A Possible Framework for Analysing National Security

The Saudi Arabian Perspective

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Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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University of Bradford
2014
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Abstract

This study will focus on explaining the dynamics of Saudi Arabia’s national security. In explaining these dynamics, the study will consider two of Buzan’s frameworks for analysing national security. Further enhancement will be given by conceptualising specific assumptions about Saudi Arabia’s national security – these will be based on the manner in which certain features are utilised within the Saudi state. Semi-structured interviews will be utilised to examine the findings from the adapted frameworks.

By studying the state’s domestic, regional and international concerns, as well as the specific threats that each level pose with regards to several security sectors (including the: social, political, economic, militant and environmental), this study will provide a distinctive analysis of national security within the Saudi state.

Initially, this study acknowledges that only a few studies have been conducted into Saudi Arabia’s national security; furthermore, these have focused on the internal perspective by considering Saudi national security in terms of its military and strategic partnerships. Secondly, the study proposes that Saudi Arabia is unique (and unlike any other state) as it holds various important social and religious aspects that are not fully understood by external sources. Consequently, this study conceptualises Saudi national security from the internal perspective by considering the Saudi state’s specific features.

Keywords

Acknowledgements

In the name of Allah most gracious most merciful.

Praise be to Allah, the lord of the worlds. And the blessings and the peace be upon the last messenger of Allah, Mohammed (peace be upon him).

First and foremost, thanks and praise to Allah, the most Gracious and most Merciful.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude and thankfulness to Professor Paul Rogers and Dr Davina Miller for providing me with this research opportunity. They have both provided continued support, guidance and encouragement throughout the course of this study.

I would like to give special thanks for the assistance and support from all of the academic and administrative staff of the Peace Studies department. I'm also extremely grateful to the Government of Saudi Arabia – represented by the Ministry of Higher Education and King Abdul Aziz University – for providing the necessary financial support which has allowed me to undertake this research. This support is gratefully acknowledged.

In addition, I would like to express sincere gratefulness and appreciation to my parents, my wife and my daughters, Yasmeen and Hind, for their love, patience, constant encouragement and continuous support. I also wish to thank all of my brothers and sisters; in addition, I am extremely thankful to my brother Omar who supported and encouraged me throughout my PhD journey. I am also thankful to my friends, Islam Amer and Hussam al-Hifzi, who provided much needed friendship, support and advice during my studies. Lastly, I am sincerely grateful to Sultan Chowrdy who provided encouragement, discussion and guidance throughout the duration of my research.
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<tr>
<td>AQAP</td>
<td>Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula</td>
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<tr>
<td>CENTECO</td>
<td>U.S. Central Command</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
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<td>GCC</td>
<td>Gulf Cooperation Council</td>
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<td>GIP</td>
<td>General Intelligence Presidency</td>
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<td>IGO</td>
<td>International Governmental Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>IR</td>
<td>International Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>JRDTK</td>
<td>Joint Rapid Deployment Task Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>KSA</td>
<td>Kingdom of Saudi Arabia</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAMA</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia Monterey Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEF</td>
<td>Special Emergency Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSF</td>
<td>Peninsula Shield Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nation Development Programme</td>
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Chapter 1

Introduction
1.1 Research Background and Problem

As a result of economic and religious circumstance, the Gulf region has become an area of vital importance in the world. Consequently, it is important that threats in this region are eliminated or reduced to ensure that countries within the region, as well as other countries, can continue to depend on the region’s resources.

Since World War II, it has become impossible to separate the global, regional and national security issues which have developed as a result of rapid growth in transportation, finance and information technologies. The world’s economy is driven predominantly by oil and natural gas in the developing and developed worlds. As countries around the world grow their own economies, their requirement for energy also grows, especially in places like China and India. The geographical location of the Gulf area is strategic as it is an important international shipping route.

