common Arab Defense Pact, and the Charter of the United Nations.²²¹ With regard to the continuous conflict with Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the other GCC members repeatedly declared their endorsement of international law, peaceful conflict-resolution and the principle of non-intervention as well as their aspiration of strengthening Arab solidarity and the role of the UN (see Alkazaz 1999: 184).

In the aftermath of the Gulf War, Saudi Arabia and the GCC countries concertedly demanded from Iraq the full implementation of all UNSC resolutions “without selectivity”, most notably the elimination of its WMD, the release of Kuwaiti prisoners of war and return of Kuwaiti property, and the refraining from any aggression and provocation against its neighbor countries.²²² At the same time, Iraq’s independence and sovereignty as well as Iraq’s unity and territorial integrity was explicitly acknowledged and endorsed by the countries of the GCC and the Damascus Declaration.²²³ With regard to the impact of the UN sanctions on Iraq, the countries expressed their sympathy for the “sisterly people of Iraq”, but blamed the Iraqi government for the suffering of the Iraqi people.²²⁴ Until 2000, the GCC countries accused Iraq of leading a “policy of procrastination” and “evasion”²²⁵ and urged the Iraqi leadership to cooperate with UNSCOM and the IAEA.²²⁶ Only in 2000, the GCC ministerial council firstly explicitly admitted to study an ease or lift of the sanctions on Iraq.²²⁷

A strong indigenous collective response of the GCC countries to the ongoing conflict with Iraq was largely impeded by two major facts. Firstly, a concerted action of the GCC countries was affected by inner divisions about the course of the GCC Iraq policy. Secondly, the strongly asymmetrical dependence of Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries on external U.S. protection undermined an indigenous intra-regional solution of the Iraq question.

²²¹ See the Closing Statements of the GCC Supreme Council from December 1997, 1998, and November 1999.

²²² See the Closing Statements of the GCC Supreme Council from December 1997.

²²³ See the Closing Statements of the GCC Supreme Council from December 1997, 1998, and November 1999, as well as Saudi Arabia’s Public Statement on the Communiqué of the Damascus Declaration session in July 1996.

²²⁴ See for example Saudi Arabia’s Public Statement on the GCC’s 20th Summit in November 1999.

²²⁵ See the Closing Statements of the GCC Supreme Council from November 1999, as well as Saudi Arabia’s Public Statement on the Final Communiqué of the 76th GCC foreign ministers conference in 2000.

²²⁶ See for example the Closing Statements of the GCC Supreme Council from December 1998.

²²⁷ See Saudi Arabia’s Public Statement on the Final Communiqué of the 76th GCC foreign ministers conference in 2000.

Despite the outer GCC consensus on a common Iraq policy, the GCC suffered from deep inner frictions about the strategy towards Iraq. Saudi Arabia's assertive and pro-U.S. policy of containment did not find the approval of all GCC members. A principal dividing line lay between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait strongly supporting the U.S. policy of dual containment, and Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and the UAE seeking a rapprochement with Iraq. As early as in 1992, Bahrain and Qatar called for the normalization of relations with Iraq in order to balance Iran's power in the region (Alkazaz 1993: 181). In the mid-1990s, Qatar and the UAE disapproved the hard stance against Iraq and deepened their relations with Iraq (see Alkazaz 1998: 184). In 1999, Qatar and the UAE called for a stop of the U.S.-led missile attacks against Iraq while Oman advocated an end of the sanctions imposed on Iraq (Alkazaz 2000: 183). By 2000, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and the UAE opened diplomatic representations in Iraq and exchanged delegations (Alkazaz 2001: 186-87).

Yet, due to the informal-hierarchical structures of asymmetric interdependence *within* the GCC, Saudi Arabia could claim a considerable degree of bargaining power in the formulation of a common GCC stance on Iraq. As the economically and politically leading country in the Arabian Peninsula, Saudi Arabia (with the support of Kuwait) was able to "discipline" the GCC countries on a common ground and push through a pro-U.S. position of the GCC. Saudi Arabia thus successfully blocked attempts by several GCC members of achieving a rapprochement with Iraq.²²⁸ Even in the end of the 1990s when the lacking consensus within the GCC became increasingly evident, Saudi Arabia was able to "discipline" the GCC members on a common pro-U.S. ground and partly force through its formulations in the joint communiqués of the GCC.²²⁹

Perhaps even stronger was the asymmetry of interdependence between the GCC countries on the one side, and the United States on the other side. On account of their strong (primarily military) dependence on the USA, Saudi Arabia and the GCC countries could not pursue an autonomous Iraq policy. The United States was able to assert a hard and non-compromising stance of the GCC towards Iraq. Saudi Arabia's dependence on the approval and goodwill of the United States led to a discrepancy between state rhetoric and action (Alkazaz 1999: 184). While in 1996 Saudi Arabia and various GCC states publicly criticized the U.S.-British missile attacks on Iraq (Alkazaz 1997: 184), they still followed the U.S. policy of containment and refrained from a further rapprochement with the Iraqi regime.

²²⁸ In 1996, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait could block the rapprochement with Iraq sought by Qatar, Oman and the UAE (see Alkazaz 1997: 184). In 1998, Saudi Arabia again used its predominant role in order to influence the GCC vote on a common Iraq position (see Alkazaz 1999: 184).

²²⁹ In 1999, Saudi Arabia could force through a formulation in the GCC joint communiqué that solely made the Iraqi government responsible for the imposition of sanctions. The Saudi position contrasted with Oman's efforts of reconciliation with Iraq, and with the Qatari and Emirati critique of the U.S.-led missile attacks against Iraq (see Alkazaz 2000: 183). In 2000, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait could largely assert a hard and pro-U.S. position on Iraq in the GCC communiqués (see Alkazaz 2001: 187).

Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy of the 1990s came largely in the form of conventional and pragmatic conflict resolution. Saudi Arabia's conflict management primarily relied on extra-regional security guarantees on a bilateral basis rather than on indigenous collective action of the regional countries. In its Iraq policy, the Saudi leadership invested its resources in bilateral alliance-building which underlay the logic of self-defense rather than the principle of collective security or collective defense. Saudi Arabia therefore defined and pursued its national interests and security largely in terms of military power and conventional balance-of-power considerations.

As a result, the Saudi leadership paid low active commitment to the GCC statements of collective defense and conflict management, or to inner-Arab solidarity. Saudi Arabia's lowly institutionalized relations and closed channels of interaction with Iraq and the low degree of normative collegiality and solidarity among the regional countries led to the failure of an indigenous management of the Iraq crisis. The course of Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy during the 1990s was by and large defined by its alliance with the United States. Saudi Arabia's structures of asymmetric interdependence at the global level hence largely shaped its Iraq policy during the 1990s.

The later growing Saudi reluctance to the U.S. Iraq strategy may be better understood through constraints and vulnerabilities at the Saudi domestic level. The Saudi leadership became increasingly concerned about the domestic discontent with its Iraq policy. The growing domestic opposition to the severe sanctions affecting the Iraqi population and to the U.S.-British military strikes on Iraq prompted Saudi Arabia's ruling elite to denounce the U.S. means of containment while at the same time largely obeying the U.S. strategy. The Saudi regime's sensitivities and vulnerabilities at the domestic level and the asymmetry of Saudi Arabia's interdependence with the United States may best explain for Saudi Arabia's ambiguous stance on Iraq and its discrepancy between rhetoric and action. The Saudi leadership has gotten into the uncomfortable situation of trading off external against domestic security concerns. Saudi Arabia's overall Iraq policy and broad political adjustments of the 1990s was mainly a function of external power considerations. Yet, Saudi Arabia's multilevel vulnerabilities and interdependencies and the dual nature of its security concerns may account for the *nuances* of the Saudi Iraq policy.

3.1.4 Complying with Foreign-Policy Roles and Norms: A Constructivist Analysis

3.1.4.1 The Saudi State's Understanding of an 'Appropriate' Response to Iraq

The questions concerning an "appropriate" response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, a following legitimate dealing with Iraq and a new just and legitimate Gulf security order were

answered by the Saudi state with frequent reference to Arab and Islamic identity, norms, and principles.

When judging the behavior of the Iraqi regime, the Saudi leadership majorly referred to Arab nationalist norms of Arab solidarity and brotherhood. Saudi Arabia's political leadership condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on the spot as an "aggression of the Iraqi regime" that "deviated from the Arab order" and as an "arrogant behavior towards Arab and international legality".²³⁰ The Iraqi behavior was viewed as an aberration from (pan-)Arab norms. The Saudi ruling elite stated that the threat to its security "in fact emanated from within the region itself"²³¹ and was grounded on the "usurpation by an Arab of an Arab land"²³². The Saudi foreign minister, Saud al-Faisal, wondered "how an Arab solution can be reached on the ruins of another Arab state".²³³ He hence praised the Damascus Declaration from March 1991 as a basis for a "new Arab order [...] rooted in the spirit of brotherhood, solidarity and mutual interest".²³⁴

With regard to the following containment policy towards Iraq, the Saudi leadership clearly distinguished between the Iraqi regime and the Iraqi people. While the Saudi leadership held the Iraqi regime responsible for the suffering of the Iraqi people and called for the maintenance of the UN sanctions imposed on Iraq,²³⁵ it claimed at the same time its sympathy for the "sisterly people" and (Arab) "brothers" in Iraq.²³⁶ The behavior of the Iraqi regime towards its neighbor countries was portrayed as an illegitimate violation of the Arab order and of Arab solidarity and collegiality. Saudi Arabia therefore called on Iraq to become once again "a pillar of Arab national security".²³⁷ In the course of the worsening of the humanitarian situation for the Iraqi people, the Saudi leadership became increasingly upset with the continuously severe containment strategy and ongoing U.S. military strikes against Iraq. The communiqué of the OIC summit which Saudi Arabia attended in November 2000 in Doha called for a "cessation of illegal actions executed outside the framework of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions" and for a "comprehensive dialogue" between Iraq and the Security Council.²³⁸

²³⁰ See the statement of Prince Saud Al-Faisal to the UN General Assembly on October 2nd, 1990.

²³¹ See the statement of Prince Saud Al-Faisal to the UN General Assembly on September 30, 1991.

²³² See the statement of Prince Saud Al-Faisal to the UN General Assembly on October 2nd, 1990.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ See the statement of Prince Saud Al-Faisal to the UN General Assembly on September 30, 1991.

²³⁵ See, for example, the statement of Saudi ambassador Allagany to the UN General Assembly on October 13, 1993; See also the final communiqué of the Arab Summit from June 23, 1996.

²³⁶ See the statement of Prince Saud Al-Faisal to the UN General Assembly on October 2nd, 1990.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ See the communiqué of the 9th OIC Summit in Doha on November 14, 2000.

The Saudi state's discourse on the appropriateness of the international, U.S.-led military response to the Iraqi aggression was mainly led in religious categories and greatly influenced by the recourse to religious and Islamic narratives. The new depth of Saudi Arabia's security alliance with the United States and the stationing of U.S. and non-Muslim troops in the region and on Saudi soil in particular became a religious matter that dominated the foreign-policy discourse of the post-war years. Saudi Arabia's state elites had religious concerns against the fact that the Saudi state was allowing and facilitating the military, political and cultural penetration of the Saudi Kingdom by a non-Muslim country. Throughout the 1990s, Saudi Arabia's religious and political state elites were hence preoccupied with the question about the compatibility of an intensified non-Muslim presence on Saudi Arabia's holy soil with Islamic norms and principles.

Religious objections to and a general feeling of unease and hesitation about the acceptance of Western and respectively U.S. military support to defeat and contain Iraq became already apparent during the Gulf War. A week after the relatively quick decision to invite U.S. troops to be stationed on Saudi territory, the U.S. military presence was religiously legitimated by an Islamic legal opinion (*fatwa*) of the Saudi Council of Senior 'Ulama (*hay'at kibar al-'ulama*). The *fatwa* from August 13, 1990 adjudged the build-up of non-Muslim troops as legal for the reason that it serves the defense of Islam (*ibid.*). On various occasions, the Saudi political leadership stressed the temporality of the foreign troop presence on its territory.²³⁹

The religious norms and principles that the Saudi leadership advocated were of a conservative, non-revolutionary and non-radical Islamic nature. In front of Western audiences, the Saudi political leadership emphasized that the Saudi Kingdom has no "colonial complex" as opposed to Middle Eastern countries that had suffered from colonization.²⁴⁰ The Islamic principles of the Saudi state did not rule out special relations with non-Muslim partner countries at any rate, but demanded to preserve the Islamic character of the Saudi Kingdom. Partnerships with extra-regional and non-Muslim countries should be designed in a way that does not undermine Saudi Arabia's Islamic principles at the domestic level.

On the other hand, the Saudi political elite made recurrent remarks about U.S. stereotypes on Islam, U.S. biased media with regard to Muslim affairs and complaints about U.S.-made links between Islam and terrorism.²⁴¹ Saudi leaders pointed to the fact that Saudi Arabia is not willing to give up its Islamic identity, but that the Kingdom will remain a fundamentalist state in which the majority of laws comes directly from the Islamic law (*shari'a*).²⁴² According

²³⁹ See, for example, the statement of Prince Saud Al-Faisal to the UN General Assembly on October 2nd, 1990.

²⁴⁰ See Prince Bandar bin Sultan's speech at the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) in Tampa on May 20, 1993.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² See King Fahd's interview in *Al-Okaz* newspaper on January 1st, 1997.

to statements of the Saudi leadership, Saudi Arabia supports and believes in modernization, but not when it comes along in form of Westernization. In the atmosphere of a growing sense of cultural and political alienation within the U.S.-Saudi partnership, Prince Bandar's claim in 1996 that there is no general trend of anti-Westernism in the Saudi Kingdom²⁴³ therefore sounded more like a helpless attempt to bridge the widening cultural gap which was felt in the Saudi-U.S. security alliance and in their conduct of a common Iraq policy.

3.1.4.2 The Saudi Iraq Policy as a Religious Precedent: In Quest of a Post-hoc Legitimization

The invitation of non-Muslim troops as a defense against a Muslim "brother country" constituted a religious precedent with regard to Saudi Islamic norms and principles.

Throughout the 1990s, Saudi Arabia adhered to a containment policy towards Iraq that was internationally legitimized by multiple resolutions of the UN Security Council. Since Saudi Arabia accused the Iraqi regime of having violated Arab and international norms, it could thus hold the Iraqi regime fully responsible for its international and regional isolation. Yet, in the course of the 1990s, Saudi Arabia had increasingly difficulties to legitimize the long-term, rigorous sanctions imposed on Iraq, causing a high level of humanitarian suffering among an Arab people. Although the Saudi Kingdom did not oppose to the UN sanctions, the Saudi leadership welcomed the partial easing of sanctions through the "oil-for-food" program in 1995 and 1999, and finally urged for a diplomatic solution which would lead to a lift of the sanctions.

In the course of the 1990s, the long-term isolation and severe punishment of a key Arab country appeared as an equivalent violation of Arab norms such as Arab solidarity and collegiality. Saudi Arabia thus became increasingly reluctant to the continuous harsh sanctions and military attacks against Iraq. Although the punishment of the Iraqi regime for violating Arab norms was considered appropriate by the Saudi leadership, the future re-integration of Iraq into the Arab state system was perceived as a natural and inevitable step. According to its obligations as a leading Arab state, Saudi Arabia therefore made the prospective rehabilitation of Iraq into the Arab order its long-term underlying aim of its Iraq policy.

Nonetheless, Arab norms proved to have a rather weak influence on Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy. Despite of Saudi Arabia's call for Arab solidarity and concerted action, it preferred an extra-regional solution to the Iraq question. The "new Arab order" proclaimed by Saudi Arabia and its regional allies after the defeat of Saddam Hussein failed due to also Saudi lacking commitment. Further military cooperation and Arab collective defense plans that were envisaged in the "Damascus Declaration" of 1991 largely failed also on account of Saudi

²⁴³ See Prince Bandar bin Sultan's statements in an interview on ABC television on July 7, 1996 that were made in the context of the Khobar bombing incident which caused a growing sense of alienation in Saudi-U.S. relations.

Arabia's reluctance to the deployment of Egyptian and Syrian troops in the Gulf (see Koszinowski 1993: 140; 1994: 139). By and large, when it came to the question of regional or national security, Saudi Arabia preferred the protection from the United States as its long-term ally. Prospects of strengthening indigenous regional security structures and efforts of Arab collective defense were lowered or abandoned in favor of extra-regional security guarantees and subordinated to individual state interests.

The Saudi leadership reacted more sensitive to religious objections to its Iraq policy, especially with regard to its security alliance with the United States. The decision of King Fahd to invite non-Muslim troops to the Kingdom and to let U.S. forces operate from Saudi territory in order to attack a neighboring Arab and Muslim country was "unprecedented in Saudi history" (Niblock 2006: 151). For the first time, the Saudi Kingdom allowed to have large numbers of foreign and non-Muslim troops to be stationed on its soil. Since the 1960s, Saudi Arabia has been aware of keeping the U.S.-Saudi relationship "invisible" and U.S. military presence "over the horizon" (Steinberg 2007: 69). With the invitation of U.S. troops to the Kingdom, the Saudi leadership decided for a more direct and visible military cooperation with the United States. Yet, the Saudi leadership did not accommodate the U.S. request for a formal status of forces agreement. It has pledged to the Islamic clergy "not to grant bases or formally base non-Muslim forces in the kingdom" (Cordesman 1993: 604). Hence, the Saudi-U.S. security alliance remained a "non-institutional one by design" (interview with El-Hokayem 2009).²⁴⁴

The existential reliance of Saudi Arabia on non-Muslim and extra-regional defense partners came into open conflict with both Arab and Islamic norms and values. Saudi Arabia's acceptance and promotion of a Gulf security order that was largely shaped by a non-Muslim, external actor undermined its credibility as a leader and role model for other Arab and Muslim countries.

The issuing of a *fatwa* that legitimized the Saudi decision to have U.S. troops deployed on Saudi territory was therefore an attempt of the Saudi leadership to bring its foreign-policy decision *a posteriori* into accordance with religious norms. As such, the *fatwa* represented a state-induced re-interpretation of religious norms and principles that made religion-based foreign-policy norms more flexible. The precedent case of the Iraq crisis established three conditions under which a military collaboration with a non-Muslim state against another Muslim country may be justified. The recourse to non-Muslim military aid may be consistent with Islamic norms and principles in case that it serves (1) the defense of Islam and remains

²⁴⁴ Until today, there has not been a single written security or defense agreement between Saudi Arabia and the USA. While after 1991 all the other GCC states signed bilateral, formal defense agreements with the United States (and additionally with the UK or France), Saudi Arabia did not sign any formal defense agreement with the USA (Partrick 2009: 32).

of a (2) temporary and (3) informal nature. The Saudi state's understanding of a legitimate and Islam-conform foreign policy thus merely demanded some *distance*, and not *resistance*, to non-Muslim alliance partners.²⁴⁵

In case of an immediate military threat and an urgent need to defend its national security, Saudi Arabia's foreign policy decisions were based on purely pragmatic considerations. The issuing of a *fatwa*, even though *a posteriori*,²⁴⁶ illustrates that the Saudi leadership still needed to embed a pragmatic foreign policy within a religious framework. Religious norms constituted less an *a priori* constraint on foreign policy, but rather demanded a *post hoc* legitimization of foreign policy decisions. Although religious norms did not determine the broad lines and decisions of Saudi foreign policy, they shaped the nuances of foreign policy and prescribed the outer design of Saudi Arabia's "legitimate" and "possible" alliances.

Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy of the 1990s revealed the endeavor to reconcile pragmatic, security interests with Islamic and Arab norms and principles and with Saudi Arabia's self-conception as an Arab and Muslim role model. The Saudi political leadership was endeavored not to endanger its strategic security alliance with the United States since it saw "no substitute for American engagement and leadership".²⁴⁷ In the end of the 1990s it was not quite clear whether Saudi Arabia's proclaimed Islamic norms would prove flexible enough to legitimate the state's foreign policy decisions or whether a violation of norms and identity would incur considerable costs on the Saudi leadership.

3.1.5 Interim Findings

From a theoretical perspective, Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy of the 1990s can be broadly characterized as a balance-of-power and balance-of-threat policy, yet one that has not remained completely unaffected by state-society relations or conceptions of a "legitimate" Iraq policy.

The Saudi Iraq policy of the 1990s majorly aimed to balance and contain Iraq as a hard power, state-actor threat to Saudi Arabia's national security. The low degree of regional institutionalization and the lack of regulated mechanisms of joint conflict management in the Gulf may explain for Saudi Arabia's classical balancing strategy towards Iraq throughout the 1990s. Saudi Arabia's decision to resort to a high degree of external balancing by passing the military (but not financial) burden to an external ally was made under pragmatic and

²⁴⁵ The resistance to foreign powers is not a part of Saudi Arabia's "national myth" as it is, for example, in Iraq's or Syria's state identity. Yet, Islamic and Arab norms and values require some distance to the United States and to unpopular U.S. regional policies (see Partrick 2009: 33).

²⁴⁶ The fatwa was issued on August 13, 1990, while the first U.S. contingent of troops arrived in Saudi Arabia on August 8, 1990 (Koszinowski 1991: 137).

²⁴⁷ See Prince Bandar bin Sultan's speech at the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) in Tampa on May 20, 1993.

realist considerations of power and external state threats. Even though Saudi Arabia endorsed a multilateral response to Iraq, Saudi Arabia's cooperation with regard to UN-legitimized sanctions and operations against Iraq must be rather understood as a function of its security alliance with the United States.

Even though Saudi Arabia's broad policy line towards Iraq during the 1990s smoothly fits into a neorealist explanatory model, the nuances of its Iraq policy may leave room for reasonable alternative explanation attempts. Saudi Arabia's recurrent signs of reluctance to the means of the international containment policy against Iraq can only be roughly captured by a neorealist balance-of-threat perspective. From a neorealist argumentation, the decrease of an immediate hard-power security threat from the Iraqi state in the course of the 1990s may account for Saudi Arabia's moderation towards Iraq.

From a more complex multilevel and multi-actor perspective, the gradual changes in Saudi Arabia's stance towards Iraq were first signs of the Saudi state's growing dilemma of trading off between external and domestic security demands. As state-society relations became increasingly a part of Saudi Arabia's foreign-policy equation, the Saudi state was re-thinking the costs and benefits of its external balancing strategy and the heavily outsourcing of its national security and defense to an external protector. Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy was co-determined by both a drastic rise in Saudi Arabia's asymmetric security interdependence at the global level and an alarming increase of the Saudi regime's vulnerability to societal discontent. Even though Saudi Arabia's external security partnership with the United States enjoyed priority, the Saudi Iraq policy can be understood as a function of finding a reasonable balance between the vantages and convenience of external security provision on the one hand, and an accommodation of domestic societal sensibilities on the other hand.

From a constructivist and normative point of view, Saudi Arabia's state identity and religious state norms affected and constrained the Iraq policy in a similar mediate way as domestic societal constraints. The Saudi Iraq policy was not *a priori* determined or constrained by state norms and identity. Instead, foreign-policy norms and principles were adapted to pragmatic state needs and interests. In the sense of a re-definition and re-interpretation of religious state norms and role-conceptions, Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy was *a posteriori* legitimized and made congruent with the Saudi state's norms and roles. As such, the Saudi Iraq policy was neither a direct result of Saudi Arabia's state identity and value system, nor could it rest completely detached from religious and cultural understandings of "legitimate" foreign policy.

3.2 From 2001 to 2005

3.2.1 *The Saudi Iraq Policy between Evasion and Paralyzation*

From 2001 to 2005 Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy continuously aimed to maintain the political, military, and territorial status quo in the Gulf. However, a profound regional political and military transformation induced from outside forced the Saudi leadership to adopt its Iraq policy to outer pressures and change. Between the years of 2001 and 2005 Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy went through three stages:

- (1) From 2001 until the end of 2002, the Saudi administration was endeavored to hold on to the previous policy of containment and conventional deterrence towards Iraq.
 - (2) During the U.S.-led Iraq War in 2003, the Saudi leadership took up an ambivalent and evasive position by officially refraining from any engagement in the war and at the same time offering indirect support for the military operation.
 - (3) From the toppling of the Iraqi regime in 2003 to the Iraqi constitutional elections of 2005, the Saudi Iraq policy can be best described as a conservative stabilization policy. Saudi Arabia was committed to preserve Iraq as a united, sovereign and independent player in the region. The Saudi leadership aimed to strengthen Iraq's domestic stability through a slow and gradual transition that would majorly maintain Iraq's domestic pre-war power relations.
- The Saudi Iraq policy from 2001 to 2005 went through different stages with ambivalent political positions. In its quintessence it can be characterized as a non-assertive and compromising status-quo policy.

Following the events of 9/11, the Iraqi regime became target of the U.S. "War against Terror". While the U.S. Iraq policy was now pursued under the agenda of anti-terrorism, Saudi Arabia separated the fighting of terrorism from its Iraq policy. The Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah clearly stated in February 2002 that the war on terrorism does not apply to Iraq (and Iran).²⁴⁸ The Saudi leadership thereby rejected the U.S. image of an "axis of evil"²⁴⁹ and the U.S. declaration of Iraq as a country sponsoring terrorism and seeking weapons of mass destruction.

When the U.S. plans of forcefully toppling the Iraqi regime became more conspicuous in May 2002, Saudi Arabia held on to the present containment policy towards Iraq and championed a diplomatic solution to the crisis. Saudi Arabia made efforts to dissuade the United States from a large-scale military action against Iraq. For this purpose, the Saudi leadership urged the United States to give the UN inspections in Iraq more time and called on Iraq to fully cooperate with the international inspectors and implement the UN resolutions (Al-Rasheed

²⁴⁸ See the interview with Crown Prince Abdullah given for 'Time Magazine' on February 26, 2002.

²⁴⁹ U.S.-President Bush named North Korea, Iran, and Iraq as part of an "axis of evil" (see the State of the Union address by US-President Bush on January 29, 2002).

2006: 156). It stressed that it only supported the disarmament of Iraq as requested in the resolutions of the UN Security Council. However, prior to the Iraq War, the statements of the Saudi leadership became more evasive and ambiguous, and lacked a unified position. In mid-August 2002, Saudi foreign minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal signified that Saudi Arabia would not support a war against Iraq even if it was mandated by the UN security council (Steinberg 2003: 153). In October 2002, it seemed that Saudi Arabia would allow the U.S. to use their Saudi military facilities to attack Iraq if there was a UN mandate. In November, to the contrary, Saudi Arabia refused any support of a U.S. attack (see Al-Rasheed 2006: 155-56). Yet, in the end of 2002, there were signals that Saudi Arabia would agree upon a tacit military cooperation with the USA (Steinberg 2003: 153). Saudi Arabia allegedly agreed to provide logistical and technical support to U.S. forces and informally agreed to give permission for refuelling, surveillance and transport missions on bases within Saudi Arabia (Prado 2006: 6). On March 18, 2003, two days before the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Saudi foreign minister Al-Faisal declared the official Saudi position on the Iraq crisis. Al-Faisal stated that Saudi Arabia would “under no circumstances” participate in the war against Iraq and expects the war to end upon the implementation of the UNSC resolution 1441²⁵⁰ (see Al-Rasheed 2006: 156). In spite of Saudi Arabia’s explicit and official refusal to engage in the Iraq War, the Saudi leadership indicated secret cooperation with the United States. Saudi Arabia’s position prior to the Iraq War hence remained contradictory, ambiguous and indecisive, and aimed to reach a non-military solution to the conflict.

Saudi Arabia neither actively and openly supported nor obstructed the U.S.-led *Operation Iraqi Freedom* that lasted from March 20 to May 1, 2003. During the Iraq War of 2003, the Saudi Iraq strategy may be best described as a policy of ‘biased neutrality’. During the invasion and occupation of Iraq led by U.S.-British troops, the Saudi administration did not authorize the use of Prince Sultan airbase near Riyadh for attacks on Iraqi territory, but secretly let U.S. forces use the air command-and-control center to coordinate the air war (Gause 2010: 151). Small contingents of U.S. special forces were hence tacitly allowed to use Saudi bases near the Iraqi border as long as their operations were not directly involved in a bombardment of Iraqi territory (Steinberg 2004a: 156). In addition, Saudi Arabia was said to have “provided tens of millions of dollars in discounted oil, gas, and fuel for the U.S. forces” (Prado 2006: 6). At the end of the Iraq War, the Saudi and U.S. defense ministers proclaimed the rescindment of the no-fly zone over southern Iraq. This implied also the withdrawal of the U.S. air force from Saudi territory, since the U.S. forces had only been maintained in Saudi Arabia for the surveillance of the Iraqi no-fly zone. Until September 2003

²⁵⁰ The UNSC resolution 1441, passed on November 8, 2002, called upon Iraq to completely cooperate with UN weapon inspectors to verify that Iraq was not in possession of WMD and cruise missiles.

the U.S. withdrawal from Saudi Arabia had been almost completed while only few U.S. military personnel remained in the Kingdom for military training missions (Steinberg 2004a: 156).

After the surprisingly quick toppling of the Iraqi regime and the U.S. occupation of Iraq, Saudi Arabia did not have a positive outline for its future Iraq policy. According to observers of the Middle East region, the Saudi and other Arab leaderships were in a state of “paralyzation” and shock.²⁵¹

The general goal of Saudi Arabia’s Iraq policy was now to ensure “a safe, stable and unified Iraq” which would serve as a pillar of security and stability in the future Gulf security system.²⁵² With the U.S.-led occupation authority in Iraq, the Saudi government generally shared the common interest in a quick and effective stabilization of Iraq, the termination of Iraq’s domestic political crisis accompanied by looting, violence and an anti-American insurgency, and the re-establishment of Iraq’s sovereignty and national unity. However, the Saudi Iraq policy revealed a different tactical approach with regard to the means and manner of stabilization. The Saudi administration pursued a conservative policy of stabilization and reconstruction. It preferred a slow, gradual and moderate transition process in Iraq that would majorly maintain the pre-war status quo of Iraq’s domestic power relations. The Saudi leadership hence disapproved the rapid dismantling of the Iraqi armed forces and intelligence services and the radical De-Baathification policy²⁵³ decreed by the U.S.-ruled Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) of Iraq.

Prior to the Iraqi constitutional elections in January 2005, Saudi Arabia’s Iraq policy still lacked a positive, autonomous strategy and was rather marked by “passivity” and “paralysis” (Gause 2010: 179) with regard to the ongoing domestic violence and fragile security situation in Iraq. When Iraq’s state sovereignty was partly re-established in June 2004 and the new Iraqi interim prime minister Allawi made his first visit to Saudi Arabia to resume diplomatic relations (see Fürtig 2005: 156), the new direction of Saudi Arabia’s Iraq policy was still indiscernible.

²⁵¹ According to an interview with Khalid Al-Dakhil in June 2009 in Riyadh.

²⁵² See Prince Saud Al-Faisal’s speech on regional security on December 5, 2004, at the IISS seminar in Manama, Bahrain. The Saudi leadership repeatedly endorsed Iraq’s national unity (see for example the speech of Saudi foreign minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal at a conference on Iraq on June 22, 2005, in Brussels).

²⁵³ On May 16, 2003, the CPA headed by Paul Bremer decreed that no member of the top four ranks of the former Baath Party could hold a government job (see Gause 2010: 157).

3.2.2 Balancing Power and Threats: A Neorealist Analysis

3.2.2.1 Historical Upheavals in the Regional Balance of Power

The time period from 2001 to 2005 was a phase of profound and unprecedented shifts in Saudi Arabia's regional constellation of power and threats. At the core of this period stands out the U.S.-led war against Iraq along with the toppling of the Iraqi regime and the elimination of Iraq as a pole of power in the Gulf. Prior to the Iraq War, from 2001 to 2003, was a transformative phase that already indicated shifts in the Gulf power relations but that kept the overall balance of power unaffected. From 2003 to 2005, during the phase of occupation and interim rule in Iraq, the traditional balance of power in the Gulf was revised and replaced by a fragmentary and cursory balance which remained in a state of flux.

Before the Iraq War of 2003, the tripolar state system in the Gulf was still intact in terms of a checks-and-balances system. Although Iraq had suffered an immense decline in military and economic power on account of the international embargo policy, it still constituted a key player in the regional state system. Iraq's power was contained but not neutralized. Within the Gulf state system, Iraq therefore still functioned for Saudi Arabia as a "buffer" (Salem 2008: 2) that counterbalanced possible Iranian hegemonic ambitions.²⁵⁴

Prior to the Iraq War, Iraq posed neither an "aggregate power threat" nor an "aggressive intention threat" (Gause 2003/04: 303) to the regional balance of power or to Saudi Arabia's national security. Although there were some concerns that Iraq might be developing weapons of mass destruction, Iraq's military potential had been largely contained and defanged (Salem 2008: 14). As well, Iraq had lost much of its ideological appeal in the Gulf and wider region (Gause 2003/04: 303) during the years of international isolation.

Signs of a transformation of the regional balance of power rather came from U.S. ambitions of a region-wide political, military, and societal reformation of the Middle East state system. After the events of September 11, 2001, the new U.S. security strategy for the Gulf and Middle East region pursued the agenda of regional security through transformation and change rather than through a stabilization of the status quo. The U.S. approval of "pre-emptive" military strikes as an (if only ultimate) option²⁵⁵ meant that the USA was also prepared to use military means to revise the political and military status quo in the region.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ The resumption of Iran's nuclear program was revealed to the international public in 2002 and only intensified Gulf Arab concerns about Iranian regional hegemonic ambitions.

²⁵⁵ In the National Security Strategy (NSS) of 2002, the United States reserved the option of preemptive (military) action in case that the immediacy and seriousness of any threat to its national security reach a critical point and if conventional deterrence or containment is not expected to be sufficiently effective (see NSS of September 2002: 15).

²⁵⁶ Until the events of 9/11, the U.S. Middle East policy has pursued stability *instead of* reform. The new strategy sought stability *through* reform (see Kaye 2004: 40).

The U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 neutralized Iraq as a sovereign state actor and pole of power in the Gulf state system. The fall of the Saddam regime removed Iraq as a state actor “capable of projecting its military, political and economic power” (Stansfield 2008: 116) in the Gulf region. Although the Iraq War eliminated one of Saudi Arabia’s fiercest competitors in the regional state system, it also removed a natural counterbalance to a possible Iranian hegemony. The former triangular system in the Gulf shaped by Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq was now in “dysfunction” (Fürtig 2008: 121). While the Gulf War and its aftermath only “modified” the tripolar power system by weakening Iraqi influence and clout, the Iraq War of 2003 transformed the balance of power into a new “artificial triangle” (Fürtig 2008: 141). Due to the “dramatic expansion of U.S. power” (Salem 2008: 17) that virtually replaced Iraq as a regional state actor, the new balance of power was now formed by Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United States (Fürtig 2008: 141). The occupation of Iraq and the U.S.-ruled Coalition Provisional Government (CPA)²⁵⁷ headed by Paul Bremer as a de facto proconsul and vested with executive, legislative, and judicial authority illustrated a new quality of a *Pax Americana* in the Gulf. Until the first Iraqi constitutional elections of January 2005, the USA could broadly influence the direction of Iraq’s future posture and politics. During the occupation period and interim phase to full Iraqi sovereignty, the USA was able to decisively re-shape Iraq’s domestic power relations and Iraq’s external, (oil)-political, and economic relations.

As a result of the external invasion and occupation of Iraq, the United States was considered to have become a “key player” in Gulf and Middle Eastern affairs (Shikara 2007: 1) that has “altered the geopolitics of the system” (Salem 2008: 1). However, during Iraq’s occupation and transitional period, it was still unforeseeable what kind of a new (im)balance of power in the Gulf would evolve and which place Saudi Arabia would take within these newly developing power equations.

3.2.2.2 Saudi Iraq Policy as a Conservative Balancing Strategy

Saudi Arabia’s Iraq policy between 2001 and 2005 was an overall conservative balancing policy that aimed to preserve the traditional balance of power in the Gulf. Saudi Arabia’s strategy was also of a defensive and non-assertive nature and at times indicated a tendency of buck-passing the responsibility of regional security to the U.S. alliance partner.

Prior to the invasion of Iraq, Saudi Arabia’s Iraq policy adhered to a conservative and conventional balancing strategy. It was all the same dedicated to defensively contain Iraqi

²⁵⁷ The CPA’s direct rule of Iraq lasted from April 2003 to June 2004. The CPA was replaced in June 2004 by an officially “sovereign and independent” Interim Government led by Iyad Allawi, Iraq’s first post-Saddam prime minister. Under the Interim Government, a new transitional constitution came into effect. The foreign occupation and interim phase on the way to full Iraqi sovereignty was symbolically ended by the first constitutional elections in January 2005.

power and threats in alliance with the United States. While during 2002 the United States had shifted to a policy of military pre-emption towards Iraq, Saudi Arabia held on to its previous conservative and defensive containment policy and to the means of conventional deterrence. The Saudi leadership did not join the new, assertive U.S. Iraq policy that abandoned the strategy of conventional containment and “smart sanctions”²⁵⁸ and that instead proclaimed the idea of regime change, counter-proliferation and democracy promotion (Denison 2003: 22). As well, the Saudi leadership did not confirm the U.S. accusations against Iraq of maintaining a secret WMD program and of sponsoring terrorism.

From a balance-of-power or balance-of-threat perspective, Saudi Arabia’s opposition to a war against Iraq and a regime change in Iraq appeared reasonable in several respects.

Firstly, the Saudi leadership considered the previous defensive Iraq policy of containment and conventional deterrence to be sufficiently effective to check Iraqi power and threats. The Saudi leadership did not consider Iraq an immediate security threat (Steinberg 2007a: 176) and doubted the links made by the USA between the Saddam regime and international terrorist organizations. Saudi Arabia hence opposed to the new pre-emptive U.S. strategy of “counter-proliferation” (Czempiel 2002: 4) which meant a military enforcement of non-proliferation.²⁵⁹ Even if Iraq had been somehow involved in sponsoring international terrorism, Saudi Arabia made very clear that it would only support the non-military part of the U.S. “War on Terror” and that it was not willing to participate in any military operation.²⁶⁰ Saudi Arabia’s and U.S.-American divergent calculations and perceptions of the Iraqi power and threat in the aftermath of 9/11 strenuously challenged the long-term Saudi-U.S. alliance and impeded a further concerted action in their Iraq policies.

Secondly, the pre-war balance of power in the Gulf guaranteed Saudi Arabia a rather comfortable position and a relatively stable environment. A change of the regional status quo would possibly prove disadvantageous for Saudi Arabia. A regime change and elimination of Iraqi power would upset the traditional tripolar balance of power in which Iraq and Iran counterbalanced each other. Saudi Arabia reckoned that a U.S.-led regime change of an Arab and Muslim fellow country could possibly destabilize the wider region and create new, unratable security threats. The Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saud Al-Faisal, warned in

²⁵⁸ Smart sanctions were only targeted at military or dual-use equipment. The concept of smart sanctions was passed by the UN Security Council in 2002 and replaced the former broader embargo against Iraq (*The Guardian*, May 15, 2002).

²⁵⁹ In contrast to the U.S. anti-terrorist strategy, Saudi officials underlined that the threat of international terrorism cannot be countered by military means. For the Saudi official opinion on anti-terrorism, see speech of the Saudi Permanent Representative to the UN in the 56th Session of the UN General Assembly on October 2, 2001, in New York.

²⁶⁰ See the speech of the Saudi Ambassador to the UK on July 9, 2002, in London.

February 2003 that an invasion of Iraq would be “solving one problem and creating five more”.²⁶¹

As well, Saudi Arabia saw its relative power position endangered and undermined by a new, possibly pro-U.S. Iraq. The Saudi leadership had to fear that the United States sought to make Iraq its alternative partner in the Gulf and hence replace Saudi Arabia as its closest ally (Russell 2006: 117). Several remarks made by U.S. officials and government advisors indicated that the USA questioned their security alliance with Saudi Arabia.²⁶² A new Iraq functioning as the future security pillar of the U.S. policy in the Gulf would contest Saudi Arabia’s privileged position as the strategically most important ally and oil-political partner of the United States in the Gulf region (Kirchner 2003: 57). The potential transformation of Iraq into a democratic and pluralist state as ambioned by the U.S. administration could possibly pose an ideological threat to the Saudi leadership (Fürtig 2008: 139-40) and would further weaken Saudi influence vis-à-vis the United States. Although the elimination of the Saddam regime in Iraq would in the first instance remove one of Saudi Arabia’s fiercest rivals and sources of threat in the Gulf, Saudi Arabia risked suffering a net loss in power. Saudi Arabia was hence eager to remain an indispensable ally for the USA within the future security order of the Gulf.

As a result, the Saudi leadership calculated the threat of changing the regional status quo as greater than keeping the present balance of power. An elimination of the Iraqi power carried the risk of a regional destabilization and perilous imbalance of power in the Gulf, and of undermining Saudi Arabia’s relative power position and privileged role as a strategic energy supplier of the West. The Saudi leadership thus made efforts to dissuade the U.S. administration from its war preparations. It championed the UN inspection process and tried to prevent a unilateral ultimatum of the United States against Iraq. Yet, Saudi Arabia had neither soft nor hard power capabilities to exert substantive leverage on the American superpower and to determine the further U.S. course towards Iraq. When a war seemed inevitable, the Saudi leadership sought to accommodate the USA by conditioned military cooperation. Saudi Arabia hoped to avoid at least a large-scale and long-term invasion of Iraq, but at the same time “wanted to remain a player in the game when the fate of its northern neighbor would be decided upon” (Fürtig 2008: 139).

²⁶¹ Cited according to Steven Simon in ‘The American Prospect’, May 20, 2007.

²⁶² Representatives and advisors of the U.S. administration openly discussed the option to abandon its alliance with Saudi Arabia and even considered the idea to occupy Saudi oil fields (Kirchner 2003: 57). In July 2002, a research analyst of the U.S. RAND Corporation think tank advocated in a briefing to the U.S. Defense Policy Board to profoundly rethink the alliance with Saudi Arabia since the Saudi leadership had proved untrustworthy with regard to the fighting of terrorism and Islamist extremism (see Simon 2007).

The fall of the Saddam regime had made a further containment and balancing policy towards Iraq redundant. Iraq had been eliminated as a power to be counterbalanced. With the defeat of the Iraqi Army and the toppling of the Iraqi government, Iraq was now “a playing field” of foreign powers, not “a player” (Gause 2010: 7). Iraq became a site where external influence and power competitions would critically determine its position and actorhood in the regional post-war order. The United States and the neighbors of Iraq – Iran, Syria, Turkey, Saudi Arabia – having individual stakes in the future of Iraq, wanted their interests to be preserved and to co-determine the terms of reconstruction. The political precedents created in the drafting of the regional post-war order could critically determine the future balance of power and interests in the Gulf. Saudi Arabia had therefore a vital interest in participating in Iraq’s reconstruction process.

From a balance-of-power logic, Saudi Arabia had a vested interest in restoring Iraq’s natural balancing function in the Gulf. The Saudi leadership preferred a united, sovereign and independent Iraq which would be strong enough to counterbalance Iran, but at the same not as powerful to pose a future security threat. A sovereign, peaceful and satiated Iraq was hence in Saudi Arabia’s national interest.

For this purpose, Saudi Arabia pursued a defensive and conservative balance-of-power policy with the aim to re-establish the traditional pre-war balance of power in the Gulf. Saudi Arabia’s strategy was defensive and conservative insofar as it aimed to preserve its national security and maintaining stability in the Gulf region and did not aspire to a re-distribution of power and interests in the Gulf. From a systemic and neorealist perspective, a defensive and conservative balance-of power policy would best serve Saudi Arabia’s national interests and security. As an economically leading but militarily weak regional power, Saudi Arabia had enjoyed a comfortable and relatively secure position in the traditional tripolar Gulf order when Iran and Iraq had held each other in check and had not managed to expand their influence towards the Arabian Peninsula.

Although the Saudi leadership had a significant interest in the stabilization and territorial integrity of the post-war Iraqi state, it lacked an active engagement and a consistent plan of reconstruction. Saudi Arabia rather relied on the resources and capabilities of the United States and buck-passed the responsibility of providing regional security to its U.S. ally. As it emphasized on various occasions, the Saudi leadership wanted the United States to be a “constructive leader” in Iraq’s reconstruction process²⁶³ and expected the USA to restore a stable and acceptable balance of power and interests. The Saudi leadership occasionally disagreed with the U.S.-led occupation authority on tactical questions. Yet, Saudi Arabia saw

²⁶³ See address of Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al-Faisal at the U.S.-Arab Economic Forum on September 30, 2003, in Detroit.

its near-term goal of preserving Iraq's unity and stability only to be effectively achieved by the leading role of the United States.

3.2.3 Managing Interdependence: An Institutional Analysis

3.2.3.1 The Rise in Multilevel Vulnerabilities

The period between 2001 and 2005 was marked by an increase in the Saudi state's multilevel vulnerabilities emanating from the global, regional and domestic environment.

At the global level, Saudi Arabia's security partnership with the United States was seriously strained after the events of 9/11. Observers of Saudi Arabia's external relations made out a "growing distance" (Gause 2003: 5) and a "decade of drift" (Russell 2006: 117) in the Saudi-U.S. security alliance. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, U.S. accusations against the Saudi leadership of having indirectly supported Islamist extremism through spreading extremist Wahhabi ideas or financing Islamist *madrassas* in Pakistan and elsewhere put the Saudi-U.S. security partnership into question. While some scholars detected a gradual Saudi disengagement from the United States by that time, others evaluated the Saudi-U.S. relations to remain "robust" (Aarts 2005: 402), "stable", and "close" (Steinberg 2007a: 176). Even though the Saudi leadership had begun to diversify its economic and security ties towards East Asia,²⁶⁴ by the end of 2005 the United States was all the same Saudi Arabia's ultimate and most powerful security guarantor and largest trading partner (Gause 2003: 22).

At the regional level, Saudi Arabia was challenged by a qualitatively new mobilization of non-state actors in the region. After the Iraq War of 2003, the al-Qaeda terrorist organization was able to enter and take hold in Iraq. The dramatic increase of cross-border activities of jihadis and foreign insurgents that were now infiltrating Iraq left Saudi Arabia more vulnerable to hardly controllable, transnational channels between non-state actors. The cross-border flow of jihadis and terrorists and the potential return of politically mobilized and militarily trained Saudi fighters from Iraq after 2003 constituted a new level of regional security interdependence. At the same time, the Saudi leadership became vulnerable to the new U.S. plans of a profound regional reformation. The region-wide U.S. pressuring of Middle Eastern states for democratization and political, societal and economic liberalization left the Saudi leadership sensitive to possible political spill-over effects to the Saudi Kingdom.

At the domestic level, the Saudi state became increasingly vulnerable to a growing homegrown Islamist extremism, on the one hand, and demands for political reforms coming from a domestic Islamo-liberal reform movement, on the other hand. Between 2003 and 2005 the Saudi Kingdom became target of Islamist terrorist attacks due to the enforced

²⁶⁴ Saudi Arabia maintained discrete security relations with Pakistan and openly extended its economic relations towards China and East Asia. In 2004, Saudi Arabia became China's principal oil supplier and signed a first contract with the Chinese energy company Sinopec for exploring and producing Saudi gas (Aarts 2005: 418-19).

terrorist campaign and insurgency of *al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula* (Steinberg 2007c: 178). The bombing of Western housing compounds in Riyadh in May 2003 were referred to by some observers as “the Saudi Intifada” (Simon 2007) or as a “watershed moment” (Salem 2008: 15) and a “wake-up call” (see Bronson 2005: 392) for the Saudi Kingdom since the terrorism of al-Qaeda finally reached its country of origin. The Saudi Kingdom found itself to be “no more immune” against Islamist terrorism than the West (Salem 2008: 15).²⁶⁵

In addition to domestic Islamist extremism, the Saudi leadership had to cope with intensified demands from the broad societal stream of “Islam liberal reformism” (Lacroix 2005). Sustained political and socio-economic challenges such as population growth and a rise of unemployment, declining per capita income, an obsolete educational system, and lacking political participation intensified domestic demands and petitions for social and political reforms²⁶⁶ from large sectors of the Saudi society. Parallel to this, the Saudi leadership was pressured by its U.S. ally to undergo comprehensive democratic and educational reforms. The U.S. demands for educational and socio-political reforms only exacerbated the pressure on the Saudi regime at the domestic level.

Saudi Arabia and the regional countries lacked mechanisms of regulated and institutionalized collective action in order to concertedly deal with growing transnational vulnerabilities and security risks that were set free by the collapse of Iraq as a sovereign state. Between 2001 and 2005, the state of regional institutionalization did not undergo a notable change in quality or quantity. A further integration of the GCC countries in security affairs or further serious steps towards collective security and defense were not achieved. Instead, some smaller GCC states could upgrade their bilateral economic and security ties with the United States, lessening thereby Saudi Arabia’s predominance in regional affairs.²⁶⁷ In 2004, U.S. troops were redeployed from Saudi Arabia to the newly established al-Udaid and al-Sailiya military bases in Qatar (Alkazaz 2005: 196). Bahrain’s signing of a bilateral free-trade agreement with the United States in 2004 undermined the GCC’s prospect of an economic union (see Niethammer 2006: 3). Yet, the ambitious political, economic, or diplomatic initiatives made by Qatar and some other smaller GCC states during this time did not seriously change the

²⁶⁵ According to Riedel and Saab, the period of increased local anti-Americanism following the U.S.-British invasion of Iraq was regarded by al-Qaeda as a “unique opportunity” to overthrow the Saudi monarchy (see Riedel/Saab 2008: 35). Eckard Wörtz posits that Al-Qaeda has suffered a loss of legitimacy and solidarity within the Saudi society when Al-Qaeda started to attack co-religionists in Saudi Arabia and Iraq (personal interview on February 16, 2009).

²⁶⁶ In January 2003, a group of Saudi (Sunni and Shiite) Islam liberal intellectuals handed in a petition to Crown Prince Abdullah. The manifest requested the implementation of political, economic and social reforms such as the creation of elected regional and national parliaments and measures against corruption or confessional discrimination. In December 2003, Saudi Islam liberals handed in another petition that this time attracted more the Sahwist Islamist ranks and repelled many liberals from signing (see Lacroix 2005: 50-54).

²⁶⁷ For the U.S. military relations with the smaller GCC countries see Gause (2003: 20).

patterns of asymmetrical interdependence within the GCC. The overall asymmetry within the GCC with regard to Saudi Arabia's predominance in the Arabian Peninsula in political, economic and security affairs could not be offset.

Although a substantial regional institutionalization was not achieved in the years after the Iraq War of 2003, the GCC countries and most notably Saudi Arabia expressed the necessity of a new regional security system that would more strongly consider indigenous regional needs and interests. In 2004, the Saudi foreign minister Saud Al-Faisal proposed in Bahrain a new framework for Gulf security.²⁶⁸ The internationally well noticed Saudi proposal was a comprehensive and multilevel²⁶⁹ approach to security and aimed for a new cooperative and inclusive²⁷⁰ regional security system.

The period between 2001 and 2005 was marked by a rise and shift of multilevel vulnerabilities that were due to a new degree of cross-border activities of non-state actors. The failing state of Iraq that could no longer successfully assert its domestic authority of state offered ample opportunity for all kinds of transnational or sub-state actors to exert influence in Iraq and beyond. The mobilization and strengthening of both Islamist extremists and Islamo-liberal reformists at Saudi Arabia's domestic level on the one hand, and the persistent dependence on U.S. security guarantees on the other hand, once more intensified the dual security dilemma of the Saudi leadership.

Projects of regional institutionalization in order to deal with new multiple security risks did not make serious qualitative advances despite expressed demands for an indigenous security order and comprehensive regional reforms. To the contrary, some smaller GCC states could upgrade their bilateral economic and security ties with the United States at the expense of intra-regional cooperation under Saudi patronage.

3.2.3.2 Trading-Off between External and Domestic Security Needs

From a multi-level and multi-actor perspective, the Saudi Iraq policy between 2001 and 2005 can be largely conceived of as a function of the Saudi state's weighing external against domestic security needs. The Saudi state had to increasingly manage security risks emanating from the domestic, regional and global level. The growing incompatibility of

²⁶⁸ See Prince Saud Al-Faisal's speech on security at the Bahrain seminar of the IISS on December 5, 2004 in Manama, Bahrain.

²⁶⁹ Al-Faisal recognized the interplay of domestic and external security. A new framework for Gulf security should be based on three interdependent components: A sub-national component of comprehensive domestic political, economic, social, and educational reforms in the Gulf countries, an international component of a further engagement of emerging Asian powers such as China and India, and a regional component of further regional integration and stabilization.

²⁷⁰ Al-Faisal suggested four pillars of a new regional security framework. These pillars should be (1) a further political, military and economic integration of the GCC countries, (2) an inclusion of Yemen into the regional security framework, (3) a "safe, stable and unified Iraq" and (4) a "friendly, prosperous, and secure Iran" that would "play a vital role in maintaining the security of the region".

domestic and external security interests may account for Saudi Arabia's evasive and ambiguous Iraq policy during that period and for the occasional discrepancy between rhetoric and action of the Saudi leadership.

Between 2001 and 2005, Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy became increasingly sensitive to the domestic and regional public opinion. In the pursuit of its Iraq policy, the Saudi leadership had to take domestic and regional sensibilities into consideration. Political pressures from the public opinion and concerns for legitimacy of the domestic regime may explain for the ambiguity and cautiousness in the Saudi Iraq policy and for the discretion in cooperating with the United States. In the aftermath of the events of 9/11, the Saudi administration had to deal with a domestic public that overwhelmingly opposed the U.S. "war against terror"²⁷¹ and in particular the U.S.-led war against Iraq.²⁷² The Saudi society and religious establishment widely disapproved a U.S. military invasion of Iraq. A growing majority of the Saudi society also disapproved the depth of the Saudi-U.S. security partnership in general and the economic and security dependence of the Saudi Kingdom on the United States as an external, non-Muslim ally.²⁷³ The ambiguity of the Saudi Iraq policy at that time may illustrate the degree to which the Saudi-U.S. security partnership had become both an asset and liability for the Saudi security (see Niblock 2006: 143). Whereas the Saudi leadership has been heavily dependent on U.S. external security and defense guarantees, it needed to keep a reasonable distance to the U.S. regional and Iraq policy for the sake of domestic credibility and regime legitimacy.

Islamist extremists and Saudi insurgents in Iraq posed an additional threat to Saudi security and may as well account for Saudi Arabia's strategy towards Iraq. These non-state security risks were a direct or indirect result of the fall of the Iraqi regime in 2003. A large number of the foreign infiltrators in Iraq were thought to be of Saudi nationality.²⁷⁴ As well, large parts of the financing of the Sunni insurgency in Iraq were believed to come from private Saudi sources (Salem 2008: 15). The Saudi state therefore had legitimate concerns about possible spillover effects and the return of radicalized Saudi fighters from Iraq. For this reason, the

²⁷¹ According to a Zogby International poll in March 2002, 57% of the Saudis polled opposed the U.S. efforts to fight terrorism while 51% had a general unfavorable opinion of the American people. In March 2003, 95% of the Saudis polled showed to different degrees an unfavorable attitude towards the United States (see Gause 2003: 8-9).

²⁷² Prior to the Iraq War, 97% of the Saudi population was estimated to oppose any form of involvement in a U.S. attack on Iraq (see Fürtig 2008: 138). Parts of the Saudi society also believed the Iraq War to be fought more for the security of Israel rather than for oil security or democratization (according to a personal interview with Suliman Toufik, former professor of political science, on May 29, 2009, in Jeddah).

²⁷³ See Russell 2006: 126

²⁷⁴ It has been estimated that 12 to 25 percent of the foreign fighters in Iraq were of Saudi nationality (see Prados 2006: 7).

Saudi leadership pursued the dual strategy of both an effective fighting of the anarchical conditions and insurgency in Iraq, and of a conservative reconstruction policy with the aim of a moderate and gradual domestic transition in Iraq. The Saudi leadership disapproved the rapid and radical de-Baathification and de-militarization policy of the U.S.-led CPA in Iraq that dismissed and banned large numbers of former members of the Iraqi Baath party and disbanded the Iraqi armed forces and intelligence services.²⁷⁵ According to the Saudi standpoint, the Baath Party and Iraqi Army were key institutions that would have been needed for the country's reconstruction process. Instead, the dismissals excluded large parts of the (Sunni) population from the political rebuilding process and could raise potential recruits for the Iraqi insurgency (see McMillan 2006: 11).

From 2001 to 2005, Saudi Arabia and the GCC countries had difficulties in pursuing a joint Iraq policy that would integrate the various needs and interests of the regional actors. With regard to increasing state and non-state security risks after 9/11 and the Iraq War of 2003, Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries had expressed the desire for a more indigenous and inclusive security system based on regional solidarity and a strengthening of the GCC integration process.²⁷⁶ However, in their Iraq policy, the GCC countries were de facto divided and lacked a united strategy independent from the U.S. position. Although the GCC officially opposed the Iraq War and endorsed a multilateral, diplomatic solution,²⁷⁷ several GCC countries were de facto involved in the invasion of Iraq due to bilateral contractual obligations to their U.S. ally (Alkazaz 2003: 197). On account of bilateral security partnerships and a high degree of asymmetric interdependence between the United States and the GCC countries, the Arab Gulf monarchies continued to pragmatically cooperate with the U.S.-led occupation regime in Iraq in the aftermath of the Iraq War (see Alkazaz 2004: 198).

The Saudi Iraq policy from 2001 to 2005 laid open the acuteness of Saudi Arabia's 'dual security dilemma' of coping with domestic pressures and meeting demands from its extra-regional alliance partner. In its Iraq policy, the Saudi leadership had to make difficult choices among competing, sometimes non-complementary goals and find a reasonable balance between sustaining the credibility and stability of the domestic regime, countering non-state, transnational terrorist threats, and managing the domestically contested security partnership with the United States (Niblock 2006: 170). The Saudi state's attempt to accommodate both

²⁷⁵ While the de-Baathification order affected an estimated number of 20,000 to 40,000 people, the decreed disarmament of the Iraqi forces left approximately 300,000 soldiers unemployed (see Gause 2010: 157-58).

²⁷⁶ Also Oman uttered in 2004 the desire of building a new regional security system including Iraq, Iran, Yemen, and Pakistan (see Alkazaz 2005: 197).

²⁷⁷ See the Closing Statement of the GCC Supreme Council on December 31, 2001, in Muscat; see as well the Closing Statement of the GCC Supreme Council on December 2, 2002, in Doha

its U.S. alliance partner and the domestic and regional public may account for the occasional discrepancy between rhetoric and action in the Saudi Iraq policy.²⁷⁸

The blurring between domestic and external security needs, the rise in interconnected and multilevel security risks, and a growing consideration of state-society relations in the formulation of Saudi Arabia's foreign-policy strategy have altogether decisively shaped the Saudi Iraq policy between 2001 and 2005. Nevertheless, in its essence, the Saudi Iraq policy has given priority to external demands of the U.S. alliance partner and adhered to a conventional conflict management on a bilateral and extra-regional basis.

3.2.4 Complying with Foreign-Policy Roles: A Constructivist Analysis

3.2.4.1 The Saudi State's Post-9/11 Discourse on a 'Legitimate' Iraq Policy

Between 2001 and 2005, the Saudi state's debating about a "legitimate" and "possible" Iraq policy was embedded within a larger discourse on Islam, culture and identity. The question about the dealing with Iraq before and after the Iraq War of 2003 was answered by the Saudi state with reference to universal principles of international law, and the legitimate right of self-determination of the regional states and societies according to their distinct Muslim and Arab identity and value system.

After the events of 9/11, the Saudi state confessed to a conservative and peaceful version of Islam. It denounced the creation of a natural link between terrorism and a particular religion or political system. In the aftermath of 9/11, the Saudi leadership warned against the international or Western association of terrorism with Islam, especially with the strict and orthodox Saudi Wahhabi interpretation of Islam.²⁷⁹ The Western media was regarded as biased and was thought to generally denounce and stigmatize Muslims and Arabs.²⁸⁰ The Saudi ruling elite asserted that the Islamic faith was an equal religion among others and should enjoy equal rights and respect.

At the same time, the Saudi leadership emphasized the distinctiveness of the Muslim and Arab identity. It advocated the legitimate right of an own cultural, political, or economic development. A modernization and reformation at the domestic and regional level should therefore be in accordance with the indigenous identity, culture and value system.

²⁷⁸ According to Mishary Al-Nuaim, vice dean at King Saud University, the contradiction between appeasing the Saudi ultra-conservative religious establishment and at the same time keeping a realist foreign-policy approach towards the United States became more than ever apparent after 9/11 (Al-Nuaim interviewed on June 6, 2009 in Riyadh).

²⁷⁹ Saudi ambassador Al-Qusaibi mentioned the "hard-to-die myth" of the relationship between Wahhabism and violence (see Al-Qusaibi's speech on "Saudi Arabian Myths" at the University of Westminster, London, on July 9, 2002).

²⁸⁰ See the Saudi ambassador Shobokshi's statement on terrorism at the UN General Assembly on October 2nd, 2001 in New York.

With regard to its Iraq policy it meant that the Saudi regime would consider any outside attempts to impose external reforms on a Muslim or Arab country or dictate the political, economical or societal development to be an illegitimate interference. U.S. plans of a regional transformation and regime change in Iraq were regarded as a violation of the regional countries' right of self-determination. Saudi Arabia officially stressed that the regional societies were "not laboratories for experimentation or stages for adventurous schemes"²⁸¹ and "not a theater for individual initiatives".²⁸² After the regime change in Iraq, the Saudi leadership proposed that the future domestic development should be determined by Iraq itself as "a proud and ancient nation". The Saudi state expected the United States to constructively contribute to the rebuilding of Iraq, but demanded that the priorities in Iraq's reconstruction process "should be set by the Iraqi people, not outsiders".²⁸³ At the same time, the Saudi leadership felt obliged to offer Muslim and Arab solidarity to its "Iraqi brothers" and considered it their duty to actively help Iraq to "become once again an independent free Arab Muslim state".²⁸⁴

The Saudi ruling elite made also clear that a distinct Muslim and Arab identity would not demand the dissociation from other nations. Even though it was impossible for the Saudi leadership to legitimize or approve of the regional policy of their U.S. alliance partner, it did not question the maintenance of the Saudi-U.S. partnership as a whole. Instead, Saudi officials claimed on many occasions (in front of Western audiences) that supporters of al-Qaeda and others were trying to "drive a wedge" between Saudi Arabia and the USA.²⁸⁵ However, for the Saudi leadership, there have remained a disquieting feeling and the question in how far it can trust in and predict the future U.S. foreign policy.²⁸⁶

In its debating and defining of a "legitimate" policy towards Iraq, the Saudi state referred as well to universal principles from international law such as state sovereignty, the principle of justice and equality of nations, and the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states. Saudi officials argued before the Iraq War that the Iraq crisis was simply an "arms control issue"²⁸⁷ that should be solved by multilateral and peaceful conflict resolution.

²⁸¹ See Prince Saud Al-Faisal's speech at a GCC-EU meeting on May 17, 2004, in Brussels.

²⁸² See the interview with Saudi Foreign Affairs Advisor Adel Al-Jubeir published in the 'National Journal' on May 11, 2002.

²⁸³ See the Address of Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal at the U.S.-Arab Economic Forum on September 30, 2003, in Detroit.

²⁸⁴ See Crown Prince Abdullah's statement at the OIC Summit in Malaysia on October 17, 2003.

²⁸⁵ See, for example, the interview with Saudi Foreign Affairs Advisor Adel Al-Jubeir published in the 'National Journal' on May 11, 2002; Crown Prince Abdullah's interview in the 'Time' magazine on February 26, 2002; Address of Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal at the U.S.-Arab Economic Forum on September 30, 2003, in Detroit.

²⁸⁶ According to Khalid Al-Khater, Minister Plenipotentiary of the GCC (personally interviewed on May 24, 2009 in Riyadh).

²⁸⁷ See Foreign Policy Advisor Adel Al-Jubeir's interview on NBC-TV on August 11, 2002.

Saudi Arabia thus advocated “preemptive diplomacy” instead of “preemptive war”.²⁸⁸ The Saudi administration contemplated about whether a UN resolution would legitimate a war on Iraq and eventually resumed that an attack on Iraq would “under no circumstances” be a possible and acceptable option for the Saudi Kingdom.

Between 2001 and 2005, the Saudi state’s definition of a “legitimate” and “appropriate” Iraq policy ruled out the possibility of engaging in a war against Iraq. According to the proclaimed principle of self-determination, the Saudi state granted Iraq the right of a self-determined modernization and reconstruction process according to indigenous norms and values. Saudi Arabia’s role-conception of being a protector of Muslim and Arab affairs also obliged the Saudi state to actively support its neighbor country in averting external interference and in rebuilding the country.

3.2.4.2 Saudi Arabia’s Iraq Policy in a Credibility Trap?

From the events of 9/11 to 2005, the Saudi state had difficulties to fully comply with its proclaimed foreign-policy norms and role conception in the pursuit of its Iraq policy. Saudi Arabia’s state identity and role conception came into conflict with intense external pressures and dependencies. Saudi Arabia’s Iraq policy was trapped in the dilemma of accommodating demands from external alliance partners and at the same time complying with indigenous norms and principles. The Saudi Iraq policy hence risked to incur a credibility gap between proclaimed state norms and principles and diverging action.

With reference to the principle of state sovereignty and in opposition to an alleged general suspicion against Muslim societies and countries, the Saudi state did not apply the “fight against terror” to Iraq as a sovereign state. Saudi Arabia did not follow the U.S. demonization of Iraq after 9/11 and officially declared it would refrain from any involvement and engagement in a military attack against Iraq. In an address on Saudi television, Crown Prince Abdullah stressed that the Saudi armed forces “will, under no circumstances, step one foot into Iraqi territory” and stated that “a united free and independent Iraq, [is] a principle that we refuse to negotiate or discuss”.²⁸⁹ Saudi Arabia’s official position on the Iraq War was declared on March 18, 2003 by foreign minister Saud Al-Faisal: “under no circumstances will the Kingdom participate in the war against the brotherly nation of Iraq. [...] We avoid engaging in a reckless adventure that endangers the safety of our country and people.”²⁹⁰

²⁸⁸ See Foreign Minister Saud Al-Faisal’s Address at the UN General Assembly on September 29, 2003 in New York.

²⁸⁹ Cited in Al-Rasheed 2006: 156

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

At various points, the Saudi Iraq policy revealed a growing tension between state principles and action. Contradictory to proclaimed state norms and principles, the Saudi leadership indirectly and clandestinely supported the U.S. military operation against Iraq, yet only reluctantly and on the basis of tacit and limited cooperation. The Saudi administration prohibited a direct military attack against Iraq from Saudi territory. According to Al-Rasheed, the Saudi leadership “opted for an indecisive position” that was the result of a “confused rhetoric of open objections to the war in regional Arab meetings and forums” (Al-Rasheed 2006: 153) on the one hand, and partial concessions to the United States on the other hand. In the aftermath of the Iraq War, Saudi Arabia’s Iraq policy could not fulfil in every respect the role of a solidary and actively engaged Muslim and Arab neighbor country. Saudi Arabia’s temporal passivity and relatively low engagement in the stabilization and reconstruction process in Iraq may weaken the credibility of Saudi Arabia’s role conception. The Saudi reluctance to release the Iraqi debt cumulated during the Saddam era, the refraining from opening a Saudi embassy in Iraq, and the Saudi failure to stop the flow of Saudi insurgents into Iraq apparently contradicted with proclaimed principles of Muslim-Arab solidarity and collegiality.

The Saudi Iraq policy between 2001 and 2005 occasionally conflicted with state norms and role conceptions and possibly left a credibility gap between state rhetoric and action. However, Saudi Arabia’s state identity and principles still acted as an *a priori* constraint during the making of Saudi Arabia’s Iraq policy and defined the range of “absolutely impossible” policy choices. The Saudi leadership hence did not trespass certain foreign-policy imperatives and principles.

3.2.5 Interim Findings

From a theoretical perspective, the Saudi Iraq policy between 2001 and 2005 has shown a varying correlation with systemic and state-actor threats, interdependent multilevel and non-state pressures and demands, and state identity and role conceptions.

The Saudi disapproval of a war against Iraq underlay - among other considerations - a rational cost-benefit calculation. Saudi Arabia calculated the Iraqi threat and the risks of a regime change for regional security and stability more realistically than its U.S. alliance partner.²⁹¹ Since Iraq constituted no immediate security threat, Saudi Arabia’s call for the continuity of the conventional containment and status-quo policy towards Iraq was in accordance with pragmatic balance-of-power considerations.

²⁹¹ According to Steinberg, personally interviewed on September 24, 2009, in Berlin. The Saudi side also underlined that its U.S. alliance partner seriously disregarded vital Saudi interests (according to a personal interview with Khalid Al-Dakhil, former professor of political sociology, on June 4, 2009, in Riyadh).

Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy between 2001 and 2005 may also suggest a growing importance of state-society relations and non-state, multilevel security risks. The Saudi Iraq policy after 9/11 had to deal with state and non-state pressures and demands at the domestic, regional, and global level. Ambiguities in Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy might be best explained by the Saudi state's dilemma of trading-off between different, competing security interests and managing tensions between societal, transnational, and global demands (see Niblock 2006). In the search of an acceptable balance between the accommodation of external great power demands and societal demands, the Saudi state had to make concessions to its U.S. ally and at the same time reassure the public. Even though the Saudi and regional public opinion did not fully drive Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy, the Saudi Iraq policy became sensitive to a minimal societal acceptance (Gause 2003: 10). A multi-level and multi-actor perspective that considers the interplay between state-society and state-to-state relations may more comprehensively grasp the Saudi Iraq policy during this period than a systemic, state-centered neorealist perspective. The fact that systemic (neo)realism largely ignores non-state threats and pressures coming from the domestic or regional environment accounts for its analytical weakness at this point (see also Stansfield 2008: 117-18).

In addition to pragmatic considerations of the regional balance of power and multilevel state or non-state security threats, the Saudi Iraq policy of this period has as well been pre-determined and constrained to a certain extent by the Saudi state's identity and role-conception. Between 2001 and 2005, external pressures and dependencies, and pragmatic state interests came increasingly in conflict with state norms and principles, and the Saudi state's understanding of a "legitimate" or "appropriate" Iraq policy. Saudi Arabia's state identity and role conception as a Muslim and Arab "brother country" of Iraq acted as an *a priori* constraint on the Saudi Iraq policy and defined the range of "absolutely impossible" policy options. While the U.S. Iraq policy of unilateral force against Iraq was no longer in accordance with Saudi state norms and principles, the Saudi leadership had to ascertain an Iraq policy that would be within the legitimate realm of the Saudi state's value system and at the same time would not cause a rupture of Saudi Arabia's traditional security partnership with the United States.

3.3 The Post-Occupation Period since 2005

3.3.1 Saudi Arabia's "New Iraq" Policy: Between Mediate and Assertive Engagement

Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy in Iraq's post-occupation period since the first Iraqi general elections of 2005 has fluctuated between a wary engagement and a more open assertion of

Saudi interests. The key goals of Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy have been the preservation of Iraq's independence, national unity and territorial integrity, and the aversion of a large-scale external interference in Iraq's domestic affairs.

Saudi Arabia's policy towards "New Iraq" has been marked by a continuous, either subtle or more openly expressed discontent with the new political status quo in post-occupation Iraq. The Saudi Iraq policy since 2005 has shown signs of a defensively revisionist outline. It has aimed to halt sectarian and pro-Iranian elements and strongly federalist ideas in Iraq's political elite and to cautiously modify Iraq's domestic power structures in order to ensure a greater political role for Sunnis in the new Iraqi state.

The years of 2005 and 2006 stand for a passive and reactionary Saudi policy of mediate and wary engagement and the lack of a positive Saudi strategy towards Iraq. Since 2007, the Saudi Iraq policy has shown an alternation between a passive rejection of the status quo and an increasingly open and active assertion of Saudi interests. At times, Saudi Arabia showed first signs of a more independent Iraq policy that was part of a more assertive Saudi policy strategy (*siyasa hujumiyya*) in regional affairs.

After 2005, Saudi Arabia had a primordial interest in the stability of Iraq as a unified state but found itself in a quandary about how to deal with the new Shiite-led interim government in Iraq (Raphaeli 2009). The Saudi political strategy towards Iraq in the aftermath of Iraq's 2005 general elections was rather reserved and passively observant.

Saudi Arabia's main concerns in post-election Iraq referred to the new political situation of an empowerment of Iraqi Shiites (and Kurds) at the expense of Iraqi Sunnis, the rise of sectarian-inspired violence, centrifugal forces and demands for a loose federation and decentralization of power in Iraq, as well as the growing Iranian influence on various political actors in Iraq. The Saudi Iraq policy pursued a long-term national reconciliation and the prevention of a political and social dismemberment of Iraq along sectarian or ethnic faultlines.

Towards the newly elected, Shiite-dominated Iraqi government the Saudi leadership remained politically distanced. Saudi Arabia favored as the best possible alternative an inclusive, cross-sectarian government of national unity that would allow Iraqi Sunnis to keep an important role in the Iraqi state. Nonetheless, the Saudi ruling elite officially approved the new Iraqi government and hoped that the later Shiite-led government of Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki would be determined to foster national unity.²⁹²

Until 2007, Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy showed an overall wary and mediate engagement and a passive rejectionism towards the new political development in post-election Iraq. The Saudi

²⁹² See the addresses of Saudi foreign minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal at a UN high level meeting on Iraq on September 18, 2006, and at the UN General Assembly on September 22, 2006, in New York.

leadership asserted its interests in Iraq rather mediately. The Saudi Iraq policy was often times reduced to appealing to the United States to push through a certain policy (Steinberg 2008: 29). Until 2006, the Saudi leadership heavily relied on the United States stabilizing Iraq's domestic security situation and defending Saudi security interests (see Gause 2010: 180). When the sectarian-inspired violence in Iraq reached its peak after the bombing of a Shiite shrine in Samarra in February 2006 and threatened to provoke the collapse of the Iraqi state, Saudi Arabia adopted a more firm position on Iraq. The Saudi leadership undertook efforts for an inter-sectarian reconciliation,²⁹³ but at the same time reserved the option of openly supporting - be it politically or military - Iraqi Sunnis in case of a failure to reach a balanced solution to the inter-sectarian conflicts.²⁹⁴ The by then more bluntly and openly expressed Saudi discontent with Iraq's domestic political and security situation was majorly addressed at the United States. Various parts of the Saudi government urged the U.S. not to withdraw its troops until the situation has been stabilised, and to ensure a fair Sunni share of power in the new Iraqi state (Steinberg 2007a: 180).²⁹⁵

After 2007, there can be discerned an oscillation in Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy between a "cold-shoulder policy" (Bar'el 2010) and a reaching out to the Iraqi government. The Saudi government pursued the strategy of both being on good terms with the Iraqi government where possible and blocking sectarian and pro-Iranian elements in the Iraqi political elite. Saudi Arabia's endeavor to establish closer relations with Iraq's political leadership and challenge Iranian influence on Iraqi politics marked a more direct and active Saudi Iraq policy.²⁹⁶ Saudi Arabia as a rather "late arriver" (Gause 2010: 247) to Iraq's political game appeared less ready to compromise than back in 2003 or 2005. Saudi Arabia occurred more often as an active and "direct manager" (Salem 2008: 2) of regional and Iraqi affairs.

As well, the Saudi Iraq policy gradually lessened its alignment with the U.S. strategy and sporadically showed different tactical approaches to assert Saudi interests (see Gause 2010:

²⁹³ In October 2006, Saudi Arabia invited under the auspices of the OIC senior Shiite and Sunni Iraqi clerics to Mecca in order to agree on a declaration of reconciliation. Yet, the thereby approved "Mecca Document" did not attract much international recognition (see Henderson 2007: 37).

²⁹⁴ A much noticed statement was that of a consultant to Prince Turki Al-Faisal, Nawaf Obeid, who warned in a *Washington Post* article in November 2006 of a "massive Saudi intervention to stop the Iranian-backed Shiite militias from butchering Sunnis" in case that the United States withdrew its troops and left Iraq in chaos. Even though the Saudi government disassociated itself from the article, there were unconfirmed signs that "Saudi Arabia was thinking of sending a military force to the primarily Sunni Al-Anbar Province if the new U.S. strategy in Iraq failed" (see Raphaeli 2009).

²⁹⁵ The question of the U.S. troops withdrawal occurred after the release of the Iraqi Study Group (ISG) report in December 2006, also known as the Baker-Hamilton report. The ISG report recommended, among other measures, the U.S. government to support the Iraqi Army in resuming the responsibility for Iraq's security so that U.S. troops may gradually withdraw (ISG report, pp. 41-43).

According to Ted Karasik, the Saudi leadership held a somehow ambivalent position on the U.S. military presence. On the one hand, it wished for a U.S. troops withdrawal, on the other hand it was also afraid of the consequences of a U.S. withdrawal (personally interviewed on February 14, 2009).

²⁹⁶ Simon Henderson (2007: 38) labels this Saudi policy as a "two-track policy strategy" towards Iraq.

180). Since 2007, Saudi Arabia has at times pursued a more independent Iraq policy that was partly autonomous from and less reliant on the U.S. strategy (see Gause 2010: 180). The widely noted statement of the [U.S.] “illegitimate foreign occupation” of Iraq made by King Abdullah at the Summit of the Arab League in March 2007²⁹⁷ was generally interpreted as a Saudi drift from the U.S. Iraq strategy.²⁹⁸ In the Iraqi political arena, Saudi Arabia further supported the secular Shiite and former Iraqi Prime Minister, Iyad Allawi, as its political favorite when the United States urged to support Prime Minister Maliki (Gause 2010: 180).

Saudi Arabia’s support of the Maliki government has been rather low and volatile. The Saudi leadership has time and again alleged Maliki of nurturing sectarian attitudes²⁹⁹ and of being under the severe influence of Iran. Even though Saudi Arabia participated in the UN “International Compact for Iraq” that committed the involved countries to economic and political support of the Iraqi government, King Abdullah and Prince Saud Al-Faisal refused to meet Maliki prior to the ministerial meeting of the “International Compact” in April 2007.³⁰⁰ At times when Maliki’s tone became more nationalist and less sectarian, the Saudi leadership showed less discontent with the Maliki government (Steinberg 2008: 24).

Until today, the Saudi government has refrained from appointing an ambassador to Iraq³⁰¹ and has since a long time refused to forgive the Iraqi debt that had been accumulated under the Saddam era.³⁰²

Saudi Arabia’s Iraq policy since the Iraqi elections of 2005 generally aimed to protect Iraq’s unity and territorial integrity against sectarian and ethnic separatism or strongly federalist ambitions. At the same time, the Saudi leadership was concerned with blocking external - most notably Iranian - influence that could undermine Iraq’s state sovereignty and independence. In its foreign-policy strategy towards Iraq, Saudi Arabia was fluctuating between passivity (see Al Qassemi 2009) or mediate engagement, and sporadic outbreaks of foreign-policy activism. The Saudi leadership was working for cross-sectarian reconciliation and the nascency of a strong, but non-chauvinist Iraqi nationalism as a buttress of Iraq’s national unity. At the same time, it also showed its readiness to drastically support Iraqi Sunni groups in case that Iraqi and external actors would bolster sectarian division.

²⁹⁷ See King Abdullah’s address to the 19th Summit of the Arab League on March 28, 2007.

²⁹⁸ See BBC news, March 29, 2007.

²⁹⁹ Saudi Arabia accused Maliki of inflaming sectarian division in Iraq (see Raphaeli 2009).

³⁰⁰ See Robin Wright, *The Washington Post*, April 29, 2007.

³⁰¹ Saudi Arabia, as well as other Arab countries, officially names the lack of inner security in Iraq as the reason why the Kingdom has so far not opened a diplomatic mission in Baghdad (see also Habboush in *The National* on July 7, 2008).

³⁰² Iraq is said to owe the Saudi government US\$ 9 billion in debt, while private Saudi firms and banks reportedly hold about US\$ 19 billion (see Prados 2006: 8).

3.3.2 Balancing Power and Threats: A Neorealist Analysis

3.3.2.1 The Regional (Im)balance of Power: A New Perilous Polarization?

After 2005, the re-shaping of the regional balance of power ushered in by the Iraq War became more conspicuous and definite. The new emerging balance of power in the Gulf was marked by an elevation of Iran's power and influence in regional affairs. The new regional balance shows signs of a dualist order in which Iran and the United States alongside with pro-U.S. allies form the two poles of power in the Gulf. In the post-occupation era, Iraq has not yet re-turned into an autonomous pillar of power and does not occupy a definite place within the Gulf's new geostrategic pattern. In the looming polarized order, Iraq has paradoxically been a strategic partner of Iran and the United States likewise.

After 2005, Iran's empowerment in strategic, military and ideological terms became manifest. Within the new regional power equations, Iran's power has been elevated in various respects (see Shikara 2007: 2; Salem 2008: 18). From the perspective of the Arab Gulf states, Iran was seen as the unintended "real beneficiary" of the Iraq War (El-Hokayem/Legrenzi 2006: 2) at the expense of the Arab Gulf monarchies.³⁰³ The regime change in Iraq removed one of Iran's fiercest rivals in the region and gave Iran new opportunities to exert power and influence. At the same time, Iran's nuclear program which was more assertively pursued after 2006³⁰⁴ and Iran's ambitious missile program threatened to exacerbate a regional military imbalance of power³⁰⁵ to the detriment of the Arab Gulf states. The Saudi Kingdom has founded itself in the undesirable regional quagmire of being afraid of a nuclear-armed Iran, on the one hand, while at the same time fearing both possibilities of a U.S.-Iranian 'grand bargain'³⁰⁶ that could leave out Gulf Arab interests and of a U.S. military strike against the Iranian regime.

The rise of Iranian power and influence became particularly evident in Iraq's post-occupation political game. International academic and foreign-policy debates have drawn the much noticed caricature of a "power vacuum" filled by Iran. According to this image, Iran was able to fill the "strategic void" (Al-Shaiji 2008: 111) and "power vacuum" (*al-faragh*) (see Sharbil 2009) left after the removal of the Saddam regime and the end of the U.S. occupation. Iran

³⁰³ According to Abdullah Hamid Al-Din, Iran has become the central security issue for the Arab Gulf countries before the issue of Iraq, Palestine or Afghanistan (see *Dar Al-Hayat*, June 7, 2010).

³⁰⁴ In 2002, Iran's nuclear program was revealed to the international public. In February 2006, Iran resumed its uranium enrichment program despite severe international protest.

³⁰⁵ Even though Iran's nuclear program is officially claimed as a civilian one, the Gulf Arab neighbors and other countries see as well strong indications for Iranian military intentions.

³⁰⁶ The issue of a U.S.-Iranian 'grand bargain' came up in 2003 when Iran offered the United States a comprehensive settlement of their bilateral conflicts. Even though the United States did not take up this offer, the issue has widely bothered the Arab Gulf states. Saleh Al-Mani, dean at the King Saud University in Riyadh, stated that even if the Arab Gulf states are really afraid of a possible 'grand bargain', he does not consider such a U.S.-Iranian deal as very realistic (personal interview on May 25, 2009 in Riyadh).

became a direct and one of the most influential external players in Iraq's domestic affairs. As external state actors such as the United States, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, or Syria got directly or indirectly involved in Iraqi politics, Iraq runs the risk to become an arena of external power competitions and a battlefield of proxy wars (Al-Shaiji 2008: 103).

Iraq's present and future strategic alignment may decisively shape the coming balance of power in the Gulf and wider region. Iraq maintains strategic relations to both pro-U.S., Sunni Arab states and the anti-American camp backed by Iran.

With regard to Iraq's strategic function in the Gulf, Iran's augmented influence in Iraq has become a highly debated issue within the larger debate about the future balance of power in the Gulf. Iran's notably grown influence in Iraq bears the potential that Iraq may become a future ally or client of Iran. The extent to which Iraq permits Iranian influence and backs Iranian political positions in regional affairs will decisively affect the geopolitical balance and Saudi Arabia's sphere of influence in the Gulf. However, Iran's clout and leverage on Iraq remains a very vague and highly discussed figure. Compared to Saudi Arabia, Iran enjoys more allies and assets in Iraq (see Gause 2010: 248). Iran has been able to rapidly develop extensive political, economic, and religious relations with post-Saddam Iraq and enjoys considerable influence with the new Iraqi government under Maliki (Barzegar 2008). Iran maintains close relations to a wide spectrum of political actors in Iraq such as the Shiite ISCI (Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq),³⁰⁷ the Shiite Dawa party of Prime Minister Maliki, the more radical movement of Muqtada al-Sadr, or major Kurdish parties. Iran's influence in Iraq has also been of military nature. Iran has been able to establish a strong military presence in Iraq. Iran's security apparatus is said to have gained a "firm footing" in Iraq's new security forces (Ehteshami 2006: 353). Through its Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), Iran has armed and trained militants in Iraq (Kaye/Wehrey 2009: 39) such as the Badr brigade that forms the militia of the ISCI.

The new emerging balance of power in the Gulf so far shows no tendency of a re-establishment of the traditional tripolar order in the short or medium term. Iraq neither constitutes a classical state threat (El-Hokayem/Legrenzi 2006: 2) nor functions as a counterbalance against Iran. In the post-occupation era, Iraq has remained a "passive player" (Bahgat 2008) within the Gulf state system. The new balance of power is marked by a dualist and antagonist outline that carries the danger of a perilous polarization and confrontation between the United States and pro-U.S., Arab states on the one hand and Iran and anti-American forces on the other hand. Iraq has become the critical site of the new geopolitical and ideological dividing line in the Gulf. Iraq's strategic outline in the Gulf will

³⁰⁷ Before 2007, ISCI was known as SCIRI (Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq).

decisively shape the future balance of power in the Gulf. Paradoxically, even though Iraq maintains strategic relations with both Iran and the United States (see Malmvig 2009: 22; Gause 2010: 173), it has so far become neither a pillar of the pro-U.S., Arab camp nor a client of Iran.

3.3.2.2 Balancing External Influence in Iraq

With the end of the U.S. occupation and interim regime in Iraq, Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy became a sophisticated balancing policy that majorly aimed to contain the growing Iranian influence in Iraq. Iran's footing in Iraq posed a potential threat to Saudi Arabia's geopolitical and geo-economic positioning at the regional and international level, and at the same time carried the risk to negatively affect Saudi Arabia's domestic regime stability. Saudi Arabia had to manage the balancing act of containing Iranian influence in Iraq's politics without directly confronting Iran or suspending its relations with the Iraqi government. The Saudi Iraq policy thereby fluctuated between buck-passing the responsibility of containing Iranian influence to the United States and at times pursuing an indigenous balancing policy independently from the U.S. strategy.

From a balance-of-power perspective, Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy after 2005 has majorly been a function of balancing external influence in Iraq, most notably Iranian influence. Iraq by itself no longer constituted a state threat or pillar of power in the Gulf. The main underlying goal of the Saudi Iraq policy was to prevent a further unfavorable shift in the regional balance of power. From the Saudi and the Gulf Arab perspective, the Iranian active engagement in post-war Iraq constitutes in various respects a security threat that needs to be counterbalanced.

For one thing, Iran's power assets and influence in Iraq may upset the regional balance of power to the detriment of the Arab Gulf monarchies. The risk of "losing" Iraq strategically to Iran and of a potential Iraqi-Iranian alliance in the future would completely overturn the Gulf military, political, and demographic balance. Iran has already cumulated power assets in Iraq and created precedents and loyalties within Iraq's domestic power structure. Iran may convert its soft power capabilities and leverage over Iraqi actors into power assets and bargaining chips to assert its interests in other regional affairs (Al-Shaiji 2008: 108). In addition, an Iraqi-Iranian alliance that would be extended to a close alignment in OPEC has the potential to undermine Saudi Arabia's oil-political power and the Saudi unique, strategic position in international oil politics.

For another thing, the growing Iranian ideological clout and influence on political and societal Iraqi actors may have disadvantageous spill-over effects on Saudi Arabia's domestic security. Saudi Arabia fears Iran's purposeful empowerment and "manipulative mobilization" (El-Hokayem/Legrenzi 2006: 21) of Shiite groups in Iraq and the Gulf region. Saudi Arabia is aware of Iran's ideological and revolutionary potential in Iraq and a possible backlash on

Saudi Arabia's regime stability in the form of a politicization and mobilization of the Saudi Shiite minority.³⁰⁸ Even though Iran's influence on Iraqi or Saudi Shiite groups must be considered to be limited - if not non-existent - , Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy partly aimed to prevent Iranian efforts to manipulate regional Shiite groups against the political regimes of the Gulf Arab monarchies. Saudi Arabia has therefore been endeavored to prevent the emergence of a strong Shiite, pro-Iranian government in Iraq.

Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy since 2005 has shown forms of a sophisticated balancing policy that aimed to contain Iranian influence in Iraq without seriously confronting Iran (Gause 2010: 181) and at blocking pro-Iranian elements in the Iraqi government without suspending or wholly damaging the Saudi-Iraqi relations. The Saudi goal of containing Iranian influence and at the same time averting the danger of a perilous confrontation between foreign forces in Iraq or an escalation of inner-Iraqi violence, proved to be difficult and ambitious.

Saudi Arabia's stance towards the Iraqi government of Maliki has been volatile, ambiguous, and mainly distanced. The Saudi preponderant objection to the Maliki government must be understood to be less grounded on the government's predominantly Shiite nature, but rather on its close engagement with Iran (Gause 2010: 181).³⁰⁹ Because the Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki has maintained close and friendly relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia has hesitated to completely normalize its relations with Iraq and at times openly rejected the Maliki government. Large parts of the Saudi or Gulf Arab elites consider the Iraqi government to be under immense Iranian influence that needs to be balanced.³¹⁰ At the same time, Saudi Arabia has been aware to prevent a perilous confrontation with Iran in the form of a proxy war in Iraq. Saudi Arabia has rather preferred a "managed stasis of confrontation and coexistence" (Kaye/Wehrey 2009: 43) with Iran and refrained from a bloc-like balancing

³⁰⁸ The Saudi Shiite minority is estimated to make up only between eight and 15 percent of the Saudi population, but is largely located in the strategically important oil-rich Eastern province where Shiites account for about 50 percent of the population. The Shi'a question in Saudi Arabia is therefore an issue of national security (Steinberg 2007: 178).

A loyalty or close links of the Saudi Shiite community to the Iranian regime cannot be confirmed.

³⁰⁹ Maliki and its government are partly seen by the Arab Gulf countries as a "marionette" (Steinberg 2008: 24), collaborate (Raphaeli 2009) or client (Gause 2010: 181) of Iran while Maliki's Da'wa Party and its coalition partner ISCI are viewed as tools of Iran (Gause 2010: 179).

³¹⁰ Even if the Saudi ruling elites have largely been cautious not to make too open and confrontational statements on Iranian influence in Iraq, there have been made many hints in this direction. Prince Turki Al-Faisal, for example, stated that "we want our Iranian friends to give support [to Iraq] through the recognized legitimized representatives of the Arab people, and not to go outside the legitimacy of the Arab governments" (according to a personal interview, May 31, 2009 in Riyadh). Jamil Dhayabi's metaphor that Iran sows "thorns" (*shawk*) not "roses" (*ward*) in the region may quite fittingly illustrate the perspective of many Gulf Arab elites on Iran's regional policy (see Dar al-Hayat, May 4, 2009).

policy that would lead to a dangerous polarization and escalation between pro-U.S. and pro-Iranian forces in Iraq and beyond.³¹¹

In Saudi Arabia's equation of power, the USA has constituted an important counterbalancing element against Iran. Saudi Arabia has in particular until 2007 heavily relied on its U.S. alliance partner acting as a counterbalance to Iran and preventing Iranian dominance over Iraq (see Gause 2010: 180). By means of largely buck-passing the task of containing Iran to the United States, Saudi Arabia pursued a rather cost-effective and mediate balancing strategy. When the weaknesses and failure of the U.S. Iraq policy became clear in 2006 (see Salem 2008: 17), the United States lost some of its former credibility as a power broker and security guarantor in the Gulf (see Stracke 2007; see Al-Shaiji 2008: 109). Saudi Arabia had growing doubts about the U.S. ability and determination to contain Iran's interventionist policy in Iraq and to re-build Iraq as a peaceful pillar of power in the Gulf. After 2006, Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy therefore made occasionally autonomous efforts to balance Iran and did not always comply with the U.S. Iraq strategy.³¹²

The much noticed statement made by the Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saud Al-Faisal, about "handling the whole country [Iraq] over to Iran without reason"³¹³ illustrated Saudi Arabia's deep discontent with the new equation of power in Iraq by the end of 2005. At the same time, this remark implicitly charged the USA with inaction and urged it to resume its role as an active power broker and guarantor of security and stability on the side of the Arab Gulf monarchies. Saudi Arabia found itself in the dilemma that the United States as its major ally and security provider restricted Saudi Arabia's foreign-policy scope of action in Iraq (see Steinberg 2008: 29). Out of consideration of the security alliance with the United States, Saudi Arabia discarded the option of counterbalancing Iranian influence through the bolstering of more radical and anti-American Sunni forces in Iraq (Steinberg 2008: 23).

3.3.3 Managing Interdependence: An Institutionalist Analysis

3.3.3.1 New Interlinked Threats in a Segmented Environment

After 2005, Saudi Arabia was situated in a deteriorating regional security environment (see Russell 2006: 117) of multiple state and non-state threats to its national security. A growing

³¹¹ Saudi Arabia did not support U.S. efforts to establish an anti-Iranian alliance of "moderate" Arab states. The Saudi leadership has tended to check Iranian power rather through accommodating than isolating Iran (Steinberg 2008: 14).

³¹² According to Steinberg, Saudi Arabia's much noticed statement of a U.S. "illegal occupation" of Iraq could be understood as an attempt to please the Syrian leadership and to disengage Syria from its regional alliance with Iran (Steinberg 2008: 26).

³¹³ See Prince Saud Al-Faisal's speech at the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations on September 20, 2005, in New York.

awareness of regional security interdependence and regionally interconnected threats in the post-2005 era, evoked region-wide demands and ideas of a new indigenous and self-sustaining regional security order. The following endeavors to establish a new framework of regional security remained lowly institutionalized and rather exclusive in character.

In the post-2005 period, Saudi Arabia's vulnerability to interconnected transnational and regional security threats remained at a high level. Saudi Arabia's national security risked to be negatively affected by the activities of societal, state, or transnational actors that have been able to project their influence in Iraq and beyond. Iraq's "domestic power vacuum" (Salem 2008: 11) marked by insecurity, sectarian violence and the rise of Salafist jihadism³¹⁴ threatened to produce perilous spill-over effects to the Saudi neighbor country. Iraq as a fragile or failing state ran the risk to become a safe haven for terrorists and various kinds of transnationally operating, state- or non-state sponsored actors. While the former threat from Islamist terrorist groups has gradually decreased,³¹⁵ the eruption of a broader sectarian Sunni-Shi'a conflict in Iraq with the danger of taking on a regional dimension posed a more acute threat to Saudi security.³¹⁶

Within the socially, politically, and economically interconnected Gulf region, the new political process set free in post-occupation Iraq may potentially pose a threat to Saudi Arabia's security and domestic political status quo. Saudi Arabia's ruling elite has made out potential challenges to its domestic security to majorly come from the permanent political and social empowerment of Shiites, a first introduction of democratic as well as federalist ideas, and the momentary rise of Salafist jihadism and mobilization of Al-Qaeda. A possible spill-over of these new ideas and developments in Iraq to Saudi Arabia could undermine the strength of the Saudi regime and put the current social contract and traditional regime-society relations in the Saudi Kingdom into question. The potential challenge from a growing Shiite consciousness or a so-called "Shi'a awakening" in Iraq and the Gulf would come less from Shiite-Islamist radicalism and extremism, or from an unlikely formation of a transnational pan-Shiite bloc. The real challenge from the political empowerment of Shiites in Iraq would rather come from a conceivable increase of democratic demands for political participation and social equality, or the dissemination of federalist ideas among Saudi Shiites.