The region’s countries hold approximately 60% of the world’s oil reserves (Cordesman, 2011) which account for the world’s second, third, fourth and fifth natural gas reserves after Russia. Most of the oil and gas exports from the Gulf are primarily dependent on the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries. Hence, the global economy is heavily dependent on the Gulf’s energy resources, and it will remain so for many years to come. Therefore, regional security in the Gulf is inherently related to socioeconomic development throughout the world, this supports the view that security in the Gulf is essentially a global security issue.

In recent decades the Gulf region has become unsettled, this could lead to further conflicts as a result of involvement from external powers. The United States (US) and its allies’ war on Iraq, arms proliferation (such as Iran’s nuclear programme), and
terrorist incidents, have brought further instability to the area. The region also faces existing ethnic and religious tensions that can be traced back many centuries.

Saudi Arabia is one of the largest nations in the region, its economic strength and its vast energy reserves have made it an important nation and major player in the security of the region. It is also recognised as being the heart for Islam as it contains the two holy sites of Mecca (or Makkah\(^1\)) and Medina. The transition to the reign of King Abdallah, in 2005, culminated with the height of uncertainties, changes and challenges in security within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, this has affected the whole region. There were rising concerns over Saudi security policies and various questions were raised with regards to how the Saudi state implements and formulates its security policies. Furthermore, questions were raised as to whether the new challenges were really being examined and whether policies were changed to reflect these challenges. Ultimately, it is important to understand the dynamics, determents and ideology that the Saudi state considers when conducting its politics as this will provide information on how the country and other states understand the complexity, dynamics, and dimensions of Saudi Arabia’s national security with regards to regional and international security.

Various new and critical challenges have affected the region and the Kingdom since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, including: instability in Iraq and the growth in Iran regional influences and nuclear programme, thus generating Shi’a-Sunni struggles in Iraq and across the region (Bahrain, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen); the return of young Saudi militants from Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria; as well as other internal economic, political and social challenges affecting the whole region. The Saudi Arabian

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\(^1\) Mecca and Makkah will be used interchangeably throughout this thesis.
government has always faced external pressures criticising it for being undemocratic and for not taking into account human rights, especially women’s rights. Saudi Arabia has also been criticised for not allowing religious or political freedom. Consequently, Saudi Arabia has openly banned certain political organisations and public demonstrations, and it has also discriminated against religious minorities such as the Shi’a minority.

The Kingdom has also been criticised for its legal and administrative procedures as well as criticisms directed toward the Kingdom’s internal issues. The main problem is that most of these external criticisms are faced by internal opposition as these issue are generally interlinked with social and religious aspects. As a result, the Kingdom is struggling in its policymaking which has now become a security concern caused by the internal and external demands dilemmas. Consequently, it can be argued that the external and internal aspects and demands are not fully understood; furthermore, Saudi Arabia’s security and politics are being analysed by foreign scholars and analysts who are not fully aware of the unique criteria and features within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Thus, it is important to study Saudi security from the internal perspective, especially as little research has been conducted into the national security policies of Saudi Arabia from the internal perspective. Al-Habbas (1999) conducted the only study which addressed this particular issue from an internal source. Al-Habbas’ thesis focused on Saudi Arabia’s national security to 1999. But, Saudi national security has changed considerably in the last 14 years – this thesis will therefore consider the period up to June 2013.

In the field of security studies and international relations, traditionalists regard the concept of security predominantly in military and state-centred terms, which equated
security and military issues with the use of force. While rethinking the meaning of security as a dominant trend during the 1990s, a paradigmatic change in the perceptive of security occurred which included various issues to address security which went beyond the military and state-centric analyses. While this study aims to provide an up to date analyses of Saudi Arabia’s national security in terms of the internal dimensions of security threats as well as the traditional military or external threats. The framework of analyses will consider the following security threats: political, economic, social and environmental variables, as well as military factors. They will be considered as principle components of domestic, regional and international security threats and diplomacy, and will be considered with regards to Buzan’s (1991) regional security frameworks of analyses. Hence, it is important to understand the domestic and regional as well as international security policies affecting Saudi Arabia as this is an important subject of study because little research has been conducting in this area and Saudi national security is an integral part of regional and international security affecting the whole world.