An effective and all-inclusive institutionalized framework for regional consultation and cooperation to manage transnational, interlinked security threats has not emerged so far (see

³¹⁴ "Salafist jihadism" refers to extremist trends of the Salafiyya. The Salafiyya has developed in the Arabian Peninsula on the basis of Sunni Wahhabism as a reaction to the Western political and cultural penetration of the Gulf and other Muslim countries (Steinberg 2004b: 151-52).

³¹⁵ The terrorist organization *al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula* became gradually marginalized in Iraq and has decreased its regional activities since 2006 (Steinberg 2008:11).

³¹⁶ In May 2010, Daoud Al-Shiryan has made out the danger of another Sunni-Shia civil war in Iraq and the risk that Iraq will become an "Iraq for the Shia" (see *Dar Al-Hayat*, May 26, 2010).

also Salem 2010). Instead, the regional countries have established rather limited and exclusive frameworks of regional cooperation that exclude major regional actors.

The GCC has remained a small, exclusive cooperation framework of the Gulf Arab monarchies and sheikhdoms. The GCC countries have been reluctant to integrate Iraq or Iran in their consultations on regional security affairs³¹⁷ and have hence “institutionalized the distance between the Arab Gulf states and Iraq.”³¹⁸ As well, different state interests *within* the GCC have impeded a unified strategy of the GCC countries vis-à-vis Iraq and a concerted management of regional conflicts. Since 2005, Saudi Arabia has instead deepened its extra-regional, bilateral security partnership with the United States. Through the Saudi-U.S. Strategic Dialogue³¹⁹ launched in 2005, Saudi-U.S. relations have become even stronger and more “institutionalized” and “mature” compared to their pre-9/11 level.³²⁰ New Saudi-U.S. arms deals since 2007³²¹ further deepened Saudi Arabia’s extra-regional, military interdependence with the United States. Even though Saudi Arabia parallelly diversified its military purchases,³²² the United States has remained the Saudi Kingdom’s principal arms supplier and security guarantor.

At the regional level, the Gulf Security Dialogue (GSD) between the U.S. and the countries of the GCC constituted another exclusive framework of security cooperation that was rather designed by the U.S. as an alliance against Iran. Launched in 2006, the GSD is supposed to foster cooperation between the United States and its Gulf Arab allies on issues such as defense, regional security, and commitments to Iraq (see Knapp 2010).

Despite of the regional states’ growing demand for an indigenous and self-sustainable regional order, approaches to more indigenous and inclusive frameworks of regional cooperation have remained on a lowly institutionalized and non-committal basis. The “Neighbors of Iraq conferences”³²³ constituted a more inclusive framework of cooperation, including the major actors of the wider region such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria, and Turkey. Other proposals of cooperation among Iraq’s neighboring countries failed due to the lack of

³¹⁷ While Iran has at least has been offered an observer status in the GCC in 2008, Iraq has not been invited to participate in the GCC summits (see Ottaway 2009: 18-19).

³¹⁸ Phebe Marr cited by McMillan (2006: 6).

³¹⁹ The Strategic Dialogue started in November 2005 embedded the formerly ad hoc and personally managed Saudi-U.S. relations in a new institutionalized framework (see McMillan 2006: 13).

³²⁰ According to Prince Turki Al-Faisal (personally interviewed on May 31st, 2009, in Riyadh).

³²¹ In September 2010, negotiations of a Saudi-U.S. arms deal with a record worth of U.S.\$ 60 billion have reached their final stage (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 15, 2010). For more details on Saudi arms orders from the United States since 2007 see the table of Yiftah Shapir (2010a).

³²² Saudi Arabia has fostered military ties with states such as Turkey, Pakistan, India, Russia, and South Korea (Knights 2010). The much recognized Saudi-British arms deal of 2005 about the sale of British Typhoon jets to Saudi Arabia is estimated to worth about U.S. \$ 10 billion (see Shapir 2010b).

³²³ The “Neighbors of Iraq Conference” was held in May 2007 in Sharm al-Sheikh and was followed up by further conferences in November 2007 in Istanbul and in April 2008 in Kuwait.

confidence or concerns over relative cooperation gains.³²⁴ So far, there has not emerged a regional institutionalized framework that could effectively coordinate the different interests of Iraq and the countries involved in Iraq's economic and political reconstruction process.

3.3.3.2 "Omni-Managing" Multilevel Security Risks

From a multilevel and multi-actor perspective, Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy after 2005 can be characterized as a policy of "omni-managing"³²⁵ state and non-state security challenges emanating from the regional, global, and domestic environment. Due to the lack of regional collective mechanisms of consultation and conflict resolution, the Saudi Iraq policy tended to solve tensions and divergences of interests in Iraq on a non-institutionalized and ad hoc "crisis-by-crisis" (Salem 2010) basis.

Saudi Arabia's policy towards post-occupation Iraq was a function of the Saudi leadership's both external and domestic security considerations. Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy was designed to meet Saudi societal demands and domestic security interests while at the same time being mindful of the interests of Saudi Arabia's external U.S.-American protector. Where demands and interests proved to be incompatible and hardly reconcilable, the Saudi Iraq policy assumed at times the form of a trade-off or "precarious balancing act" (Aarts/Nonneman 2005: 444) between divergent, multilevel demands and pressures.

Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy aimed to reconcile the urges of the Saudi public and clergy for a stronger backing of Iraqi Sunnis³²⁶ with U.S. demands to fight various groups of Sunni jihadis and to support the Iraqi Shiite government of Nouri Al-Maliki. Saudi Arabia's strategy in Iraq was therefore subject to fluctuations and change. At times it was based on vehement calls for and envisaged plans of a military intervention to protect Iraqi Sunnis from sectarian-inspired violence.³²⁷ At other times, the Saudi Iraq policy showed serious attempts of a political rapprochement and cooperation with Iraq's Shiite and allegedly sectarian government.

³²⁴ For example, Iran's proposal of a regional trade and security pact to the GCC countries at the GCC meeting in 2007 in Doha was not well received by Saudi Arabia due to the fear that Iran would dominate any Arab-Iranian form of security cooperation (see Salem 2010: 10-11).

³²⁵ Nonneman uses the term "omnibalancing" as a suitable term to describe the state's balancing or trade-off between demands from various levels and sectors (Nonneman 2005: 319, 351). Steven David (1991) had developed the "theory of omnibalancing" to explain alignments and foreign policy behavior of third world countries. David argued that states in the Third World have to address both external and domestic threats to their leaderships. This study uses the more general term "omni-managing" that suggests a strategy of various means and options of action.

³²⁶ After the escalation of violence in Iraq in 2006, Saudi clerics and academics called for an active support of Iraqi Sunnis. In 2006, a group of 30 prominent Saudi clerics published an appeal for the backing of Iraqi Sunnis (Steinberg 2008: 24). In addition, Saudi clerics have been accused of issuing various (unofficial) *fatawa* that endorsed the volunteering to fight a *jihad* against "apostates" in Iraq (see Raphaelli 2009).

³²⁷ In 2007, the Saudi leadership was alleged to think of sending a military force to the primarily Sunni Al-Anbar Province in Iraq, if the U.S. stabilization policy in Iraq failed (see Raphaelli 2009).

With regard to the divergent political demands and pressures coming simultaneously from multiple levels and actors, the preservation of Saudi Arabia's domestic regime stability has enjoyed priority in the formulation of the Saudi foreign policy. Saudi Arabia's domestic security concerns have traditionally aimed to safeguard the domestic political status quo³²⁸ and the stability of the Saudi regime. The political transformation in Iraq has introduced a new political status quo of domestic ruling power based on democratic-pluralist and federalist elements. The paradigm shift in Iraq's domestic political order and the first-time political empowerment of Iraq's Shiite community may constitute a serious ideological challenge to Saudi Arabia's monarchical-absolutist political order and to the idea of a centralized state power held by a small circle of a Najdi-Wahhabi ruling elite. Without disrupting or sustainably interfering in Iraq's political transition process, Saudi Arabia has been carefully observant of Iraq's new political developments and Iraq's adoption of a federalist constitution in 2005. Whenever the Saudi leadership did not fear a backlash on its own domestic political status quo, it has relied on the U.S. Iraq strategy and preferred the role of a passive observer in Iraq.

Saudi Arabia has preferred to solve tensions and crises in Iraq by means of an ad hoc and conventional crisis management.³²⁹ So far, Saudi Arabia has refrained from initiating the formation of an inclusive regional security order and has been reluctant to the integration of Iraq into the GCC framework. Instead, Saudi Arabia has resorted to exclusive forms of Sunni-Arab consultation and cooperation such as the "Arab Quartet"³³⁰ or the GCC. Apart from that, the Saudi leadership broadly relied on the success and effectiveness of the U.S. Iraq policy to stabilize an acceptable political status quo in Iraq.

However, the U.S. engagement in Iraq was believed to constitute both a guarantee of security and a source of regional and domestic instability. For the Saudi leadership, the U.S. presence has remained a "double-edge sword" (Stansfield 2008: 115) due to the ambiguous impact of the U.S. regional presence on regional security.³³¹ Saudi cooperation with the U.S. Iraq policy has therefore been ambivalent and fluctuant. On the one hand, Saudi Arabia has strongly demanded the preservation of the U.S. presence in Iraq until the danger of an

³²⁸ Influences coming from the politicization of Shi'ism, U.S. democratization efforts, or Al-Qaeda and Salafist jihadism may pose a threat to the domestic political status quo of the Gulf monarchies (Stansfield 2008: 127).

³²⁹ For example, Saudi Arabia has started the project to build a security fence along the Saudi-Iraq border of 900km in order to prevent the return of Saudi jihadis or flows of refugees (Steinberg 2008: 23).

³³⁰ The "Arab Quartet" was formed in March 2007 by Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the UAE and Egypt as a response to a perceived rising "Shiite" influence from Iran and a new Shiite-ruled Iraq. (see Salem 2008: 12; 15)

³³¹ The U.S. presence in Iraq was a force of stability, but at the same time posed a threat to Iraq's security as the U.S. military presence invoked terrorism and insurgency uprisings in Iraq (see Mattair 2007: 134).

implosion or dismemberment of Iraq has been averted. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia aimed to reduce the U.S. “footprint” (El-Hokayem/Legrenzi 2006: 22) in Iraq and the region in the longer term on account of domestic and regional sensibilities. The different political strategies in Iraq have also shown that Saudi Arabia’s long-term interests in Iraq might not match as smoothly with those of the United States (McMillan 2006: 14).

3.3.4 Complying with Foreign-Policy Roles: A Constructivist Analysis

3.3.4.1 The Saudi State’s Foreign-Policy Discourse after 2005: Re-Considering Iraq’s Identity

In the post-occupation period since 2005, the Saudi state has continued to reflect about an appropriate dealing with the newly sovereign and restructured Iraq. The Saudi state’s foreign-policy discourse on Iraq has been grounded on the underlying image of a transfigured Iraqi identity as a result of external political and cultural interference and spurred sectarian awareness. The post-2005 Saudi discourse revealed a subtle dilemma of conflicting Saudi norms and role-conceptions. Saudi Arabia has tried to reconcile its roles of being a regional stabilizer, a protector of Islamic unity and regional solidarity as well as the role of being the patron and defender of Iraq’s Sunni-Arab identity. At times the Saudi state appeared uncertain about which role to consider more legitimate and appropriate and to give priority in its foreign-policy orientation. At other times it seemed to assume multiple and parallel roles towards Iraq.

The Saudi state has traditionally upheld the idea of Islamic unity (*umma*) and objected sectarian, ethnic or tribal loyalties (*‘asabiyya*) as the roots of sedition and divisions within the Islamic community.³³² In its role as a guardian of Islamic unity, the Saudi leadership has claimed to treat the Iraqi people not as members of several groups and factions,³³³ but to strengthen the unity of Iraq as a Muslim state.³³⁴ With regard to the political situation in post-war Iraq, the Saudi Kingdom has been alarmed by calls for a “lose federation” from various “centrifugal forces” within Iraq’s Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish communities.³³⁵ The Saudi state therefore sees its role in working for a broad-based national consensus and cross-sectarian reconciliation in Iraq.³³⁶

³³² In his policy address to the Saudi Shura Council on March 15, 2008, King Abdullah warned of ignorance “in the guise of sectarian, regional or tribal extremism.”

³³³ Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saud Al-Faisal, underlined that he conceives of Iraqi Muslims as members of one religion and denied to confine the term “coreligionists” to Muslim Sunnis (see interview on NPR, September 22, 2007).

³³⁴ See speech of Prince Saud Al-Faisal at the Council of Foreign Relations on September 20, 2005.

³³⁵ Prince Turki Al-Faisal (personally interviewed on May 31st, 2009, in Riyadh).

³³⁶ See, for example, the speech of Prince Saud Al-Faisal at the Neighbors of Iraq Conference in Istanbul on November 4, 2011. Al-Faisal stressed the need to build an Iraq without ethnic-sectarian divides.

At the same time, the Saudi Kingdom has perceived itself as an advocator of regional solidarity. The endorsed norm of regional solidarity goes hand-in-hand with the principle of Islamic unity and inter-Muslim solidarity. Regional solidarity is understood to include intra-regional cooperation and integration, the advocacy of regional self-determination in accordance with the region's indigenous identity, norms and values, and the prevention of extra-regional interference in affairs of regional concern.³³⁷ With regard to Iraq, it would require the Saudi state's commitment to support Iraq's reconstruction process, help Iraq to re-integrate into the regional Arab and Muslim state community, and to defend Iraqi interests and concerns vis-à-vis foreign, extra-regional interests and interference.

According to regional and Muslim solidarity, no regional neighbor and Muslim brother country should stay categorically excluded or isolated in the region. The Saudi leadership has endorsed an inclusive and cooperative regional order in which Iraq and all of its neighboring countries peacefully coordinate their views on and interests in Iraq's reconstruction process.³³⁸ Iraq (as well as Iran) should hence be treated as an integral part of the region.³³⁹

The Saudi state has as well assumed the role as an advocator of regional self-determination according to indigenous norms and values. Regional stability and social progress should emerge from the "peculiarities of nations"³⁴⁰ and be in consistence with traditions, customs and inherited values. The Saudi state has upheld the "free and independent will of the Iraqi people"³⁴¹ and Iraq's right to establish its own institutions.³⁴² In its role as a supporter of regional self-determination, the Saudi leadership stressed the international obligation to support Iraq's new "legitimate government".³⁴³ The Saudi state has also claimed its obligation and commitment to assertively protect the region's autonomy and its indigenous norms and identity in case of extra-regional penetration and dictation. The Saudi Kingdom would "fortify its [regional] nations and brothers from any interventions or political propaganda which is far

³³⁷ According to King Abdullah's policy address to the Shura Council on April 14, 2007, Saudi Arabia has played "an active role in the Gulf, Arab and Islamic arenas to solidify the bases of cooperation to preserve the identity of Arab and Muslim nations, to defend their issues, to maintain their interests, to confront the dangers of divisions and struggles threatening their entities."

³³⁸ According to a personal interview with Prince Turki Al-Faisal on May 31st, 2009 in Riyadh.

³³⁹ Prince Turki Al-Faisal stressed the fact that Iran "is not an isolated entity in the Middle East" (see Turki Al-Faisal's speech on November 29, 2006 at the U.S. Army War College in Pennsylvania). The Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saud Al-Faisal, stated the Saudi wish to live in peace and stability with the Iranian neighbor. Yet, he remarked the Iran has to "want the same thing too" and underlined that "the test with Iran is what they do in Iraq" (see Prince Saud Al-Faisal's interview with Time Magazine published on November 25, 2007).

³⁴⁰ See King Abdullah's interview with the Kuwaiti daily *Al-Siyassah* on July 1, 2008.

³⁴¹ See Prince Saud Al-Faisal's address at the UN high level meeting on Iraq on September 18, 2006, in New York.

³⁴² According to a former member of the Saudi Shura Council, Mohammed Ibrahim Al-Hulwah, the Saudi Kingdom wants the United States to give Iraq the chance to establish its own indigenous institutions (personally interviewed on June 4, 2009 in Riyadh).

³⁴³ See Prince Saud Al-Faisal's address at the UN high level meeting on Iraq on September 18, 2006, in New York.

from their peculiarities and vision.”³⁴⁴ According to its claimed important role in the Arab and Muslim world, the Saudi Kingdom perceives a responsibility to advocate non-intervention in the internal affairs of Arab and Muslim countries and to work for intra-regional solidarity and reconciliation.³⁴⁵ In a much noticed speech at the Arab League Summit in 2007, the Saudi King has called for regional (Arab) solidarity in order to “never allow any forces from outside the region to design the future of the region.”³⁴⁶ This implies that Saudi Arabia would only endorse a temporal presence of U.S. or other foreign forces in Iraq. The Saudi leadership has hence acknowledged the legitimate role of the United States as a *stabilizer*, but not as a *shaper* of Iraq’s domestic affairs.

In contrast to the principles of Islamic unity and regional solidarity irrespective of ethnic, national, or sectarian differences, the Saudi Kingdom has at times assumed the role as a patron of Iraq’s Sunni-Arab state identity and Iraq’s Sunni community. Saudi Arabia has made out a transformation of Iraq’s former statized Sunni-Arab identity. While during the Saddam era, Iraq was only considered a “black sheep” of the Arab family, the new Shiite-led Iraq is rather perceived as an “alien” within the Sunni-Arab state community (Hussein 2010). Even though the Saudi leadership has avoided emphasizing a Sunni-Shia divide and has refrained from using the narrative of a “Shiite Crescent”³⁴⁷ or “Shiite threat”, it has indicated its obligation to defend the legitimate rights of Iraq’s Sunnis.

According to the Saudi state’s argumentation, external cultural, political or military interference in Iraq has laid the foundation for division and sectarianism³⁴⁸ at the expense of Iraq’s Sunni communities. The Saudi Kingdom therefore sees its role not only in preventing extra-regional intervention in Iraqi affairs, but also in averting divisive and polarizing influence from Iraq’s neighborhood at the expense of the Sunni communities. Saudi Arabia’s anxieties about Iraq becoming a client of the Shiite-Persian Iranian Republic were indirectly expressed in calls for preventing external interference³⁴⁹ and safeguarding Iraq’s *Arab* identity.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁴ See King Abdullah’s interview with the Kuwaiti daily *Al-Siyassah* on July 1, 2008.

³⁴⁵ See King Abdullah’s policy address to the Shura Council on April 14, 2007.

³⁴⁶ See King Abdullah’s address to the Summit of the Arab League on March 28, 2007.

³⁴⁷ The international debate about a “Shi’a Crescent” was sparked by Jordan King Abdallah who used this controversial phrase in 2004. The term “Shi’a Crescent” refers to the perceived political empowerment of a (pro-Iranian) Shiism stretching from Iran to Syria, and passing through Iraq and Lebanon.

³⁴⁸ See also the Closing Statement of the GCC Supreme Council from December 10, 2006.

³⁴⁹ When asked about Iranian influence in Iraq, the Saudi King Abdullah stated that “Iraq is in dire need of being free from external interference” (see King Abdullah’s interview with *la Repubblica.it* on July 16, 2008).

³⁵⁰ In the 2008 and 2009 Closing Statements of the GCC summits, the GCC members urged for the preservation of “Iraq’s Arab and Islamic identity”. Since the terms “Shiite” and “Persian” are often used interchangeable in the Arab discourse, the use of the term “Arab” may in this context also refer to “Sunnism”.

The Saudi state's worry about Iraq's Sunni-Arab identity contrasts with its otherwise statements of a co-regional and co-religious solidarity with the wider Muslim region. Regardless of Iraq's Shiite majority in sheer numbers, the Saudi regime is increasingly concerned about an excessive and unjustifiable marginalization of Iraq's former Sunni elite and about a perceived "imbalance" in Iraq's new identity. Its assumed role as a defender and representative of Sunni-Arab interests may therefore come into conflict with its upheld norms of pan-Islamic and regional solidarity.

3.3.4.2 Saudi Iraq Policy on the Basis of Conflicting Norms and Role Conceptions

In the post-occupation period since 2005, Saudi Arabia's different foreign-policy roles came increasingly into conflict with each other. The Saudi state acted both as a representative of more inclusive and general Muslim and regional interests and as a representative of more exclusive and particular Sunni-Arab interests. Saudi Arabia's roles as a regional stabilizer, a champion of Arab causes and a protector of Sunni-Arab interests, a supporter of regional solidarity and integration, and an advocator of a universal Islamic *umma* could no longer be smoothly reconciled or properly fulfilled. The dilemma of trading-off between competing foreign-policy role-conceptions may explain for Saudi Arabia's faltering and indeterminate Iraq policy after 2005.

A re-integration of Iraq into the regional state community would make sense from an Arab, Muslim, and regionalist perspective. Despite affirmations about Iraq as an "inseparable part of the Arab nation"³⁵¹, Saudi Arabia's post-war Iraq policy has shown rather ineffectual and hesitant steps towards an integration of Iraq into the regional Arab community.

Saudi Arabia's uncertainty about Iraq's new national and state identity, and Saudi worries about the loss of the formerly Sunni-Arab identity of the Iraqi state have made the Saudi leadership to assume a stronger role as a patron of Iraq's Sunni-Arab community. According to its assumed responsibility for the well-being of its Sunni-Arab coreligionists, the Saudi ruling elite was endeavored to halt Iranian and Shiite-sectarian influence in Iraq.

Saudi Arabia's policy towards the new Iraqi leadership alternated between calls for refraining from divisive and discriminating sectarian policies³⁵² on the one hand, and solidarity claims with the new Iraqi state on the other hand. Concerns about the marginalization of Sunni interests in the new Iraqi state have made the Saudi state assume at times a stronger role as

³⁵¹ See interview of Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz al-Saud with *Asharq-al-Awsat* on June 8, 2008.

³⁵² According to Prince Saud Al-Faisal, Iraq needs a government "that will move heaven and earth to get this reconciliation going on, and not a government who needs to be prodded in order to work for national reconciliation" (interviewed by U.S. reporters on November 26, 2007, in Washington D.C.).

a Sunni-Arab spokesman.³⁵³ Whenever the Saudi leadership perceived a violation of legitimate Sunni rights, the idea of a greater Islamic *umma* and the principle of Saudi solidarity with its neighboring states became secondary.

Saudi Arabia's goal of regional stability on the basis of regional self-determination was also subdued to the Saudi state's commitment to preserve Sunni-Arab interests. While the Saudi leadership did not approve the foreign U.S. presence in Iraq and even once talked of an "illegitimate foreign occupation",³⁵⁴ it insisted that the U.S. forces only leave when a national reconciliation and Iraq's territorial integrity can be guaranteed.³⁵⁵ Even though a long-term foreign presence in Iraq was not tolerated, a temporal presence that safeguards Sunni-Arab interests in Iraq was considered legitimate. While the Saudi Kingdom has considered itself as a responsible and able regional stabilizer,³⁵⁶ it has so far rather poorly fulfilled its role as a stabilizing regional player.

3.3.5 Interim Findings

In theoretical terms, Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy since 2005 has been a balancing policy in various respects.

From a neorealist balance-of-power and balance-of-threat perspective, the Saudi Iraq policy had to respond to de facto and conceivable shifts in the regional balance of power. Saudi Arabia's balancing strategy mainly aimed to avert *future* imbalances and polarizations of power in the Gulf due to cumulative effects of disproportionate, relative gains. Iran's strategic gains in the Gulf and Iraq's indeterminate positioning in the regional balance of power exposed Saudi Arabia with potential future strategic losses. The disruption of the former traditional tripolar balance of power in the Gulf risked to be replaced by a perilous polarized order in which Iraq could become a strategic asset on the side of Iran's equation of power.

³⁵³ The Saudi leadership believes that Iraqi Sunnis do not get enough support under the current Iraqi government (according to Al-Khathlan, chairman of the political science department at King Saud University, interviewed on June 7, 2009, in Riyadh).

Babak Rahimi (2010: 4) expects that the Saudi leadership will increase its support of Iraqi Sunnis in case that Iyad Allawi and his secular Shiite faction become politically marginalized in Iraq.

³⁵⁴ According to Prince Turki Al-Faisal, the Saudi-U.S. *éclat* has become irrelevant after the U.S.-Iraqi agreement of a gradual troops withdrawal (personally interviewed on May 31, 2009, in Riyadh).

³⁵⁵ See interview with Prince Saud Al-Faisal on NPR, September 22, 2007.

According to Youssef Al-Kuweylit, the United States is mandated with the protection and stabilization of the new Iraqi system (in: *Al-Riyadh*, December 20, 2008).

³⁵⁶ According to Jamil Al-Dhiyabi, the Saudi King has been very ambitious to play a responsible and stabilizing role in the region (in: *Dar Al-Hayat*, November 1st, 2010).

However, Saudi efforts have rather remained rhetorical appeals upon Iraqi actors. In April 2010, the Saudi King received the Iraqi President, Jalal Talabani, in Riyadh and stressed the need to establish an Iraqi government of unity and preserve Iraq's independence and territorial unity (see Al-Shamri/Ghalab in *Dar Al-Hayat*, April 12, 2010). Saudi Arabia and Bahrain called in April 2010 upon the Iraqi government to strengthen its efforts to achieve national unity (in *Dar-Al-Hayat*, April 20, 2010).

According to the neorealist state-actor approach, Iraq played only a mediate role in Saudi Arabia's considerations of power and threats and must instead be understood as an arena of external power contests. Iran's potential to manipulate Iraq's state-society relations and to use transnational identities and loyalties as a tool of power constituted a conceivable state-actor threat to Saudi Arabia's national security. After 2005, Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy therefore mainly aimed to counterbalance state proxies and external state influence in Iraq.

The sole focus on state-actor threats may give unsatisfactory explanations of Saudi Arabia's policy towards a socio-politically restructured Iraq after 2005. Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy can also be understood as a policy of "omni-balancing" (Nonneman 2005; David 1991) multiple interlinked state and non-state threats to Saudi Arabia's national security. A multi-actor perspective that includes state-society relations may more comprehensively explain the Saudi state's reservations about building stronger ties with the Iraqi government. The Saudi Iraq policy after 2005 rather suggests a balancing policy against potential future spill-over effects from non-state, transnational socio-political developments that pose a challenge to the Saudi state's domestic and external political status quo. A multi-actor approach is therefore able to more precisely grasp the complexity of challenges that the Saudi Iraq policy has to address.

The Saudi response to the multitude of challenges rather corresponds with conventional neorealist assumptions of an ad-hoc and lowly institutionalized conflict- and crisis management which grants a high degree of state autonomy in international relations. The Saudi Iraq policy after 2005 can therefore be understood as a policy of "omni-balancing" multi-actor threats in a conventional realist way.

Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy was also a function of various self-acclaimed foreign-policy roles of the Saudi state. Ambiguities and fluctuations in the Saudi Iraq policy may be understood as the result of an emerging incongruence between Saudi role-conceptions. The Saudi state's uncertainty about Iraq's new (state and national) identity left the Saudi leadership uncertain about its own assumed role towards Iraq. The uncertainty and vagueness of Iraq's identity provoked the Saudi state's re-consideration of "self" and "other" in its relationship with Iraq.

3.4 Saudi Arabia's Iraq Policy: Findings of a Diachronic Analysis

3.4.1 Continuity and Change in the Form and Content of the Saudi Iraq Policy

Over the past two decades, Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy has shown a strong continuity in the overall strategic goals towards Iraq, but has also expressed a transformed foreign-policy tone. The assurance of a united, sovereign, regionally integrated, and self-sufficient but not

too powerful Iraqi actor has remained the overarching goal of the Saudi Iraq policy. The manner and tone of Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy, however, has gradually changed over time. During the 1990s, the Saudi Iraq policy of conventional deterrence and containment was a genuine defensive-status quo policy that at large respected Iraq's national sovereignty. Saudi Arabia's containment and disarmament policy towards Iraq was embedded within the multilateral framework of the UN, but was at the same time strongly backed by the bilateral security partnership with the United States. Even though Saudi Arabia expressed a growing discomfort with the U.S. military containment strategy, it did not opt for an autonomous policy that would be pursued independently from the U.S. Iraq strategy.

The time between 2001 and 2003 was marked by Saudi efforts to hold on to the previous containment and disarmament policy towards Iraq and maintain the regional status quo. The Saudi Kingdom thereby strictly rejected the linking of the international war on terrorism to the Iraqi regime. During the Iraq War, the Saudi Arabia maintained an ambiguous, evasive and indecisive position. Apart from some tacit and mediate support of the U.S. operation against Iraq, Saudi Arabia neither openly supported nor actively obstructed the U.S.-led invasion. After the war, Saudi Arabia opted for a conservative stabilization policy that refrained from radical decisions in Iraq's reconstruction process. Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy between 2001 and 2005 was an overall non-assertive and compromising status quo policy that lacked a positive and indigenous strategy.

After 2005, Saudi Arabia's foreign policy passivity and wary engagement with Iraq was coupled with a stronger assertion of Saudi national interests and sporadic outbreaks of foreign-policy activism. Yet, the Saudi Kingdom was hesitant to make every effort to become an active shaper of Iraq's political reconstruction process. The Saudi leadership rather expressed at times its discontent with the new political status quo in Iraq and maintained an overall ambivalent and distant relationship with the new Iraqi government.

Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy underwent a shift from a mediate containment strategy with the backing of the United States and the international community to an ambivalent and indecisive position towards new Iraq. Even though the Saudi Kingdom does not pursue an independent Iraq strategy from its U.S. ally, it also does not coordinate every policy step with the United States. Post-9/11 prognoses of a break of the Saudi-U.S. security alliance did not come true. All in all, there can be witnessed a stronger assertion and more open articulation of Saudi national interests in the conduct of the Saudi Iraq policy.

3.4.2 Continuity and Change of Structural Factors

The Saudi state has been embedded within multi-level, material and normative structures that have gradually evolved and were at times been deeply ruptured from outside.

Saudi Arabia's systemic balance of power in the Gulf has transformed from a relatively stable, tripolar balance to a perilous polarization of power. In the new polarized Gulf order, it is still unclear which future position Iraq as a strategic regional player will take. The recent political developments carry the potential of fostering the accumulation of disproportionate, relative gains in power and generating a regional imbalance at the expense of Saudi Arabia's geo-strategic position. The Saudi Kingdom is as well exposed to the threat of a "nuclearization" of the Gulf region and the potential of following extra-regional - possibly military - interventions.

Over the past two decades, there can be observed a trend from the prevalence of conventional state threats during the 1990s to an increase in interdependent multi-level and multi-actor security risks. The increase of new asymmetric security risks coming from a possible transnational spilling over of terrorism or political ideas have reformed the notion of threat. In particular, the threat potential of oppositional political ideas has grown. The less restraint transnational competition of political conceptions and exchange of opinions catalyzed by a grown pluralism of accessible media sources may turn into a serious threat to domestic stability and regime legitimacy. The Saudi state has therefore shown a growing sensitivity and vulnerability to the domestic and regional public opinion. In addition, the region still lacks effective mechanisms of collective conflict and risk management to handle transnationally interconnected security risks. Even though demands for fostering indigenous integration and cooperation have become stronger, the overlay of bilateral and extra-regional security guarantees has rather hindered the regional integration process.

The Saudi state's self-conception in Saudi Arabia's external relations has shown a stronger emphasis on the distinctiveness of indigenous norms and values. The formerly strict normative separation between domestic and external affairs has begun to turn blurred. The Saudi state's hitherto pragmatic (re-)interpretation of religious norms and principles in the foreign-policy realm according to material and "profane" needs has witnessed a shift to a stronger awareness of one's own indigenous identity. The discourse among Saudi Arabia's foreign-policy elites expressed a mounting request for regional self-determination according to the region's distinct value systems. The Saudi state has continued to advocate a conservative but peaceful Islam and strongly rejected the equation of Islam with violence and terror. At the same time, the Saudi state endorsed a gradual modernization according to indigenous norms and values. The need of a sustainable socio-religious domestic reformation has become a steady tenor in the discourse of the Saudi state.

Saudi Arabia's foreign-policy roles in the region have shown a shift from a solidified self-conception of being a stabilizer of the regional status quo to a growing uncertainty about Saudi Arabia's future regional role. The transformation of Iraq's identity has provoked the

Saudi state to assume a new role towards Iraq. The Saudi state is left in the state of re-considering “self” and “other” in a transforming region.

3.4.3 Continuity and Change of Saudi Arabia's Foreign Policy Behavior

The patterns of Saudi Arabia's foreign policy behavior have shown continuities and gradual changes over the past two decades.

The Saudi Kingdom has continued to rely on its strategy of external balancing through the request of external security provision. Saudi Arabia has tended to pass the military (but not financial) burden of guaranteeing national and regional security to its extra-regional U.S. ally. Even though Saudi Arabia has continuously “sourced out” the task of domestic and regional security provision, it has returned to the former less visible form of external security guarantees.³⁵⁷ The Saudi foreign policy has also shown a change in its trend from simply buckpassing the responsibility for regional security to the United States to a stronger indigenous balancing strategy and a more open assertion of Saudi national interests. The strategy of reducing the Saudi dependence on the U.S. security guarantor was accompanied by a gradual diversification of Saudi Arabia's economic and security relations towards South and East Asia.

State-society relations, in particular after 2001, have increasingly become a part of Saudi Arabia's foreign policy consideration. Saudi foreign policy has shown a sustained shift from conventionally balancing state threats during the 1990s to a new form of “omni-balancing” (Nonneman 2005) multi-level and multi-actor security risks. For this purpose, the Saudi leadership has re-considered the costs and benefits of external security provision. The Saudi foreign policy has varied from a tendency to firstly accommodate its external security guarantor during the 1990s, over strongly responding to societal demands between 2001 and 2003, to a more balanced managing of tensions between domestic-societal, regional, and global demands. In this omni-balancing game, Saudi Arabia has adhered to a conventional and rather ad hoc conflict- and crisis management. The Saudi state has thereby been able to keep a high degree of domestic and external autonomy in the formation of its foreign policy strategy.

The Saudi state has been continuously endeavored to separate the realms of domestic and external affairs. Even though the state has applied different normative criteria for domestic and external relations, it could not keep its foreign policy completely detached from domestic

³⁵⁷ In 2003, after the end of the Iraq War, the Saudi leadership asked the United States to withdraw its combat forces from Saudi territory that had been stationed there as a security buffer against the Saddam regime since the Gulf War.

religious and cultural understandings of “legitimate” behavior. Over the past two decades, pragmatic and more material state interests have come time and again into conflict with religious norms and principles. The Saudi state has tended to subdue and re-interpret foreign-policy norms and principles according to more urgent “material” needs. The Saudi state has thereby searched for an acceptable balance between a pragmatic (post hoc) legitimization of foreign policy and the refraining from “absolutely impossible” and “unacceptable” behavior.

The growing uncertainty about Saudi Arabia’s foreign-policy role in a transforming region has encouraged the Saudi leadership to more strongly assert Saudi national interests. Rather than complying with the former role of accommodating conflicting regional interests and guarding the regional status quo, the Saudi leadership has shifted to a more open defense of vital Saudi interests.³⁵⁸

The cross-temporal comparison of the Saudi Iraq policy has shown an overall continuity, but also gradual changes in Saudi Arabia’s behavioral patterns. While the 1990s have strongly confirmed neorealist assumptions on foreign policy, the time after 2001 was increasingly marked by the influence of non-state and multi-level pressures on foreign policy. As state-society relations have become a stronger factor in shaping Saudi foreign policy,³⁵⁹ the Saudi state’s formerly strict separation between domestic and external affairs has become slightly blurred. After 2001, Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy has been caught in a balancing act of accommodating domestic, regional and global demands and of trading-off between competing security interests. At the same time, the Saudi state has still been able to keep a high degree of autonomy at both the domestic and external level.

4. Iran’s Iraq Policy

The Iranian Republic has experienced difficult and intense relations with Iraq. The proclamation of the Iranian Republic in 1979 was followed by an Iraqi proclamation of war against Iran. The “imposed war” with Iraq lasting from 1980 till 1988 turned out to be one of the bloodiest and most devastating wars in the entire region in recent times. Even though Iran was able to stay out of the Gulf War against Iraq in 1990/91 and the Iraq War of 2003, its relations with Iraq have remained pre-conditioned by the memories of the Iraqi aggression and still unresolved territorial and political questions from the first Gulf War. The Iranian-Iraqi sharing of the *Shatt al-Arab (Arvand Rud)* waterway as a critical territorial juncture, close

³⁵⁸ Christian Koch has noticed a stronger assertion of Saudi national interests. Also within the framework of the GCC, Koch has made out a stronger awareness and consideration of the interests of the Arab region (personal interview on February 16, 2009).

³⁵⁹ According to Hassan Al-Alkim, it is in particular the domestic public and religious, societal elites that indirectly exert a “pull-back effect” on Saudi foreign policy (personal interview on March 24, 2009).

transnational and trans-societal ethnic and religious ties, and mutual oil-political interests have made the Iranian Iraq policy a complicated undertaking.

In the following, this chapter will make out general shifts in Iran's Iraq policy since 1990 ranging from a policy of "cold peace and pragmatic rapprochement" of the 1990s, over a policy of "active neutrality" and "managed stabilization" between 2001 and 2005, to a policy of "strategic engagement" in the post-2005 era. The chapter will thereby look at whether and in which way the goals and means of the Iraq policy have changed. The Iranian goals and interests in Iraq are distinguished according to whether Iran has challenged or accepted the regional status quo and whether it nurtured underlying defensive or offensive motives. The forms and means of Iran's Iraq policy will be assessed under the aspect of how they related to the strategies and policies of other regional and extra-regional actors.

In a following sub-chapter of the respective time period, the study will look at the shifts and continuities in Iran's multi-level structural conditions which include the regional state structure of power and threats, the structure of global, regional, and domestic interdependence, and the domestic normative structure of state norms, identities, and role-conceptions.

For each time period, the study will then qualify Iran's Iraq policy according to the observed patterns of foreign-policy behavior. In an interim resumé, this chapter will evaluate in how far Iran's Iraq policy has been a function of balancing conventional state power and threats, of managing more complex patterns of interdependence, and in which way it has been determined by the Iranian state's normative self- and role-conceptions.

4.1 The 1990s: The Gulf War and Its Aftermath

4.1.1 Iran's Iraq Policy in the 1990s: "Cold Peace" and Pragmatic Rapprochement

Iran's Iraq policy of "cold peace" during the 1990s can be largely characterized as a strategy of pragmatic and flexible rapprochement aimed to look for a new *modus vivendi* in the Gulf. The Iranian Iraq policy under the presidencies of Rafsanjani and Khatami showed a high level of pragmatist flexibility in goals and means. Iran adopted a double-edged strategy of gradual rapprochement and accommodation with both Iraq and the U.S.-led anti-Iraq coalition. Major goals of Iran's Iraq policy were the preservation of the territorial and political status quo of Iraq and the gradual pushing back of the U.S. military presence and influence in the Gulf region. The Iranian Iraq policy tended towards a flexible and preliminary strategy. Iran resorted to issue-by-issue negotiations with Iraq and kept its policy provisional and short-termed as long as the future of Iraq appeared uncertain. Iran thereby maintained a balanced and nuanced policy of drawing neither on conciliatory appeasement nor on full confrontation. Iran's cautious and largely defensive-status quo policy was also coupled with

some residual revisionist elements. Iran's mediate confrontation with Iraq through the parallel ideological endorsement of Iraqi opposition groups constituted a double-edged game.

Iran's Iraq policy in the 1990s was a prism of dealing with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the following U.S.-led (Second) Gulf War and containment policy against Iraq, and with the heavy political legacy of the former Iran-Iraq War.

With regard to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Iran pursued a clear status-quo policy. The goals of Iran's Iraq policy were the restoration of Kuwait's national sovereignty and of the territorial status quo of the *Shatt al-Arab* (pers. *Arvand Rud*),³⁶⁰ the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the Gulf, and the preservation of Iraq's national unity and sovereignty.

As a response to Iraq's challenge of the political and territorial status quo in the Gulf, Iran chose a flexible and independent approach. Iran's neutrality and non-aligned stance in the course of the Gulf War allowed for a high degree of flexibility and autonomy in its Iraq policy (Ehteshami 2002: 301). During the Gulf War, Iran joined neither the U.S.-led international coalition against Iraq nor the antiwar Arab forces. Iran condemned Iraq's invasion of Kuwait at an early stage³⁶¹ and demanded the termination of Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, but also refused to grant the use of Iranian territory or air space to the anti-Iraq coalition (Rieck 1992: 80). In effect, Iran sided with the aims of the U.S.-led international coalition (Bakhash 2001: 253). Even though Iran denounced the use of force against Iraq by the United States and its coalition partners,³⁶² it effectively supported the U.S.-backed international containment of and embargo against Iraq. The Iranian Iraq policy of the 1990s was largely marked by Iran's de facto cooperation with the international community and the endorsement of the UN position. Iran demanded from Iraq the compliance with all UNSC resolutions and supported a non-military enforcement of the UN-sponsored disarmament of Iraq. Throughout the 1990s, Iran did not give in to Iraqi attempts of winning Iran as an ally against the U.S.-led international embargo and containment policy.³⁶³ The U.S. policy of dual containment directed against Iraq and Iran during the 1990s, and the common enmity with the United States hence did not trigger an Iranian-Iraqi act of solidarity or a tactical alliance against the United States (Ehteshami 2008b: 132; Taremi 2005: 32).

³⁶⁰ The *Shatt al-Arab* (literally "beach/coast of the Arabs") or the *Arvand Rud* (in Persian meaning literally "Arvand river") refers to the river that forms where the Tigris and Euphrate Rivers confluence before it joins the Gulf. The southern end of the *Shatt al-Arab* defines the Iranian-Iraqi border. In 1980 at the onset of the Iran-Iraq War, Iraq claimed its full territorial sovereignty over the *Shatt al-Arab*.

³⁶¹ Prior to the statements of many Arab countries, Iran had already condemned the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait on August 2nd, 1990 (Rieck 1991a: 83).

³⁶² Iran condemned the U.S.-led air and missile attacks in Iraq between 1991 and 2002 (Taremi 2005: 32).

³⁶³ At various occasions, Iraq attempted to persuade Iran to circumvent the UN embargo against Iraq, but Iran denied to make concessions to Iraq and widely complied with the international embargo policy. This was the case, for instance, in the years of 1990, 1993, 1994, 1998, or in 2000 (see Rieck 1991a: 83; 1994: 82; 1995: 85; 1999: 85; 2001: 86).

Iran's Iraq policy during the 1990s illustrated a remarkable foreign-policy balancing act between realizing a gradual rapprochement with Iraq and at the same time endorsing the policy of the anti-Iraq coalition (Rieck 1991: 82). The Iranian relations with Iraq were marked by lasting tensions and confrontations and parallel cooperation and intergovernmental exchange (see Ehteshami 2003: 121). Iran pursued neither a conciliatory and placable policy of appeasement, nor a fully uncompromising policy of confrontation.

Iran's policy towards Iraq built upon a gradual and conditioned rapprochement, and on issue-by-issue negotiations.³⁶⁴ Iran's neutrality in the course of the Gulf War and Iran's following double-edged strategy towards Iraq and the anti-Iraq coalition allowed for a high degree of flexibility in the negotiation of inherited, unresolved Iranian-Iraqi issues.

Iran succeeded in dealing separately with unresolved questions from its previous eight-year war with Iraq. Major remaining issues were the question of war reparations, the exchange of war prisoners and lasting border disputes coupled with the question of territorial sovereignty over the *Shatt al-Arab* and of the acknowledgment of the Algiers Agreement³⁶⁵ from 1975. While Iran did not reach a formal peace treaty with Iraq in the 1990s, it re-established diplomatic and working relations with its Iraqi neighbor (Hooglund 2006: 174).

When Iraq offered the 1975 Algiers Accord as the basis for negotiating a new border agreement, Iran did not take up the offer of Iraq's desperate accommodation policy in the wake of the Gulf War and held on to its demands of UN-acknowledged war reparation from Iraq (Rieck 1991a: 83; 1992: 81).

Parallel to Iran's bi-directional policy of rapprochement and flexible pragmatism, Iran continued its ideological endorsement of Iraqi opposition groups. Iran thereby held on to a revisionist policy of mediate confrontation via regional, sub-state proxies. The Iranian hosting and supporting of Iraqi opposition groups aiming to overthrow the Iraqi Baathist regime and to revise the political status quo illustrated a residual revisionist element in Iran's Iraq policy inherited from the time of the Iran-Iraq War. The mutual backing of anti-regime groups can be considered a remnant of the Iranian-Iraqi heavy historical legacy and of their war-prone relationship.

Iran massively invested in the training, organizing, and arming of subversive Iraqi Islamic movements that were vehemently opposed to the Iraqi regime. During the 1990s, Iran has continued to shelter a number of Iraqi Islamic opposition groups, among them the Islamic

³⁶⁴ The Iranian President Rafsanjani regarded the settlement of the lasting Iranian-Iraqi conflict and the Kuwait Crisis as separate issues (see Rieck 1991a: 83).

³⁶⁵ The Algiers Agreement of March 1975 endorsed the principles of territorial integrity, border inviolability and non-interference in internal affairs and was as such a "turning point" in Iranian-Iraqi relations (see Gause 2010: 36-37). In the agreement signed by the Shah of Iran and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, Iraq recognized Iran's sovereignty over half of the Shatt al-Arab river while Iran agreed to return disputed Iraqi territory and end its backing of the Iraqi Kurdish rebellion.

Dawa party and the *Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq* (SCIRI) as Iraq's chief Islamic opposition group advocating an Iraqi Islamic theocracy.³⁶⁶ During the (Second) Gulf War, Iran supported the Iraqi Shiite uprising against the Saddam regime in southern Iraq.³⁶⁷

While Iran continued to support Iraqi Islamic opposition groups during the 1990s, it was equally confronted with an Iraqi backing of the Iranian opposition group *Mojahedin-e Khalq* (MOK) exiled in Iraq and violently opposed to the Iranian Islamic Republic.³⁶⁸ Iran responded to Iraq's hosting and massive political, financial, and military support of the MOK and to various activities of MOK members against Iran by sporadic and guerrilla-like attacks on Iraqi territory.³⁶⁹

During the 1990s, Iran pursued a multi-layered, flexible, and "short-termist" Iraq policy that failed to "deliver a consistent set of policy options towards Iraq" (Ehteshami 2008: 129). In a quite flexible and pragmatist way, Iran succeeded in separating its gradual process of rapprochement with Iraq from its de facto support of the international embargo policy against Iraq and its backing of Iraqi proxies opposed to the Iraqi regime. Iran's defensive status-quo policy towards Iraq was thereby accompanied by residual revisionist elements inherited from its former war-prone relationship with Iraq.

4.1.2 Balancing Power and Threats: A Neorealist Analysis

4.1.2.1 Iran's Risks and Opportunities in a Re-Configured Balance of Power

During the 1990s, Iran was situated in a partly hostile and unstable regional environment and a transformed regional balance of power. Iran's positioning in the transfigured balance of power was two-fold. On the one hand, an immediate hard-power threat from Iraq to Iran's national security was internationally contained in the medium term. On the other hand, Iran was not able to fully escape its state of regional exclusion and marginalization in order to become an active and integrated player in the regional order.

As a result of the Gulf War, the three poles of power in the Gulf became once again more conspicuous. The monolithic threat of the 1980s to Iran's national security coming from a

³⁶⁶ SCIRI was founded by Iraqi Shiite exiles in Iran in 1982, during the Iran-Iraq War. It constituted the most prominent Shiite groups opposing the Iraqi Saddam regime (Kemp 2005: 8).

³⁶⁷ As the Shiite uprising of March 1991 failed, thousands of Iraqi Shiites fled Iraq to Iran (see Rieck 1992: 80-81).

³⁶⁸ The Islamo-marxist group *Mojahedin-e Khalq* (MOK) split from Khomeini after the Iranian Revolution and was engaged in a violent fight against the Iranian regime throughout the 1980s and 1990s. In 1986, the political leadership of MOK went into exile in Iraq (Buchta 2004: 7-8).

³⁶⁹ Iran has repeatedly launched air strikes and missile attacks against MOK camps in Iraq, partly in retaliation to MOK guerrilla attacks on Iranian territory (see Rieck 1993: 82; 1994: 82; 1995: 85; 2001: 86).

belligerent Iraq backed by the West and by a number of Arab countries had been re-transformed into the former competing poles of power. The re-figuration of the traditional dividing lines between an ambitious but contained Iraq and the Arab GCC countries allied to the U.S. left Iran in a more comfortable, but also double-edged position. The military power and threat from Iraq was largely contained and replaced by an almost similarly threatening military presence of the United States. The re-configured regional balance of power in the wake of the Gulf War hence carried both risks and opportunities for Iran's strategic positioning. While the weakening and regional isolation of Iraq had the potential to catalyze a relative strategic upgrade for Iran, it was also coupled with an accumulation and consolidation of U.S. and Western military presence in the Gulf region.³⁷⁰

The post-Gulf war era of the 1990s signified for one thing Iran's ongoing regional exclusion and the imposition of constraints by a partly hostile regional system. In the wake of the Gulf War, Iran became encircled by U.S. alliances and defense pacts with the Arab Gulf monarchies and was confronted with a direct and permanent U.S. military presence in the vicinity of its national borders. The former U.S.-American "off-shore" balancing strategy (Mearsheimer 2001: 42) that was marked by a low-cost military engagement and reliance on regional allies was replaced by large-scale military basing and extensive U.S. arms deals with Gulf Arab allies (see Rathmell et al. 2003: 3-4). Even though the U.S. military engagement was to a large part a response to Iraqi ambitions, it was also a hostile accumulation of military power that could be quickly mobilized against Iran.

The new political regional order in the post-Gulf War period carried both the risk of Iran's continuous political marginalization and relative strategic loss in its regional power position on the one hand, and the opportunity for Iran of a better strategic positioning, on the other hand. Systemic constraints to Iran's strategic positioning and maneuverability came in particular from the United States in the form of a dual containment policy. Initiated in 1993, the U.S. dual containment strategy pursued the political exclusion and strategic marginalization of Iran and Iraq in the new regional order.³⁷¹ The U.S. endeavor to alienate Iran from its Arab neighbors and forge a regional and international consensus against Iran (Moeinaddini/Rezapour 2008: 119-120) challenged Iran's national interests and curtailed Iran's external credibility and its ability to recruit regional or international alliance partners. The overall increase of pro-U.S. (and pro-Israeli) policy orientations of a number of regional states in the wake of the Gulf War and the revitalised U.S.-backed Middle East peace

³⁷⁰ According to Ehteshami (2002: 300-01), Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the following Gulf War was a "mixed blessing" for Iran.

³⁷¹ After the terrorist attack on the New York World Trade Center in 1993, the United States rated Iran as the "most dangerous state sponsor of international terrorism" and introduced a policy of "active containment" (see Rieck 1994: 80). In the following years, the United States continued its anti-Iran campaign and passed in 1996 the *Iran and Libya Sanctions Act* (ILSA).

process (Madrid process)³⁷² risked to further reduce Iran's influence and voice opportunity in the new evolving regional order (see Ehteshami 2002: 302). On the other hand, the Islamic Republic of Iran enjoyed for the first time the opportunity to position itself as an alternative regional partner of the Arab Gulf countries and as a buffer against an expansionist and possibly revanchist Iraq. However, the difficult history of Iran's relations with its Arab neighbors, the long-term Arab-Persian rivalry about the predominance over the Gulf, combined with the precariousness of geographic proximity posed a substantial obstacle to an Arab-Iranian entente against Iraq.

4.1.2.2 Iran's Iraq Policy in the 1990s: A Cautious and Bidirectional Balancing Game

Iran's Iraq policy during and after the Gulf War was part of a cautious and bidirectional balancing policy. Iran's strategy to check Iraq's power and at the same time push back the growing U.S. influence in the Gulf largely served the defensive objective to safeguard Iran's national security and power position. Iran's balancing policy manifested itself as an overall cautious and at times cooperative balancing strategy in the form of "pre-emptive cooperation" and pragmatic rapprochement with both Iraq and the anti-Saddam coalition. Iran relied on internal sources of balancing such as the re-establishment of an own deterrence force and defense preparedness and the strengthening of military self-sufficiency. At the same time, Iran made use of sub-state proxies in and near Iraq to externally balance Iraqi power.

From a neorealist balance-of-power and balance-of-threat perspective, Iran's Iraq policy of the 1990s was a function of Iran's bidirectional balancing strategy in the Gulf. Iran neither sided with the U.S.-Arab anti-Iraq coalition nor formed with Iraq a tactical alliance against the U.S. dual containment policy. The Iranian neutralist stance during the Gulf War illustrated Iran's cautious assessment of the new regional power relations and its endeavor to contain potential future threats from a revanchist Iraq or an ambitious regional agenda of the United States.

With regard to Iraq, Iran had plausible reasons to continuously balance a weakened and contained Iraq. Iraq had been the most serious foreign-policy challenge of the Iranian Islamic Republic and may even be classified as Iran's "greatest source of insecurity".³⁷³ The Iranian Republic's historical experience of an expansionist and belligerent Iraq and its memorization of the Iran-Iraq War as an "imposed war"³⁷⁴ from Iraq had nourished Iran's deep distrust and its wary expectations of Iraq's future behavior. Unsettled border conflicts between Iran and

³⁷² All Arab GCC countries agreed to take part in the Madrid Summit of 1991 (see Lotfian 2007/08: 7).

³⁷³ According to Ehteshami (2003: 122), during the 1990s Iran and Iraq regarded each other, and not the United States, as their greatest source of insecurity.

³⁷⁴ The Iran-Iraq War from 1980 till 1988 is termed in Iran's historical narrative as an "imposed war" by Iraq. In 1990, the UN determined Iraq as the "aggressor state" of the war and legitimized Iranian demands of war reparations (see Ehteshami 2002: 301).

Iraq, alleged Iraqi WMD stockpiles and Iraq's support of armed Iranian opposition forces made Iraq, at least in theory, "the most obvious traditional security threat to Iran" (Chubin 2002: 45).

Even though Iran hoped that the U.S.-led war against Iraq would weaken its regional competitor (Ehteshami 2002: 301), it also distrusted U.S. intentions in the region. The use of external force against Iraq could have set a precedent for an attack against Iran and made Iran a potential next target of U.S. military ambitions (Taremi 2005: 32). For this reason, Iran feared at the same time a U.S. regime change in Iraq and was cautiously aware to balance the U.S. projection of power and influence in the Gulf.

Iran's predicament of trusting neither Iraq nor the Western and U.S.-led anti-Iraq coalition was addressed by Iran through a partly cooperative balancing strategy. Iran's support of the UN embargo policy against Iraq may be understood as a form of "pre-emptive cooperation". Iran supported the U.S.-backed embargo policy as much as to prevent a U.S. regime change in Iraq or a military confrontation with the United States. At the same time, it also allowed some smuggling across the Iranian-Iraqi border (Gause 2010: 107).³⁷⁵ In this way, Iran sought to prevent both a re-strengthening of Iraq and a further extension of U.S. power and influence. With regard to Iraq, the Iranian Republic chose a strategy of pragmatic rapprochement and low-scale cooperation, but avoided long-term agreements or further engagement with Iraq. Iran's neutrality made sure that Iran would not have to fear a later Iraqi retaliation for having cooperated with the United States nor a later U.S. accusation of having supported the Iraqi Baathist regime. Iran's cautious and pragmatic policy of neutrality and "pre-emptive cooperation" may be interpreted as a defensive balancing strategy of minimizing future risks and confrontations.

Iran's pragmatic cooperative foreign-policy approach towards Iraq was coupled with a confrontational balancing strategy via regional sub-state proxies. Iran's mediate backing of Iraq's "Shiite intifadha" of 1991 against the Saddam regime (see Gause 2010: 114-15) and its ongoing support of Iraqi religious oppositional groups constituted an additional and precautionary tool of power just in case of the ineffectiveness of Iran's pre-emptive cooperation approach.

The overall orientation of Iran's balancing policy showed largely defensive motives. Iran's emphasis on national defense was also recognizable by Iran's strengthening of its indigenous "deterrence force" and defense preparedness" through military purchases,³⁷⁶ exercises³⁷⁷ and the pursuit of military self-sufficiency (Chubin 2002: 51-53). Iran's pragmatic

³⁷⁵ According to Rieck (1994: 82), the Iranian Iraq policy aimed to support Iraq only as much as to keep the Iraqi regime in power and prevent a U.S. regime change.

³⁷⁶ Iran has acquired mid-range missiles. In 1998, Iran announced the first successful testing of its self-produced Shahab-3 missile series with a range of 1,300 kilometres (Rieck 1999: 83).

³⁷⁷ In 1998, Iran conducted its largest military exercise Zolfaghar-2 along its borders with Afghanistan, and another one in 1999 around the Strait of Hormuz (Lotfian 2007/08: 20).

cooperative foreign-policy approach of the 1990s underlay Iran's ambition to escape its regional isolation since the time of the Iranian Revolution and to preserve its national security. Residual confrontational means to balance Iraqi power may in this context be understood as a precautionary reservation of additional assets and tools of power that could be applied more assertively in times of need.

4.1.3 Managing Interdependence: An Institutional Analysis

4.1.3.1 Iran's Multi-Sectoral Vulnerabilities at Multiple Levels

The new era of the 1990s ushered in by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the U.S.-led Gulf War revealed Iran's multi-sectoral interdependence at the regional and global level and its high degree of socio-economic vulnerability at the domestic level. The degree of intra-regional interdependence between Iran, Iraq and the other Arab Gulf states remained sustainably high throughout the 1990s, but could not give a sufficiently strong impulse to induce a process of inclusive regional integration. Signs of Iran's exclusion from the new regional security architecture in the Gulf were only partly offset by individual confidence-building measures on a bilateral basis. At the domestic level, Iran underlay severe structural economic weaknesses and was at the same time susceptible to pressures coming largely from the global level.

At the domestic level, the sustained structural weakness of Iran's national economy during the 1990s exposed the Iranian state to recurrent financial problems, payment bottlenecks, and pressures for socio-economic reforms. Iran's overall macroeconomic stagnation since the Iranian Revolution of 1979 (Kooroshy 1999: 45) coupled with a continuous population growth and a fluctuating inflation rate at a high level³⁷⁸ caused a declining per capita income and a constantly high unemployment rate.³⁷⁹

Iran's domestic socio-economic stability was to large parts dependent on Iran's integration in the global economic and financial system. During the economic reconstruction process of the 1990s following the end of Iran's devastating war with Iraq in 1988, the Iranian state heavily depended on the export of crude oil and the import of industrial commodities (Taeb 2008: 27) and had a strong incentive to attract foreign investments. Iran depended on constantly high oil revenues to finance its huge public sector, maintain its highly subsidized economy (Kooroshy 1999: 46) and service its foreign debt. As a consequence, the Iranian state was exceedingly vulnerable to the development and fluctuations of the international oil price. Declines in the world oil price, such as in 1993 or in 1998, exacerbated Iran's economic

³⁷⁸ According to Rieck, Iran's inflation rate fluctuated between estimated 30% in 1992, 60% in 1996 and 20% in 1997 (see Rieck 1993: 84; 1997: 86; 1998: 86).

³⁷⁹ Iran's unemployment rate was estimated by unofficial sources to vary between 30% and 40% (see Rieck 1991: 84; Kooroshy 1999: 45).

crisis, led to an accumulation of Iran's foreign debt and at worst carried the risk of a payment crisis and national bankruptcy (see Kooroshy 1999: 46; Rieck 1994: 84).

Further pressures from the global level came from the United States. The U.S. economic and political containment of Iran constrained Iran's re-integration in the world economic system and exposed Iran to economic and political pressure. The U.S. recurrent tightening of its anti-Iran campaign such as the declaration of Iran as "the most dangerous sponsor of terrorism" in 1993³⁸⁰ and the passing of the U.S. Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA) in 1996³⁸¹ diminished Iran's reliability of expectations for further economic activities and reduced the planning security and confidence of potential foreign investors or strategic partners.

At the regional level, the Iranian Republic remained enmeshed in structures of intra-regional interdependence. Regardless of its continued regional isolation from the Arab Gulf states, Iran has remained vulnerable to intra-regional political, social and economic developments, and maintained various non-state religious and political interconnections with Iraq. Iraq's ethnic and sectarian divisions, the rise of Kurdish nationalism or the forceful crackdown of Shiite opposition groups in Iraq had various long-term, if only secondary, effects on the Iranian state and society. Iran's hosting of a large Iraqi exile community and of Iraqi Shiite refugees that fled the Iraqi suppression of 1991 carried the potential of having long-term socio-political effects on Iran (Ehteshami 2003: 118).

Despite Iran's intra-regional interdependence and sub-state interconnectedness with its Arab neighbors, Iran was not able to fully escape its regional marginalization and isolation at the state-to-state level. The Damascus Declaration of 1991 that launched an Arab 6+2 security pact between the GCC countries, Syria and Egypt undermined Iran's vision of a "Gulfanization" of future regional security arrangements and was meant as an effort of an "Arabization" of regional security relations (see Fürtig 2008: 130). Even when the Damascus Declaration regime did not turn out to be successful, Iran equally risked to be left out of the new regional security system forged by the United States. The following prevailing security architecture in the Gulf was based on the GCC countries' bilateral agreements with the United States and on some intra-GCC steps of economic and security integration. Iranian proposals of enhanced cooperation among the littoral states of the Gulf and Iran's advocacy of a regionally crafted security architecture without foreign interference was widely met with reluctance of the GCC countries.³⁸² During the 1990s, Iran's intra-regional cooperation was accompanied by a cautious Iranian rapprochement with its Arab Gulf neighbors, but rarely

³⁸⁰ The re-launched U.S. anti-Iran campaign after the 1993 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York left Iran with the fear of further U.S. activities against Iran (see Rieck 1994: 80).

³⁸¹ The passing of the ILSA in 1996 represented a new level of the U.S. containment policy against Iran. The ILSA imposed economic sanctions on national and foreign companies investing in Iran's energy sector.

³⁸² The GCC countries remained reluctant to Iranian offers of confidence-building measures and cooperation such as the offer to conduct joint military maneuvers (see Alkazaz 1997: 184).

exceeded the degree of confidence-building measures on a bilateral basis.³⁸³ In the post-Gulf war years, Iran was continuously excluded as an active and fully integrated member of the Gulf security system, but remained enmeshed in a complicated web of relationships and obligations with its Arab neighbors (Ibrahim 2004: 39).

4.1.3.2 Iran's Iraq Policy: A Paradigm Shift to 'Regional Self-Reliance'?

Iran's Iraq policy during the 1990s became a function of Iran's gradual foreign-policy reorientation and re-ordering of its foreign-policy priorities. Iran's pragmatic policy towards Iraq opened frozen channels of communication and governmental exchange and served Iran's priority of addressing urgent economic needs. Iran's Iraq policy also revealed an Iranian paradigm shift from the concept of *national* autonomy and self-reliance to a more integrationist concept of *regional* self-reliance. Iran's policy towards Iraq was lead by the objective of containing extra-regional influence on Gulf security and of overcoming the Iranian Republic's regional isolation at the state-to-state level through the establishment of a more inclusive and self-sufficient regional order. Yet, Iran's Iraq policy also illustrated the conflict between the pragmatic economic interest in regional reconciliation and Iran's continuous parallel politicization of non-state ideologized groups in Iraq and beyond.

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the following Gulf War offered Iran the opportunity to re-negotiate its relations with Iraq from a more comfortable bargaining position and renew its overall relations with the regional states to address economic and international restraints. The new pragmatism in Iran's Iraq policy during the 1990s was an expression of Iran's "economisation" of foreign policy and the primacy of economics (Ehteshami 2002: 290; 305) in Iran's external relations. The Iranian leadership laid a new emphasis on market economy, the attraction of foreign investments, export expansion, and deepening economic relations with the West for the rebuilding of the still war-damaged country (see also Dehshiri/Majidi 2008/09: 104). The new discernible priority of economic growth and performance indicated a shift of the regime's policy focus from the former emphasis on ideological-charismatic legitimacy to economic-functional efficiency and performative legitimacy. The growing importance of oil politics, the genuine interest in the security of and access to energy transport routes and waterways, and of creating stable conditions for foreign investors may explain Iran's foreign-policy pragmatism towards Iraq. Iran had an interest in negotiating unresolved issues such as the question of war reparations, the recognition of borders, and

³⁸³ In the end of the 1990s, the process of a Saudi-Iranian rapprochement led to enhanced Saudi-Iranian trade relations and travel diplomacy. In 1999, President Khatami was the first Iranian president since the Iranian Revolution to visit Saudi Arabia. However, there was no joint GCC policy vis-à-vis Iran. While Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait improved their relations with Iran, and Oman even conducted joint military maneuvers with Iran, the UAE were reluctant to a normalization of relations with the Iranian regime (see Steinbach 2000: 84, Alkazaz 1999: 184).

the exchange of war prisoners. The Iranian leadership could make its demands towards an internationally pressured and isolated Iraq from a more favorable bargaining position.³⁸⁴ As Iraq's future behaviour and posture remained uncertain, the Iranian state avoided long-term agreements with Iraq. As long as the political survival of the Iraqi regime was not guaranteed, Iran's foreign-policy strategy towards Iraq was hence designed as a preliminary and provisional policy (see also Ibrahim 2004: 44).

The remarkable shift in the Iranian Republic's post-Gulf War Iraq policy from conflict to cooperation showed a political paradigm shift in Iran's regional relations that was perhaps majorly due to Iran's regional and international economic restraints and domestic socio-economic pressures. Iran endorsed an inclusive collective security system in the Gulf that would ultimately also include Iraq. This new propagation of regional self-reliance aimed to minimize the influence of extra-regional forces and hence to reduce the international pressure on the Iranian Republic.³⁸⁵ Iran was prepared to form a comprehensive and viable regional security structure in partnership with all Arab Gulf countries in order to replace the regional states' reliance on foreign powers (Lotfian 2007/08: 15). Iran's Iraq policy showed as well signs of the willingness to gradually re-integrate Iraq into the regional security architecture in the longer term,³⁸⁶ be it for the sake of regional self-reliance and self-defense or for the sake of long-term economic benefits from a regional political and economic integration.³⁸⁷ Iran hence rejected the initiation of the Damascus Declaration regime as a step in the direction of an exclusively Arab regime that allowed, on the one hand, the interference of non-Gulf states in Gulf affairs and, on the other hand, excluded Iraq and Iran from regional security cooperation (Lotfian 2007/08: 14; Ibrahim 2004: 40).

Iran's multi-level Iraq policy throughout the 1990s illustrated Iran's continuous conflict between an economically induced foreign-policy pragmatism and political-ideologically inspired foreign-policy interventionism. Iran's political interventionism in Iraq addressed socio-political security risks coming from Iraq's sub-state level and aimed to reassure Iranian influence in future Iraq. Iran's territorial security was linked to transnational minority questions (Reissner 2007: 44). This may explain Iran's interest in the political status of Iraqi Kurds and

³⁸⁴ Iraq's courting and desperate peace overture to Iran prior to the Gulf War strengthened Iran's coming negotiating position towards Iraq and was celebrated by Iran as "the greatest victory since the foundation of the Islamic Republic" (Rieck 1991: 83). Throughout the 1990s, Iraq was endeavored to win Iran over as an ally against the international containment of Iraq (see for example Rieck 1999: 85).

³⁸⁵ In 1998, Iran expressed its willingness to exchange its missile technology know-how with its Gulf Arab neighbors in exchange for a binding non-aggression and military cooperation agreement. In 1999, Iran showed enthusiasm for a collective security pact in the Gulf during an official visit of the Saudi defense minister, Prince Sultan, in Tehran (Ehteshami 2008: 136).

³⁸⁶ In 1994, Iran endorsed the lifting of the trade embargo against Iraq, even though the Iranian leadership also accused Iraq of violating the embargo (see Rieck 1995: 85).

³⁸⁷ Iraq could serve as a potential ideal market for Iranian exports (Barzegar 2008a: 50).

Iran's interference in inter-Kurdish conflicts³⁸⁸ in the Kurdish Autonomous Zone in northern Iraq. Iran's partly unilateral interventions in Iraq's Kurdish region were accompanied by Iran's cooperation with Iraq's northern neighbors who similarly had to deal with Kurdish minority groups in their societies. The periodical conference of the foreign ministers of Iran, Syria, and Turkey dedicated its cooperation after 1992 to the observation of the UN protection zone established in the Kurdish-dominated region of northern Iraq.³⁸⁹ Iran also intervened in Iraq's domestic affairs on a unilateral and confrontational basis. The Iranian regime maintained close relations with Iraqi opposition groups and conducted military operations against Iranian opposition groups residing in and supported by Iraq.

The apparent contradiction between economic pragmatism and political interventionism in Iran's Iraq policy during the 1990s did not necessarily have to constitute a trade-off between conflicting foreign-policy goals. Both pragmatic cooperation and the parallel confrontational politicization of transnationally operating opposition groups could possibly go hand in hand to further Iran's economic and ideological-strategic ambitions vis-à-vis Iraq and the Gulf region. The domestic economic crisis of the 1990s made an economic renewal a prerequisite of the spiritual and ideological survival of the Iranian regime.

4.1.4 Complying with Foreign-Policy Roles and Norms: A Constructivist Analysis

4.1.4.1 Iran's Foreign-Policy Culture in the 1990s: From Islamic Resistance to 'Islamic Efficiency'?

The transformation of Iran's foreign-policy norms and principles from a strong revolutionary-Islamic interpretation to a more pragmatic-nationalist outlook proceeded further during and after the Gulf War of 1991. Iran's foreign-policy culture showed a gradual shift from the priority of Islamic resistance towards an emphasis on what is called in this study "Islamic efficiency". The principle of "Islamic efficiency" refers to the material (economic) potency of Iran's Islamic system. In line with religious-ideological and ideational sources of legitimacy, Islamic efficiency may serve as a second major source of legitimacy and credibility of the Islamic system.

The idea of "Islamic efficiency" became a dominant principle in Iran's foreign-policy culture of the 1990s. Advocates of this new pragmatist-economist strand of Islamic thinking within the Iranian leadership considered the economic and material renewal to be a precondition for the success of Iran's Islamic system. The material (economic) renewal was thought to constitute the basis for the persistence, clout, and appeal of the Islamic system. Economic growth and

³⁸⁸ Iranian troops recurrently intervened in inner-Kurdish conflicts that broke out in 1994. Iran had won over various Kurdish groups as allies, such as the *Islamic Movement of Kurdistan* or the *Kurdish Revolutionary Hizbollah* (see Rieck 1995: 85).

³⁸⁹ The collaboration was terminated in 1995 when Turkey refused to cooperate with Syria as long as the Syrian government kept supporting the PKK (Ibrahim 2004: 43).

strength in conformity with Iran's revolutionary-Islamic value system may hence establish and enhance the Iranian Islamic system as a universal role model. According to the logic of Islamic efficiency, only an Islamic system that is able to domestically modernize and adapt to outer structures to tackle material and ideational challenges will enjoy credibility, strength, and at last the power of resistance. Spirituality and materialism thereby do not form an unbridgeable antagonism, but may synergistically combine.³⁹⁰ While material potency and economic efficiency safeguard the (material) survival of the Islamic system and institutions, they reversibly retain their meanings and directions through the ideational value system of the Iranian Revolution.

The foreign-policy paradigm shift to Islamic efficiency was accompanied by a renewed Iranian role-conception in the region. The new conception of fostering the material survival and strength of the Islamic system through cooperation and constructive engagement in the region prevailed over the idea of isolationism and defiance (see also Dehshiri/Majidi 2008/09: 104). The predominant role-conception of Iran shifted from that of a revolutionary challenger of the regional status quo to a responsible regional stabilizer.³⁹¹ Iran wanted to be recognized as a "key factor to regional peace and stability" (see Reissner 2008: 9) and as an indispensable partner in regional security arrangements. Iran perceived itself as the guarantor of regional autonomy and the guardian of regional consciousness (see Fürtig 2008: 129). The new Iranian foreign-policy culture distinguished between (extra-regional) enemies that required persistent Iranian resistance and regional neighbors towards whom Iran had begun to advocate the ideas of accommodation, regional solidarity (see Reissner 2008: 22) and the establishment of a "security partnership system"³⁹² based on indigenous values of the region.³⁹³

Iran's renewed regional role was understood as one of a cooperative regional leader and a holder of regional responsibility. Iran's redefined conception of its regional role built on the pre-revolutionary self-conception of being the stabilizer, leader, and "natural" hegemon in the Gulf (Maloney 2002: 109; Rieck 1991a: 82). Iran showed continuous ambitions to assert "regional supremacy" (Ehteshami 2002: 286) and to establish itself as a "great regional power" in the Gulf (Maloney 2002: 109). According to Iran's self-conception of occupying

³⁹⁰ According to Ramazani (2010), Iran's "diplomatic culture" is marked by a hybrid nature of "spiritual pragmatism". The Iranian foreign-policy culture has varied in its emphasis on practical-material and spiritual considerations.

³⁹¹ After the Iran-Iraq War, "the Iranian Republic for the first time declared itself a status-quo power" (Maloney 2002: 111).

³⁹² Proposed by Saeed Taeb (2010: 28).

³⁹³ Ehteshami (2002: 299) notes that Iran's acceptance of a cease-fire with Iraq in 1988 according to the UNSC resolution 598 already indicated Iran's interest in "developing a viable security structure for the [Gulf] subregion in cooperation with all of its Arab neighbors."

regional centrality and importance, Iran perceived itself as “uniquely qualified to determine the destiny, at the very least, of the Gulf subregion” (Ehteshami 2002: 286).

Despite signs of a shift in Iran’s foreign-policy role conception after the Gulf War of 1990/91, Iran’s self-conception in the region remained ambivalent and expressed the ongoing process of Iran’s “national soul-searching” (Maloney 2002: 114). In Iran’s perception of the region, the Gulf subregion symbolized, on the one hand, a cultural-religious commonality and closeness of values and, on the other hand, an ethnic-religious “otherness” and source of aggression. Iran’s long, traumatic war with Iraq had a formative influence on its national psyche and on how it memorized regional events ever since. Iran’s feeling of belonging to the Gulf region was therefore overshadowed by a latent anxiety of becoming once more marginalized and alienated in the region.

4.1.4.2 Iran’s Iraq Policy: Between Flexible Norms and Inherited Role-Conceptions

From a norm-based, inter-subjective, and constructivist perspective, Iran’s Iraq policy of the 1990s can be understood as the outcome of a general flexibilization of Iran’s foreign-policy norms, of a revival and re-activation of Iranian nationalism, and of a concurrent inertia of Iran’s inherited role-conceptions vis-à-vis Iraq and the regional states. While the flexibility and elasticity of Iran’s foreign-policy norms and principles may explain for Iran’s pragmatic re-orientation and maneuvering in its Iraq policy, the rigidity of Iran’s socially and historically formed role-conceptions may account for the continuity of Iran’s aversion and ideological resistance towards Iraq.

The new foreign-policy paradigm of “Islamic efficiency” aiming at an economic renewal to safeguard the material survival and strength of the Islamic system demanded a high degree of ideological pragmatism and flexibility in Iran’s external relations. The national interest thereby served as an important point of reference in Iran’s foreign-policy making (see Reissner 2008: 25). The Iranian state defined its national interest according to an Islamic-nationalist *raison d’état* which combined the spiritual heritage of the Islamic revolution with the ordinary material needs of a nation-state.³⁹⁴

The Iranian Republic distanced itself from ideological “adventurism” in its foreign policy and instead emphasized Islamic expediency and ideologic flexibility.³⁹⁵ The elasticity of Iranian

³⁹⁴ According to Moshirzadeh (2010: 185), Iran’s *raison d’état* requires a broad definition of “national interests”. The Iranian reason of state comprises the pursuit of both conventional “nationalist” interests such as the territorial integrity, the well-being of the state and the survival of state institutions, and of Islamic-spiritual interests like the preservation of Islamic values and the heritage of the Iranian revolution.

³⁹⁵ President Rafsanjani emphasized the flexibility of ideology. Ayatollah Khomeini had already indicated the need of a flexible religious interpretation of Islam and ideology in order to preserve the national interest of the Islamic Republic (see Reissner 2008: 25).

ideological norms and the re-orientation of Iran's foreign-policy priorities after the Iran-Iraq War may account for the flexibility and signs of pragmatism in Iran's Iraq policy during the 1990s. The flexible interpretation of Iran's national interest allowed for the practical support of the pro-U.S. alliance and the UN-imposed embargo against Iraq. Even though Iran's support of the pro-Western Iraq strategy was coupled by a concomitant condemnation of U.S.-led extra-regional interference and use of force against Iraq, it practically served the interests of the pro-Western coalition. The practical support of the international embargo against Iraq and the simultaneous rhetorical disapproval of domestic interference and military force against Iraq showed Iran's compromising pragmatism in its foreign affairs. Iran's readiness to compromise did not represent a degradation of its Islamic identity, but expressed instead the willingness to preserve the Islamic system. The Islamic Republic worked to overcome its state of isolation and recognized some sort of interdependence with its regional neighbor countries without giving up its identity and Islamic profile. The neutralist and non-aligned stance towards Iraq helped Iran to introduce a pragmatic, gradual rapprochement with the Baathist regime of Iraq, but did not query Iran's overall revolutionary-Islamic values and principles.

At the same time, the Iranian state combined its ideological pragmatism with a "re-activated" sense of Iranian nationalism in its regional affairs. The revival of Iran's self-conception as an indispensable regional stabilizer and responsible regional leader expressed itself in Iran's dealing with Iraq's regional provocative and expansionist posture. Through the containment of Iraq, the Iranian Republic could reassert its claimed (both spiritual and material) "natural" leadership in the Gulf region. Islam and Iranian nationalism thereby did not come into conflict with each other, but merged into a religiously underpinned power projection and an Iran-specific form of "Islamic geopolitics" (see Ehteshami 2002: 287).

The consolidation and further practice of Iran's transnational role conception of being a revolutionary, resistant actor with transnational messianic objectives limited and constrained a pragmatic-nationalist dealing with the region. In parallel to Iran's pragmatic rapprochement with the regional states, Iran preserved its ideological commitment to transnational resistance. The Iranian Republic understood the politicizing of Iraqi Muslim opposition groups as part of its transnational resistance against the "oppression of an antireligious regime" (see Hooglund 2006: 175).

On certain times, Iran's Iraq policy during the 1990s was subject to solidified inherited role-conceptions which impeded a fundamental re-orientation of the Iranian Iraq policy according to pragmatic-Islamic considerations. The first encounter in lethal confrontation and the early inter-subjective experience of the young Iranian Republic with the Iraqi neighbor made the two countries assume antagonist roles and laid the foundation of their future behavioral practice.

Iran's "social legacy" (Ehteshami 2003: 120) of the previous Iran-Iraq War can be observed in a "culture of war remembrance and commemoration", a deep suspicion towards the Iraqi Baathist regime, and a continued sense of self-imposed martyrdom and isolation in a hostile and alien regional environment. The traumatic experience of and the "psychological wounds" (Taremi 2005: 32) from the war with Iraq, made an Iranian-Iraqi solidarity against the U.S. dual containment strategy "unimaginable" for the Iranian regime.³⁹⁶

4.1.5 Interim Findings

During the 1990s, "conventional" state (or state-manipulated) threats were decisive for the formulation of Iran's Iraq policy. From a neorealist point of view, Iran's Iraq policy was largely a balancing policy against threats to the Iranian regime's external and domestic security. The Iranian Iraq policy was thereby part of a bi-directional balancing strategy against both a potentially re-arming, revanchist Iraq and the delicate accumulation of U.S. power in the Gulf region. Iran's cautious and two-fold policy of pragmatic rapprochement and confrontation towards Iraq can be best understood as a diversification of security risks. Iran's occasional "pre-emptive" cooperation with both Iraq and pro-U.S. actors in the region constituted a pre-cautious and defensive balancing strategy in a still hostile environment.

Iran's Iraq policy of the 1990s had as well to take account of Iran's transformed multi-level vulnerabilities. From a more complex and multi-level consideration of state interests, Iran's pragmatic policy shift towards Iraq was part of an overall Iranian "economization" of foreign policy.

Iran's urgent socio-economic needs that were exacerbated by pressures coming largely from the regional and global level may best account for Iran's new pragmatic and tactical strategy towards Iraq. Iran's Iraq policy was also part of Iran's regional integrationist policy that aimed to tackle socio-economic pressures and Iran's regional marginalization. Iran expected to derive economic and security-political benefits in the long term from a gradual and balanced re-integration of Iraq into a more self-reliant region.

The parallel contradiction between economic pragmatism and political interventionism in Iran's Iraq policy can be traced back to the multi-facetedness of Iran's security needs. The linkage of Iran's territorial and domestic regime security to transnational minority questions may best explain Iran's political and at times paramilitary interventions in Iraqi affairs.

³⁹⁶ Some Iranian hardliners advocated a joint Iranian-Iraqi *jihad* against the United States (see Marshall 2003: 111), but they could not establish a dominant stream of thought within the Iranian state elite.

From a sociological and constructivist perspective, Iran's Iraq policy reflected a new flexibility and elasticity of ideology and foreign-policy norms, on the one hand, and the difficulty in overcoming socially constructed and historically inherited role conceptions, on the other hand. Iran's new foreign-policy pragmatism in its Iraq policy was made possible by the state's new pragmatist-economic re-consideration of its Islamic *raison d'état*. The new predominant strand of Iran's foreign-policy culture laid its emphasis on "Islamic growth" rather than on Islamic purity. According to this renewed Islamic-nationalist self-conception, the searching for a *modus vivendi* with Iraq and the overcoming of Iran's regional isolation gained priority over regional resistance.

The parallel continuity of Iran's ideological aversion and resistance towards Iraq can be explained by the rigidity of socially constructed and historically inherited role conceptions. On account of Iran's traumatic experience with a belligerent Iraq and its perception of a hostile and alien environment, Iran hold on to a self-imposed martyrdom and an ideological suspicion towards its environment. A policy of Iranian-Iraqi solidarity against the U.S. dual containment policy hence remained "unimaginable".

4.2 From 2001 to 2005

4.2.1 Iran's Iraq Policy of 'Active Neutrality' and 'Managed Stabilization'

Between 2001 and 2005, the Iranian Republic pursued a largely cautious, nuanced, and flexible Iraq policy. During the most intense stage of the U.S.-led "War against terror" that resulted in the invasion and occupation of Iraq, Iran's Iraq policy reflected a strategy of keeping all options open as long as the future of Iraq remained uncertain.

Prior to and during the Iraq War, Iran pursued a policy of "preventive diplomacy" (Afrasiabi/Maleki 2003: 257) and "active neutrality". The Iranian leadership condemned the U.S.-envisaged forced regime change in Iraq. At the same time, it declared its neutrality and refrained from actively interfering in the U.S. invasion plans.

In the aftermath of the Iraq War, Iran largely pursued a policy of "managed stabilization". Iran's foreign-policy goals in post-war and occupied Iraq were multi-faceted and nuanced and seemed at times difficult to reconcile. Iran preferred a united and stable, but also an ineffective and weak post-war Iraq. The Iranian leadership aimed to have the U.S. forces entangled in Iraq's domestic turmoil, but did not seem to wish for an unmanageable chaos in Iraq. Iran favored democratic elections, but not necessarily the emergence of a liberal-democratic Iraq. The Iranian leadership hoped for a Shiite-dominated government, but feared at the same time the establishment of a rival Shiite clerical government in Iraq.

As a result, Iran's Iraq policy during the U.S. occupation of Iraq combined different and at times seemingly contradictory foreign policy strategies. Cooperative and pro-U.S. elements in Iran's Iraq policy such as stabilization efforts and limited cooperative arrangements with the occupation regime fused with a simultaneous support of radical and paramilitary forces in Iraq.

In the aftermath of the events of 9/11, Iran's Iraq policy appeared as a defensive, status-quo policy that aimed to preserve the political and geo-strategic status quo in the Gulf. Iran vehemently opposed the United States' plans to extend its "war on terror" to the Iraqi regime. The Iranian leadership objected unanimously and on principle to the unilateral use of force against the Iraqi regime (Buchta 2003: 92) and instead advocated a diplomatic solution through a peaceful disarmament and containment of Iraq. Even though the Iranian leadership did not categorically mind the toppling of the Iraqi Baathist regime, it still preferred the survival of the Saddam regime to a new, possibly pro-U.S. regime in Baghdad (see Taremi 2005: 33-34).

The Iranian strategy of "preventive diplomacy" and "active neutrality" applied before and during the Iraq War was a cautious and flexible strategy. Iran's official position of "active neutrality" declared in September 2002 meant the refusal to side with either party of war, while not adopting an *indifferent* position.³⁹⁷ Iran's opposition to the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq remained a non-assertive stance in the form of rhetorical condemnations and diplomatic objections (see Buchta 2004b: 97). The dual character of "active neutrality" manifested itself in Iran's refraining from an active intervention or confrontation during the conflict while at the same time placing demands on the belligerent parties. Prior to the war, Iran urged Iraq to fully comply with the UN resolutions and cooperate with the international community (see Taremi 2005: 33). After the invasion, Iran demanded from the United States to return to the *status quo ante bellum*. It pressed for the withdrawal of the U.S. troops from Iraq and for the end of the foreign occupation (Buchta 2004b: 97).

After the end of the Iraq War, Iran's basic foreign-policy goal with respect to Iraq was the preservation of Iraq as a single entity and the subsequent restoration of Iraq's national sovereignty. First of all, Iran's major interest focused on the protection of the territorial status quo. The preservation of Iraq's national unity and territorial integrity and the prevention of Iraq's disintegration had top priority in Iran's foreign policy (Barzegar 2008a: 49).

When it came to more detailed questions about the political configuration in the new Iraqi state, Iran's foreign-policy goals and interests did not appear as clear and straightforward.

³⁹⁷ Iran's foreign minister, Kamal Kharazi, described Iran's policy position prior to and during the war as "neutral but not indifferent" (see Ehteshami 2003: 124).

Iran's interests with regard to the political reconstruction of Iraq were much more nuanced. In some respects, they appeared ambivalent and difficult to reconcile. Observers of Iran's foreign policy have considered a broad range of Iranian intentions and foreign policy goals possible. In this context, it has been discussed the question whether Iran had an interest in the stabilization of or in the reign of chaos in Iraq. Many observers of the Gulf and Middle East region have posited that Iran has insofar an interest in a domestic Iraqi chaos as it hoped that the United States would not come out as a successful regional stabilizer in Iraq. Proponents of a "managed-chaos" thesis have argued that Iran is interested in a "protracted but controllable disorder."³⁹⁸ Others have stressed that Iran sees no advantage in having chaos and instability in the vicinity of its borders.³⁹⁹ Albeit Iran obviously had no interest in an "un-manageable chaos", it apparently pursued some form of "managed stability". Iran seemed to seek a balance somewhere between preventing both a sectarian or ethnic-inspired civil war and a successful, U.S.-designed stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq. During the U.S. occupation of Iraq, Iran shared with the United States the basic goal of restoring order and stability in Iraq.⁴⁰⁰ At the same time, the Iranian Republic feared a pro-Western stabilization that would lead to a pro-U.S. Iraq maintaining close relations with the United States and possibly with Israel (see Kemp 2005: 3).

The Iranian leadership preferred a relatively stable, but weak Iraq. Regardless of Iran's interest in a moderate, political stabilization within Iraq, the Iranian leadership aimed to prevent a serious Iraqi resurgence and monopolization of power in the future.

Iraq's democratization process was a double-edge sword for the Iranian Republic. On the one hand, the Iranian leadership advocated democratic elections in Iraq, in the hope that free democratic elections would politically empower Iraq's Shiite community and secure "its fair share of power" in the future government (Taremi 2005: 30). On the other hand, Iran's leadership feared the establishment of both a secular, liberal-democratic Iraqi state and a competing Iraqi clerical regime that could challenge Iran's Islamic system (Kemp 2005: 2-3). Iran's best scenario in Iraq was hence an independent, stable, united and balanced Iraq with a friendly, pro-Iranian and Shiite-dominated government (Barzegar 2008; 2009).

Iran's Iraq policy during the time of the U.S. occupation presented itself as a dualist strategy. Iranian stabilization efforts and cooperative arrangements with the U.S. civil administration

³⁹⁸ ICG 2005: ii; 22

³⁹⁹ Johannes Reissner posited that Iran rather nourishes feelings of insecurity than an active wish for chaos and instability. Reissner therefore considered the term of "controlled chaos" to be misleading (according to a personal interview on April 7, 2009 in Berlin).

⁴⁰⁰ Ramin Asgard noticed some overlapping interests of Iran and the United States in Iraq. Both countries want to different degrees stability in Iraq and support an Iraqi democratization, though for different reasons. Iran tactically supports democracy in Iraq, because democracy is believed to empower Shiite religious forces in Iraq (personally interviewed on February 26, 2009).

and Iraq's provisional government structures were accompanied by a concurrent policy of informal political interventionism and occasional collaboration with radical Iraqi forces.

At the formal level, Iran established proper relations with Iraq's provisional government bodies. Iran was among the few regional states that recognized the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) appointed by the U.S. civil administration of Iraq (Ibrahim 2004: 44). In November 2003, Iran acknowledged the IGC as a temporary legitimate negotiating partner (see Buchta 2004b: 97). In June 2004, the Iranian President Khatami congratulated the newly established Iraqi Interim Government under Prime Minister Iyad Allawi (see Buchta 2005: 95) and restored full diplomatic relations with Iraq in the same year. In the economic sector, Iran opened negotiations on large joint projects.⁴⁰¹ Only delicate unresolved issues such as the remaining question of war reparations to Iran resulting from the former Iran-Iraq War and the demarcation of the Iranian-Iraqi border according to the 1975 Algiers Agreement were excluded from Iranian-Iraqi negotiations. Iraq's Interim and later Transitional Government claimed to have no mandate to tackle these issues until Iraq's constitution was put to a referendum (see Taremi 2005: 43-44).

While Iran maintained fairly good relations with the Iraqi Governing Council ruling from July 2003 to June 2004 under the U.S. civil administration, Iran's following relations with the Iraqi Interim Government under Prime Minister Allawi proved to be more difficult. Even though Iran made efforts to cooperate with the Iraqi Interim government, it faced resistance and hostile attitudes by the Allawi administration.⁴⁰²

On account of Iraq's dual governing structures split between the U.S. civil administration and first rudimentary Iraqi provisional administrations, Iran's Iraq policy became more than ever a function of its relations with the United States. On the one hand, Iran made limited stabilization efforts in cooperation with the United States and was willing to mediate between radical Iraqi Shiite actors and the pro-U.S. coalition forces in Iraq. On the other hand, Iran maintained complex informal relations with various moderate and radical Iraqi factions and was assumed to simultaneously support paramilitary groups.

Iran was willing to cooperate with the United States on a limited, unofficial basis in order to restore order and stability in Iraq.⁴⁰³ During the 2004 uprisings of radical Iraqi Shiites led by the Mahdi militia of Muqtada Al-Sadr, Iran was endeavored to calm the situation. The Iranian

⁴⁰¹ Iran and Iraq negotiated on the building of an oil pipeline between Basra and Abadan and signed for this purpose a 'Memorandum of Understanding' in February 2004 (see *iraq-businessnews*, May 3, 2010).

⁴⁰² Iran was accused by the Allawi administration of being behind the Shiite insurgency of 2004, and of illegitimately interfering in Iraq's domestic affairs (Barzegar 2006: 84). In 2004, Iraq's defense minister, Hazim Al-Sha'alan, rated Iran the "enemy number one" of Iraq (see Rasha Saad, in: *Al-Ahram Weekly*, August 19-25, 2004).

⁴⁰³ Throughout 2003, Iran was said to latently cooperate with the United States in order to look for pragmatic solutions for the sake of Iraq's security. A series of secret U.S.-Iranian meetings were allegedly held in Geneva, Athens and New York (see Buchta 2004: 97).

leadership made efforts to convince Al-Sadr to refrain from violence and stressed the importance of unity among Iraq's Shiite community.⁴⁰⁴ During another fighting between the Mahdi militia and the U.S.-led coalition forces in August 2004, Iran adopted a tougher stance towards Al-Sadr, but at the same time blamed the United States of provocative actions (see Taremi 2005: 38). In addition, Iran sought to exert influence on political events in Iraq through its extensive intelligence presence within Iraq's new security forces and within Shiite militias.⁴⁰⁵ Iran's mediation efforts between radical forces and the pro-U.S. coalition forces were thus in so far a complicated balancing act as Iran's strategy alternated between containing and engaging with radical factions in Iraq.

Iran pursued the strategy of maintaining working relations of varying degrees with almost all important political and religious factions in Iraq. In particular, the Iranian leadership systematically attempted to build balanced relations with all Shiite groups (see Barzegar 2008a: 51). This policy strategy of diversified relations implicated Iran's formal and informal support of various, sometimes contradictory factions. Iran maintained short-term, tactical relations with radical Sadrist forces and enjoyed close relations with Shiite 'moderate' factions such as the Islamic Dawa Party or SCIRI whom Iran granted financial and political support. While the Iranian leadership also strived for working relations with moderate Sunnis, it kept its distance to Iraqi secular or former Baathist sections (see Barzegar 2008a: 51-52).

Iran's strategy of maintaining diverse, formal and informal relations with various Iraqi actors and factions was hence a precautious policy. Iran's Iraq policy under the U.S. occupation of Iraq aimed to co-design Iraq's future political events and "manage" Iraq's stabilization process according to Iranian interests. Iran thereby had to find a balance between promoting diverse and at times seemingly contradictory goals and interests.

4.2.2 Balancing Power and Threats: A Neorealist Analysis

4.2.2.1 Iran's Constellation of Power and Threats: Unexpected Benefits or Relative Loss?

The time period after the events of 9/11 quickly turned out for Iran as a time of intensified insecurity and threats. The U.S. "axis of evil" declaration of 2002 ushered in a new stage and quality of U.S. hostilities towards the Iranian Republic. The U.S. "war against terror" that came along with an agenda of assertive democratization, the endorsement of pre-emptive and unilateral interventions and a firm and uncompromising assertion of U.S. hegemony became an imminent threat to the Islamic Republic. While the new U.S. democratization agenda endorsed domestic democratic reforms in Middle East countries like Saudi Arabia and other regional countries allied to the United States, it advocated the idea of enforced

⁴⁰⁴ President Rafasanjani urged Al-Sadr to refrain from violence and cooperate with SCIRI and other Islamic factions in Iraq (see Taremi 2005: 37).