1.2 Research Questions

The research problem clearly acknowledges the importance of understanding Saudi Arabia’s security and policymaking as international security and international relations problem that affect the whole world (due to its economic and religious status). Nonetheless, most of the previous research/studies have been conducted predominantly by foreign scholars and analysts who appear to have limited understanding and knowledge of the social, cultural and religious factors that play a major role in the state’s national security and policymaking. Consequently, the
internal perspective needs to be considered; hence, the following four research questions have emerged to consider this research problem:

1. How does Saudi Arabia implement and formulate its national security policies and diplomacies? And, who are the main players influencing Saudi politics? (State dynamics and nature.)

2. What are the main internal and external threats affecting Saudi Arabia? (State threats and concerns.)

3. What states play a major role and are vital to Saudi Arabia’s politics and security? (State relationships and diplomacy.)

4. How effective are Saudi Arabia’s state and national security policies domestically, regionally and globally? (State policies and diplomacies assessment.)

5. What are the main obstacles that limit or affect Saudi Arabia’s potential political outcomes? And, what are the perceptions for Saudi Arabia’s politics and security? (National security prospects.)

1.3 Research Hypotheses

To answer the research questions, four hypotheses have been formulated in response to the literature review:

Hypothesis 1: Saudi Arabia will maintain and advance its role as the leader in the Gulf region, and the Muslim world, by improving its domestic and foreign national security.
Hypothesis 2: Religious and social issues play a central role in policymaking and security – these issues are not fully understood by external analysts.

Hypothesis 3: Oil procurement and distribution is viewed as the most important issue in Saudi Arabia’s security policymaking.

Hypothesis 4: Foreign involvement in Saudi policymaking is seen as one of the major obstacles in reforming and improving Saudi Arabia’s security policy and regional security.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

This study will apply two of Buzan’s frameworks of security in order to study and analyse the Saudi state’s security context. The study aims to present a framework that will explain all of the aspects that involve all of Saudi Arabia’s national security, including national, regional and international security, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the Kingdom’s security. Finally, a framework will be presented of Saudi Arabia’s national security in order to reduce its complexity (as it involves social and religious aspects). Hence, this study aims to address the following primary objectives:

1. To examine the dynamics of Saudi national security and policymaking.

2. To identify factors that may limit or affect the effectiveness of Saudi Arabia’s national security and policymaking.

3. To identify and analyse the key aspects and weaknesses in each of the Saudi state’s social, historical, political, economic, military and environmental security.
4. To discuss and assess measures to improve the overall effectiveness of Saudi Arabian national security.

1.5 Importance of the Study

Saudi Arabia’s national security has not been the subject of many studies despite the importance that the Kingdom possesses regionally and globally. Only a few studies have attempted to understand Saudi security; but, most of these studies witness an absence in a deep understanding of the complexity that security and policymaking hold in this region with regards to social and religious internal characteristics and identity. Thus, to some extent these studies are difficult to understand as they have been conducted by external analysts and in some cases they have failed to even notice the importance of state identity. Saudi Arabia is one of the main states in the region and it is a major player in the region’s security as it holds huge economic, religious and political statuses; thus, its security within the regional security context is inherently linked to the international security context.