⁴⁰⁵ Iran has maintained a substantive intelligence presence in Iraq through its Revolutionary Guards and paid informants (see Kemp 2005: 5).

regime change in regional “rogue states” such as Iraq and Iran. In the aftermath of 9/11, the most imminent security threat to Iran came hence from the United States. Iraq, to the contrary, did not pose a clear and present danger to Iran, since the Iranian Republic had reasonable doubts on the U.S. accusations of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and alleged links to the Al-Qaeda network (see Taremi 2005: 32).

The U.S.-led Iraq War and the toppling of the Saddam regime constituted for the Iranian Republic an alarming precedent of the apparent U.S. determination to eliminate the “axis of evil” by military force. From the Iranian perspective, the U.S.-led Iraq War was just the same directed against the Iranian Republic as another member of the “axis of evil” (Yaphe 2008: 40). The Iraq War therefore risked becoming a prelude to a U.S. military attack against the Iranian regime (Taremi 2005: 32).

For the Iranian Republic, the time from the Iraq War of 2003 until the first Iraqi elections of 2005 represented a period of “dramatic change” and “expansion of U.S. power” (Salem 2008: 17). The U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq illustrated another point of culmination of foreign penetration and intervention in the Middle East region since the time of the Gulf War. Iran’s virtual and sustained military encirclement by the U.S. military⁴⁰⁶ and the U.S. resoluteness and aggressive intentions against Iran and other “rogue states” posed a direct security threat to Iran. Middle East observers and researchers detected a U.S. ‘overlay’ (Buzan 1991: 198) and an “overextended posture” (Kemp 2005: 13) of the U.S. military in the Gulf disrupting the “natural” balance of power in the Gulf (Barzegar 2006: 83).

For the Iranian Republic, the U.S. ‘war against terror’ and the elimination of the Iraqi Saddam regime entailed both risks and opportunities. While on the one hand, the Iranian Republic has been confronted with sustained U.S. pressure, Iran also benefited from the regime change in Iraq. Some foreign-policy analysts have argued that Iran turned out to be a major “beneficiary”⁴⁰⁷ from the Iraq War. Iran’s regional chief rivals, the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the Iraqi Saddam regime, and the MOK activists, have been either eliminated or neutralized (Taremi 2005: 42) as a direct or indirect result of the U.S.-led ‘war on terror’. However, as Iran became another potential target of U.S. regime change ambitions, the rise

⁴⁰⁶ Iran is faced with a sustained U.S. military presence along its borders. Iran is virtually encircled by a direct U.S. presence or U.S. allies: From the south-west through military basements in the Arab GCC countries, in the north-west through U.S. strategic relations with its Turkish NATO ally, in the east through the U.S. presence in Afghanistan and U.S. friendly ties to Pakistan, in the north through U.S. security relations with Central Asian countries and in the west through a military presence in Iraq.

⁴⁰⁷ The thesis that Iran came out of the Iraq War as the “real beneficiary” was in particular put forward by the Arab countries in the Gulf (see El-Hokayem/Legrenzi 2006: 2). According to Kemp (2005: 2), Iran has turned out to be one of the “great beneficiaries” of the Iraq War, since Iran could unprecedentedly sustain its influence in the Iraqi neighbor country.

in insecurity and threats largely balanced out the unintended benefits of the Iraqi regime change and “has negated any comfort” for the Iranian regime (Fürtig 2008: 136).

Perhaps Iran’s most important strategic upgrading as a consequence of the Iraq War lies in the unleashing of Iran’s soft power assets in Iraq. Whereas under the Saddam regime Iran’s close ties to key political-oppositional and Islamic players in Iraq could not materialize into power assets, they now became Iran’s most important strategic advantage in Iraq and the Gulf region. The Iraq War hence inadvertently enabled Iran to cement its influence on the political events in Iraq and beyond. Iran’s influence in Iraq became probably greater than it has been for decades (see Kemp 2005: 2) and provided the Iranian regime with a high potential of behavioral power on political actors in Iraq. Whether or not Iran would be the “final beneficiary” of the geostrategic shifts in the Gulf depended on Iran’s ability to use the opportunity and turn the Iranian strategic advantage into effective power assets.

4.2.2.2 Iran’s Iraq Policy: Between Confrontational and Cooperative Balancing

From a balance-of-power and balance-of-threat perspective, Iran’s Iraq policy between 2001 and 2005 aimed to balance both present and future state threats. During the time of U.S. expansion and display of power after 2001 and the U.S. occupation of Iraq between 2003 and 2005, Iran’s Iraq policy became largely a function and an “extension” (Taremi 2005: 30) of U.S.-Iranian relations. As post-invasion Iraq became the “center stage” of U.S. pressures and threats against Iran (Barzegar 2006: 84), Iran’s Iraq policy functioned to a large part as a balancing policy against U.S. power and threats. In the short run, Iran’s Iraq policy served the goal of averting present and direct threats coming mainly from the United States. In the long term, it aimed to prevent menacing power imbalances and precarious political developments in the Gulf such as a permanent overextension of U.S. power and the re-formation of a powerful Iraqi adversary.

With regard to Iranian means of power, Iran’s Iraq policy was characterized by a frequent use of soft power, particularly after 2003. The Iranian leadership increasingly used its exercise of soft and behavioral power over various political actors in Iraq as a power resource towards the United States. Iran was able to skilfully integrate its soft power assets over Iraqi political actors into its overall balancing policy in Iraq.

Iran’s strategy in Iraq did not draw on full confrontation towards the U.S. presence in Iraq. Iran’s Iraq policy was rather marked by an alteration or linkage between a confrontational and a cooperative balancing strategy.⁴⁰⁸ Iran used its soft power tools both to cooperate with and confront the United States and the U.S.-led occupation regime in Iraq. From 2001 to 2003, Iran’s Iraq policy was a “nuanced” balancing policy towards the United States and did not “automatically” object to U.S. action against Iraq (Ehteshami 2003: 123). During the time

⁴⁰⁸ Similarly, Barzegar (2010: 181-82) has argued that Iran’s foreign policy has alternated between “alliance building” and “accommodating” Iran’s adversaries.

of occupation, Iran cooperated with the United States just as much as to prevent a further U.S. military involvement in Iraq. At the same time, the Iranian leadership confronted the U.S. action in order to weaken and impair U.S. influence in Iraq.

Analysts of Iran's foreign policy have continuously discussed the question whether Iran has nurtured defensive or offensive foreign-policy motives. Iran's confrontational balancing strategy in its Iraq policy largely revealed defensive-security motives. Iran's pre-invasion policy of "active neutrality" could be classified into the category of confrontational, but defensive balancing. "Active neutrality" actually meant a firm, but non-military opposition to the U.S. Iraq policy. It aimed to avert a U.S. invasion of Iraq since a U.S. enforced regime change in Iraq could serve as a precarious precedent for an attack on Iran. Before the invasion, Iran underpinned its strategy of "active neutrality" with a strategy of deterrence and defense preparedness. It deployed troops at the Iranian-Iraqi border, and had conducted a series of military exercises and maneuvers through the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and the *Basij* militia (see Taremi 2005: 34).

As the United States successfully established an occupation regime in Iraq, the Iranian Republic continued to defy the new U.S. imposed order in Iraq (Gause 2010: 8) by denouncing the U.S. occupation administration under General Jay Garner and by steadily insisting on a U.S. troops withdrawal. Iran went on a more confrontational path of balancing when it decided to back radical resistance forces in Iraq. The Iranian Republic established working relations with the Shiite radical, Muqtada Al-Sadr, who posed a challenge both to moderate religious, Shiite factions and to the U.S. authorities (Gause 2010: 161). The Iranian leadership invited Al-Sadr in June 2003 to Iran and was allegedly supplying Al-Sadr's militia, the *Badr* corps (see Taremi 2005: 37, Gause 2010: 172).

Iran's maintenance of various relations to diverse religious and political factions in Iraq functioned as a soft-power balancing strategy. This soft-power balancing via Iranian allies and proxies in Iraq served defensive Iranian security interests. The Iranian leadership hoped to prevent a U.S. military attack or regime change policy in Iran by keeping U.S. forces entangled in Iraq. If the United States would deplete its resources in stabilization efforts in Iraq, it would possibly lose interest in leading another military campaign against Iran (Kemp 2005: 7). At the same time, Iran was anxious to contain U.S. power and influence in Iraq. The Iranian leadership was worried that the United States might as well make use of political actors in Iraq in order to pressure and balance against Iran. In particular, Iran sought to preempt a U.S.-MOK coordination to topple the Iranian regime.⁴⁰⁹ In the long term, Iran's soft-

⁴⁰⁹ In December 2003, President Khatami demanded from the United States and the Iraqi Governing Council the extradition of high-ranking MOK fighters to Iran. The U.S. civil administrator in Iraq, Paul Bremer, refused the request for extradition (see Buchta 2004: 98).

power balancing served the purpose of preventing the formation of a powerful and menacing Iraqi state in the future.

Iran's defensive and pre-emptive balancing policy of confronting the United States in Iraq was also intermingled with offensive motives of assuring strategic power advantages. Iran's maintenance of various links to radical resistance groups in Iraq also served as a leverage and bargaining power resource towards the U.S. occupation regime in Iraq. Through confronting the U.S. presence in Iraq, Iran hoped to create opportunities and assert a greater level of power and influence in Iraq and the region.

Iran's Iraq policy was not exclusively based on a strategy of complete confrontation towards pro-U.S. elements in Iraq. Between 2001 and 2005, Iran coupled its confrontational balancing strategy in Iraq with a cooperative form of balancing power and threats. Before the Iraq War of 2003, Iran had maintained latent relations with the United States in order to consult on the upcoming war.⁴¹⁰ After the war, Iran showed several efforts of cooperating with the U.S. forces in Iraq.

Similar to Iran's confrontational balancing policy of backing radical resistance groups in Iraq, Iran's cooperative form of balancing was driven by both defensive (security-seeking) and offensive (power-seeking) motives. For one thing, Iran's cooperative balancing policy in Iraq was a form of defensive and "pre-emptive cooperation". Iran pursued a cautious policy and signalled its willingness and ability to cooperate in order to prevent a potential U.S. attack on Iran. In 2003 after the toppling of the Saddam regime, the Iranian leadership even went so far to offer the United States a comprehensive settlement of their bilateral conflicts, but the United States rejected this so-called "grand bargain" (Gause 2010: 170). During the Shiite uprisings of 2004 in Iraq, Iran worked for a calming of the situation. Iran employed its soft power over political Iraqi Shiite actors as means of stabilizing Iraq's domestic situation. Iran sought to influence Iraqi Shiite actors to refrain from violence against the coalition forces. Iran's acting in accordance with U.S. interests in Iraq was a defensive, accommodating approach within Iran's Iraq policy. The Iranian leadership hoped that an accommodative approach in Iraq would prevent a further extension of foreign U.S. presence in Iraq and avert a U.S. political or military campaign against the Iranian Republic.⁴¹¹

For another thing, the cooperative elements in Iran's Iraq policy also served the goal of establishing Iran as an indispensable interlocutor in Iraqi affairs. Iran made clear that it could serve as a "spoiler" or "facilitator" for the U.S. stabilization policy in Iraq (Kemp 2005: 16). By

⁴¹⁰ Iran and the United States had established latent relations since the 2001 Bonn conference on Afghanistan's reconstruction. In May 2003, however, the United States "terminated the low-profile, direct channel" between the U.S. and Iran (Gause 2010: 170-71).

⁴¹¹ Ayatollah Rafsanjani, for example, was said to have urged Al-Sadr to refrain from violence against the coalition forces, since violence would only give the United States "a pretext to extend their presence in Iraq" (Taremi 2005: 37-38).

granting cooperative engagement only “on probation”, Iran sought to use its cooperative and stabilizing approaches in Iraq as a power leverage and means to enhance its influence and power advantages in Iraqi affairs.

4.2.3 Managing Interdependence: An Institutional Analysis

4.2.3.1 Iran’s Vulnerability to Transnational Spill-Over Effects

The time between 2001 and 2005 was marked by a rise of formal, inter-state as well as informal, inter-societal transaction between Iran and Iraq. In particular after the removal of the Saddam regime in 2003, Iran and Iraq resumed formerly broken societal, religious, cultural, and economic relations.

The increased societal, political, and economic interconnectedness and interaction as a result of reopened channels of transaction also increased the risk of unintended socio-economic side effects and undesired political spill-over effects on the Iranian side. As the threat from transnational spill-over effects increased, the notion of power and threat became more diffuse and multi-faceted for Iran.

The centuries-long religious, cultural and economic Iranian-Iraqi interconnectedness that had been largely interrupted since the Iran-Iran War of the 1980s could now run its “natural” course. The toppling of the Iraqi Saddam regime in 2003 opened the opportunity to have Iranian-Iraqi relations return to a more “normal” degree of interaction. Even though the state of war between Iran and Iraq has not been formally ended after 2003, Iranian-Iraqi relations were now less inhibited by the former ideological “overlay” and hardened fronts of two ideological rivals.

At the inter-societal level, both countries witnessed a recovery of pilgrimage and trade. Since 2003, tens of thousands Iranian pilgrims are estimated to have visited Iraq while the Iranian government has encouraged the pilgrimage of Iraqi Shiites to holy sites in Iran (see ICG 2005: 13). Many political and religious refugees that had been expelled by Saddam Hussein could return from Iran to Iraq. Iranian businessmen started investing in Iraq’s Shiite southern region or in the Kurdish province in northern Iraq.⁴¹²

At the state level, Iranian governmental and quasi-state ties to Iraq were resumed and deepened. The Iranian administration began to negotiate with Iraq on issues of security, energy, transport, or tourism. In southern Shiite Iraq, Iran funded infrastructure projects such as the building of schools, clinics, and mosques, and invested large sums of money into religious charity. Through various state and quasi-state channels, Iran gave charitable money

⁴¹² In northern Iraq, Iranian private companies invested particularly in the construction and communication sector (see ICG 2005: 20).

and financial patronage to the renovation of the Iraqi Shrine towns of Najaf and Karbala or to various social, humanitarian projects (see ICG 2005: 12-13).

The presence of thousands of Iranians in Iraq after 2003, among them pilgrims, traders, clerics, or security and intelligence personnel (Yaphe 2008: 45), illustrated the normalization, but not necessarily an improvement of Iranian-Iraqi relations. The Iranian and Iraqi state regimes and societies were not only closely interlinked by various cultural and religious bonds, but also by a history of troubled and belligerent relations.

The drastic increase of Iranian-Iraqi interaction at the societal and governmental level carried as well the risk of undesired spill-over effects on Iran's national and state security. The re-opening of various governmental, quasi-state, and societal channels of interaction between Iran and Iraq made the Iranian Republic more vulnerable to the political, societal, and economic developments in Iraq. The events of 9/11 and the Iraq War set free various socio-political developments in Iraq and the region. In particular the socio-political effects of the Iraq War risked to become transnational in scope and to easily spill across to Iran.⁴¹³ The Iranian Republic became increasingly vulnerable to sub-state and trans-state security risks that resulted from the Iraq War and the toppling of the Saddam regime. The unintended effects of the Iraq War such as the rise of Salafist jihadism and Al-Qaeda in Iraq, the eruption of the Sunni-Shia conflict and sectarian violence, and the resurgence of Kurdish ambitions (Salem 2008: 11) constituted new non-state and asymmetric security threats to the Iranian Republic. An increased porosity and permeability of the Iranian-Iraqi border after the Iraq War and the following "domestic power vacuum" (Salem 2008: 11) in Iraq facilitated not only the spill-over and infiltration of jihadis,⁴¹⁴ weapons,⁴¹⁵ or smuggled goods, but also of new ideas. As a result, Iran's national and state security risked to become extremely vulnerable to adverse political ideas and concepts from "new Iraq".

The two most threatening political ideas coming from Iraq were (1) the idea of ethnically grounded federalism or autonomy, and (2) new concepts on the relationship between religion and state.

(1) Firstly, the Iranian Republic as a multi-ethnic nation-state has been highly vulnerable to transnational separatist movements and to alternative political conceptions on the political

⁴¹³ According to Taremi (2005: 30), the socio-political effects of the Iraq War have been most "acutely felt" in Iran.

⁴¹⁴ Most foreign jihadis in Iraq were said to arrive from Saudi Arabia, Syria, or Jordan. The majority (95%) of suspected insurgents captured in Iraq were Iraqis while the remaining 5% were predominantly non-Iraqi, Sunni Arabs (see ICG 2005: 14).

From the official Iranian point of view, the U.S. foreign presence in Iraq and the Gulf has encouraged the expansion of terrorism (see, for example, *Tehran Times*, July 17, 2007).

⁴¹⁵ The Iranian province of Khuzestan suffered from a deteriorating security situation due to the influx of weapons from Iraq across a largely unguarded border (ICG 2005: 14).

integration and representation of multi-ethnic and transnational groups in a single nation-state. The empowerment of ethnic groups in Iraq, either through autonomy or through political representation and participation of ethnic factions in a strongly decentralized, federal system may pose a serious security threat to the political status quo of the Iranian regime.

Among Iran's ethnic separatist groups in Iranian Baluchistan, Khuzestan and Kurdistan, the Iranian Kurdish minority was the most likely minority group to become susceptible to federal-democratic or autonomist ideas from Iraq. Iran's Kurdish community comprises trans-border ethnic and tribal groups that have strong cultural and family bonds with their kinsmen in Iraq (ICG 2005: 10).⁴¹⁶ A political mobilization of the transnational Kurdish community in Iraq could possibly cause political spill-over effects with regard to the Kurdish minorities in Iran. The Iranian regime has been worried that a revival of Kurdish nationalism in Iraq, Kurdish demands for strongly autonomous rights and representation, or at worst, Kurdish independence from the Iraqi central state could inflame similar ambitions among its own Kurdish and other ethnic minorities. A disintegration of Iraq along ethnic or sectarian faultlines could furthermore entail transnational Kurdish alliances against the Iranian central state (ICG 2005: 10).

(2) Secondly, another major non-state and ideational security challenge from Iraq came from liberal or secular-democratic trends as well as from alternative concepts of an Islamic state. The re-negotiation of the relationship between religion and state in Iraq's new political arena could constitute a future challenge to Iran's regime security.

A new Shiite-dominated Iraq may paradoxically deepen doctrinal cleavages within Iran's own political system (Ehteshami 2003: 125) as well as between the Iranian and Iraqi regimes, no matter whether the new Iraqi regime chooses to separate or reconcile religion and state. On the one hand, Iraq's new political elite may chose to establish an Islamic or Islamic-like system that would be based on more pluralist-democratic sources of power. An Islamic system in Iraq offering "more genuine forms of popular representation" and participation and providing a "more appealing way of combining (or separating) religion and politics" could become a "threatening counter-model" to the Islamic Republic of Iran (ICG 2005: 12).

On the other hand, the new Iraqi system could opt for a "quietist" separation between religious and political authority, while still granting Islam a central place within a new Iraqi nation. So far it has not been quite clear which role of religion Iraq's most senior and revered religious leader within Shiite Islam, Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani, prefers for Iraq. Even though Sistani maintains good relations with the Iranian leadership, he may decline an active involvement and role of clerics in state institutions and politics and thereby discredit

⁴¹⁶ However, Iraq's Shiite Fayli Kurds, a cross-border Kurdish group speaking a Persian-Kurdish dialect (*Luri* or *Lak*), prefer to be referred to as "Iraqis" rather than "Iranians" or "Kurds" (ICG 2005: 5).

Khomeini's *velayat-e faqih* doctrine as a political model in Shiite Islam.⁴¹⁷ In addition, Iraq's traditional and powerful religious centers of Najaf and Karbala may provide alternative sources of theological discourses and contest the theological doctrines of Iran's religious center in Qom (Kemp 2005: 3). Given Al-Sistani's influential role within Shiite Islam and the religious and inspirational role of Iraq's shrine towns of Najaf and Karbala, Iraq may become a new center for religious inspiration and authority to the region's Shiite community. Iraq could therefore establish itself as a new religious center independent from Iran's control (Ehteshami 2003: 125) or even contesting Iranian theocratic doctrines.

Iran's increased societal and political interconnectedness with post-invasion Iraq not only facilitated Iran's potential to influence and manipulate various political actors in Iraq, but also engendered multi-faceted security risks for the Iranian Republic. On account of the state of growing "interconnected security", political developments in Iraq could pose in various ways diffuse security risks to the Iranian Republic. Iran's increased vulnerability to potential non-state, transnational spill-over effects coming from Iraq suggest a broadened diversity of Iran's security risks and a growing relevance of sub- and trans-state threats to Iran's national security.

4.2.3.2 Iran's Iraq Policy Between 2001 and 2005: Soft-Power Manipulation and Issue-Linkage

The high level of interconnectedness and interdependent Iranian-Iraqi relations carried both risks and opportunities for Iran. Due to Iran's historical interconnectedness with Iraq, Iran enjoyed immediate influence on Iraq's post-invasion politics. Parallel to the liberalist maxim that "democracies do not fight democracies", the Iranian leadership proceeded on the assumption that "Shiites do not fight Shiites" (see ICG 2005: 10). Even though Iran expected a new Shiite-led Iraq to align and maintain friendly relations with Iran, the Iranian administration was well aware of the limits of this maxim. A new high level of interdependence with Iraq could - if not managed wisely by Iran - facilitate conflict rather than cooperation and carry serious inter-linked security risks for the Iranian Republic.

After 2001 and in particular since 2003, Iran's Iraq policy became a policy of cautiously managing and manipulating interdependent security relations. Iran's approach towards post-occupation Iraq was marked by the use of soft power and persuasion. During Iraq's process of political reconstruction after 2003, Iran aimed to cautiously manipulate its interlinked and

⁴¹⁷ For more information on Sistani's conception of religious authority see Reidar Vissar's insightful study on Sistani's involvement in Iraq's political process. Visser (2006) argues that Sistani has not clearly endorsed a quietist and thus pro-secular role of religion as it has been broadly depicted in the international media. Neither has Sistani sustained an activist role in Iraqi politics, but has rather oscillated between a passive and activist position.

interdependent security-political relations at Iraq's governmental and societal level. Iran's approach towards the various political actors in Iraq was a non-confrontational approach that refrained from the use of coercive tools and means. Rather than confronting or isolating politically challenging factions within Iraq's political arena, the Iranian leadership sought to stimulate as far as possible the different political Iraqi factions to act in Iran's national interest. In order to prevent a delicate disintegration of Iraq, Iran tried to "push" Iraqi actors with separatist or strongly federalist motivations "back into the fold of the central state" (ICG 2005: 10) and dissuade them from seeking independence.⁴¹⁸

At the same time, Iran was aware that a successful use of soft power assets was limited. Both an Iranian disengagement and a too blatant Iranian engagement in Iraq carried the risk of counter-productive effects on Iranian security interests (Kemp 2005: 10). Widespread mistrust and xenophobic views on Shiites and Iran among Sunni-Arab Iraqis (see ICG 2005: 23) inhibited a too open and obvious Iranian involvement in Iraqi affairs. Iran had to look for a balanced and sensible engagement in Iraq in order not to arouse protest or counter-measures by Iraq's political or societal actors. Iran therefore engaged in Iraq on a wide scope of affairs, but acted with a lot of prudence and constraint (ICG 2005: 24).

Iran tried to co-opt or at least maintain a dialogue with all important political and religious Iraqi factions that were considered to be decisive in shaping Iraq's future political setup. With regard to the U.S. presence in and administration of Iraq, Iran shared multiple strategic interests with the United States in Iraq. Iranian and U.S. interests converged on key issues of Iraq's reconstruction process such as the holding of Iraqi general elections on time and preventing disintegration or secession movements in Iraq. Even though the basic convergence of U.S.-Iranian interests could have produced a win-win situation for both countries, the convergence of interests was very "fragile" (ICG 2005: 23) and dependent on the development of U.S.-Iranian relations in other fields of interest.

Iran chose a mixed strategy of combining cooperative and confrontational elements towards the U.S. occupation regime and of linking the issue of Iraq's reconstruction to other U.S.-Iranian fields of dispute. In order to strengthen its relative bargaining position vis-à-vis the United States on other U.S.-Iranian issues, the Iranian Republic sought to keep the U.S. forces in Iraq dependent on Iranian goodwill. By making itself indispensable for a successful U.S. stabilization policy in Iraq, the Iranian leadership hoped for more positive signals in the U.S. Iran policy and for a stronger negotiation position and U.S. concessions in the U.S.-Iranian nuclear dispute.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁸ Iran supported Iraqi-Kurdish demands for appropriate political representation just as far as to prevent Kurdish demands for independence (ICG 2005: 10).

⁴¹⁹ See also Kemp 2005: 16, 18; Taremi 2005: 36

4.2.4 Complying with Foreign-Policy Roles and Norms: A Constructivist Analysis

4.2.4.1 Iran's Foreign-Policy Thought Patterns between Ideological Renewal and Disillusion

The period between 2001 and 2005 was a time of intellectual and ideological renewal and of searching for new perspectives and roles for Iran in the international arena. The Iranian foreign-policy discourse during this time took place within the framework of Iran's official "20Years Vision" and was influenced by the Iranian liberal reform movement that had been ushered in with the beginning of the Khatami presidency in 1997. While the "20Years Vision" enjoyed a large national consensus of all centers of state power and established a powerful and persistent construct of thought, the ideas of Khatami's reform movement turned out to be ephemeral and less influential on Iran's foreign-policy culture.

The general tenor in Iran's foreign policy discourses expressed the need of a re-definition of Iran's role in regional and international relations. Under the spirit of the "20Years Vision",⁴²⁰ Iran imagined a renewed and pivotal regional Iranian role which would reflect Iran's cultural, religious-spiritual, political, and geo-economic weight.⁴²¹ Iran imagined its new regional role within the wider Middle East to be that of an ideological-spiritual, economic, and technological vanguard. Iran perceived itself to have the natural potential of becoming the region's first leader in all respects. The Iranian understanding of leadership revealed a re-strengthened transnational ambition, but appeared in a benevolent tone. Iran conceived its new role of that of a benevolent hegemon and "big brother" (Sadjadpour 2008: 26) for the regional states. The emphasis of Iran's regional leading role was laid on soft rather than military power. Within the wider Muslim region, Iran sought to play a new "inspirational role" (Reissner 2008: 23; 15) and to exert a positive, religious-ideological inspiring influence on the regional countries. Iran stressed its religious-cultural bonds and commonalities with the regional states, but also expressed its respect for the plurality of Muslim identities and political systems. Iran conceived its future function as a spiritual role model that disassociates itself from purposive interfering in domestic affairs and from actively imposing its political culture on other countries.⁴²²

⁴²⁰ The "20Years Vision" was a strategy document on Iran's comprehensive development in the policy realms of culture and domestic society, security and defense, foreign policy, economy, trade and strategic technology. The strategy paper was developed under the Khatami administration as a basic policy directive for Iran's executive, legislative, and judicial branches. In November 2003, the Khatami government presented the document to the Revolutionary Leader. In 2005, the strategy paper came into force after the review by all three powers (see Reissner 2008: 14).

⁴²¹ According to Rahman Ghahremanpour (2011: 64-65), the 20-Year Vision Document is an attempt to reconcile the demands of the economic-technological discourse and those of the ideological-security discourse within the Iranian elite. The document defines Iran's role as a technological and scientific power as well as an inspirational model for the Islamic World.

⁴²² Ayatollah Khamenei stressed that the culture and values of the Iranian Revolution cannot be "exported" like a commodity (see Sadjadpour 2008: 21).

At the same time, Iran saw itself destined to establish constructive and privileged relations with other regional great and middle powers such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Pakistan, and Egypt (see Reissner 2008: 22). In cooperation with other (secondary) leading powers in the region, Iran sought to assume the leading position as a constructive regional stabilizer with regard to regional conflicts and crises such as those in Afghanistan, Iraq, or Sudan.

Iran's new regional self-conception reflected a re-strengthened and broadened transnational agenda. The self-imposed Iranian role as the guarantor of regional Muslim interests was based on the perception that the regional Muslim countries share the same interests and enemies with Iran (see Reissner 2008: 23). By reaching the status of a (civilian) nuclear power, Iran would help to overcome the technological inferiority and irrelevance of the Muslim world region. According to the Iranian state narrative, Iran's technological progress would hence be in the service of regional emancipation and progress and serve the purpose of the Islamic world's technological, economic, and political independence from the Western hemisphere.

At the same time, the liberal reform movement around president Khatami had introduced an interlude of new foreign-policy narratives and thought patterns and a change in tone in Iran's foreign-policy rhetoric. Under the Khatami administration, Iran's foreign-policy culture experienced an emphasis on dialogue and the rebuilding of Iran's external relations, in particular the relationship with the West. Iran sought to raise its international profile by establishing itself as the advocator of a "dialogue of civilizations" and as a role model for an "Islamic democracy".

The reformist era under the presidency of Khatami symbolized the height of the Iranian Republic's rapprochement towards the international and regional state community. The new narratives of inter-cultural dialogue, multilateralism, and renewed constructive relations, however, soon came to an end. The liberal reform movement did not prove to have a dominant and persistent influence on Iran's foreign-policy self-conception. The new spirit of optimism and euphoric mood were foiled before they could gain momentum.

The new patterns of thought supported by Iran's reform movement clashed with unforeseen bold changes and contrary developments in the general mood and mentality in the international state system. It seemed to be an irony of history that Iran's proclaimed "dialogue of civilizations" was followed by the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in the same year and answered by the U.S. "axis-of-evil" caricature. Iran's perception of self and other was henceforth re-defined and disillusioned by impulses from outside. Iran's conception of inter-cultural dialogue and multilateral security was followed by the U.S. conception of pre-emptive strikes and unilateral security provision. Iran's new emphasis on the compatibility between Islam and democracy and Islamically guaranteed human and civil rights clashed with the U.S. agenda of enforced liberal democratization.

The interlude of new ideas and envisaged roles of Iran's reformist movement were no longer compatible with the new ideational trends in the international system. The contrary and challenging developments of the international normative structure strengthened only those Iranian intellectual factions that advocated a commitment and return to the Islamic Republic's revolutionary core identity. The gradual disillusionment of Iran's reform movement ushered in a slow return to Iran's foreign policy core values such as national independence and self-reliance, international reciprocity and justice, and Iranian regional supremacy. As the target agreements of the "20Years Vision" enjoyed a broad national consensus, their ideas became more important in forming Iran's foreign-policy premises than those of the liberal reform movement.

4.2.4.2 Iran's Iraq Policy: Experimenting with New Foreign-Policy Roles

Between 2001 and 2005, the Iranian Iraq policy fell into a transitional period of Iran's regional and national role conception. New intellectual thought patterns and ideas of Iran's national self-conception were applied for the first time to the Iranian foreign policy.

The "20Years Vision" as the new national "roadmap" for Iran's domestic and foreign policy lacked concrete policy directives and left open various possible interpretations about how to achieve its target agreements and where to set priorities in the policy-making (see Reissner 2008: 15). In the imminence of the Iraq War, Iran pursued a "policy of integrity" and adhered to an Islamic-revolutionary reasoning of its Iraq policy. In its post-war Iraq policy, Iran was experimenting with new and different roles and applying new foreign policy conceptions under the principle of trial and error. As Iran's regional role was in a state of flux, the Iranian Iraq policy had to resort to a not yet solidified or overall consistent national and regional role conception.

Prior to the Iraq War, Iran pursued a principled "policy of integrity". The Iranian Republic understood its position of "active neutrality" not as Iranian indifference, but rather as an act of integrity and as an expression of Iran's loyalty to its Islamic-revolutionary principles. Even though the Iranian leadership viewed the Iraqi regime as an unjust and godless regime that deserved to be overthrown, an Iranian collaboration with a U.S.-led forceful toppling of the Saddam regime would have meant a profound betrayal of the Iranian Republic's policy fundamentals and guiding principles.

According to the Iranian Republic's foreign policy narrative, the U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq embodied a paradigm example of Western "neo-colonialism", "crusaderism", and double-standards towards international law. The U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq was imagined as a "U.S. neo-colonialist plot" to annex Iraqi oil fields, install an Iraqi pro-American "puppet government" (Sadjadpour 2008: 24) and keep the regional states dependent on the Western political and economic structures. The U.S. coup

against Iraq was also viewed as a “neo-crusader” attempt to divide and conquer the Islamic world and to manipulate the Sunni-Shia divide. The Iraq War became hence a war between “Islam and infidels” (Taremi 2005: 34). The Iranian leadership finally denounced the Iraq War as “unlawful” since the invasion lacked the endorsement of a UN resolution and the consensus of the international community.⁴²³ An Iranian collaboration with the U.S.-led operation against Iraq would have meant a challenge to Iran’s credibility and moral integrity. The Iranian leadership was therefore well aware of not becoming embroiled in or in any way associated with the operation against Iraq.

In the post-invasion period, Iran’s Iraq policy became more nuanced as Iran was experimenting with its new role in Iraq. According to Iran’s newly imagined constructive role in Iraq, the Iranian leadership partly cooperated with the U.S. forces during the 2004 Iraqi insurgency. Yet, Iran understood its cooperation with the United States in Iraq not as an Iranian appeasement towards the United States, but rather as an act of Iranian “goodwill”. Iran made clear that its cooperative attitude could be retracted at any time.

The dominant neo-conservative Iranian view was that the Iraqi insurgence against foreign forces was a “natural response” (Hooglund 2006: 177) against foreign meddling in domestic affairs and against an externally imposed “imbalance of interests”. Iran assumed the role as an advocator for a new and more “natural” balance of interests that would consider legitimate interests of all state and non-state actors in Iraq. Iran felt an equal or adequate Iranian role in Iraq denied by the United States (see Barzegar 2010b). Iran claimed to be respected as an “equal” negotiation partner and to have acknowledged its legitimate security rights by the United States. Iran saw the reason of the ongoing domestic crisis in the lack of reciprocity in the new regional order. Iran’s influence in Iraq was not regarded as an illegitimate Iranian meddling in Iraq’s internal affairs, but rather as a natural product of its cultural and societal interconnectedness with Iraq (Barzegar 2006: 82).⁴²⁴

4.2.5 Interim Findings

From a state-centric and systemic perspective, Iran’s Iraq policy since 2001 became largely a function of U.S.-Iranian relations and of the “overlay” of U.S. power in the region. The shifting power equations in Iran’s regional state environment after 2003 offered Iran unexpected benefits and opportunities, but also exposed Iran to a new level of state threats.

⁴²³ In contrast to the Gulf War of 1990/91, the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 was not mandated by a UN resolution. The official Iranian position mentioned the lack of a UN approval as the main reason for Iran’s opposition against the war (see Taremi 2005: 32). In a press conference on April 16, 2003, President Khatami expressed his satisfaction at the fall of the Saddam regime, but judged the U.S. invasion as “illegal” by international law. Khatami stated that Iran would only acknowledge an Iraqi government which will be formed by free elections under UN supervision (Buchta 2004: 97).

⁴²⁴ President Khatami stressed that Iran’s moral and financial support of Iraqi Shiites is not an act of interference and claimed that Iran has the right to assist its coreligionists (see Taremi 2005: 40).

Iran's uncertainty about its new strategic position in the evolving power equations of the Gulf may explain for Iran's "nuanced" balancing policy of cooperation and confrontation in Iraq. By playing both the role of a spoiler and facilitator of the U.S. Iraq policy, Iran aimed to make the most of its power assets and increase its strategic value within the new game of power in Iraq.

After 2003, the rise of Iran's soft and behavioral power on various Iraqi actors constituted Iran's most important strategic advantage in Iraq and made up for Iran's strategic regional upgrade. Iran's new Iraq policy was therefore strongly characterized by Iranian efforts to turn Iranian relations with strategic Iraqi actors into effective power assets. From a state-centric and systemic perspective, Iran's new Iraq policy can hence largely be explained as the using Iranian-Iraqi relations as a security guarantee and power tool in balancing third-state actors in the region.

From a multi-actor and multi-level perspective, Iran's Iraq policy between 2001 and 2005 cannot simply be reduced to an extension of the U.S.-Iranian conflict. As the notion of power and threat became more diffuse and multi-faceted, Iran's new Iraq policy became also a management of non-state and transnational security risks. The dual character of Iran's interdependence with Iraq offered Iran both risks and opportunities. Since the normalization of Iranian-Iraqi relations after 2003 carried the potential for both cooperation and conflict, Iran's Iraq policy stayed largely cautious and prudent. Iran's limited ability to manipulate Iraqi sub-state proxies would explain for Iran's diversification of relations with various Iraqi actors and its low-level engagement on a broad scope of affairs. Since "conventional" power assets proved to be less useful in post-invasion Iraq, Iran's Iraq policy was rather conducted through a cautious and multi-faceted soft-power manipulation of Iranian-Iraqi relations and the cross-issue use of Iranian bargaining power.

From a sociological perspective, the re-imagining of traditional roles as well as the experimenting with new foreign-policy role conceptions were critical in the formulation and manner of Iran's Iraq policy. After September 11, 2001, the dramatic change of the material and social reality in the international system was constitutive for the re-strengthening of Iran's revolutionary-nationalist self-conception. Prior to the Iraq War of 2003, the norms and principles of the Iranian Republic exerted an *a priori* constraint on Iran's Iraq policy. An Iranian support of a U.S. invasion of Iraq was considered to be "unimaginable" and to subvert Iran's moral integrity. Iran's policy of "active neutrality" towards Iraq was hence largely understood as an act of 'moral-ideological' integrity.

Iran's nuanced and sometimes seemingly contradictory Iraq policy after 2003 can also be explained by the transitional nature of Iran's national self-conception and foreign-policy roles. The dramatic shifts in Iran's regional environment led to a re-consideration of "self" and

“other”, and to a searching for a new Iranian self-conception. Since Iran had not yet solidified its foreign-policy roles in the transforming region, Iran’s post-invasion Iraq policy was based on an experimenting with new foreign-policy role-conceptions.

4.3 The Post-Occupation Period Since 2005

4.3.1 Iran’s “New Iraq” Policy: A Policy of Strategic Engagement

After 2005, Iran’s policy towards a new, post-occupied Iraq became more conspicuous and pro-active. The Iranian Republic began to pursue an open policy of “strategic engagement” in Iraq in order to actively shape Iraq’s political reconstruction and future strategic orientation. The major interest of Iran’s Iraq policy thereby lay in guaranteeing the establishment of a unified, loyal Shiite government in Iraq that would side with the Iranian Republic against the U.S. engagement in the region.

Iran’s Iraq policy in the post-2005 era was to a large extent driven by strong defensive motives. Iran aimed to ensure Iraq’s unity and stability partly in partnership with the lasting U.S. military presence. At the same time, Iran’s Iraq policy revealed the adoption of new offensive-revisionist policy priorities under the recent Ahmadinejad administration. The Iranian leadership aspired to sustainably extend and foster Iran’s power and influence in Iraq and sought to prevent the surge of a strong Iraqi nationalism that could facilitate independent nationalist policies of Iraq’s new administration.

Iran’s strategy in Iraq was a multi-layered policy that combined cooperative and multilateral elements with unilateral, confrontational, and at times coercive components. The complexity of Iran’s strategy and Iran’s diverse relations with multiple Iraqi actors served the larger purpose of ensuring the Iranian Republic’s long-term, strategic engagement in Iraq.

In the post-2005 era, the Iranian Republic has become deeply engaged in Iraq’s political events. In the academic debate, observers of the Gulf region have not only discussed the degree and manner of Iran’s involvement, but have also speculated about Iran’s possible motives and intentions vis-à-vis Iraq.

Iran’s Iraq policy after 2005 seemed to be continuously driven to a large part by defensive motives. Iran’s goal was to ensure a viable Iraqi state that would pose no future military, political or ideological threat to the Iranian Republic (Reissner 2007b: 47). Iran had a strong interest in stabilizing the Iraqi state as much as to prevent an ethnically or sectarian-inspired civil war and foster an Iraqi government strong enough to hold the country together. With this in mind, the Iranian leadership did not wish for a complete failure of the U.S. stabilization efforts in Iraq, even though other issues and points of contention may put Iran and the United States on a path of conflict in their Iraq policies.

On the other hand, Iran's Iraq policy witnessed a general foreign policy priority shift since the inauguration of the Ahmadinejad presidency in 2005. The Iranian Iraq policy illustrated the stronger revisionist and power-seeking ambitions of the new Iranian leadership. Iran's interest to expand and cement its influence in Iraq on a stable basis was part of Iran's broader regional agenda. By actively shaping Iraq's domestic political developments and winning over Iraq as a loyal ally, Iran aimed to assert its influence and voice opportunity in Iraq and beyond.

In the formulation of its foreign-policy goals in post-occupied Iraq, Iran made rather moderate and balanced claims and refrained from extreme positions. Contested issues in Iraqi politics after 2005 have been the remaining U.S. military presence in Iraq, the structure of Iraqi federalism, the new sectarian balance in Iraqi politics, the configuration of an all-inclusive Iraqi nationalism as well as the handling of Iraq's Ba'athist heritage.

Iran's stance towards the U.S. military presence after 2005 has remained ambivalent (Reissner 2007b: 47). On the one hand, the Iranian Republic principally objected to an ongoing U.S. presence and demanded a full withdrawal of American forces from Iraq and the Gulf.⁴²⁵ On the other hand, the Iranian leadership tacitly acknowledged the temporary need of a U.S. presence to restore order and prevent an Iraqi drift towards domestic chaos and civil war. In sum, however, the Iranian leadership has aspired for a minimalist U.S. role in Iraq's future developments and instead hoped to expand Iran's formative power in Iraqi affairs.

The issue of an Iraqi federalism has remained a matter of great concern for the Iranian Republic. Iran has continued to stress the national unity of Iraq and the need to prevent a loose Iraqi federalist system along ethnic or sectarian lines (Barzegar 2010a: 175; 178). On the other hand, Iran has shown no interest in the resurgence of a strong Iraqi central state similar to that of the Saddam era (see Fürtig 2010: 9). While Iran has disapproved strict ethno-sectarian political quotas (*muhasasa*) according to the Lebanese model, more recent talks of ethno-sectarian "partnerships" (*shiraka*) has gained more approval from the Iranian side (see Visser 2010: 6). Another possible model recently re-discussed in regional affairs has been the idea of "asymmetric federalism" which would continue to grant an exceptional over-proportional political autonomy to certain areas such as Iraqi Kurdistan. As long as "asymmetric federalism" would help to avoid a Kurdish quest for independence, it could become a favored option of the Iranian leadership.

With regard to the sectarian balance in Iraqi politics, Iran has clearly welcomed the political rise of Iraqi Shiites and the establishment of a Shiite-dominated government after 2005.

⁴²⁵ Iran vehemently opposed to the 2009 U.S.-Iraq Political Security Agreement that installed U.S. troops for many years and institutionalized the U.S. role in Iran's sphere of influence (Barzegar 2010a: 176).

Iran's delight at the political upgrade of Iraq's Shiite community has been inspired more by strategic than by religious considerations. Even though some Iranian clerical leaders may endorse the idea of the Shiite jurisprudence (*velayat-e faqih*) as the sole system for a Shiite-ruled state, the Iranian leadership has shown no aspiration of establishing a Shiite religious state in Iraq (Zweiri 2008a: 118). Instead, the Iranian Republic has shown strong endeavors of taking advantage of the new political constellation in Iraq and of establishing long-term strategic relations with Iraq's new political ruling elite. Regardless of the fact that Iran has continued to prefer a united Shiite front in Iraqi politics, Iran's priority of backing Shiite factions has more depended on where Iraq's political (Shiite or non-Shiite) factions stand vis-à-vis the United States. Iran's main motive for support has therefore been grounded less on Shiism, but rather on anti-Americanism and loyalty to Iran (see Zibakalam 2010).

Various signs of the formation of a new cross-cutting Iraqi nationalism in the new Iraqi administration have partly aroused Iranian suspicion. Iran does not favor an Iraqi-nationalist government that could assume autonomous nationalistic positions with regard to Iraq's domestic and foreign policies. Even though Iran seemed to favor a "community-focused" and "anti-nationalist paradigm" in Iraqi politics (see Visser 2010: 4), some Iranian foreign-policy experts, such as Kayhan Barzegar (2009), have argued that a modest Iraqi nationalism combined with an independent, friendly, Shiite-led Iraqi government would be actually in Iran's long-term interest. Another important goal of Iran's Iraq policy was to overcome Iran's Ba'athist heritage and to prevent the restoration of former Ba'athist functionaries of the Saddam era into the new Iraqi power structure.

The predominant Iranian policy strategy in post-2005 Iraq was based on the principle of broad engagement and diversification of relations with a variety of political actors in Iraq. The Iranian leadership pursued a largely pragmatic Iraq policy that was open to work with a wide spectrum of political factions and that aimed to establish strategic and tactical relations with the most relevant and influential political actors in Iraq. Iran's leaders have sought relations of various degrees with both moderate and radical forces, as well as with secular and religious factions.

Since 2005, Iran has continuously broadened and strengthened its relations to the Iraqi government. When Nouri Al-Maliki was elected Prime Minister of Iraq in 2006, Iran, in contrast to most of Iraq's Arab neighbors, appointed an ambassador to Iraq. Iran became, besides the United States, one of the most important supporters of the new Iraqi government (Zweiri 2008a: 117). The Iranian Republic was able to foster the Iranian-Iraqi relations by regularly inviting Iraqi political officials and military personnel to Iran and deepening Iranian-

Iraqi economic and security cooperation on large joint energy and other projects, border security or the mutual exchange of security information (see Zweiri 2008a: 118).⁴²⁶

The Iranian leadership has always stated its support for the Maliki government and moderate Islamic factions such as Maliki's Islamic Da'wa Party and Al-Hakim's ISCI (Barzegar 2010: 178). The Iranian leadership has also sought good relations with Iraq's most powerful and revered Shiite cleric, Ali Al-Sistani. Despite possibly contradictory politico-religious views of Al-Sistani, Iran has continued to treat Al-Sistani as an integral part of maintaining Iraq's stability (Kemp 2005: 3). In addition, the Iranian Republic has as well embraced radical and controversial Iraqi groups on a temporary and tactical basis. Iran is considered to have maintained quite opaque and informal relations to the hard-line Shiite Al-Sadr faction and to the military branches of political Shiite organizations.

Iran's post-2005 engagement in Iraq thereby mainly relied on non-coercive, manipulative or soft-power means. Iran's Iraq strategy was to large parts dedicated to brokering desired political coalitions before and after Iraqi elections. The Shiite majority as a result of the Iraqi elections held in January 2005 was also in part due to Iranian financial support to Shiite-backed political groups (Kemp 2005: 2). In view of the 2010 parliamentary elections in Iraq, Iran put efforts in restoring the former all-Shiite alliance, the by then called National Iraqi Alliance (Visser 2010: 3). After Iraq's parliamentary elections in March 2010, Iran was heavily involved in brokering a new pro-Iranian, Shiite coalition by mediating between radical and moderate political forces.

Iran's post-2005 Iraq policy showed, on the one hand, a sincere inclination to cooperative and multilateral engagement with the United States and Iraq's neighbor countries. On the other hand, Iran occasionally assumed confrontational and defiant stances towards pro-U.S. forces in Iraq and at times resorted to coercive means and military interventions, though on a rare and exceptional basis.

In the course of Iraq's stabilization and state-building process, the Iranian Republic was not only inclined to coordinate its Iraq policy with Iraq's neighbor countries, but also showed a strong willingness to proceed with direct talks with the United States on Iraqi security issues (Barzegar 2010: 179). During the time of intense sectarian fighting in Iraq in 2007, Iranian negotiators consulted with the United States on a regular basis about how to calm the situation. After Iran's participation in the Neighbors of Iraq Conference in March 2007 in Baghdad, Iranian and U.S. sub-negotiators resumed direct talks on Iraqi security in

⁴²⁶ According to the statement of Iran's Chamber of Commerce in 2010, Iranian state and private investors were implementing 750 projects in Iraq, majorly in the oil and construction sector. Iranian investments in Iraq's construction sector largely involve the construction of dams, roads, hotels, housing, and power plants. Iranian annual investments in Iraq have reached U.S.\$ 100 billion (see Sadeq Dehqan, *Iran Daily*, November 23, 2010, p. 4).