This study aims to provide a key analysis of Saudi Arabia’s national security by providing a full understanding of Saudi Arabia’s national security in terms of the various factors and aspects affecting the state (including: political, societal, economic, military and environmental); in addition to the state’s regional security perspective, insight will also be gained for the international security environment. Hence, this study aims to conceptualise a special framework which will understand the Kingdom’s national security in terms of how it matches a specific and unique criteria that only the Saudi state imposes.
This study also intends to utilise an alternative theoretical approach. It will be structured using the theoretical framework which analyses security in the context of the Saudi state, as suggested by Barry Buzan – Buzan’s framework is considered to be one of his greatest contributions to the theory of international relations (IR). This study and framework aims to present a more complete understanding of the complexities of security based on how well they could then be applied as concepts to current issues or states. However, it appears as though only a few studies have applied Buzan’s framework as an analytical tool to analyse state security. This research will essentially focus on Buzan’s (1991a) frameworks theory, by incorporating the theoretical underpinning of different components of security which cover most of the factors involved in internal (national) and external (regional and international) state security dynamics and aspects, as well as their interaction with each other, in the sense that it asserts and focuses on states as the primarily referent object (study scoop) of security analysis. The individual and system levels are then considered as major contributing elements to the conditions for security within the specified states. Although, it should be noted that Buzan’s follow up work in 1998 focused on not rejected the state-centric as a referent object but rather proposed further levels of analysis, as objects of analysis, based on the role that these levels play in international relations (further explanation for the choice of Buzan and state-centric analysis will be presented in Chapter 3).

1.6 Research Methodology

To justify the philosophical stand, in accordance with the chosen method, approach and strategy, and to ensure that the research questions and hypotheses are adequately addressed, an in-depth semi-structured interview will be used, as it combines the
advantages of the unstructured and structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews will be based on the research setting, the objectives and the variables. These interviews intend to re-examine the outcomes of the first phase of the research by focusing directly on Saudi views. The first phase will examine Saudi national security in accordance with the supposed framework of security analysis and based on the literature analysis which consists of mainly foreign experts and analysts on Saudi national security. These data collection methods were employed to ensure that the study answers all of the research question thoroughly; ultimately, a full and clear understanding of Saudi Arabia’s national security will be gained as all aspects of the Kingdom’s security policy will be considered.

Therefore, as Figure 1.1 shows, the first phase of the methodology was to locate the theoretical and study referent objects and variables that match the Saudi state’s criteria. The second phase of the methodology was to study security in Saudi Arabia by considering a range of secondary sources, drawing on the literature of international law, international relations theory, security studies, Saudi history, Saudi foreign policy and military history, as well as strategy. Moreover, the secondary data collection needed to include official documentation; think tank, including policy documents issued by the Saudi government; non-governmental organisations (NGO), conference reports and relevant speeches from Saudi government officials in order to fully consider Saudi security. A number of texts, translations from Arabic and other languages, books and online sources, were examined in order to understand the overall representations articulated. In addition, this study will include an analysis of experts’ studies on Saudi security, including Cordesman (2009), Peterson (2002) and Henderson (2006), as well as other analysts of international politics and state behaviour in relation to Saudi Arabia. Moreover, other English and Arabic audio-
visual materials and media reports from the Gulf region and the Western world will also be used.

The third phase of the methodology utilised in-depth semi-structured interviews, with key decision makers. These key decision makers were linked to security measures or they were academic consultants who had a deep understanding of particular security issues in Saudi Arabia – this provided insight into the broader phenomena as particular examples were utilised. Furthermore, these findings were then organised in a manner to re-examine the findings from the secondary data analysis so as to ensure that this study answers the research questions and objectives thoroughly by considering as many perspectives as possible (further detail of the methodology adopted in this research will be provided in Chapter 2).

Figure 1.1: Research methodology phases and aims
1.7 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis has been structured into eight chapters, a brief description of each chapter will now be given.

Chapter 1 provides an overview, the background and the methodology for the project and the other chapters in the thesis.

Chapter 2 provides an outline of the different steps adopted by the researcher: this is systematic, organised and logical in the manner in which it justifies the philosophical standpoint, in accordance with the chosen method, approach and strategy.

The third Chapter 3 reviews the different philosophies and theories with regards to understanding the security philosophies and the meaning of security in general and national security in particular by placing specific attention on developing state security. Consequently, a basic assumption will be gained with regards to Saudi security and the most appropriate field of security studies will be identified to match the specific criteria that the Saudi state holds, the chosen field or framework will then be identified and the next chapter(s) will be used as examples for identifying and breaking down every aspect of Saudi security. The chosen framework (Buzan) suggested several elements for investigation in order to understand state security – this will be divided into three main parts (the first part is also presented in Chapter 2): the state idea will be identified, the institutions will then be identified and the relations between them will then be discussed.

Chapter 4 presents the second part of the investigation, the state in which Saudi security is based upon. The chosen framework implies that it is important to identify
the state’s five security sectors (social, political, economic, military, and environmental) and the threats that each pose to the state’s security. Consequently, it details the structure, dynamics and threats that each part impose, which represent the domestic threats and challenges to the Saudi state’s security.

Chapter 5 presents the third part of the investigation into Saudi state’s security. It illustrates Saudi Arabia’s threats within the regional and global context by also enabling and understanding the regional and external dynamics of security. It views most of the threats to the Saudi state from the principle of amity and enmity divided according to regional and external threats – based on threats to the ideology, territory, ethnic lines and historical precedents that Buzan suggests.

Chapter 6 presents the collected data by re-examining the findings from the second phase. The interview findings and discussions for each part of the framework of analysis will also be presented.

Chapter 7 will provide the key findings of the research which will be based on the data collection and secondary literature findings. It will also present the advantages/disadvantages of the literature findings by comparing them to the interview findings. This chapter will also focus on the effectiveness and the limitations of the adopted framework for analysing national security once all of the stages have been examined.

Chapter 8 will provide a conclusion to the study by addressing the research objectives and hypotheses as well as the final findings. This chapter will present a summary of each chapter’s findings, it will also discuss the limitations and contributions of the
study; finally, suggestions will be given for various directions in which future research could be conducted.

1.8 Summary

This chapter introduced the research topic by describing the background of the study. The problem statement was discussed, followed by a discussion of the need for the study. The purpose of the study was then discussed based on its aim to present a framework to explain all of the aspects that have evolved in Saudi national security which include domestic, regional and international security as a way of gaining a deeper understanding of Saudi Arabia’s security dynamics. The research questions were then developed in response to this. The methodology chosen for this study was then briefly discussed and an outline of the thesis was then presented. The following chapter will now provide a review of the relevant literature upon which this thesis has been constructed.
Chapter 2

Research Methodology
2.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide an outline of the various steps, systematic, organised and logical, adopted by the researcher to justify the research methodology in accordance with the chosen method, approach and strategy. The research design is viewed as a master plan which specifies the methods and procedures appropriate for gathering and analysing the data needed for the given study – this should be in line with the research structures. According to Jankowicz (2005), research methodology is a systematic and orderly approach for collecting and analysing data – ultimately the relevant information should be obtained to solve the research problem. The following chapter will provide an extensive literature review of the meaning of security and the different security theories with special reference to Saudi Arabia.

In order to ensure that the research questions and hypotheses are covered by the research, an appropriate research methodology needs to be identified. The methodology of a project normally identifies how the research will be conducted by identifying the methods by which the data will be collected, analysed and presented. The research methodology for this study was developed in accordance with the ideas and theories presented in Chapter 3 (where the theoretical approach was located in terms of an understanding of national security in Saudi Arabia), and based upon the research objectives. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the reasons for choosing the specified methodology for this research project.

Interestingly, Remenyi et al. (1998) argue that the research topic is one of the main aspects that needs to be considered when choosing the research methodology. He also believes that the literature review should unveil a suitable research methodology along with the research problem. This chapter will firstly present the research
objectives and the research variables will then be used to identify the most appropriate methodological approach. The significance of the selected methodology will be highlighted along with its theoretical importance to the specified discipline. Finally, an appropriate research strategy will be adopted and a discussion of how it will enable this research to be conducted will be given. This chapter will therefore explain and justify the data collection and data analysis procedures and methods for this study.