Baghdad.⁴²⁷ In May 2005, Ayatollah Khamenei publicly advocated to enter into dialogue with the United States on the issue of Iraq (Sadjadpour 2008: 16). Following the international Iraq conference in May 2007 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Iran and the United States had later talks on the ambassador level in Baghdad in order to further discuss Iraq's security situation (Al-Shaiji 2008: 104).

While Iran repeatedly took over a mediating and stabilizing role in Iraqi affairs, such as Iran's successful mediation in March 2008 after the clashes between the Maliki government and Shiite, pro-Al-Sadr militias in Baghdad,⁴²⁸ the Iranian leadership made clear that it could serve both as a facilitator or spoiler in Iraq's stabilization process. Since 2005, Iran sporadically put pressure on both the U.S. forces in Iraq as well as on the Iraqi government. Either by tactically supporting radical groups in Iraq or by unilateral operations, the Iranian leadership occasionally departed from its stabilization efforts. Iran's hardly verifiably sponsoring of Shiite radicals in Iraq and the Iranian Republic's opaque relations with the hard-line Al-Sadr faction seemed to be meant as rather tactical moves (Barzegar 2010: 178). In 2009, Iran pressured and snubbed both the Iraqi government and the international community by a short military occupation of an Iraqi oil field near the Iranian border in order to "demarcate" the Iranian-Iraqi border.⁴²⁹ Even though this operation remained a short-lived, isolated incident, the Iranian leadership demonstrated its determinedness to stay involved in the political developments in Iraq.

4.3.2 Balancing Power and Threats: A Neorealist Analysis

4.3.2.1 Iran's Regional Consolidation of Power under Increased Insecurity

After 2005, Iran was able to consolidate its power position in Iraq and the Gulf while at the same time being faced with increased threats to its external and domestic security coming mainly from the United States. Iran benefited from the loss of U.S. credibility and power that became evident during Iraq's insurgency and the following sectarian fighting beginning in 2006 (Al-Shaiji 2008: 110). Even though after 2005, Iran was able to constantly extend and consolidate its strategic presence in Iraq and the Gulf, Iran's actual power and influence in the Gulf region has remained vague and debated.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁷ Bilateral U.S.-Iranian controversial issues were excluded (Zweiri 2008a: 124).

⁴²⁸ In 2008, Iran overtly supported the Iraqi government against the Mahdi militia of Al-Sadr (Barzegar 2010: 178).

⁴²⁹ According to international media reports, eleven Iranian soldiers occupied for three days the Iraqi oil field *Fauqa* and set up an Iranian flag. After an initial Iranian disclaimer of the incident, Iranian officials later stated that the oil field was not returned to Iran after the Iranian-Iraqi War (see Hermann in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, December 23, 2009, page 6).

⁴³⁰ Marina Ottaway (2009: 8-9) questions Iran's hegemonic position in the Gulf given the U.S.-American military ground, air, and naval presence in the Gulf. Hermann (2009: 6) notices in 2010, that Iran's political and economic influence on Iraq, though being still on a high level, declines. The more

Iran's particular power and strength in the Gulf has been largely believed to be based on soft power and Iran's widely branched relations with various influential political networks and actors in Iraq. As Iran maintains friendly relations with all major competing actors in Iraq, it enjoys considerable means of influencing the political events in Iraq (see Hussein 2010). According to the view of Iranian academics, Iran's major power assets are its "multi-faceted channels of communication" (Dehshiri/Majidi 2008/09: 111) and its high potential to establish strategic relations with major Iraqi actors based on cultural, economic, and political-security interaction (Barzegar 2007/08: 96). However, Iran's multi-channel political relations to Iraq have not been an undisputed power asset. Iranian-Iraqi relations have stayed difficult and elusive (see Ottaway 2008: 16). There is no guarantee that Iran may not lose its influence over Iraq's strategic actors or that Iraq may turn towards Iran's regional competitors such as Turkey or its Arab neighbors.⁴³¹

The major constraint to Iran's exertion of power and influence in the Gulf has continued to be coming from the international system. In the post-2005 era, the United States has been by far Iran's greatest political challenger in the region and posed one of the most acute threats to Iran's national security. During Iraq's reconstruction period, the U.S.-Iranian rivalry about the future regional order in the Gulf reached a new stage. From the Iranian perspective, the current U.S.-Iranian conflict about Iran's nuclear program is in fact a conflict about the definition of the new international balance of power and the new security order in the Gulf. The Iranian leadership therefore perceives the regional policy of the United States as an attempt to "re-define the region's political-security order with a minimum role for Iran" (Barzegar 2010: 176).

The USA has posed both a serious hard-power and a significant soft-power security threat to the Iranian Republic. On the one hand, the United States constitutes a conventional hard-power threat to Iran's national security. The United States has continued to exert considerable hard pressure in the form of economic sanctions, diplomatic pressure, the consideration of military attacks on Iranian nuclear sites, and forging regional counter-alliances against the Iranian regime.⁴³² Since 2006, the United States has intensified its containment strategy against Iran. The U.S. strategy of heavily re-arming its Arab GCC allies

Iraq is able to stabilize its oil production and political situation, the political balance between Iran and Iraq may shift towards Iraq.

⁴³¹ Al-Hakim, leader of the Iraqi governing party ISCI, indicated in an interview given in 2009 that Iraq may be close to Iran, Turkey and the Arab neighbors. Even though he named Iran as a strategic friend of Iraq, he mentioned differences in the political culture of both countries and stressed that Iraq belongs to the Iraqis and Iran belongs to the Iranians (see interview with Al-Hakim in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on December 28, 2009, page 6).

⁴³² In early 2006, the U.S. administration enforced its regime-change strategy towards Iran and passed for this purpose the *Iran Freedom Support Act* in September 2006 (see Rudolf (2007: 2). The U.S. *National Intelligence Estimate* (NIE) of 2007, on the other hand, surprisingly downplayed the Iranian threat and seemed to exclude the option of a U.S. military strike on Iran in the foreseeable future (see Reissner 2008: 12).

(see Lotfian 2007/08: 28, 23; Ehteshami 2008b: 137) was primarily meant against the Iranian regime. In 2010, the United States was to conclude its biggest arms deal ever with Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries. The Iranian side thereby believes that the U.S. policy towards Iran has aimed to achieve *regime* change, and not merely *behavior* change (see Sadjadpour 2008: 16; Ramazani 2008: 10).

The United States has as well posed a soft power threat to Iran. Iranian scholars, such as Moeinaddini and Rezapour (2008: 119), have argued that the United States has frequently resorted to a policy of “non-conventional confrontation” and “psychological warfare” towards Iran. From the Iranian point of view, the United States has continuously sought to create political divides both within the region and within the Iranian society in order to undermine the credibility of the Iranian regime at the international and domestic level.

From the Iranian perspective, the United States may regionally isolate Iran by manipulating an Arab-Persian or Sunni-Shia divide and “cultivating regional rivalries” (Barzegar 2010: 180). In the post-2005 period, the United States has worked intensively to undercut Iran’s international credibility by forging widespread consensus against Iran (see Moeinaddini/Rezapour 2008: 120) and “demonizing” Iran in the Gulf and Middle East region (Barzegar 2008a: 55). Since 2006, the U.S. administrations have been eager to form an anti-Iranian alliance of “moderate” regional states (see Ottaway 2009: 2; Al-Shaiji 2008: 111). According to Barzegar (2006: 84-86), post-occupied Iraq has become the new arena where the U.S. has tried to contain Iranian influence by isolating Iran from its neighbor countries and producing a divide between Iran and the Arab World. Whether or not the United States will be successful in conveying the image of reverse Iranian interests vis-à-vis Sunni-Arab interests depends on the approval of the Arab regional states. So far, the GCC countries have shown no serious interest in openly taking sides with the United States in a potentially escalating U.S.-Iranian confrontation.

The United States has as well posed a potential threat to Iran’s domestic security and credibility of the Iranian regime. The Iranian leadership has been highly worried about a U.S. “political and cultural onslaught” (see Sadjadpour 2008: 18) against the Iranian Republic. The United States and its allies may promote popular disillusionment with its Islamic system, forge ethnic and sectarian unrest, and incite cleavages among the Iranian political elites and the Iranian society as a whole (see Sadjadpour 2008: 18).⁴³³

⁴³³ Iran has, for example, accused the United States of supporting Iranian exiles in North America and the MOK in Iraq to work for regime change in Iran, and of broadcasting anti-Iranian propaganda into Iran, e.g. through *Radio Farda* or *Voice of America* (see Hooglund 2006: 179; Lotfian 2007/08: 23; 16).

4.3.2.2 Iran's Policy in Post-Occupied Iraq: From Defensive To Offensive Balancing?

Not only the scope and degree of Iran's influence, but also Iran's motives and intentions in post-occupied Iraq have remained a matter of controversy (see Gause 2010: 171). From a balance-of-power and balance-of-threat perspective, Iran's Iraq policy in the post-2005 era has shown elements of both offensive and defensive balancing. New Iraq has become one of Iran's most important arenas of both security challenges and opportunities (Barzegar 2006: 86). Iran's Iraq policy has thus become a function of using new opportunities to extend Iran's regional influence, containing new, state-sponsored security threats, and preventing disadvantageous shifts in the regional balance of power. From the Gulf Arab perspective, Iran has shown an offensive, power-oriented balancing policy in Iraq that has aimed to achieve regional predominance and to become a dominant agenda-setter and interlocutor in regional affairs (see Al-Shaiji 2008: 105-06). From the Iranian perspective, Iran's Iraq policy appeared as a defensive balancing policy with the aim to protect legitimate Iranian security interests. According to Barzegar, Iran's foreign and Iraq policy was dictated more by security concerns and pragmatic geo-strategic interests than by expansionist or hegemonic designs (see Barzegar 2008a: 53; 2010: 173-74). The short-term goal of Iran's Iraq policy seemed to be the handling of immediate and direct threats from the remaining U.S. presence in Iraq. From a long-time perspective, however, Iran's Iraq policy also appeared to be a function of the assertion of Iran's regional role and the extension of Iran's power and influence in the wider region.

In the post-2005 era, Iraq has become the focal point where the U.S.-Iranian competition over power and influence in Iraq's political process has become a larger competition about the future balance of power and political-security order in the Gulf. Due to the reserve and virtual political abstinence of the Arab Gulf monarchies in Iraqi affairs, the Iranian leadership has majorly focused on the U.S. political and military presence in post-war Iraq. Two major areas of U.S.-Iranian competition have been Iraq's national and local elections that determine Iraq's further political and geo-strategic alignment, and the development of Iraq's oil industry that may affect Iraq's oil-political and geo-economic orientation.

Post-Saddam and post-occupied Iraq has become Iran's "strategic linkage" (Barzegar 2007/08: 99) to the Gulf and Middle East region. Iran's major tool of assuring a favorable balance of power in the Gulf has been the "strategizing the role of Shiites in Iraq's power equation" (Barzegar 2007/08: 94). By heavily endorsing Iraqi elections results that would secure a pro-Iranian Shiite government, the Iranian Republic worked to shift Iraq to a reliable strategic friend, overcome its regional marginalization, and strengthen its negotiation position in regional affairs.

4.3.3 Managing Interdependence: An Institutional Analysis

4.3.3.1 A New Quality of Regional Interdependence and Competition

After 2005, Iran's relations with Iraq at the societal and governmental level have become even more sustained and helped to foster a new quality of intra-regional interdependence. The political developments in Iraq have the potential to affect Iran's interests domestically, regionally, and internationally (see Barzegar 2006: 78). While the political process and the re-definition of the relationship between religion and state in Iraq may impact on Iran's domestic security, the re-formation of Iraq's regional strategic alignment will unavoidably affect Iran's future regional role and sphere of influence. Iraq's relations with extra-regional actors such as the United States may impact on Iran's scope of action within the international system.

The continuously high intra- and extra-regional involvement in Iraq's political process has increased the potential for regional conflict and hence once more laid open the lack of effective regulated or institutionalized mechanism of conflict resolution in the Gulf. The low success of Iranian initiatives for regional security cooperation expressed only the absence of a regional consensus about the further political-security order and an imbalance of interests in the Gulf.

After 2005, Iran and Iraq have witnessed a strong cultural, political and economic interconnectedness. The Iraqi national elections in 2005 and the formation of a Shiite-dominated government in Iraq have produced a new nature of Iranian-Iraqi relations at the governmental level. For the first time, the Iranian Republic's interaction with the Iraqi Shiite communities has been simultaneously placed on "normal cultural and political ties" of the two governments (Barzegar 2007/08: 95). As a result, analysts of the Gulf region have interpreted Iraq's national assembly elections of January 2005 as a "turning point" in Iranian-Iraqi relations (Taremi 2005: 42).

At the same time, the post-election process in Iraq has also opened the potential for a new nature of Iranian-Iraqi competition at the societal and state-to-state level. Iraq's former state-dictated restriction and interpretation of religion has been replaced by a more free domestic and transnational exchange of religious ideas⁴³⁴ and a more free competition among a plurality of political conceptions. As Iraq re-discusses the relationship between state and religion, the Iranian state may be forced to open itself for the same discussion. In particular in view of the formation of Iran's oppositional Green Movement in 2009, a successful Iraqi

⁴³⁴ After the fall of the Saddam regime, many Iraqi clerics have returned from their Iranian exile to Iraq. On the other hand, many members of Iraq's new political or religious elite have chosen to exchange ideas with their Iranian counterparts. Iraq's radical Shiite activist, Muqtada Al-Sadr, has stayed in Iran between 2007 and 2011 and studied at the Iranian seminar in Qom.

civilian government may become an attractive counter-model for many Iranians disappointed with their semi-theocratic system (see also Sick 2009).

The leader of Iraq's governing party ISCI, Al-Hakim, stated in 2009 that Iraq's clerical leadership in Najaf held a different view than its Iranian counterparts on the role that religion should play in a modern state.⁴³⁵ Observers of the Gulf region have made out a new competition between Iran's and Iraq's most important religious seminars (*hawza*) in Qom and Najaf respectively (see Hermann 2009: 6). Gary Sick (2009) has argued that the relationship between the seminars of Qom and Najaf is rather one of "friendly competition", a term that would also best describe the current state of Iranian-Iraqi relations.

The time after 2005 was also marked by a dramatic increase in "conventional" state security threats coming from the international system and the international state community, and a contemporaneous rise in domestic pressures and threats to Iran's regime stability.

The international dispute about Iran's nuclear program reached a new quality after Iran's resumption of uranium enrichment in 2006 under the new Ahmadinejad administration. The nuclear issue left Iran more politically and economically isolated than before. The tightened sanctions by the UN Security Council, the United States, and its Western allies⁴³⁶ led to far-reaching socio-economic and political after-effects for the Iranian Republic.

At the domestic level, the Iranian leadership had to continuously cope with a structurally weak national economy, the lack of urgently needed foreign investments in its oil and gas industry, and a high unemployment rate in particular among Iran's growing youth population. The Iranian presidential elections in 2009 were followed by one of the most serious oppositional movements in the history of the Iranian Republic. Societal demands for political freedom as well as inner-regime rivalries and contests for power have since then gained momentum and continue to constrain the regime's domestic autonomy of action.

The new nature of regional interdependence and the new quality of security risks such as a dangerous region-wide confrontation between Iran and an "anti-Iranian" front or the threat of a "nuclearization" of the Gulf region make a renewal of the regional security architecture indispensable. While the former balance-of-power order based on dual containment has become obsolete, a new regional order has not fully formed. The dramatic increase of interdependent security risks in the comparably small Gulf region would suggest the need to

⁴³⁵ Al-Hakim argued that Iraq's religious elite in Najaf would like to see a civil Iraqi government that at the same time respects the Muslim identity of the Iraqi people (see interview with Al-Hakim in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on December 28, 2009, page 6).

⁴³⁶ In 2006, the IAEA decided to refer Iran's file to the UNSC that began to impose sanctions on Iran by the end of 2006. In the following years, the UNSC, the United States, the European Union, and other major countries imposed sanctions and embargos in the military, economic, and banking sector.

establish regulated patterns of conflict resolution and institutionalize regional security affairs in order to collectively tackle new security challenges.

After 2005, Iran has turned out as one of the most influential and most contested actors in the Gulf while being at the same time the least integrated actor in regional cooperation initiatives. Since 2005, Iran has proposed at various occasions the establishment of regional security and defense cooperation among the littoral states of the Gulf.⁴³⁷ Among Iran's cooperation proposals have been the idea of a regional security regime with its Arab neighbors,⁴³⁸ an Islamic defense and security pact to share nuclear technology and knowledge with the Muslim world,⁴³⁹ the intensification of regional security cooperation with the GCC states,⁴⁴⁰ and a 10-point plan for Gulf security.⁴⁴¹

Even though the Iranian initiatives for regional security cooperation seemed to be an integral feature of Iran's regional strategy, they had only low chances of success. With regard to the GCC countries' long-term military cooperation agreements with the United States and other external partners, Iran's general demand of a withdrawal of all foreign forces from the Gulf as a prerequisite for regional collective security measures was probably not even by Iran expected to be a realistic point of negotiation. Iran's cooperation and collective-security proposals were probably more an expression of the Iranian discontent with the current regional security architecture and were rather meant as a form of a "security alliance" or security guarantee against the U.S. predominance in the Gulf. In addition, the Iranian cooperation initiatives cannot conceal the fact that the time after 2005 was marked by the "dawn of a post-détente era" (Ehteshami 2006: 355) in Iran's regional relations with the Arab neighbors in the Gulf. While the prospects for indigenous collective-security approaches in the Gulf remained very slim, Iran could only hope to be a regional *ad hoc* cooperation partner (Reissner 2007b: 50) on a bilateral basis.

⁴³⁷ In 2007, Ayatollah Khamenei advocated in front of an Iranian audience a joint defense pact of the Gulf littoral states (see Reissner 2008: 24; Taeb 2008: 29).

⁴³⁸ At the IISS conference in December 2005 in Manama, Iran proposed the adoption of a regional security regime that should work for a WMD-free Middle East, establish anti-terrorism measures and include a timetable for the departure of foreign military forces from the region (see Ehteshami 2006: 354).

⁴³⁹ On the margins of the OIC summit in 2005 in Mecca, President Ahmadinejad proposed an Islamic defense and security pact and offered to share Iran's nuclear technology for the scientific advancement of the Muslim world (see Ehteshami 2006: 354).

⁴⁴⁰ At the GCC summit in 2007 in Qatar, President Ahmadinejad renewed his call for regional security cooperation in the Gulf. President Ahmadinejad was the first Iranian President to be invited to a GCC summit.

⁴⁴¹ At the World Economic Forum in Doha in April 2007, Hassan Rohani, representative on Iran's Supreme National Security Council and director of the Center for Strategic Studies of Iran's Expediency council, introduced a 10-point plan for Gulf security. The Iranian plan proposed, inter alia, a collective security system including the GCC countries plus Iran and Iraq, a joint nuclear enrichment consortium, a WMD-free zone for the Middle East and the withdrawal of foreign military forces from the region (see *Mehrnews*, April 10, 2007, available on: <http://www.mehrnews.com/en/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=468577>; retrieved on November 12, 2009).

4.3.3.2 Iran's Iraq Policy: Using Iraq as a Cross-Cutting Bargaining Chip?

In the post-occupation period, Iran signalled its willingness to coordinate its Iraq policy with other regional countries and to cooperate with the United States for the further stabilization of Iraq. In a pragmatic way, Iran has accepted the role of the United States in Iraq as a strategic fact and was cautious not to directly engage in any conflict with the United States in Iraq (Barzegar 2010: 179). Yet, Iran has been kept aside from regional integration processes and has received no security guarantees from the major players in the region. The new Gulf security architecture envisaged by the United States and its regional allies does not seem to provide a balance of interests that would be favorable to Iran. The Tehran-based academic, Kayhan Barzegar, has brought it to the point by stating that Iran has perceived itself as “paying a great price for preserving regional security, without receiving appropriate gains in return” (Barzegar 2010: 180). From the Iranian nationalist point of view, Iran's past experience has also shown that it would receive no gratitude neither from the Arabs nor from the United States and that it would be better off to prioritize Iranian national interests over other interests in the region (Barzegar 2008a: 48).

As an option to protect vital Iranian interests in the Gulf and Middle East region, Iran has shown signs of using its role in Iraq as a bargaining tool to negotiate a favorable and safe Iranian position within the future regional order. Iran's influence on diverse political actors in Iraq could serve as a versatile and cross-functional bargaining chip in other regional issues and matters of dispute. Some observers of regional politics have argued that Iran might link its Iraq policy to the issue of its nuclear program. Iran could use its influence in Iraq as a strategic advantage in the international negotiations on its nuclear program.⁴⁴² Iran has been endeavored to remind the United States that it could “make life hell” for the U.S. forces in Iraq in case of a U.S. or Israeli attack on its nuclear facilities (Taremi 2005: 42).⁴⁴³ During Iraq's political stabilization process, Iran has signalled that it can play either a cooperative and constructive or a non-constructive role if it sees its national security threatened.

Iran has also made attempts to use Iranian-Iraqi relations to re-negotiate its role in the future oil-political order. Iran's three-day occupation of the Iraqi oil field *Fauqa* in December 2009 was interpreted to be possibly a signal towards Western oil companies, as well as towards the U.S. and Iraqi governments. It could have been meant as a hint not to overlook or bypass Iran when Iraq's future oil-political order is determined,⁴⁴⁴ as a powerful demonstration that

⁴⁴² This option has for instance been considered by Al-Shaiji (2008: 108) and Kemp (2005: 16, 18).

⁴⁴³ An anonymous SCIRI leader stated in March 2005 that Iran could make life “like hell” for U.S. forces in Iraq by using its influence over thousands of volunteer fighters in Iraq. However, so far Iran has refrained from doing so (see ICG 2005: 24).

⁴⁴⁴ According to Zibakalam (2010), Iran tried to convey to both the Iraqi government and Western oil companies that there are major border disputes between Iran and Iraq and that no one can “simply enter” these areas. Just shortly before, in December 2009, the Iraqi government had signed several substantial contracts with major international oil consortiums. The Iranian side claimed that the disputed oil field had not been returned to Iran after the Iran-Iraq War.

presents Iran as a strong-willed actor that would also show no weakness in the negotiations on its nuclear program (Hermann 2009: 6), or as signal to Iraq's Maliki government that has developed a more independent and Iraqi-nationalist policy (Hermann 2009: 6).

Iran's attempts to use its influence in Iraq as a versatile and cross-functional bargaining chip to safeguard or further vital Iranian interests in other sectors or regional issues has arisen again the question of Iranian motives behind its strategy in Iraq. Has Iran placed its Iraq policy at the service of safeguarding legitimate security interests or has Iran beyond that intended to further its regional clout and carve out a new powerful role in the wider region? Either way, the Iranian leadership has also been aware of the limits of its cross-sectional influence. The post-occupation period in Iraq has shown that Iran enjoys no ultimate influence over its political allies and protégés in Iraq and cannot direct or control political events in Iraq (see Reissner 2007: 48). As a consequence, the Iranian leadership has refrained from entering into an open conflict with other external state actors in Iraq.

4.3.4 Complying with Foreign-Policy Roles and Norms: A Constructivist Analysis

4.3.4.1 Iran's Foreign-Policy Narratives and Role Conceptions after 2005

After 2005, Iran witnessed a change of emphasis in its foreign-policy culture. With the inauguration of the neo-conservative and neo-revolutionary Ahmadinejad administration, the regime re-activated its invocation to the Islamic constitutive element and to Iran's resistance culture. Various foreign policy narratives and themes of the Iranian leadership have revealed a re-strengthened Islamic-revolutionary self-conception and a grown self-assurance of the Iranian regime in the international arena. After 2005, the Iranian leadership has increasingly assumed a new assertive and pro-active foreign-policy role conception in various political and geographic spheres. At a global scale, the Iranian regime has portrayed itself as a defender of "international justice among nations" and of an advocator of all-Muslim interests. Regionally, Iran has imagined itself as an indispensable and ever-important player for regional security, as a vanguard for regional progress and as a spiritual vanguard and catalyst of a regional Islamic awakening. As the Iranian Republic feels its legitimate "natural" leadership and responsibility denied, it has viewed itself to be in an intensified struggle with an unjust and hegemonic international system. The "panacea" for the current international and regional impasse is imagined to lie in non-permissiveness towards dominating Western power structures, the fostering of an all-Muslim unity, and the "indigenizing" of regional security structures.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴⁵ In October 2010, for example, President Ahmadinejad stressed the need to increase regional resistance for the sake of peace and stability in the region (see *Fars News Agency*, October 2nd, 2010).

A common tenor in Iran's statized foreign-policy discourse has been the idea that the Iranian Republic is constrained by an unjust and hierarchical international structure of domination and discrimination. After 2005, the Iranian leadership has revived the narrative that the international system lacks justice, reciprocity and equality of nations. Based on pure materialism and domination by a few, the international system is viewed to lack justice and spirituality.⁴⁴⁶ According to this narrative, the dominating international normative structure does not express the international public opinion, but reflects the imposed norms of the Western, secular-materialist world elite. Iran's Islamic governance and its religious *raison d'état* are thought to be incompatible with the dominating secular norms and principles of the international system (Rouhani 2010: 43). Due to these foundational differences, the Iranian Republic has been subject to challenges and impediments from the secular international system (Moeinaddin/Rezapour 2008: 130).

In contrast to the dominating rules of the international system, the Iranian state elite has detected an increasing role of religion and religious identity and the revival of Islam as a spiritual counter-trend in the international system.⁴⁴⁷ The Iranian discourse considers the international system to be in a "transitional period" (Moeinaddin/Rezapour 2008: 110).⁴⁴⁸ On account of the observed growing discrepancy between the religious consciousness of the international public and the dominating secular materialism of the international system, the former anti-colonial struggle of the peripheral countries has developed into "home-grown protest movements" against the domination of foreign ideologies (see Rouhani 2010: 25).⁴⁴⁹

According to the Iranian state narrative, the Iranian Republic embodies a vanguard of this new religious consciousness and protest in international relations. The Iranian Republic is viewed as a pioneer of religious governance within the dominating structures of secular materialism (see Rouhani 2010) and may hence serve as a spiritual role model for others. Iran's spirituality and dynamic ideology is thought to enjoy wide popularity among the public opinion of other sidelined nations and peoples. The Iranian state discourse has detected

⁴⁴⁶ Ahmad Sadeghi (2008: 17) remarks that Iran's revolutionary foreign-policy discourse has tolerated the existing Westphalian world order. It does not regard it as a legitimate order, but as a given fact and a *modus vivendi*.

⁴⁴⁷ See, for example, Ayatollah Khamenei's speech on the Feast of Mab'ath on September 2nd, 2005; see also Rouhani's reflections on international relations (Rouhani 2010).

⁴⁴⁸ President Ahmadinejad, for example, has stated on September 23, 2008 that the present order "based on a particular culture, way of thinking and political and economic relations is about to collapse" (see <http://un.president.ir/en/?ArtID=12031>).

⁴⁴⁹ The 2011 Jasmine Revolt in Tunisia and the following Egyptian coup d'état have been interpreted by the Iranian leadership as a form of Islamic awakening and an "arc of resistance" against pro-Western regimes. The Iranian opposition movement, to the contrary, has considered the uprisings as a struggle against oppressive regimes, similar to their own struggle of the Green Movement formed after the Iranian presidential elections of 2009 (see for example the analysis of Barbara Slavin on IPS, February 10, 2011).

According to Iranian officials, the people of the region are fed up with the U.S. regional policy and "U.S. double standards" in the region (see *Ettela'at*, October 30, 2009).

religion as a new force that influences international politics (see Rouhani 2010: 23). According to these new perceived developments in the international arena, the Iranian leadership views itself confirmed in its theses and endowed with genuine international legitimacy.

The look at Iranian state narratives on U.S. intentions and at Iran's perception of the currently increased U.S.-Iranian dualism may help to better understand Iran's foreign-policy role conceptions and behavior. The Iranian regime has perceived various U.S. plots intended to harm the Iranian Republic and keeping the countries of the Middle East region dependent and controllable.⁴⁵⁰ According to the narratives of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, the U.S. administration opposes Iran not because of its behavior but because of its strategic location and resources that are too valuable to be controlled by an independent-minded Islamic government (see Sadjadpour 2008: 15). As a consequence, the United States does not want an independent Islamic country to achieve strategic technological and scientific knowledge such as advanced nuclear technology.⁴⁵¹ The United States is told to be less worried about the nuclear proliferation threat, but rather to be aware to keep the region technologically dependent and maintain the previous patron-client relationship with the regional states (see Sadjadpour 2008: 23, 15).

Since the Iraq War, Iraq has become for the Iranian regime a symbolic place of U.S. neo-imperialism and a new arena from where the United States is thought to form its plots against Iran and the regional Muslim nations.⁴⁵² In the aftermath of the Iraq War and the 2005 Iraqi elections, the United States is increasingly believed to manipulate regional divides in order to undermine Iran's domestic legitimacy and international credibility and in order to keep the regional states and societies weak and divided. From the Iranian state's point of view, the United States is not only seeking to create cleavages within Iran's Islamic society to subvert Iran's Islamic system, but is currently also manipulating regional cleavages among the countries and societies of the Middle East. According to Iran's official narrative, the U.S. has tried to create and make use of a Sunni-Shia divide in Iraq and the wider region. By doing so, the U.S. is thought to be trying to portray Iran as a *Shiite* Republic with specifically Shiite interests in order to isolate Iran from the Sunni communities in Iraq and the wider region.⁴⁵³ In addition, the United States is accused of trying to drive a wedge between Iran and the

⁴⁵⁰ President Ahmadinejad, for example, rated the Iraq War as a U.S. attempt to "solidify the [U.S.] position in the political geography of the region and to dominate oil resources" (see Ahmadinejad's speech at the UN General Assembly on September 23, 2008).

⁴⁵¹ See, for example, Ayatollah Khamenei's address to Iranian air force servicemen on February 7, 2006.

⁴⁵² Iranian officials have repeatedly mentioned "plots" and "conspiracies" of the United States and its Israeli ally that were designed to create a rift between Iran and Iraq and to marginalize Iran in the region (see, for example, *Fars News Agency* on October 3rd, 2010, and October 6, 2010).

⁴⁵³ See Ayatollah Khamenei's speech to the residents of Qom on January 8, 2007; see also President Ahmadinejad's interview with channel 13-PBS (Charlie Rose) on September 25, 2007).

Arab countries.⁴⁵⁴ According to Khamenei, the United States and its agents are benefiting from the formation of discord and division among Muslims and from the ongoing ethnic and religious unrest in Iraq.⁴⁵⁵ While inter-Muslim schisms would strengthen the U.S. power to influence regional events, a continuous instability in Iraq would give the U.S. a pretext to continue its “illegal occupation” of Iraq.⁴⁵⁶

While the Iranian leadership repeatedly pointed to the “defeat” and failure of the United States in assuming control over Iraq and the region,⁴⁵⁷ Iran has made out a simultaneous growth of Iran’s regional role and influence. The U.S. failure to establish a pro-Western “puppet regime”⁴⁵⁸ in Baghdad and the U.S. loss of credibility in the region due to its inability to bring security and prosperity to the Iraqi people, were interpreted by the Iranian regime as an opportunity to Iran (see Reissner 2008: 5). Iran perceives itself more than ever as an indispensable regional player and guarantor for regional security and stability. Within the new realities in Iraq and the Middle East, the Iranian leadership sees Iran’s role as a regional player of upmost strategic importance (see also Moeinaddini/Rezapour 2008: 130). Iran’s state elite hence expects the United States to recognize Iran’s status as a major regional player and to respect Iran as an equal negotiation partner in regional affairs (Ramazani 2010: 82). However, so far Iran has felt its natural role denied and hindered by the United States and the pro-U.S. forces in the Middle East. As the United States continues to further ignore Iran’s increased regional importance, it would act against the region’s “natural power equations” and risk to exacerbate regional conflicts (see Barzegar 2010b: 87).

Iranian demands for a renewed regional security order have been made according to the state’s narrative of a current unjust, exclusive and “imported” regional security system that does not represent the new realities in the regional power equations. Iran’s elite regards the present security architecture in the region to be “disproportionate” and serving only the interests of a few, namely the United States and its allies (see Barzegar 2010b: 87). The Iranian President Ahmadinejad has placed regional security in a wider Islamic context (Ehteshami 2006: 355). The Iranian talks of “indigenizing” regional security (Knapp 2010: 56)

⁴⁵⁴ See, for example, Ayatollah Khamenei’s address to Iranian officials and executives on April 6, 2007; see also Barzegar 2006: 84.

⁴⁵⁵ See, for example, Ayatollah Khamenei’s address at the 2nd Congress in Commemoration of Ibn Maytham Bahrani on January 15, 2007; and Khamenei’s speech to governor-generals on February 27, 2006.

⁴⁵⁶ See Ayatollah Khamenei’s statements at the Tehran Friday prayers on August 19, 2005. Interestingly, the United States accuses Iran of pursuing the same strategy in Iraq. Iran was accused of boosting and profiting from Iraqi insecurity.

⁴⁵⁷ See Ayatollah Khamenei’s speech to government officials on Eid al-Fitr on November 4, 2005; Khamenei’s speech to the residents of Qom on January 9, 2006; and Khamenei’s address to Iranian officials and executives on April 6, 2007.

⁴⁵⁸ See Ayatollah Khamenei’s statements at the Tehran Friday prayers on August 19, 2005.

were grounded from the conception of the indivisibility of regional security and a commonality of Muslim security interests. The Iranian leadership has repeatedly stressed that regional security is indivisible cannot be reached at the expense of Iranian security. A stable and just regional security system can only be established upon Islamic unity and solidarity. With regard to the perceived U.S. plot to create divides among the natural bonds between regional countries and societies, the Iranian regime warned the regional states not to fall into the “enemies’ trap”.⁴⁵⁹

Iran’s foreign-policy role conceptions after 2005 have revealed a strong re-activation of Iran’s revolutionary-Islamic self-conception. Iran’s foreign-policy elite has portrayed Iran as an advocator of all-Muslim and genuine regional interests, as a catalyst and vanguard of a perceived Islamic awakening, a leader of regional resistance, and as a defender of regional Islamic pride and honour. Iran has been increasingly eager to take over the role as the “big brother”⁴⁶⁰ of the regional Muslim states. In addition to that, the Iranian leadership has increasingly resorted to the nationalist element of Iran’s foreign-policy culture. Iran’s state elite has shown a strong dedication to assuming the role of a “regional great power”. Under the Ahmadinejad administration, the Iranian regime has tried to “carve out a role for Iran on a broader regional scale” (Barzegar 2010a: 181) and assert Iran’s role as an indispensable player in regional affairs. While the Iranian leadership after 2005 has re-turned to Iran’s role as a non-permissive and non-complaisant actor, it has also been eager to convey Iran’s role of a constructive and responsible regional player to the international community.

4.3.4.2 Iran’s Iraq Policy: Asserting Iran’s “Legitimate” Regional Role

As Iraq has become the new decisive place to fight U.S. imperialism and assert a more “just” regional order, the Iranian Republic has felt obliged to assert “legitimate” Iranian and regional Muslim interests in Iraq. Iran’s new imagined “legitimate” role in Iraq has been that of a constructive and responsible, but also of an assertive and non-complaisant regional player. While Iran assumed a mediating role to prevent the inflammation of an Iraqi civil war and engaged itself for a “genuine” Iraqi democracy, it also assumed an assertive and non-compromising role to endorse a new “fair” share of power in Iraq and a more “just” regional order.

The Iranian leadership considered its Iraq policy to be a positive and constructive contribution to Iraq and the region. Part of this constructive role was Iran’s readiness for cooperation and engagement with the United States and other regional actors involved in

⁴⁵⁹ See Ayatollah Khamenei’s speech to the residents of Qom on January 8, 2007: Khamenei sent a warning to the Arab governments that tended to form an anti-Iranian alliance with the United States.

⁴⁶⁰ According to Abbas Al-Lawati, personally interviewed on March 9, 2009 in Dubai.

Iraq and Iran's peace-building and stabilization efforts in Iraq (see Rouhani 2010: 42; Barzegar 2010b: 91-93). In addition, Iran supported Iraq's democratization process and endorsed the establishment of a "genuine" Iraqi democracy. The Iranian leadership supported the Maliki government of Iraq as the "first Iraqi popular government based on Islam". The Iranian leadership distinguished its support of the new Iraqi government under Prime Minister Al-Maliki from alleged Western "double standards" on democracy. While the United States and its allies are not thought to truly accept an Islamic democratic Iraq, the Iranian regime considered itself to endorse true popular democracy in Iraq.⁴⁶¹

After the foreign toppling of the Saddam regime, Iraq has once more become a symbolic place of foreign interventionism, but also of the "failure" of imposing foreign political ideas on a Muslim country. Iran's Iraq policy in post-occupation Iraq now actively aims to re-shape the balance-of-interests and to assert "legitimate" Iranian interests. Iran's Iraq policy thereby became a function of Iranian demands of respect, reciprocity and the recognition of Iran as an equal negotiation partner and player of utmost importance. The Iranian Iraq policy also reflected Ahmadinejad's new proclaimed strategy of "aggressive diplomacy"⁴⁶² which became a counter model to President Khatami's formerly "placable" and "compliant" policy towards the West (see Reissner 2008: 19) after the perceived Iranian experience of disappointment with and rebuffs from the United States. "Aggressive" (*tahajomi*) diplomacy was based on the demand of "direct reciprocity" in Iran's dealing with the United States. With regard to Iran's policy towards the U.S. presence in Iraq, "aggressive diplomacy" meant that Iran places own demands in Iraq's re-construction process. The Iranian regime has actively claimed the respect of vital Iranian interests in Iraq and the recognition of Iran's indispensability for Iraq's peace and stability.

4.3.5 Interim Findings

From a state-centric balance-of-power and balance-of-threat perspective, Iran's Iraq policy in the post-2005 era became a function of balancing third-state security threats in Iraq. From a neorealist lens, Iran's Iraq policy was part of a regional powers' competition over the new regional security architecture and of an intensified U.S.-Iranian confrontation. In the short term, Iran's Iraq policy may be explained as a defensive balancing strategy that aimed to avert immediate security threats coming mainly from the United States. From a longer perspective, Iran also showed the ambition to take advantage of the shifting regional constellation of power and the U.S. difficulties in determining the political developments in

⁴⁶¹ See Ayatollah Khamenei's statements at the Tehran Friday prayers on August 19, 2005; and Khamenei's speech on the Feast of Mab'ath on September 2nd, 2005.

⁴⁶² When Mottaki was confirmed foreign minister by the Iranian parliament in 2005, Mottaki considered Iran's new working principle of the coming era to be "aggressive diplomacy" (see Reissner 2008: 20).

Iraq. By using Iraq as a “strategic linkage” to assert Iran’s wider regional role and power position, the Iranian leadership exhibited also power-seeking ambitions in its Iraq policy. Iran’s policy in Iraq can hence also be understood as an offensive, power-oriented balancing strategy.

The analysis of Iran’s Iraq policy solely through the lenses of regional powers’ competition would neglect potential effects coming from the new quality of intra-regional non-state interdependence and competition. The new nature of Iranian-Iraqi relations at the governmental and non-state level as well as the free flow and discussion of political ideas and concepts in the democratizing Iraqi state may have had a significant and formative influence on the formulation and conduct of Iran’s Iraq policy. The Iranian Iraq policy after 2005 was therefore a form of “managing” and “channelling” these qualitatively transformed Iranian-Iraqi relations by means of Iran’s multi-channel networks with Iraqi actors.

In addition, there were also signs that Iran’s Iraq policy was occasionally put to the service of negotiating a favorable and safe position in the new regional order. After 2005, Iran has emerged not only as one of the most influential regional players, but also as one of the most contested and least regionally integrated actors. Iran’s Iraq policy therefore became also a function of Iran’s regional cross-issue bargaining on vital Iranian interests in other regional affairs. By using its various networks and its political role in Iraq, Iran hoped to prevent to be bypassed when the new regional economic, political or security order was to be re-negotiated.

Through a sociological perspective, Iran’s post-2005 Iraq policy can also be understood as an assertion of Iran’s “legitimate” role in Iraq. As long as Iran feels its new legitimate role in Iraq denied, it will continue to follow a largely non-placable, insistent and autonomous strategy.

The significant transformation of Iran’s foreign-policy culture after 2005 in the sense of Iran’s return to a strongly Islamic-revolutionary and nationalist self-conception may generally explain for Iran’s new tone and assertiveness in its external affairs. However, more interesting would be the question whether the change in Iran’s foreign-policy role-conceptions was due to a de facto material change in regional capabilities, opportunities and security risks, or rather the outcome of social discourse and a traumatic, inter-subjective experience with international exclusion, rebuffs and imagined anti-Iranian plots.

The perceived experience with U.S. rebuffs and “plots” against Iran may have been constitutive for the formation of a strongly resistant and non-compromising foreign-policy role conception after 2005. This could explain for Iran’s difficulties to coordinate its Iraq policy with the United States despite the existence of common U.S.-Iranian interests in Iraq. As well, the material shift and consolidation of Iran’s regional power position may have had a

constitutive effect on the re-formation of Iran's role-conception within the Middle East region. As Iran has emerged as one of the strategically most important and indispensable regional players in Iraq, the Iranian regime now claims the recognition and respect of Iran's newly assumed role and acts accordingly.

4.4 Iran's Iraq Policy: Findings of a Diachronic Analysis

4.4.1 Continuity and Change in Form and Content of Iran's Iraq Policy

In a chronological comparison of the Iranian Iraq policy since the 1990s, the respective time periods have shown a (formal and material) change in the form and content of Iran's Iraq policy.

Iran's policy of "cold peace" and "pragmatic rapprochement" during the 1990s was based on a provisional, cautious and flexible strategy. By seeking a gradual rapprochement with both Iraq and the anti-Iraq coalition, the Iranian Republic performed a remarkable balancing act. Iran's policy towards Iraq was majorly motivated by defensive, status quo intentions, but also revealed remaining hostile and revisionist motives and ideological antipathy towards the Iraqi regime.

Iran's Iraq policy of "active neutrality" and "managed stabilization" between 2001 and 2005 revealed preventive, status quo motives and defensive-revisionist intentions. Iran's establishment and diversification of relations within Iraq's new political arena after 2003 were a precautionary measure, but also introduced a double-edged strategy in Iraq's new political game. Iran pursued an ambivalent policy with seemingly contradictory foreign-policy goals. The Iranian Iraq policy after 2003 combined the support of both moderate and radical political forces in Iraq. For this purpose, Iran drew on both formal engagement with Iraq's new administration and on a non-transparent and mediate interventionist policy through the support of various regional protégés.

Iran's post-2005 Iraq policy was a policy of strategic and long-term engagement. The Iranian Iraq policy revealed defensive motives of assertively and pro-actively guaranteeing Iran's national security interests in the new emerging regional order. On the other hand, Iran showed offensive-revisionist intentions of re-shaping political events in Iraq in a way that strengthens Iran's regional clout and influence and of re-negotiating the regional order "on Iranian terms". Iran thereby continued a double-edged strategy of combining cooperative and confrontational elements in its Iraq policy.

Since the 1990s, Iran has continued to lead a nuanced and "double-edged" strategy that has coupled cooperation and rapprochement with confrontation and unilateral interventions. Iran has shown a continuous openness to and pragmatic flexibility in working with different,

sometimes opposing political factions in Iraq. Yet, Iran's foreign-policy pragmatism has always been coupled to various degrees with ideological motives. A visible change in Iran's Iraq policy has been the shift from the searching of a temporal and provisional *modus vivendi* with Iraq to the pursuit of a long-term, strategic engagement with the Iraqi neighbor. In addition, Iran's Iraq policy has shown a new level of pro-active and overt engagement and a pro-active assertion of Iranian national and security interests. The Iranian Iraq policy also revealed a new degree of offensive-revisionist motives. While Iran has pursued a largely cautious and defensive policy during the 1990s, the post-2005 Iraq policy has aimed to actively extend Iran's power position and re-shape the regional order according to Iranian interests.

4.4.2 Continuity and Change of Structural Factors

A cross-temporal, diachronic comparison of the explanatory variables shows continuities and changes in the structural factors that have determined and influenced Iran's Iraq policy.

Conventional state threats to Iran's national security have continued to remain important, but there can be witnessed a decline in priority. As Iran's security risks have become more multi-faceted and appear as hard and soft, multi-actor threats, traditional state threats to Iran's national security are only one type of threat among others. A continuously high extra-regional state threat to Iran's security has come from the United States in the form of hostile intentions and a policy of active containment. Throughout the last two decades, the Iranian Republic was menaced by U.S. motives of regime change in Iran. Threats to Iran's domestic security in the form of state manipulation of ethnic-religious minorities and opposition groups have become a less tangible and predictable security risk. Transnational minorities and political groups have become less manipulable by states, but have rather arisen as new non-state and hardly controllable political forces. The prospect of success to manipulate transnational groups against state adversaries has therefore become less predictable for both Iran and its opponents. All in all, Iran's power position towards Iraq and other state actors in the region has become stronger, but less secure and more strongly contested.

The nature of Iran's structural interdependence has gradually shifted from a rather state-level to a more diversified complex interdependence. During the 1990s, Iran's poor integration into the world economy, Iranian export dependence and vulnerability to the international oil market constituted Iran's most urgent vulnerabilities. In the last decade, the Iranian state has become increasingly vulnerable to transnational societal and non-state developments in the Gulf region and to a new free-flowing, transnational competition of political ideas. Iran had to face a new quality of interdependence while at the same time the nature of power and security threats had become more diffuse and difficult to deal with. In contrast, the degree

and quality of regional institutionalization or collective conflict-management in the Gulf has remained on a low level. Iran has continued to be one of the least regionally integrated actors despite Iran's growing intra-regional interdependence. As a matter of fact, there can be observed a growing discrepancy between the level of regional interdependence and the level of regional integration and institutionalization.

Iran's identity and self-conception has continued to be strongly defined through Iran's conflictual relations to the outside world. Iran has itself perceived as an antagonist in and opponent to the present predominant global structures. The Iranian state narratives have thereby notably shown a structuralist argumentation according to that Iran's true potentials have been constrained and challenged by the international structure. Iran's role-conception has revealed an inherent revisionist attitude that has aimed to overcome present external structures and constraints.

From the 1990s to the present, there could be observed changes in the Iranian state's self-conception and foreign-policy roles according to transformations in the international structure and shifts in Iran's material needs. In the past two decades, Iran's national self-perceptions and foreign-policy role-conceptions have shifted from a pragmatic-nationalist self-conception during the 1990s to a neo-revolutionary, neo-conservative and ultra-resistant role-conception in the post-2005 era. In the 1990s, there could be witnessed an ideological pragmatism and a flexibilization of foreign-policy norms and principles according to changed socio-economic needs. Iran's self- and role-conceptions were made congruent with material needs. Despite Iran's continuously strong ideological rhetoric, Iranian norms and roles have stayed in contact with reality. The uncertain development of Iran's external environment after 2001 and 2003 was accompanied by an uncertainty about and vague re-definition of the Iranian self-conception vis-à-vis the Gulf region. After 2005, Iran's new political regional influence and the shifts in the regional power equations reinforced Iran's assumption of a new assertive regional role-conception according to Iran's strategic upgrade in the region.

In contrast to the flexibilization of religious or ideological norms and principles, Iran's historically inherited and socially constructed role-conceptions proved to be more immutable and resistant to change. Iran's historical suspicion towards a hostile and alien region and the socially constructed U.S.-Iranian antagonism grounded on memorized U.S. "plots" and "rebuffs" have remained constant elements of Iran's foreign-policy culture.

4.4.3 Continuity and Change of Iran's Foreign Policy Behavior

Iran's behavioral patterns in balancing state power and threats, managing complex interdependence and conforming to foreign-policy roles and norms have shown shifts in emphasis and adaption to external stimuli.

Iran's foreign policy has witnessed a trend from an overall defensive balancing strategy in the 1990s to a broad-ranged balancing policy comprising both defensive and offensive elements. Iran has continued to rely on a nuanced and double-edged balancing strategy that combined confrontation with accommodation and occasional "pre-emptive cooperation". A preferred strategy has been a mediate balancing policy via regional proxies and protégés. In recent years there can be observed a stronger emphasis on soft power balancing through means of public diplomacy and appeals to the regional public opinion or attempted manipulation of transnational or sub-state political groups.

The last two decades have shown a clear trend away from a balancing of pure power and state threats to a sophisticated "omni-managing" of multiple state, quasi-state, or non-state security risks. Iran has thereby adhered to rather conventional (non-regulated, bilateral or unilateral) forms of conflict- and crisis-management. At times, Iran has shown efforts to use its influence over multi-channel quasi-state or non-state networks as a cross-issue bargaining tool for other regional affairs. Iran's parallel integrationist policy that aimed to foster an indigenous regional integration process revealed rather features of a balancing strategy against extra-regional actors.

The state's compliance with its foreign-policy norms and roles has shown itself to be less problematic, as ideological norms, roles and principles were made flexible and adapted to reality *before* they were applied to foreign policy. Iran's foreign policy hence did not risk facing a serious domestic credibility trap. The Iranian regime showed rather difficulties in defending its role, credibility and trustfulness at the external level. There can be observed a constant discrepancy between proclaimed norms or role-conceptions and actual foreign policy behavior. Iran's praise of all-Muslim and intra-regional solidarity clashed at times with signs of an Iranian-nationalist or seemingly sectarian policy. Iran made efforts to credibly assuming the role as an all-Muslim leader rather than a Shiite power, and to being accepted as a defender of genuine regional interests rather than being perceived as a regional power with hegemonic and nationalist interests. Iran's compliance with its roles and norms appeared to be a complicated balancing act of reconciling seemingly contradictory role- and self-conceptions. The proclaimed principle of regional Muslim solidarity was limited by Iran's inherited ideological suspicion towards its external environment. Iran's conception of an equality of nations clashed with the parallel nationalist concept of Iranian supremacy.

The cross-temporal comparison of Iran's Iraq policy has shown that both structural challenges from the Iranian state's environment and Iran's policy reactions have transformed. Iran's Iraq policy of the 1990s majorly reflected neorealist assumptions. Iran was predominantly confronted with conventional state threats and resorted to a classical balancing strategy and conventional conflict management. The years between 2001 and 2005 fully revealed the complexity and severe rupture of the international structure. Iran

“managed” multilevel and multi-actor threats in a rather conventional and autonomous way and was searching for an appropriate re-definition of its self- and role-conception in the region. After 2005, regional power equations, identities and role-conceptions as well as the structures of intra-regional interdependence remained in a state of flux and transformation. Iran’s more pro-active assertion of its national and security interests and Iran’s regional power projection shows a more clear assumption of Iran’s regional role.

5. FPA in the Gulf Region: Findings and New Perspectives for Further Research

5.1 Saudi Arabia’s and Iran’s Iraq Policies: Findings of a Comparative Analysis

In a cross-country comparison, the Iraq policies of Saudi Arabia and Iran have shown similarities in goals and content, but have begun to more strongly diverge in goals and form over time. Throughout the 1990s, Saudi Arabia and Iran shared similar foreign-policy goals towards Iraq, but applied different strategies. Both countries supported (directly or implicitly) the assertive re-establishment of the regional *status quo ante bellum* in 1990/91. In the following, the two countries pursued a largely defensive status quo policy towards Iraq. They aimed to secure a safe regional status quo and the territorial integrity of the regional states. Both countries advocated active measures to prevent Iraq from new expansionist or hegemonic ambitions while they looked at the same time for a temporary *modus vivendi* with the Iraqi neighbor. The major difference between Saudi Arabia’s and Iran’s Iraq policy was of formal nature. While Saudi Arabia aligned with the United States and the pro-U.S. coalition forces, Iran pursued an independent, single-handed strategy and avoided a multi-lateral engagement against Iraq.

Between 2001 and 2005, Saudi Arabia’s and Iran’s Iraq policies began to diverge. While both Saudi Arabia and Iran at first rejected the U.S.-led regime change in Iraq, they started to pursue different goals and strategies towards the U.S. occupation regime in Iraq. Iran’s double-edged strategy of supporting radical Iraqi Shiite groups and occasionally cooperating with the U.S. forces contrasted with Saudi Arabia’s virtual political absence in Iraq. Yet, both countries nurtured a similar ambivalent and sceptical attitude towards the democratization and federalization process in Iraq

After 2005, Saudi Arabia’s and Iran’s goals and strategies towards post-occupation Iraq not only diverged but at times seemed to run counter and clash against each other. Iran’s interest in a pro-Iranian and anti-American Shiite government in Iraq clashed with the Saudi goal of securing a “fair” Sunni share of power and the Saudi endorsement of a secular Shiite and pro-U.S. Iraqi government. The common Saudi-Iranian wariness of a successful liberal democratization in their Iraqi neighbor country, of Iraqi secession movements or of a strong

federalization and decentralization of power in Iraq has not led to a joint Saudi-Iranian strategy towards Iraq. While Iran began to actively exert influence on Iraq's domestic power equations to re-shape them according to Iranian interests, the Saudi regime showed rather reactionary efforts of containing and pushing back Iranian influence. Saudi Arabia's passivity, limited engagement and sporadic, uncoordinated assertions of Saudi interests in Iraq's political sphere contrasted with Iran's sophisticated and broad-ranged strategic engagement in Iraq.

The cross-country comparison of the structural environment shows that the Saudi and the Iranian state regimes have been embedded in similar but not identical environmental conditions. Structural changes in the environment have been similar, but had impacts of different degrees and intensity on the two states.

As concerns the external constellation of state power and threats, both countries have been affected by the eradication of the tripolar balance and the current perilous polarization of power in the Gulf. Saudi Arabia finds itself in a growing uncomfortable regional position and in the quagmire of neither wanting a U.S.-Iranian military confrontation nor a U.S.-Iranian reconciliation on a large scale ("grand bargain"). Iran has made out both opportunities and threats in the shift of the regional power equations. Iran's regional power position has become stronger, but also less secure and more strongly contested. The impact of the U.S. regional presence on Iran's and Saudi Arabia's external security could not be more different. While the United States continues to be the greatest state security threat for Iran, it constitutes the ultimate security guarantor of the Saudi Kingdom.

Saudi Arabia and Iran have equally witnessed a rise in non-state threats along with conventional state threats. For both countries, the regime change in Iraq had set free transnational, non-state security risks to domestic security. Intra-regional interdependence in the political, economic, and societal sphere has brought new interconnected security risks to the Saudi and the Iranian state. The Saudi and the Iranian regimes have become in particular vulnerable to the growing transnational competition and articulation of political ideas and to the socio-political developments in their neighbor countries. The growing intra-regional interdependence contrasted with a notably low level of regional integration or collective conflict management. At the same time, both regimes could maintain a respectable degree of domestic and external autonomy.

The Saudi Kingdom and the Iranian Republic have continued to hold antagonist role- and self-conceptions. The Saudi role has generally been one of a regional mediator and guarantor of the status quo. The Iranian role, to the contrary, has been that of a revisionist and defiant opponent to the current regional (and global) structures. Since 2001, both Saudi Arabia and Iran have expressed a mounting request for regional self-determination and integration according to the region's distinct needs and values. Parallel to this, there can

recently be observed a new degree of self-confidence and a more assertive understanding of their regional roles. Both countries have conceived themselves of playing a responsible and leading regional role. The Saudi state, though, has remained rather tentative and hesitant in defining and fulfilling its new regional role.

Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Iraq policies have revealed different patterns of foreign policy behavior in dealing with these structural conditions.

Saudi Arabia and Iran have chosen opposite behavioral strategies in balancing external state threats. The Saudi state had decided to "source out" the responsibility for its national security to its U.S. security guarantor. In addition, the Saudi regime tended to buckpass the responsibility of regional security and stability to the United States. The Iranian Republic, to the contrary, has built its external security on autonomous defense capabilities, the instrumentalization of regional protégés and proxies, and on the vantages of public diplomacy. While the Saudi regime continues to heavily rely on its external security partnership, the Iranian leadership has maintained a high degree of autonomy towards its regional allies. Whereas Saudi Arabia has by and large shown a defensive balancing behavior that aimed to secure the regional status quo, Iran has shown a stronger tendency of a revisionist balancing strategy that aimed to redefine the regional balance of power. Saudi Arabia's conception of security was thereby largely based on defensively avoiding relative losses in power. Iran, on the other hand, has increasingly defined its security in terms of accumulating power advantages and reaching regional predominance. Saudi Arabia's and Iran's balancing strategies have also varied in the choice of cooperative and confrontational means. Saudi Arabia has traditionally preferred a cooperative and accommodating balancing approach in contrast to Iran's oftentimes confrontational posture. At a closer look, however, the Iranian leadership has as well frequently resorted to forms of "pre-emptive" cooperation during times of pressure and to a "carrot-and-stick strategy".

Both countries have shown a clear behavioral trend from balancing pure state threats to a more complex form of "omni-managing" multi-level security threats to their domestic regimes. The Saudi Iraq policy oftentimes laid open the growing need to bridge tensions between domestic and external security needs. Since the Gulf War, the Iraq policy had become a prime example for the Saudi regime's efforts to reconcile multi-level demands and contrasting needs of domestic and external regime security. The Saudi regime was thereby well aware to keep a strict divide of domains between domestic and external affairs. The Iranian Iraq policy, to the contrary, became an example for linking external and domestic affairs. The Iranian regime used external issues and relations to strengthen its domestic legitimacy and power base. Both the Saudi and the Iranian regime were well aware of keeping a high degree of domestic and external autonomy when managing their external affairs. Their autonomy-seeking behavior became manifest in their diversification of external

relations to lessen asymmetries of interdependence, in their avoidance of costly and binding multilateral commitments, and in the shunning of inconvenient transnational influence and ideas from their domestic societies.

Both the Saudi and the Iranian Iraq policies have shown tensions between state norms and roles and the actual foreign-policy behavior. While the Saudi Iraq policy risked to get caught in a domestic credibility trap, the Iranian Iraq policy occasionally clashed with Iran's external credibility in the region. Saudi state norms and roles rather worked as an (*a priori* or *post hoc*) constraint on the Saudi Iraq policy. In the Saudi case, material needs came increasingly in conflict with religious (state and societal) norms. Religious norms rather acted as a societal constraint that changed the cost-benefit calculations of the Saudi regime. Saudi Arabia's Iraq policy was therefore to a large part a genuine realist foreign policy, even though it remained outside certain limits of "impossible" behavior. Iran's Iraq policy was strongly shaped through socially constructed perceptions and historically inherited conceptions about Iran's external environment. After 2003 and 2005, in particular, material shifts in the regional balance of power have led to a re-consideration of Iran's (and Saudi Arabia's) role- and self-conception vis-à-vis Iraq and the Gulf the region.

Iranian religious and ideological norms proved to be quite flexible and pragmatic compared to Saudi religious norms and principles. The (*a priori*) pragmatic interpretation of religion and ideology kept Iranian state norms in close contact with the material needs of the Iranian regime.

5.2 FPA in the Gulf at the Intersection of Power, Interests, and Ideas

FPA basically refers to three grand analytical categories for explaining foreign policy behavior. These analytical categories are (1) power (as the ability to act), (2) interests (as the motivation for action), and (3) ideas (as the understanding of action). IR-theoretical approaches to FPA have tended to view foreign policy either as a more technical function of the state's ability (or constraints) to act, as the outcome of the state's motivations, or as a product of how the state understands and interprets its role to act. Even though IR theories put their emphasis respectively on one of these major analytical schemes, the analytical categories of power, interests, and ideas cannot simply be referred to one single IR-theoretical approach. IR-theories incorporate the categories of power, interests and ideas into their explanatory approaches, but prioritize and interlink them in different ways.

The findings of the comparative analysis suggest a further specification of both the structural environment that shapes and pre-conditions state behavior and foreign-policy behavior itself. The analyses of Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Iraq policies have shown that the states' environment is more nuanced and complex than a (neorealist) systemic and state-centric approach would consider. The national interests and conceptions of state security were co-

influenced by material needs and conditions as well as by normative understandings of legitimate action. Differences and changes in the countries' Iraq policies have also expressed varying definitions of security and of what kind of a regional balance would best guarantee their national security.

The following chapter will look at the interplay of multi-level and possibly contradictory security interests, the interplay and co-constitution of material and normative structures, and varying distributional intents that all played a role in the formation of Saudi Arabia's and Iran's foreign-policy strategies.

5.2.1 The Interplay of Multi-Level Security Interests

Foreign policy in the Gulf takes place in a more complex and multi-faceted environment than a (neorealist) systemic and state-centric approach would consider. The cases of Saudi Arabia and Iran have shown an increase of transnational and non-state security threats over the past two decades. Transnational and asymmetric security risks in the Gulf have come from ethnic and religious groups with trans-border loyalties that could undermine the people's loyalty to the domestic state regimes. Recently, transnational political ideas have developed a new threat potential as the articulation, exchange and free competition of adverse political ideas have become less controllable by the state regimes. At the same time, the states' power assets have become more diffuse and uncertain, and were oftentimes confined to issue-specific matters.

The multi-level and multi-actor character of security threats makes a multi-dimensional conception of security indispensable.⁴⁶³ The state has to meet multi-level and multi-sector security needs and interests. Foreign policy has to address security threats and interests at the global, regional, and domestic level.⁴⁶⁴ Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Iraq policies therefore had to consider well how to deal with the regional presence of the United States which constitutes either an extra-regional security guarantor and a global trading partner at the world energy markets, or a serious state threat and competitor. Saudi Arabia and Iran had to take into consideration how their Iraq policies may affect regional politics and their relations with other regional players. As well, both states had to address in their Iraq policies socio-political impacts on their own state-society relations.

⁴⁶³ For a multi-level conception of security see table below.

⁴⁶⁴ Raymond Hinnebusch has endorsed to look at conceptually distinct environments at the domestic, regional and global or international level for FPA in the Middle East (see Hinnebusch 2002: 2). Likewise, Gerd Nonneman (2005: 316-18) endorses a "theoretically pluralist" approach that takes into consideration the imperative of regime security at the domestic level, transnational identity factors at the regional level, and external threats and opportunities at the international level.

In addition, foreign policy has to address sector-specific dimensions of military, oil-political, economic, and social security. When forming their policies towards Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Iran therefore had to conceive of Iraq as a potential military threat, as a significant oil-political player in OPEC, as a potential trading partner, and as a political and religious partner or adversary.

The plurality of security interests has opened the door to hardly solvable dilemmas of interests. The relationship between different security interests of the Saudi and the Iranian state has been one of correspondence, neutrality, or conflict. Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Iraq policies revealed tensions and trade-offs between different security interests. The Saudi Iraq policy had to trade-off external security against domestic legitimacy of the state regime. The Iranian Iraq policy had to find an acceptable balance between economic performance and ideologically grounded interests of the Iranian regime.

Saudi Arabia's and Iran's behavioral strategies under conditions of multilevel security risks have been ones of "omni-managing" the multiplicity of security needs and of finding an appropriate balance of meeting possibly contradictory multi-level and multi-sector security demands.

While trading-off between various, possibly contradictory interests and demands, the states had to decide which interests best serve their overall goal of national security. In the (semi)-autocratic states of the Gulf, national security is equated with the security of the domestic regime. Regime security and the maintenance of the domestic status quo have remained the primordial rationale under which domestic and foreign policies are made. The Iraq policies of Saudi Arabia and Iran have been put into the service of safeguarding the domestic and external security and autonomy of the state regimes.

The Saudi and the Iranian state regimes revealed to be first and foremost "autonomy-maximizers". Their Iraq policies were subject to the rationale to maintain or to carve out the highest possible degree of domestic and external autonomy. Varying degrees of asymmetrical interdependence and multi-level vulnerabilities of the state regimes confined the external and domestic regime autonomy. However, Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Iraq policies have shown that the states have developed strategies of maximizing their autonomy under conditions of structural constraints.

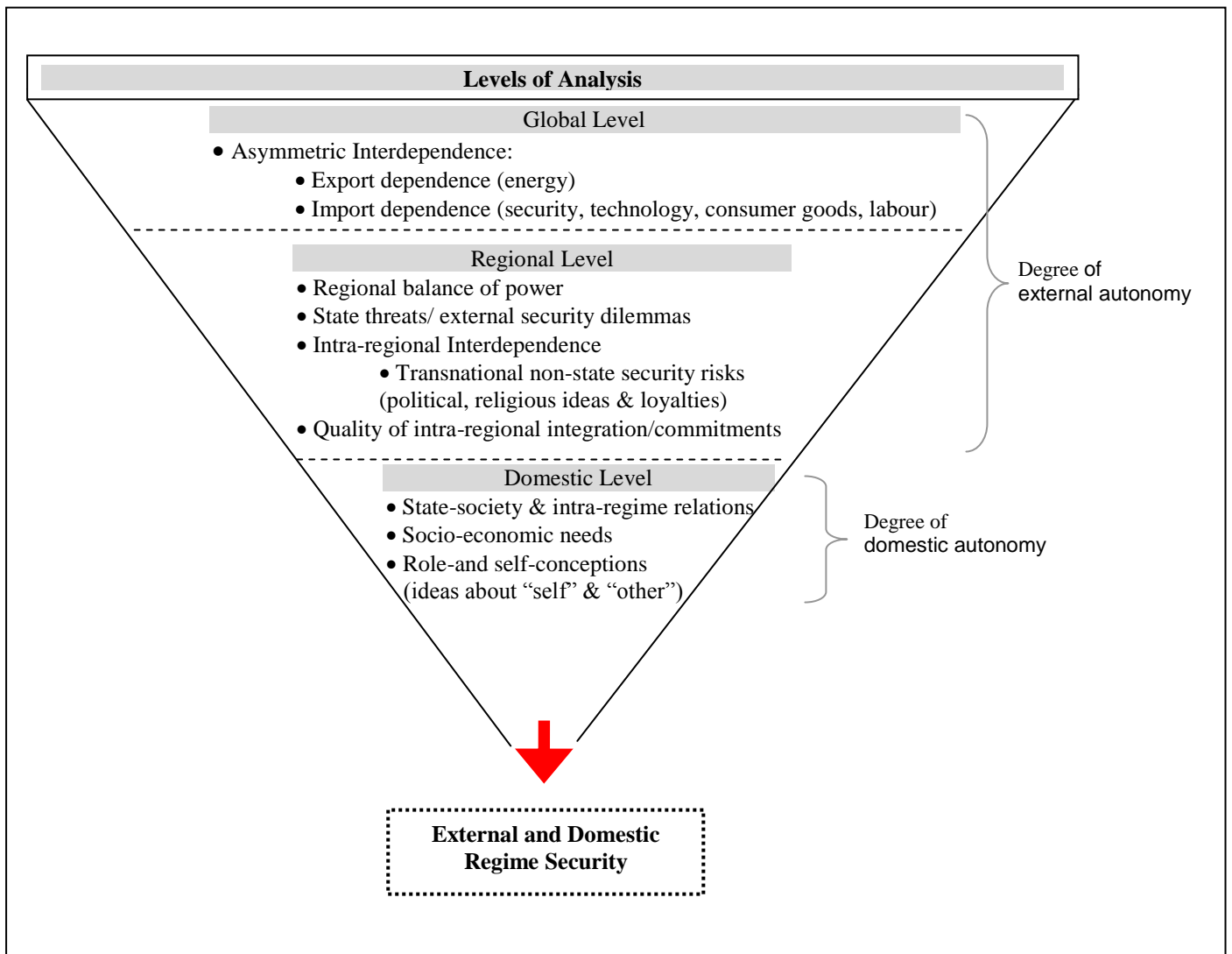
The analysis of the states' external structural conditions has shown that the states in the Gulf enjoy no full autonomy or autarky, but are also not completely dependent on the global and international structures. The United States as the region's either major trading partner and security supplier or greatest security threat has remained deeply and directly involved in the Gulf region. Yet, the United States was not able to completely control the political events in the Gulf (Gause 2010: 6). Both Saudi Arabia and Iran have found ways of escaping the U.S.

influence. The diversification of their external relations for their export of energy or their import of security and technology alleviated their asymmetrical interdependence with dominating global players. Saudi Arabia's efforts of intra-regional (Arab) cooperation and solidarity during the Iraq crises were also made with respect of its security dependence on the United States. On the other hand, both Saudi Arabia and Iran avoided confinements of their national sovereignties and refrained from binding multilateral commitments or engagement in supra-national organizations. Both countries preferred conventional and *ad hoc* crisis- and conflict management measures on a unilateral or bilateral basis. Iran's carrot-and-stick method that combined cooperative and confrontational strategies gave Iran a high level of autonomy and flexibility in Iraq. Through its influence over various actors in Iraq, the Iranian leadership has sought to carve out a considerable bargaining position that would safeguard an appropriate level of autonomy in its external relations.

At the domestic level, the state regimes were aware to secure a high level of domestic autonomy from their societies as well as from competitive political factions within their regimes. By "statizing" national identity, norms and role-conceptions according to the material needs and interests of the regime (see Hinnebusch 2005: 170), the Saudi and Iranian leaderships were able to maintain an appropriate level of domestic autonomy of action. The Saudi regime has continued to keep a strict divide between domestic and external affairs and to shun its society from inconvenient external influence. The Saudi leadership was endeavored to keep its domestic public away from debates over its Iraq policy and controversial issues of external security.

Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Iraq policies showed how both states were endeavored and able to secure some degree of external and domestic, or sector-specific autonomy. The Iraq policies revealed a foreign-policy behavior in the form of "omni-managing" multi-level interdependencies and security demands in a rather realist and conventional way. Both states had to respond to a more complex and interdependent environment, but developed strategies which would maintain a highest possible level of external and domestic autonomy and independence.

Figure 3: Multi-Level Conception of Regime Security



Source: Author’s compilation

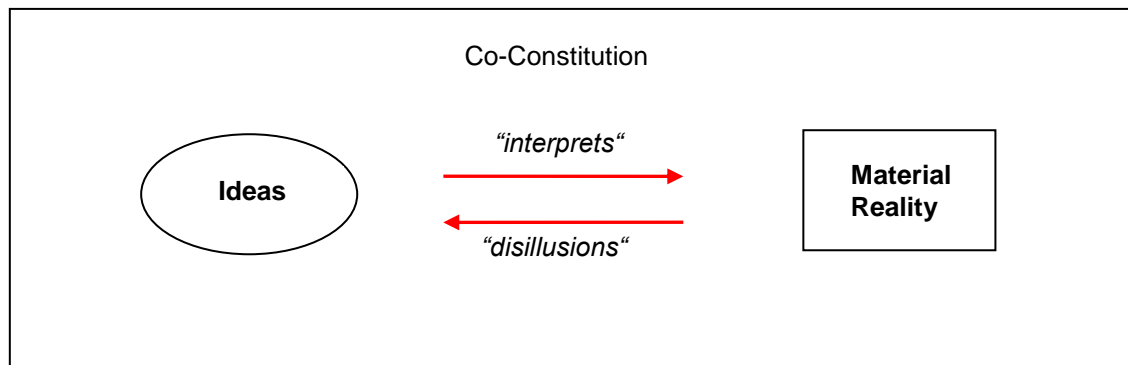
5.2.2 The Interplay of Material and Normative Structures

Saudi Arabia’s and Iran’s Iraq policies proved to be responsive to material needs and constraints, on the one hand, and to normative instructions of action and socially constructed role- and self-conception, on the other hand.

The interplay and co-constitution of material and normative structures have pre-determined the framework of action in which foreign policy took place and pre-defined state interests and motives *before* they were applied to the political practice. Both material givens or needs and normative conceptions of appropriate action have pre-conditioned the Iraq policies of Saudi Arabia and Iran, yet in different ways. Social perceptions of “self” and “other” have defined the countries’ relationships to their neighbors and interpreted whose (material) power capabilities must be considered a vital threat. Conversely, material shifts in the regional

balance of power proved to have had a perceptible constitutive impact on the states' self- and role-conceptions. Self-conceptions have shown to be "disillusioned" by or adapted according to a new material reality.⁴⁶⁵

Figure 4: Co-Constitution of Material and Ideational Structures



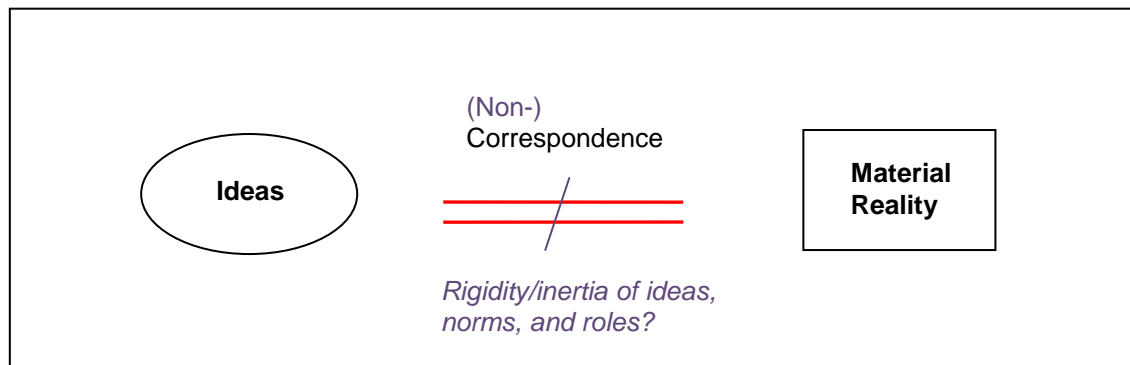
Source: Author's compilation

Despite a material-normative co-constitution, the relationship between material and normative structures can be one of correspondence or contradiction. A discrepancy between state norms or social roles and material needs and constraints may produce noticeable tensions in foreign policy. In Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Iraq policies, such tensions could be observed in the form of discrepancies between foreign-policy rhetoric and action, indecisiveness, or proclamations of incoherent goals and strategies. Foreign policy roles and norms that are strongly defined in religious terms may come into conflict with more material and "profane" state interests. The Saudi Kingdom and the Iranian Republic as two models of an "Islamic state" have shown a strong invocation to Islamic principles of action and would make a prime case for such a dilemma. However, both the Saudi and the Iranian state have found ways of reconciling religious norms and material needs. A state-controlled religious jurisprudence has helped to "statize" religious norms and principles according to the needs of the domestic regime. In the Iranian case, an *a priori* pragmatic interpretation (*ijma'*) of religious-ideological norms and principles has brought religion and ideology into accordance with more profane "national interests" (see also Reissner 2008: 24-25). In the Saudi case, Islamic norms and state interests have remained more separate. The Saudi state has rather subdued religious norms to state security interests and legitimized its foreign policy by a *post hoc* re-interpretation of religious norms. However, religious norms did not prove to be unboundedly elastic and malleable. Even though statized norms were designed to serve the interests of the regime, they also developed an independent backlash effect that constrained the Saudi state.

⁴⁶⁵ See figure below.

In contrast to religious norms and principles that underlie scholastic interpretation, socially constructed role- and self-conceptions have shown to be more rigid and immutable. Historically inherited and socially constructed perceptions of “self” and “other” have rather remained elements of inertia. The inertia of roles and perceptions such as Iran’s ideological suspicion or Saudi Arabia’s self-conception as an Islamic role model risked to come into conflict with new material realities in the Gulf.

Figure 5: The Relationship between the Material and Ideational Structure



Source: Author's compilation

The impact of state identity and norms on foreign policy depends on the respective relationship between the state agent and the ideational-normative structure. The Saudi and Iranian Iraq policies have revealed multiple causal and constitutive relations between identity or norms and the state agent. The Saudi and Iranian states have oscillated between internalizing and instrumentalizing norms and roles. An internalization of norms and roles may drive the state agent to move towards congruity with norms and roles in its foreign policy behavior.

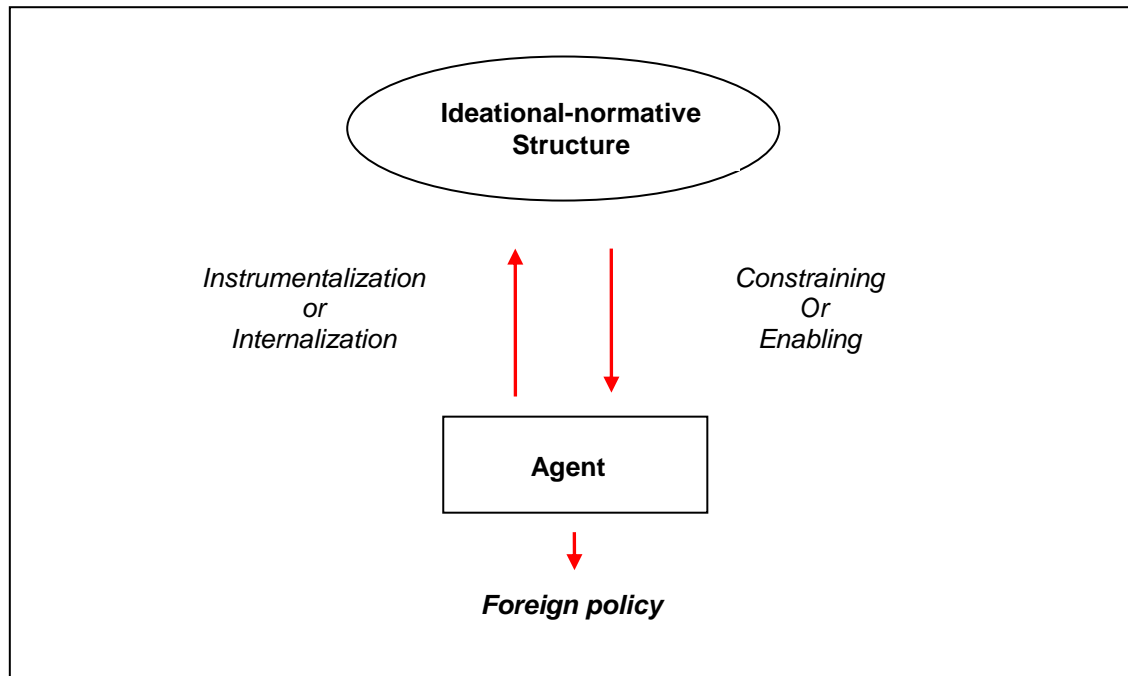
Whenever norms and roles proved to be too constraining for the state agent, the Saudi and Iranian states have been endeavored to re-interpret norms and roles. This process of “statizing” norms and roles, however, had to remain within a “legitimate” and credible range. In addition, also “statized” identities and roles would impact back on the “interpreter” and gain an independent impetus once the “Pandora Box” of identity-building had been opened⁴⁶⁶. A severe violation of statized norms and roles would incur as well social legitimacy costs on the state agent.

The same can be observed with regard to an instrumentalization of social norms and roles by the state actor. Ideas and identities have been frequently instrumentalized as much-favored tools of power by the state regimes in the Gulf. The act of exploiting norms and roles was supposed to enable the agent to pursue a certain policy line or to legitimate its foreign-policy

⁴⁶⁶ See also Zweiri’s and Zahid’s analysis of how the states’ invocation to identities since the first Gulf war has created an independent effect of identities (Zweiri/Zahid 2007).

decisions. But also instrumentalized ideas and norms could transform from a state tool into a non-controllable, independent variable.

Figure 6: The Relationship between the State Agent and the Ideational-Normative Structure



Source: Author's compilation

5.2.3 The Distributional Dimension in Foreign Policy

The Iraq policies of Saudi Arabia and Iran over the past two decades have expressed divergent and varying notions of security. Saudi Arabia's and Iran's final state goals and interests did not prove to be static and pre-determined, but varied according to different and alternating definitions of security.

Saudi Arabia and Iran tended to define their state security either in terms of the stability of the regional status quo or in terms of change and transformation of the current regional balance. Yet, this classical revisionist-status-quo dichotomy of state interests in the Gulf region revealed to be too simplistic for giving satisfying answers on the states' underlying foreign-policy motives. In particular since the Iraq War of 2003, the past dividing line between revisionist and status-quo intents has become increasingly blurred.

The comparison of Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Iraq policies has shown that the states' conceptions of security were based on varying distributional intents and conceptions of an "appropriate" regional balance. State security was thought to be guaranteed through either a more even regional balance of power and interests or a strong hierarchical distribution of power assets and interests. The Saudi state has tended to define its security in terms of a more proportionate balance between the major regional state players. The Saudi foreign-

policy motives were defensive insofar as the Saudi state sought to maximize its security through self-autonomy rather than through extending its power advantages over others. The Saudi state generally preferred a “safe” to a “dominant” position in the Gulf region.⁴⁶⁷ Most of the time, the regional security order granted the Saudi Kingdom a quite comfortable and comparably safe position. While a change of the established regional order only threatened to increase security risks, the regional status quo promised the Saudi state for a long time the highest possible degree of security. The Saudi foreign-policy behavior in the Gulf was therefore assumed to be strongly status-quo oriented.⁴⁶⁸

In the Iranian case it has not been self-evident whether Iran defines its national security in defensive or offensive terms.⁴⁶⁹ On the one hand, Iran has shown the endeavor of seeking first and foremost a more convenient and safe, but not necessarily a predominant position in the Gulf. On the other hand, Iran has occasionally exhibited strongly hegemonic ambitions. There have been occasional indications that the Iranian Republic would not feel secure enough in a regional balance of equivalent regional players. At times, Iran has nurtured an offensive conception of national security according to which only a dominant regional position would sufficiently provide for Iran’s security. Perhaps the well-known Iranian foreign-policy expert, Abbas Maleki, best expressed this notion of security by stating that “if Iran wants to survive, it must become a regional power”.⁴⁷⁰ According to this conception, national security is only guaranteed through a hierarchical distribution of power in terms of abundant and effective power advantages over others.

The Iranian Republic has been largely excluded from being an active member of the regional order and lacks formative power for effectively co-designing the regional security architecture. The Iranian Republic has instead been kept in an unfavorable and disadvantaged position in the regional (economic and security) order. Iran’s leaderships have therefore nurtured strongly revisionist ambitions towards the regional political architecture. A transformation of the regional order and the installation of a new security order on Iranian terms would hence be in Iran’s national security interest.

The comparison of Saudi Arabia’s and Iran’s definitions of security shows a rough divide between Saudi Arabia’s largely defensive and status-quo oriented conception of security and Iran’s tendency towards an offensive-revisionist notion of security. Nonetheless, Saudi

⁴⁶⁷ This must be distinguished from Saudi Arabia’s motives in the Arabian Peninsula where the Saudi Kingdom claims a dominant and hierarchical position.

⁴⁶⁸ Saudi Arabia has oftentimes been described as the regional “bastion of the status quo” (see for example McMillan 2006: 5; Henderson 2007: 35).

⁴⁶⁹ According to Abdolkhaleq Abdullah, Iran’s foreign policy can be looked at from two perspectives. On the one hand, Iran has strived for and witnessed a rise of its regional power position, on the other hand it has nourished a deep sense of insecurity (personal interview on February 26, 2009).

⁴⁷⁰ Cited by Reissner (2008: 19).

Arabia's and Iran's approaches to national security have witnessed a gradual change over time.

While Saudi Arabia has continued to adhere to a defensive notion of security and has not nurtured a severe redistribution of the regional balance of power, it has signalled an increasing discontent with the new regional status quo in the post-Iraq War order. The Saudi wariness towards the new emerging regional balance shows that the Saudi Kingdom is uncertain about whether the new regional order will offer Saudi Arabia an equally convenient position and sufficiently guarantee for its national security. Yet, even if the new status quo appears less attractive, the Saudi state has preferred the status quo to further change.⁴⁷¹

Iran's foreign-policy behavior has shown a tendential shift from defensive to offensive revisionism. While Iran has continued to be discontent with the regional status quo, it has begun to define national security more strongly in power-oriented terms. In particular since 2005, Iran's national security is considered to be best guaranteed through clear power advantages rather than through a regional parity in power.

The comparison of Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Iraq policies has shown that the regional states have not adhered to identical and static notions of security. Security could be defined through a more even balance and the sharing of parities in power, or through a hierarchical and hegemonic position. The notions of national security varied according to different distributional aspirations. Whenever the political status quo did not meet the states' distributional intents and did not sufficiently guarantee the national security, the states have shown a stronger propensity to change.

From the results and the observed variance of foreign policy behavior in the previous comparative analysis, there can be made out three basic categories of foreign-policy motives according to the states' distributional intents and their propensity to change.⁴⁷² The foreign-policy motive may be aimed to keep the current balance and asymmetries of the system through a (1) "conservative distribution". In the past two decades, Saudi Arabia has largely tended to favor a conservative distribution of power and values in the Gulf. Such a distribution would guarantee a regional balance of some asymmetries, but without considerable power disparities which could establish a regional hegemony of one of the regional powers.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷¹ According to Neil Partrick, Saudi Arabia would like to change the recent status quo and create more of a regional balance, but lacks the options to do so (personal interview on March 4, 2009 in Sharjah/UAE).

⁴⁷² See table below.

⁴⁷³ The notion of "balance" does not necessarily mean an equal distribution of values. It allows for asymmetrical and disproportionate distributions as long as they do not result in an elimination of the balance through the (contested) predominance of one player over others. Ernst Haas (1953) has made out more than eight different notions of a "balance of power" ranging from a power equilibrium to dominance. According to Bahgat Korany (1998: 36), the notion of a

If the current balance proves to be disadvantageous, state actors may favor a (2) “compensative distribution” that reduces existing power asymmetries. Most of the time, Iran has sought to change and redefine the regional balance and negotiate a compensation for its disadvantageous position in the regional order. After 2005, also Saudi Arabia has occasionally expressed its discontent with the new emerging regional balance with regard to Iran’s strategic regional upgrade and to a potential Iranian-Iraqi definition of the future Gulf political, economic or security order. Yet, Saudi Arabia’s propensity to change the status quo has not reached a critical point that would make the country a challenger of the current order. During the Kuwait crisis of 1990/91, both Saudi Arabia and Iran have sought to re-establish the former balance in the Gulf and prevent a further accumulation of power to the benefit of Iraq.

State actors may also be inclined to enforce asymmetries in the existing balance through a (3) “hierarchical” or “cartelized” distribution. After 2005, Iran has shown a stronger inclination to eliminate the former regional balance and establish itself as a regional hegemonic power.⁴⁷⁴

Table 7: Foreign-Policy Motives and Mentalities

Foreign-Policy Mentalities				
No distributional conflict or indifference to distribution (eg. <i>benevolent hegemon</i>)	Defensive status quo oriented (<i>lion</i>)	Defensive revisionist oriented (<i>jackal</i>)	Offensive status quo oriented Prevention of cartelization	Offensive revisionist oriented (<i>wolf</i>) <i>malevolent hegemon</i>
“Balance”			Hierarchization	



Pursued Distribution of Values (State Motives)		
“Balance”		Hierarchization (Cartelization)
<i>Conservative distribution</i> proportionate distribution: = preservation of asymmetries balance in favor of <i>lions</i>	<i>Compensative distribution</i> disproportionate distribution to the benefit of the weaker = reduction of asymmetries balance in favor of <i>jackals</i>	<i>Cartelized distribution</i> disproportionate distribution to the benefit of the stronger = Reinforcement of asymmetries (im)balance in favor of <i>wolves</i>

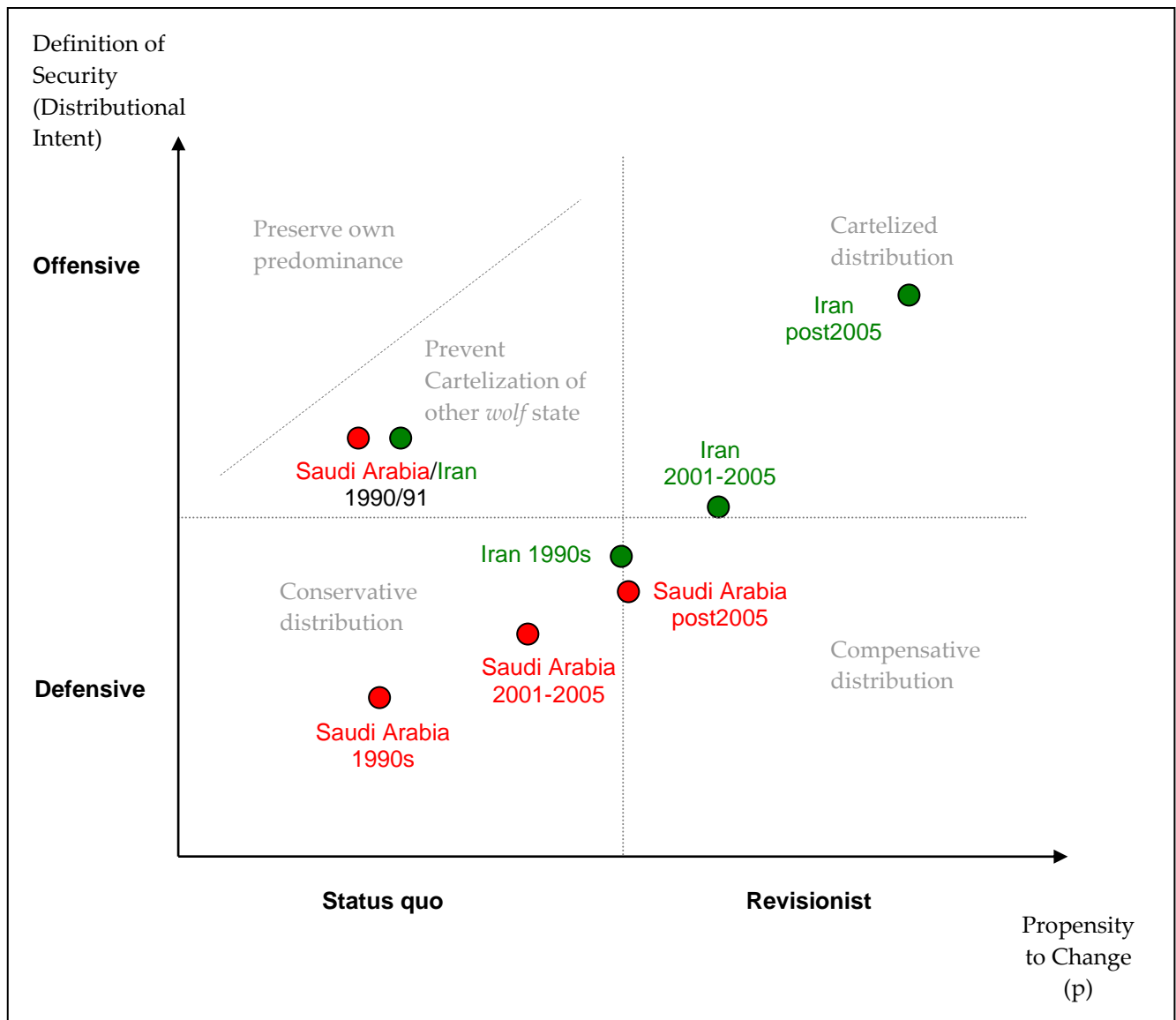
Source: Author’s compilation (see also Zeino-Mahmalat 2008: 14)

“balance” in the Middle East is a very broad concept and may be based on various symmetrical or asymmetrical distributions.

⁴⁷⁴ Iran’s leadership officially rejected the “theory of a regional balance” (see Ehteshami 2006: 354).

Saudi Arabia's and Iran's divergent notions of security and varying distributional intents constitute the general foreign-policy mentality and may be meaningful and informative for the analysis of the countries' foreign-policy behavior. The following figure shows how Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Iraq policies since 1990 have been motivated by varying distributional intents and changing notions of security.

Figure 7: Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Foreign-Policy Mentalities in the Gulf (since 1990)



Source: Author's compilation⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷⁵ This figure was developed upon the idea that state actors do not necessarily cherish a similar conception of national security. While for some actors only huge power advantages would satisfy their definition of security, for other actors a more equal balance of power and interests would grant the highest level of national security. The propensity to change shows in how far a state actor is willing to alter or revise the balance that the state disagrees with.

The conception of national security (S) may be displayed in the following formular:

$$S = H - p(D - H) \binom{D}{H} \quad \text{where } p \geq 0$$

The variance of distributional intents in Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Iraq policies suggests that foreign policy analysis in the Gulf cannot proceed from a static and one-dimensional notion of state interests and security. Distribution matters for the regional states. The exclusion of major regional actors in the past, such as Iraq and Iran, has constituted a major source of tension in the region (see Barzegar 2007/08: 105) and forged revisionist ambitions among those actors widely deprived of regional benefits. The foreign-policy behavior of Saudi Arabia and Iran has varied according to which balance of power, interests or ideas the countries pursued or according to which balance would still be acceptable to the individual actor. The Iraq policies of Saudi Arabia and Iran have shown that it was less difficult for the countries to find common interests than agreeing on an all-accepted regional balance. The distribution of ideas has been a matter of particular concern. In the post-Iraq War era, both countries have become increasingly concerned about who becomes the new political opinion leader in the region and whose ideas become hegemonic in the region.

5.3 FPA in the Gulf Region: Vantages of a Cross-Theoretical Synapse

The Iraq policies of Saudi Arabia and Iran revealed diverse patterns of foreign-policy behavior that do not solely fit into a single IR-theoretical scheme. While approaches to FPA generally acknowledge the vantages of cross-theoretical research, the difficulty rather rests upon the question of how to find an appropriate theoretical synthesis.

First of all, each approach to FPA has to trade-off between theoretical parsimony and empirical specificity. The motivation of this study was to find an appropriate balance between generally valid theoretical theses and country- or issue-specific knowledge for FPA in the Gulf.

The second challenge was to look for a useful multi-theoretical FPA in the Gulf across inter- and intra-theory faultlines. One theory cannot explain all aspects of foreign policy in the Gulf. A synoptic, multi-theoretical perspective in FPA and a theoretical synthesis at the right points may contribute to a better understanding and explaining of foreign policy in the Gulf.

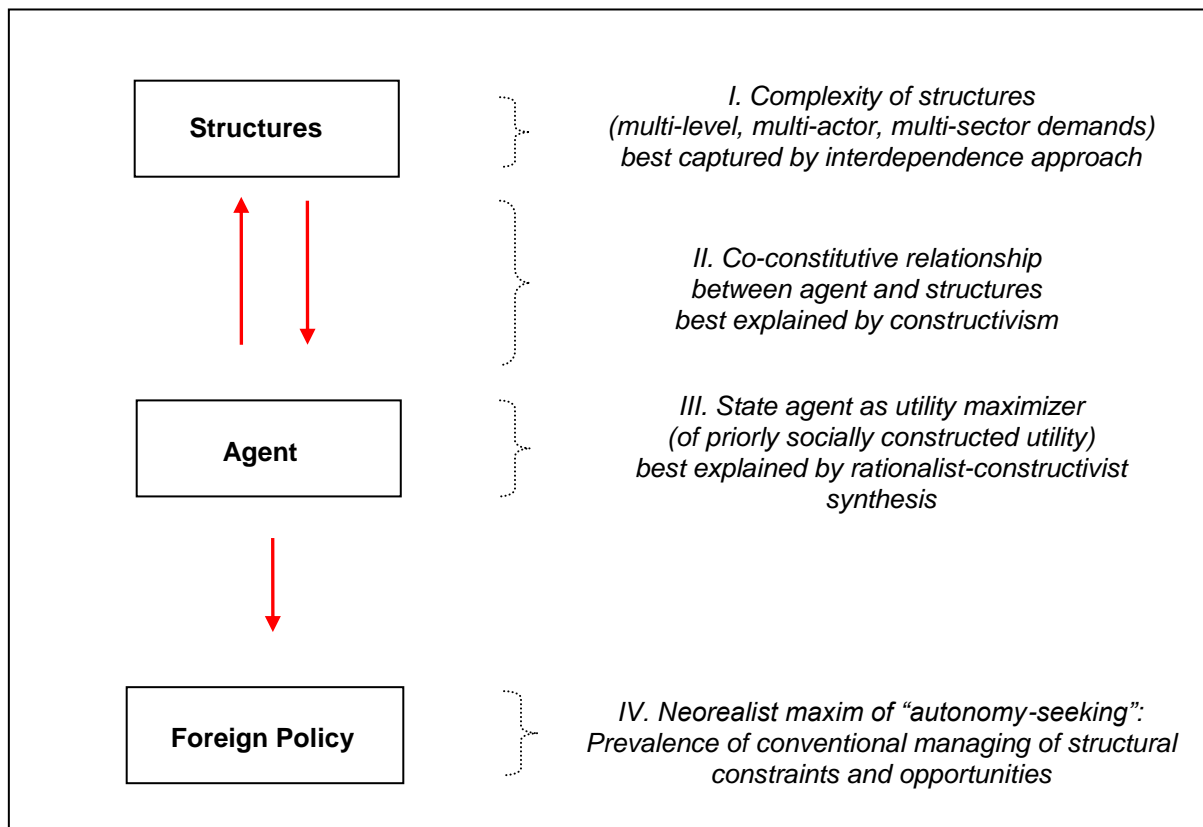
The following figure shows a possible cross-theoretical synapse for FPA in the Gulf region.

The conception (or mentality) of national security (S) is made up of the assets that the actor actually has (H), but set in relation of which distribution of assets the actor actually desires (D) in order to feel secure. The propensity to change (p) shows to what degree the actor is willing to revise the current distribution of assets to establish a new balance of assets.

The author has developed the idea of varying notions of national security out of Joseph Grieco's conception of varying state sensitivities to relative gains (see Grieco 1993: 41). The author had previously modified and complemented Grieco's formulär (see Zeino-Mahmalat 2008). This study, however, has refrained from using the coefficient of a sensitivity to relative gains, and replaced it with a state actor's *propensity to change* (p).

The figure above indicates the development of Saudi Arabia's and Iran's conceptions (or mentalities) of national security from 1990 to 2010. It was based on the evaluation of only qualitative data.

Figure 8: A Cross-Theoretical Synapse for FPA in the Gulf



Source: Author's compilation

I. Complexity of the structural environment

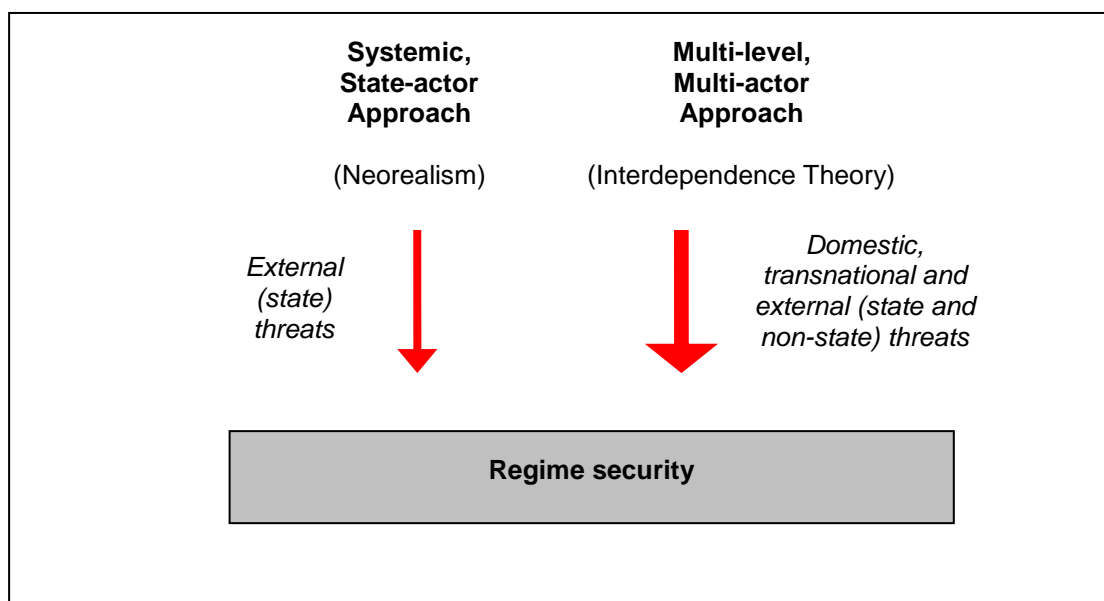
The structural environment of state actors gives first useful information about the constraints and opportunities for state action.

Structural particularities of the Gulf region make a regional contextualization and specification of structural factors indispensable. The domestic environment for the states in the Gulf reveals difficult state-society relations. Domestic political autocratic structures have formed the basis for both a remarkable domestic stability and continuity, and an inherent tension between the ruling elites and large societal groups deprived of formative power, benefits, and opportunities. Transnational identities and political ideas have penetrated the domestic realm of the state and formed the region's endogenous incongruity between identities and national borders. The permeability of regional borders for appealing transnational ideas and identities left the regional states vulnerable to the political and societal developments in their neighbor countries. At the global level, the countries of the Gulf are enmeshed in structures of asymmetrical interdependence. As major global energy exporters and importers of technology and know-how, the regional countries have become existentially dependent on their integration in the world economic and financial system. The parallel high degree of extra-regional cultural, political, and economic penetration of the

regional states and societies has fostered both a conflictual and cooperative nature of interdependence.

The structural environment of the regional states is much more nuanced and complex than a state-centric and systemic neorealist perspective would suggest. Political dynamics in the Gulf are not simply and solely driven by classical security dilemmas or inter-state competition for power. The look at multi-level, multi-actor, and multi-sector particularities and demands gives a more complex picture of the regional states' structural conditions. The theoretical approach of complex interdependence may be best able to add sufficient theoretical complexity and nuance to the structural environment in the Gulf region.

Figure 9: Threats to Regime Security



Source: Author's compilation

II. Co-constitution of agent and structures

How the state agent understands and hence copes with its structural conditions is best understood through a constructivist analysis of the co-constitutive relationship between state agent and structures. The relationship tells in how far structural conditions constitute a constraint or opportunity for state action. It also tells to what extent structures are the outcome of state intent and to what degree structures exist independently from state influence.

The state actors in the Gulf have been endeavored to shape their structural conditions in their interests, but were at the same time subject to their structural environments. The states in the Gulf were not able to freely shape, defy, or completely ignore the structural realities at the domestic and external level. While the states in the Gulf managed to claim a certain

degree of structural autonomy at the domestic and external level, their perception of the world and their realm of action were decisively pre-conditioned by their structural environment.

III. State agents as utility maximizers

A theoretical synthesis of social constructivism and rational-choice theories may best explain state agency and the definition of state interests in the Gulf. State actors in the Gulf have shown to be goal-oriented⁴⁷⁶ and utility-maximizing actors. The states in the Gulf have shown a high degree of foreign-policy pragmatism with the aim to further their own national interests.⁴⁷⁷ The utilitarian-rationalist concept of utility-maximization hence serves as a good fix point for FPA in the Gulf. Notwithstanding that the states in the Gulf are utility-oriented, the notion of utility can be rendered more meaningful through the complementation with social-constructivist processes. While state actors in the Gulf have been endeavored to look for strategies that best serve their goals and interests, their notion of utility and definition of state interests have shown to be subject to social construction or ideological principles.

The states' definition of utility varied according to different understandings of state interests and conceptions of security. Regional role- and self-conceptions, religious-ideological principles, material needs and realities, and the structural conditions of the state environment altogether formed the respective notion of utility of each state.

Even though the Saudi and the Iranian regimes claim a religious motivation of action and an Islamic form of agency for themselves, they cannot be considered to be "irrational" actors. The states in the Gulf appeared to be quite skilful in selecting those policy strategies that might - from the perspective of rational-economic cost-benefit considerations - best serve their priorly defined goals. Rational cost-benefit and means-end considerations have guided the states' choice of strategies. However, for the explanation of the *formation* and *sources* of state goals, interests and preferences in the Gulf, rational-choice theories offer no convincing explanatory approach.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁶ A rational goal-oriented actor has consistent goals in the sense of ordered, transitive preferences and applies strategies that best serve its goals (see Grieco 1997: 165). The existence of contradictory goals that are difficult to reconcile does not necessarily make the actor non-goal oriented.

⁴⁷⁷ Awadh Al-Badi, for example, considers the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia as one of a "pragmatic nation-state" that acts for its own national interest (personal interview on May 25, 2009 in Riyadh). Similarly, Kayhan Barzegar and Johannes Reissner have considered Iran to pragmatically act in its national interest. Volker Perthes has argued for Iran, that in critical moments, national interests will be prioritized over pure ideologic dogma (personally interviewed on April 8, 2009). Abdullah Askar has tended to see Saudi Arabia's and Iran's foreign policy to be largely driven by pragmatism than by ideology. In return, he has argued that ideology can be expressed pragmatically (personally interviewed on June 6, 2009 in Riyadh).

⁴⁷⁸ Rational-choice theorists distinguish between "substantive" and "instrumental" rationality. While "substantive rationality" posits a rational choice of *goals* on the basis of cost-benefit calculations, "instrumental rationality" merely posits a rational choice of *means* and *strategies* to achieve the not necessarily rationally grounded goals (see Grieco 1997: 165). "Instrumental rationality" therefore leaves room for a prior social construction of state goals and state utility.

A constructivist approach to the formation of state interests may help to better understand the diversity, variability and transformation of state goals, interests, or distributional intents in the Gulf. A constructivist approach can help to explain the process of defining state goals and preferences *before* the utilitarian-rationalist model “comes in” (Ruggie 1998: 867). The construct of a “foreign-policy mentality” put forward in the previous chapter allows for different culturally or historically moulded state attitudes that define variable and diverse foreign-policy motives in the Gulf.⁴⁷⁹

IV. Autonomy-seeking behavior

Foreign-policy behavior in the Gulf continues to be marked by the prevalence of conventional (“neorealist”) managing of structural constraints and opportunities. State actors in the Gulf tended to maximize their autonomy of action at both the domestic and external level. At the domestic level, the state regimes have tended to keep foreign and external security affairs a prime domain of a small ruling circle. At the external level, the regional states have shown the endeavor to maintain a high degree of flexibility and autonomy of action. Foreign policy behavior often comes along in the form of unilateral action, or *ad hoc* multilateral arrangements of low collective commitment. The regional states have remained inclined to avoid and reduce regional or global (inter)dependencies rather than taking them as opportunities for integration or institutionalization processes. The regional states have principally rejected any form of supra-national institutionalization that would mean a loss or surrender of national sovereignty.

Even though the states have not managed to reach complete external autarky and independence, they tended to minimize constraints in their autonomy through the diversification of external relations and the carving out of “multi-dependence”. The foreign policy behavior may be best described as a strategy of “omni-balancing” (Nonneman 2005; David 1991) between various multi-level pressures and demands. The strategy of “omni-balancing” takes into consideration the growing complexity of interdependent relations, but is subject to the (neorealist) maxim of autonomy-maximizing.

⁴⁷⁹ Constructivist thinking explains the transformation of state interests by virtue of a “transformed consciousness” of the actor (see also Menzel 2001: 178).

6. Summary and Perspectives for Further Research

The present study of Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Iraq policies in the post-Gulf War era has elaborated on and compared how the Saudi and the Iranian Iraq policies have changed in form and content and adapted to changed environmental structures, transformed social preconditions, and altered state preferences and notions of national security over time. The study was strongly theory-motivated. The major purpose was to offer a theory-guided framework for analyzing the foreign policies of the regional countries in the Gulf. The study has aimed to develop a research design for FPA that best fits the structural and actor-specific particularities of the Gulf region. The analytical framework of this study has been located at the intersection of IR theories and area studies. The interest lay in contributing to bridging the gap between IR theories, comparative politics and region- or country-specific expertise.

The present study has proceeded from two basic assumptions. The first assumption was that the Gulf region constitutes no *exceptional* region. This meant that IR-theoretical hypotheses on foreign policy were considered to be equally applicable to the Gulf region as to other world areas and regions. The second assumption was that the Gulf nevertheless constitutes a *distinct* (sub-)region within the larger Middle East region. This meant that IR-theoretical approaches to foreign policy had to be made applicable and regionally contextualized according to Gulf-specific peculiarities. A conceptual demarcation of the Gulf (sub-)region from the wider Middle East was believed to give more accurate analytical results.

The Saudi and the Iranian states have been selected as case units that share critical similarities in those aspects observed through the IR-theoretical approaches of this study.

The Iraq policies proved to be an ideal object of study that allows to make general assumptions on regional foreign policy in the Gulf. Iraq has been the central party of war in the last three Gulf Wars and has continued to be a critical site where the political, geo-strategic and geo-economic security order of the Gulf was decided. For both Saudi Arabia and Iran, Iraq has constituted one of the most challenging neighbor countries and has occupied a prime issue in their regional policies.

In order to avoid a one-dimensional theoretical lens on foreign policy, the Saudi and Iranian Iraq policies were looked at from a multi-theoretical perspective. The three IR-theoretical approaches applied and reviewed in this study have been (1) a neorealist systemic and state-centric, (2) an interdependence-theoretical multi-level, multi-actor, and multi-sector, and (3) a sociological-normative constructivist approach.

Finding IR-theoretical hypotheses on foreign policy proved to be challenging for two reasons. One reason refers to the object of study. IR theories explain *international relations* as the outcome of international state or non-state interaction rather than *foreign policy* of individual

states. Another reason refers to the diversity of IR-theoretical strands and sub-schools. Each of the three IR-theoretical approaches represents a broad and meta-theoretical line of thinking on international relations. These grand IR theories therefore incorporate heterogeneous and at times contradicting strands and sub-schools.

The study has worked out IR-theoretical explanatory variables and hypotheses on foreign policy that would best represent the core assumptions of each IR-theory approach. These core assumptions served as the working hypotheses in the comparative analysis. The three IR-theoretical approaches reviewed in this study made out explanations for foreign policies at different environmental levels and structures.

The explanatory variables of (1) state power and threats, (2) patterns of interdependence, and (3) state identity and role-conceptions were operationalized through a contextualization according to region- and country-specific peculiarities. The study made out specific forms, types, categories and possible classifications of the notions of power, threat, interdependence, identity and foreign-policy roles in the Gulf region and how they evolved and changed over time. Since foreign policy analysis presupposes a “statist” perspective, the study has examined what these explanatory categories mean for the state regimes in the Gulf.

The constellation of state power and threats in the post-Gulf War order has shown specific features that are the result of a long-time extra-regional penetration of United States, sensitive state-society relations, and the regional abundance of strategic natural resources. Regional balance-of-power processes, security-building and scenarios of state threats have shown to be critically shaped by the “overlay” of U.S. power. The extra-regional presence and interventions have transformed the rather “natural” tripolar balance of power in the Gulf into a perilous regional polarization between pro-U.S. countries and those defying the U.S. regional security order. Difficult state-society relations at the domestic and transnational level have formed the basis of a “dual nature” of state threats. There could be observed numerous state attempts of ideological and political subversion by manipulating and exploiting weaknesses in state-society relations and supporting transnational oppositional groups. The third-state support and agitation of domestic or transnational oppositional movements or political ideas appeared to be at least equally threatening as direct military force. The states in the Gulf were also endowed with decisive forms of unconventional and soft power. While Saudi Arabia’s oil-political strength constituted its critical power asset, Iran’s arsenal of soft power on transnational groups and the regional public opinion showed to be its crucial strategic advantage in manifold regional affairs.

Conventional military state power did not tell about the state regimes’ vulnerabilities and insecurities. Over the past two decades, there could be observed a widening “multi-dimensionality” (Korany et al. 1993) of security risks for the state regimes. While conventional military threats have remained strong, other non-military asymmetric security

risks gained momentum. The state regimes have remained strongly vulnerable to oppositional domestic-societal or transnational political ideas and loyalties. Thanks to new media and information technology, political ideas and opinions have become less controllable by the states in the Gulf. Pluralist political ideas and opinions flowing more freely both within and across regional societies therefore constitute a growing threat potential to the regional regimes. Oppositional ideas and conceptions on statecraft, political leadership and representation have come broadly from both liberal-democratic and Islamist lines of thinking. The autocratic regimes in the Gulf region have not been fully autonomous from their domestic societies and appeared vulnerable and responsive in various ways to the public opinion. In a growingly interconnected region, the regime stability of the ruling elites in the Gulf has become more than ever dependent on domestic and regional credibility.

At the global level, the state regimes of the Gulf have remained highly enmeshed within and vulnerable to structures of economic and security interdependence. Despite observed attempts to diversify their economic and security relations, the Gulf rentier states continue to be strongly dependent on the import of security, technology, and consumer goods, and the export of energy.

Besides material structures of power and interdependence, the regional states have been equally embedded within ideational and normative structures. Various layers of identities, role conceptions and understanding of self and other give instructions of “appropriate” action. The Gulf region is marked by an incongruity between state, sub-state and (trans)national societal identities (Hinnebusch 2005, 2003). This study has put its focus on “statized” identities and role-conceptions of the ruling elites. The Saudi and Iranian state regimes have shown different ways of making identity, norms, and roles congruent with more material needs of the state. While the Iranian regime proved to be skillful in interpreting its religious norms and foreign-policy principles in a flexible and pragmatic way, the Saudi state chose to keep a strict separation between domestic Islamic norms and material necessities of the state. In the international arena, Saudi Arabia and Iran have taken apparently antagonist regional roles. However, recent fundamental shifts in the regional balance of power have left both countries uncertain about their future regional roles. The regime change in Iraq has invoked the Iraqi neighbor countries to re-define their regional role- and self-conceptions.

The comparative analysis of Saudi Arabia’s and Iran’s Iraq policies over the past two decades has made out changes in form (means and strategies) and content (goals and interests) of the Iraq policies as well as qualitative changes in foreign policy behavior.

By help of a long-term comparison of the countries’ goals, means and strategies towards Iraq, there could be observed qualitative changes in Saudi Arabia’s and Iran’s definitions of national (and regional) security. During the 1990s until the Iraq War of 2003, Saudi Arabia and Iran cherished similar notions of security regardless of their different ideological

orientations and divergent strategic alignments. Both countries largely pursued the goal of a safe regional status quo and the territorial integrity of regional states. Even though the Iranian Republic showed attempts to escape its state of regional marginalization in regional economic and security affairs and improve its regional position, it defined its security in terms of a more even and “just” regional balance rather than in terms of Iranian predominance. After 2003, and more clearly after 2005, Saudi Arabia’s and Iran’s conceptions of national and regional security began to strongly and sustainably diverge. With regard to Iran, there could be observed a strongly power-oriented understanding of national security that was based on the idea of regional predominance and power advantages over others. Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, showed a still defensive conception of security, but also a stronger discontent with the evolving regional (im)balance of power and interests.

The foreign-policy *strategies* of Saudi Arabia and Iran did not appear to be as dissimilar as expected. Both states showed to pursue a strategy of maximizing their domestic and external autonomy. In their Iraq policies, Saudi Arabia and Iran resorted to means of conventional conflict management and avoided binding international commitments and a too restricting multilateral engagement. Both countries showed to be well aware to shun their domestic societies from unfavorable or threatening influence or spill-over effects from Iraq. In sum, both Saudi Arabia’s and Iran’s Iraq policies appeared as a policy of “omni-managing” multi-level threats and constraints to the regime’s (domestic and external) autonomy. The qualitative difference of Saudi Arabia’s and Iran’s Iraq policies rather seemed to lay in varying and divergent conceptions of national security.

As a result, two major contributions of this study to the discipline of FPA in the Gulf region can be emphasized:

- (A) One major contribution can be seen in the development of a cross-theory and region-specific approach to foreign policy in the Gulf region.
- (B) A second major contribution lies in identifying and bringing back in different distributional conceptions of national security.

One major contribution of this study has been the development of a cross-theory and regional-specific analytical framework for analyzing the foreign policies of the regional Gulf countries. A multi-theoretical approach was believed to catch a broader and less biased picture of foreign policy. The regional contextualization of IR theories was thought to better grasp the nuances of regional foreign policy in the Gulf.

The foreign policy analysis examined in how far Saudi Arabia’s and Iran’s Iraq policies can be explained as (1) a balancing of state power and threats, as (2) managing multi-level and multi-sector patterns of interdependence, and as (3) preconditioned by identity, self- and role-conceptions. The diachronic and cross-country analyses of this study have shown that

foreign policy behavior does not fit into a single theoretical scheme. The study has therefore suggested a synoptic and synthetic approach to FPA that remedies explanatory weaknesses and enhances the analytical strengths of IR theories for FPA in the Gulf. IR-theoretical approaches showed to be selectively useful and accurate with regard to the specific foci and analytical stages of FPA.

An interdependence-theoretical approach has proved to best capture the complexity of the structural environment in which the states in the Gulf interact. The multi-level, multi-sector and multi-actor perspective of interdependence-theoretical approaches may appropriately grasp the widening multi-dimensionality of state security needs and give valuable information on the diversity of opportunities and constraints of state action.

A synthesis of rationalist and constructivist approaches has shown to give a more accurate and comprehensive picture on state goals and interests and of what defines the notion of “national security”. While the states in the Gulf showed very pragmatic and rational ways of pursuing their national interests, their definition and understanding of state interests and national security underlay constant re-interpretations according to changes in the material or normative structure or to (social) experience.

A second major contribution of this study lies in bringing back in the distributional dimension of national security.

Classical realist distinctions between “satiated” status quo and “non-satiated” revisionist-expansionist states and ongoing debates between defensive and offensive neorealists have already expressed the need to further elaborate on different (distributional) notions of security. However, neorealist theory alone could not explain for the variance and change in the notions of state interests and security in the Gulf region. Theoretical refinements of neo-classical realism have offered valuable and nuanced analytical results for foreign policy in the Gulf. But so far, neoclassical realism has not developed a comprehensive and sufficiently dynamic theory that would integrate the plurality of security conceptions and distributional intents. Neorealism as a behavioralist approach could explain variance in foreign-policy *behavior*. Apart from this, it has largely remained a “theory of stasis” that has shown weaknesses in explaining change in state *goals* and *interests* and the states' *understanding of national security*.

This study has detected various reasons for the diversity and change of the distributional dimension of national security. Among these could be a(n) (un)satisfying or (un)comfortable power position, specific needs and pressures from multiple environments and state-society relations, and varying state role-conceptions that could be consistent with, clash, or be reconciled with their environment. Diverse and varying notions of security and distributional ambitions of the Saudi and Iranian state have forged different foreign-policy mentalities that may help to better understand the countries' grand foreign policy strategies and choices. It

was therefore argued in this study that approaches to FPA cannot proceed from a one-dimensional and static notion of state interests and national security in the Gulf.

Perspectives for Further Research

Perspectives for further research in the realm of FPA in the Gulf region lie in particular along the two axes that the study contributed to. These axes are the combination of a cross-theory and region-specific approach to FPA, and the inclusion of distributional considerations of state actors.

Analytical potential of future FPA in the Gulf region lies in particular in a stronger (geographic or historical) contextualization of current approaches and in a multi-theory perspective. A regional contextualization promises more nuanced and accurate analytical results while a cross-theory (synaptic or synthetic) approach would catch a broader and less biased picture of foreign policy. The research design conceptualized in this study has made a first step towards such a cross-theory and region-specific approach to foreign policy in the Gulf.

Testing the applicability of this research design to the smaller GCC states in the Gulf on the one hand and to post-Saddam Iraq on the other hand may be a promising next step for further research in this area. In the near future, the Gulf countries may in particular have to handle four major challenges. These challenges are (1) the adaption to a post-oil era, (2) the dealing with their Arab-Persian and Sunni-Shiite heritage, (3) the handling and inclusion of new extra-regional actors (e.g. China) in the Gulf region, and (4) demands for an inclusive and politically participating society. With regard to these major challenges, the smaller Gulf states may prove to develop more innovative strategies to manage these challenges or even convert them into opportunities. Innovative policy strategies have come in the last years in particular from the smaller Gulf states such as Qatar or the United Arab Emirates, be it in the realm of investing in renewable, non-fossil energy, or in launching diplomatic initiatives (such as Qatar's invitation of President Ahmadinejad to the GCC Summit in 2007). Despite remarkable differences in the degree of political participation that the state regimes allow, all Gulf states - including the small Gulf monarchies - are far from building an inclusive and politically participating society, and even show sporadic setbacks as concerns the protection of political freedom.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁸⁰ Just recently, the UAE has deprived a political activist of his citizenship and expelled him to Thailand. According to the London-based Emirates Center for Human Rights, the famous human rights activist, Ahmed Abdulkhaleq, was expelled on July 16, 2012 to Thailand on a Comoros Islands passport. In April 2011, Abdulkhaleq and four others, including blogger and rights advocate Ahmed Mansour and economics professor Nasser bin Ghaith, "were arrested for signing an online petition demanding constitutional reforms and free elections in the UAE". The UAE are said to have arranged a deal with the government of Comoros "to provide passports for people it makes stateless" (see Press TV, July 16, 2012, <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/07/16/251258/uae-sends-online-activist-into-exile/>).

As concerns the case of Iraq, the new post-Saddam Iraqi state may better fit into a Gulf-specific framework of analysis. Whereas under the rule of Baath party, the Iraqi state has been an integral part of the Near and Middle East, the new post-Baath Iraq may more strongly become part of the Gulf region. While the former Baathist regime defined its role and position rather through its relations with Egypt, Syria or pro-Palestinian movements, the new, post-Saddam Iraqi state may conceive of itself more as being part of the Gulf region and define its position through its relations with Iran. Since the fall of the Saddam regime, Iraq has - more than before - to deal with its Arab-Persian heritage. Future research on Iraq could examine in how far Iraq is able to integrate itself as an active Gulf actor (e.g. with respect to regional institutional integration) and how it will incorporate its Arab-Sunni and Sunni-Shiite identity in its future foreign-policy roles and regional policies towards its neighbor countries. A possible focus of further studies may be the question whether Iraq will be able to build a new conception of a Shiite-Islamist state that may become an alternative model to the Iranian Republic but also to the other regional states and societies. Can Iraq implant the idea of federalism and pluralism, or will sectarianism and regional secessionist ideas take over?

A second important axis for FPA in the Gulf region may be the closer look at the distributional dimension of foreign policies and conflicts in the Gulf.

The further study of the distributional dimension in the definition of national or regional security and state interests may promise a more nuanced understanding of regional policies in the Gulf. Distributional conflicts and the lack of an all-accepted balance of power, interests, and ideas have been endogenous to the Gulf region over the past two decades and pre-determined the foreign policy behavior of the regional states. One paradigm example of a distributional conflict is the revived conflict over the nuclear balance in the Gulf. When it comes to the question of a nuclear balance in the Gulf region, it seems that the regional countries pursue different conceptions of national security. It is still unclear whether Iran's revisionist strategy of becoming a nuclear power (be it for civilian or military reasons) serves more defensive security or rather offensive power-prone reasons. As a rational egoist actor, Iran may seek nuclear energy to meet the growing energy needs of its population. As a positionalist actor, Iran may pursue its nuclear program to secure a greater military and geo-strategic advantage. Both motives (energy security and geo-strategic advantage) can either combine with an offensive-aggressive or a defensive and more cooperative strategy. The Iranian regime has envisaged - at least when it comes to Iranian rhetoric - a new security balance in the Gulf based on an "Islamic defense and security pact" and the mutually sharing of nuclear expertise between the Muslim regional countries (see page 212).

As concerns the 'nuclearization' of the Gulf, further research on how Saudi Arabia would deal with a revised nuclear balance in the Gulf is needed. Will the Saudi regime accept a new balance of nuclear expertise or will it turn into a revisionist, activist or even perturbing player

itself? Sporadic outbreaks of Saudi expressions of discontent, such as the Saudi uttered threat to actively side with Iraqi Sunni combatants or the Saudi talking of an "illegal occupation of Iraq (see page 146), have shown the tendency of the Saudi Kingdom to proactively defend Saudi interests without the consultation of its allies.

The same question of Saudi Arabia's future foreign policy mentality arises with regard to the new evolving ideational balance of ideas and identities in the Gulf. The establishment of a Shiite-dominated government in Iraq has revealed a long-time demographical fact and revised the old concept of a Shiite majority under Sunni rule. Will Saudi Arabia offensively defend an anachronous status quo and deny the new political facts, or will it find a new way of accepting the new ideational balance? Its policy towards Iraq and its willingness to integrate Iraq into the new regional order may be the political barometer of Saudi Arabia's openness to a new balance of political and religious identities in the Gulf region.

Map of the Persian Gulf and Middle East



Courtesy of the University Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.

Glossary

<i>'asabiyya</i>	(arab.) solidarity to a social group
<i>'ulama (sing. 'alim)</i>	(arab.) religious scholars
<i>al-'alam al-'arabi</i>	(arab.) the Arab world
<i>al-faragh</i>	(arab.) vacuum, void
<i>al-mutawa'a</i>	(arab.) Saudi religious police
<i>al-nizam al-asasi li-l-hukm</i>	(arab.) Basic Law of Governance (issued by the Saudi King Fahd)
<i>Arvand rud</i>	(pers.) Arvand river, [->] <i>Shatt al-'arab</i>
<i>azadi</i>	(pers.) freedom
<i>ba'ath</i>	(arab.) awakening, revival, renewal; also refers to Arab socialism
<i>dar al-harb</i>	(arab.) (lit.) "house of war"
<i>dar al-islam</i>	(arab.) (lit.) "house of Islam"
<i>da'wa</i>	(arab.) missionary invitation/call to convert to Islam
<i>dir'a al-jazeerah</i>	(arab.) Peninsula Shield (joint troops of the GCC countries)
<i>esteqlal</i>	(pers.) independence
<i>fatwa (pl. fatawa)</i>	(arab.) religious opinion issued by Islamic scholars
<i>fitna</i>	(arab.) strife, dissent
<i>fiqh</i>	(arab.) jurisprudence
<i>ghodrat</i>	(pers.) power
<i>jama'</i>	(arab.) community
<i>jihad</i>	(arab.) endeavor, struggle
<i>haj</i>	(arab.) Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca
<i>hanbaliyya</i>	(arab.) school of Islamic Law in Sunni Islam going back to Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (780-855), today used in Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Qatar
<i>haweeya khaleejeeya</i>	(arab.) Gulf identity
<i>hawza</i>	(arab./pers.) seminary of traditional Islamic school of higher learning
<i>hay'at al-amr bil-ma'ruf wa al-nahi 'an al-mankar</i>	
Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice	
<i>ijma'</i>	(arab.) consensus (e.g. of religious scholars through interpretation of the sources of Islamic law)
<i>intifadha</i>	(arab.) uprising, lit. trembling, shaking
<i>khadim al-haramain</i>	(arab.) custodian of the Two Holy Mosques (title of the Saudi King)
<i>khod kafaye</i>	(pers.) self-sufficiency
<i>madrassa</i>	(arab.) school; also Islamic religious schools
<i>Mojahedin-e Khalq</i>	(pers.) People's Mujahedin (Islamic Fighters) of Iran
<i>muhasasa</i>	(arab.) concept of political, ethnic-religious quotas for power sharing
<i>musharri'</i>	(arab.) legislator
<i>muwahhidun</i>	(arab.) confessors [->] <i>tawhid</i>
<i>nizam</i>	(arab.) regulation
<i>qawm</i>	(arab.) people, nation
<i>qawmiyya</i>	(arab.) nationalism
<i>umma</i>	(arab.) Muslim community
<i>qanun</i>	(arab.) law
<i>Rabita al-'Alam al-Islami</i>	(arab.) World Muslim League
<i>shakhseeya khaleejeeya</i>	(arab.) Gulf "personality"
<i>shari'a</i>	(arab.) Islamic religious law; the Qur'an and the sayings and living habits of the Prophet Muhammad (<i>sunnah</i>) as reported in the <i>hadith</i> are widely believed to be the primary sources of Islamic law
<i>Shatt al-'arab</i>	(arab.) lit. beach/coast of the Arabs, refers to the river that forms where the Tigris and Euphrate river confluence, for the Persian term see [->] <i>Arvand rud</i>
<i>shiraka</i>	(arab.) partnership, participation, co-operation (also refers to ethno-sectarian share of power)
<i>siyasa hujumiyya</i>	(arab.) assertive policy
<i>solteh</i>	(pers.) (oppressive) power
<i>Tanzim qa'idat al-jihad fi bilad al-rafidayn</i>	
Organization of Jihad's Base in the Country of the Two Rivers ("Al-Qaeda in Iraq")	
<i>tawhid</i>	(arab.) oneness, concept of monotheism in Islam, [->] <i>muwahhidun</i>
<i>velayat-e faqih</i>	(arab./pers.) guardianship of the religious jurist (in Shi'a Islam)

<i>wahhabiyya</i>	(arab.) conservative and puritanical Islamic reform movement launched in Arabia by Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792)
<i>watan</i>	(arab.) country, fatherland
<i>wataniyya</i>	(arab.) nationalism, statism

Overview of Political Events in Iraq (1990-2010)

August 2, 1990	Iraqi invasion of Kuwait
August 6, 1990	UN Resolution 661 imposing economic sanctions on Iraq
January 17, 1991	Begin of <i>Operation Desert Storm</i> (Second Gulf War)
April 5, 1991	Establishment of a no-fly zone over northern Iraq
August 1992	Establishment of a no-fly zone over southern Iraq (<i>Operation Southern Watch</i>)
April 1995	Relaxation of sanctions through the "Oil-for-Food Programme" (UNSR resolution 986)
1998	UNSCOM weapon inspectors leave Iraq
December 16-19, 1998	Bombing campaign on Iraq by the U.S. and the UK (<i>Operation Desert Fox</i>)
December 1999	Relaxation of the "Oil-for-Food Programme" by lifting all limits on Iraqi oil sales (UNSC resolution 1284)
January 29, 2002	Iraq declared by the United States as a member of an "Axis of Evil" (along with Iran and North Korea)
March 20, 2003	U.S.-led invasion of Iraq (<i>Operation Iraqi Freedom</i>)
May 1, 2003	Official U.S. declaration of the end of the major combat operation
April 21, 2003	Establishment of the U.S. civil administration of Iraq,
(until June 28, 2004)	(later named) <i>Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA)</i> Jay Montgomery Garner: Director of the <i>Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance/ORHA</i> (April 2003 - May 6, 2003) L. Paul Bremer III: Chief civil administrator of Iraq (May 6, 2003 - June 28, 2004)
July 13, 2003	Establishment of the <i>Iraqi Governing Council (IGC)</i> by the CPA Consisting of 25 political, religious, and tribal leaders appointed by the CPA 13 Shi'ites, 5 Sunni Arabs, 5 (Sunni) Kurds, 1 Turkmen, 1 Assyrian Presidency rotated monthly among nine members of the Council
March 8, 2004	Signing of the <i>Transitional Administrative Law</i> (Iraqi provisional constitution)
June 1, 2004	Transfer of sovereignty to the <i>Iraqi Interim Government</i> President: Ghazi Mashal Ajil Al-Yawar (Sunni tribal leader) Prime Minister: Allawi (secular Shiite, Iraqi National Accord) Vice-President: Ibrahim Ja'afari (Islamic Da'wa Party)
June 28, 2004	Full sovereignty of the <i>Iraqi Interim Government</i> , dissolution of the CPA
January 30, 2005	National Assembly elections
May 3, 2005	<i>Iraqi Transitional Government</i> Commissioned to draw a permanent constitution of Iraq President: Jalal Talabani (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan) Vice Presidents: Adil Abdul Mahdi (SCIRI), Ghazi al-Yawar (Sunni tribal leader) Prime Minister: Ibrahim al Ja'afari (Islamic Da'wa Party)
October 15, 2005	National referendum approves Iraqi permanent constitution
February 22, 2006	Bombing of the Shiite Al-'Askari Mosque in Samarra
May 2006 - mid-2007	Most violent period in post-occupation Iraq, massive ethnic-sectarian fighting, Iraq risks becoming a "failed state"
May 20, 2006	First permanent government under Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki
June 7, 2006	Killing of Al-Zarqawi (<i>Al-Qaeda in Iraq</i>)
December 6, 2006	Release of the <i>Iraqi Study Group</i> Report by James Baker and Lee Hamilton
December 30, 2006	Execution of Saddam Hussein
January 2007	U.S. troop surge
June 13, 2007	Second bombing of the Shiite Al-'Askari Mosque in Samarra

March-May 2008	Iraqi Spring Fighting: series of clashes in Baghdad, Basra, and southern Iraq between the Mahdi Army of Muqtada Al-Sadr and the Iraqi Army supported by the coalition forces
2008	Negotiation of the U.S.-Iraqi Status of forces agreement (SOFA) that laid the timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. combat forces (the legal basis for the U.S. military presence was about to expire end of 2008)
November 27, 2008	SOFA ratified in Iraqi parliament
January 31, 2009	Iraqi provincial elections
December 2009	Iraqi government signed several substantial contracts with major international oil consortiums
December 2009	Iranian soldiers occupy for three days the Iraqi oil field <i>Fauqa</i> near the Iranian border
January 15, 2010	Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq (IHEC) bans 499 candidates from election due to alleged links with the Ba'ath Party
March 7, 2010	Iraqi parliamentary elections
November 11, 210	Agreement on the formation of a new government under Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki
December 22, 2010	Iraqi parliament approves new Maliki government

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Iraq-businessnews.com
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Journal of Peace Research. London; Oslo
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Nahost Jahrbuch. Opladen/Wiesbaden
Orient. Berlin
PolicyWatch. Washington D.C.
Politique Étrangère. Paris
Press TV. Tehran
RAND Issue Paper. Doha; Abu Dhabi
Reader Sicherheitspolitik. Bonn
Review of International Studies. Cambridge
Saudi Gazette. Riyadh
Security Dialogue. Oslo
Security & Terrorism Research Bulletin. Dubai
Security Studies. London
SWP Aktuell. Berlin
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Terrorism Monitor. Washington D.C.
The American Prospect. Washington D.C.
The Brown Journal of World Affairs. Providence (Rhode Island)
The Daily Beast. New York
The Economist. London
The Emirates Occasional Papers. Abu Dhabi
The Guardian. London et al.
The Iranian Journal of International Affairs. Tehran
The Middle East Journal. Washington D.C.
The National. Abu Dhabi
The Wall Street Journal. New York
The Washington Post. Washington D.C.
The Washington Quarterly. Philadelphia
World Politics. Boston; Cambridge, Mass.
World Energy Outlook. Paris
Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen. Baden-Baden
Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft. Hamburg

Personally Conducted (semi-structured) Interviews

- Abdullah, Abdulkhaleq: UAE University, Al-Ain (Professor of Political Science), Dubai (UAE) on February 26, 2009.
- Al-Alkim, Hassan Hamdan: UAE University (Professor of Political Science), Al-Ain (UAE) on February 24, 2009.
- Al-Badi, Awadh: King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies (Director of Studies), Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) on May 25, 2009.
- Al-Dakhil, Khalid: Former professor of Political Sociology, King Saud University, Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) on June 5, 2009.
- Al-Faisal, HRH Prince Turki: King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies (Chair), Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) on May 31, 2009.
- Al-Falah, Falah: Former member of the Shura Council, Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) on May 31, 2009.
- Al-Hattlan, Sulaiman: Arab Strategy Forum (CEO), Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation, Dubai (UAE) on March 11, 2009.
- Al-Hulwah, Mohammed Ibrahim: Shura Council (Foreign Affairs Committee), Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) on June 4, 2009.
- Al-Khater, Khalid: GCC (Minister Plenipotentiary, Advisor to GCC Secretary-General, Head of Strategic and Political Analysis), Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) on May 24, 2009.
- Al-Khathlan, Saleh: King Saud University, Department of Political Science, (Chairman); National Society for Human Rights (Vice President), Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) on June 7, 2009.
- Al-Lawati, Abbas: Gulf News (Staff Reporter), Dubai (UAE) on March 9, 2009.
- Al-Mani, Saleh: King Saud University (Dean), Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) on May 24, 2009.
- Al-Nuaim, Mishary A.: King Saud University, Faculty of Law and Political Science, (Vice dean), Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) on June 6, 2009.
- Asgard, Ramin: U.S. Department of State, Iran Regional Presence Office (Director), Dubai (UAE) on February 26, 2009.
- Askar, Abdullah: Shura Council (Vice President of Foreign Affairs Committee), Weekly columnist of Al-Riyadh, Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) on June 6, 2009.
- Devine, James: Concordia University (Researcher), Montreal (Canada) on May 14, 2009.
- El-Hokayem, Emile: The National (Political Editor), Abu Dhabi (UAE) on March 14, 2009.
- Fathy, Mamdouh Anis: The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR), (Scientific Advisor), Abu Dhabi (UAE) on March 15, 2009.
- Karasik, Theodore: Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis (INEGMA), (Senior Researcher), Dubai (UAE) on February 14, 2009.
- Koch, Christian: Gulf Research Center (GRC), (Director of International Studies), Dubai (UAE) on February 16, 2009.
- Partrick, Neil: American University of Sharjah, Department of International Studies (Assistant Professor), Sharjah (UAE) on March 4, 2009.
- Perthes, Volker: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (Director), Berlin (Germany) on April 8, 2009.
- Reissner, Johannes: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (Senior Researcher), Berlin (Germany) on April 7, 2009.
- Salman, Muhammad Mulla: Delmon University (Professor), Manama (Bahrain) on March 5, 2009.
- Steinberg, Guido: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (Senior Researcher), Berlin (Germany) on September 24, 2009.
- Stracke, Nicole: Security and Terrorism Department, Gulf Research Center (GRC), (Researcher) Dubai (UAE) on February 27, 2009.
- Toufik, Suliman: Former professor of Political Science, Jeddah (Saudi Arabia) on May 29, 2009.
- Woertz, Eckart: Gulf Research Center (GRC), (Director of Economic Studies), Dubai (UAE) on February 16, 2009.

Personally Conducted (non-structured) Interviews and Conversations

- Ahmad, Latifa: Al-Qassimi Center for Gulf Studies, Sharjah (UAE) on March 4, 2009.
- Al Hammadi, Mohammed: Department of Transport (Business Development Manager), Abu Dhabi (UAE) on February 20, 2009.
- Al-Mutawaa, Ahmed: Emirati Diplomat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Abu Dhabi (UAE) on February 25, 2009.

Al-Yahya, Khalid: Dubai School of Government (Assistant Professor of Public Policy), Dubai (UAE) on March 1st, 2009.

Cooper, Derek: British Embassy (First Secretary), Manama (Bahrain) on March 5, 2009.

DeGeorges, Thomas: American University of Sharjah, Department of International Studies (Assistant Professor of History), Sharjah (UAE) on March 4, 2009.

Gholizadeh, Mersad: Development Manager, Dubai (UAE) on February 25, 2009.

Ripsman, Norrin M.: Concordia University (Associate professor of political science), Montreal (Canada) on May 15, 2009.

Note:

Some of the interviewees have requested to stay anonymous. In very rare cases, the taking of notes has not been allowed.

Guideline for Interview Questions

The interviews were conducted between February and September 2009.

The following questions served as a guideline for the interviews, but were largely adapted to the professional background of the interviewee.

General Questions on Saudi Arabia's and Iran's Regional Policies, Interests, and Security in the Gulf Region

- *What are Saudi Arabia's/Iran's national interests in Iraq and the Gulf region and have there been shifts in their definition of national interests and security since 1990?*
- *What do you think guides Saudi Arabia's/Iran's current regional policy towards Iraq?*
- *Concerning the construction of post-war Iraq, in how far do Saudi/Iranian and U.S. interests match/ do not match?*

Questions on the Regional Security Architecture

- *What is Saudi Arabia's/Iran's preferred design of and precondition for a regional security architecture?*
- *In how far do Iran and Saudi Arabia have convergent or divergent notions of regional security?*
- *In how far do Iranian and Saudi security interests in Iraq match/do not match?*
- *Could Iran profit from cooperation with the USA? Where might their interests match in their Iraq policies?*
- *What role should the United States play in the regional security architecture?*
- *What (military, political, diplomatic) measures do you think should the USA take to safeguard Iraq's domestic stability and security?*
- *How do you think should the USA behave towards Iran's regional policy (Iran's engagement in Iraq; nuclear program)*

Questions on Considerations of power and threats

- *Do you think the regional policies of Iran and Saudi Arabia towards Iraq are primarily determined by considerations of power and threats?*
- *Do you think Saudi Arabia/Iran pursues status quo/revisionist intentions in the Gulf region? Do you think Saudi Arabia/Iran intends to preserve the balance of power/to expand its power positions?*
- *To what extent is threat perception based on ideology? Is the "Shiite Crescent" a myth or reality?*
- *Do you recognize a net rise in Iranian power?*
- *Is Iran's (presumed) rising power more by default than by design?*
- *Is the USA rather an asset or liability to Saudi security?*

Questions on State-society relations and foreign policy discourse

- *Does the Saudi/Iranian Iraq policy represent or incorporate the domestic foreign policy discourse in society?*
- *Is Saudi Arabia's/Iran's foreign and regional policy in line with the domestic societal discourses? Where do state and society discourses diverge?*
- *To what extent is the realm of foreign policy kept separate from or combined with domestic policy?*
- *What shifts in the domestic foreign policy discourses since 1990 do you recognize?*
- *Which major groups of the Saudi/Iranian political elite do you think guide the foreign policy discourse?*

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Ellinor Zeino-Mahmalat
Born: 14th July, 1980 in Siegen, Germany
Nationality: German
Marital Status: Single

Education

Since 10/2006 Ph.D. candidate at the University of Hamburg and GIGA, Hamburg (Germany)
Submission of thesis: June 2011
Thesis defense: June 2012
06/2006 Completion of the Master Degree at the University of Passau (Germany)
2000-2006 M.A. Political Science, Law, and Economics at the University of Passau,
Languages for special purposes: Arabic and French in law and economics
2003-2004 Studies abroad: Political Science at Cairo University, Cairo (Egypt)
Funded by a scholarship of the Egyptian government (*Wafedin*-scholarship)
2000 Graduation ("Abitur") at the Fürst-Johann-Moritz Gymnasium, Siegen (Germany)
1996-1997 Rabat American School (RAS), Rabat (Morocco)

Professional Career

Since 2012 Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Rabat office, Morocco (project coordinator)
2010-2012 Lloyd's Financial Services Ltd., Hamburg office, Germany (project work)
2007-2010 UNICEF, Hamburg office, Germany (volunteer work)
2004 Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Cairo office, Egypt (internship)
2002-2003/ University of Passau, Office of the Women's Representative, Passau, Germany
2004-2006 (staff member)
2002 Odhikar (NGO for human and civil rights), Dhaka, Bangladesh (internship)

Affiliations and Memberships

since 2008 Member of DAVO (*Deutsche Arbeitsgemeinschaft Vorderer Orient*)
since 2007 Member of WIIS (*Women in International Security e.V.*)

Language Skills

German: native speaker
English: fluent
French: fluent
Arabic: advanced oral and written skills of Modern Standard Arabic,
additional knowledge of the Syrian, Egyptian, and Moroccan dialects
Spanish: basic knowledge