2.2 Research Setting, Objectives and Variables

It is important to understand that the Saudi state’s political behaviours and policies are affected by the political nature of the state itself. Religion and tradition (tribalism) have played a role in the policymaking; furthermore, conflict between the conservatives and liberalists (reformers) have also affected Saudi society. The Saudi regime is still experiencing conflict, differences and tensions as a result of Islamic reforms within the state; nonetheless, these same elements have also worked to develop strong alliances within Saudi society. Saudi Arabia is one of the rare states that is continually facing internal armed threats (from Al-Qaeda); hence, the internal (domestic) and external (regional and international) threats need to be considered.

This study focuses on the internal and external dimensions of security by analysing the state’s position. Consequently, the espousal of a multi-level analysis of individual, group, state and international levels of security will be considered in order to provide a wider understanding of the domestic and foreign policies, dynamics and diplomacy so as to fully understand the main features of national security in Saudi Arabia. The purpose of this research will be addressed further in Chapters 4 and 5 (detailed literature reviews), this will be reassured and reflected further in Chapter 6 (Saudi views). Hence, the following research objectives were formed in order to identify the
empirical evidence that best matches the theoretical proposal – it is important to identify these elements in order to allow clear analysis of the state’s national security.

The main objective of this research is to analyse and study (conceptualise) Saudi Arabia’s national security by investigating how the state formulates and implements its national security policies and its diplomacy. Hence, it is important to understand the state threats, the dynamics, the main players, the future prospects (internally and externally) as well as the state actions and practices as the main referent objects of the study. Consequently, an analysis of the international sources of behaviour, which are common to all states in the international system is needed. The researcher will therefore gather this information by examining Saudi Arabia’s domestic and foreign policies/diplomacy, their threats, the main players and the influencers that are concerned with maintaining the state’s survival based on their commitment to national security. Hence, the research objectives can be formulated upon the following points:

1. To examine the dynamics of the Saudi national security and policymaking.

2. To identify factors that may limit or affect the efficiency of Saudi Arabia’s security and policymaking.

3. To find out the threats and challenges affecting security and policymaking in Saudi Arabia.

4. To discuss and assess the measures to improve the overall effectiveness of Saudi Arabia’s security policymaking.

To answer these objectives, this study will investigate the dilemmatic and dynamic interplay of national security threat perceptions on the regional and international levels, which have influenced or shaped in some way state policies or behaviour. Such
security measures are both structurally generated and inter-subjectively shaped based on the changing and current world politics. This thesis will demonstrate how the resultant conflict within the Gulf region has had a cyclical action-reaction process by understanding the relationship that the individuals level in the Gulf has effects on the superpowers (international level) that are involved in the region. National security is effected by the national, regional, and international dynamics and changes in each level. The dynamics of this cycle will be developed further in the following chapters. Overall, it will be shown that the security issues in the Gulf region are complex as they have both unique characteristics as well as general lessons that are applicable to other regional nations facing conflict.

Various theories, and their strengths and weaknesses, will be discussed in Chapter 3 based on their relevance to the specific time period, the current state of global politics and to their relationship with other non-Western states. Hence, the criteria for considering what should be regarded as a security issue will depend primarily on the assumptions proposed by the researcher about national security in Saudi Arabia. Ultimately, an integrated notion and theories about the meaning of national security will be identified in order to imply how the specific nature of the Saudi state shares views about security from both neorealist and constructivist viewpoints.

2.3 Research Philosophies

Researchers who are concerned with facts (such as: resource requirements and objectives) are likely to have a very different view of the way in which research should be conducted than researchers who are concerned with the subjective attitudes and feelings associated with human constructs.
Collis and Hussey (2009) emphasise the importance of taking appropriate steps to check proposed research designs not only for overall cohesion, in terms of the paradigm, methodology and research strategy logic, but also to check whether the scope is realistic against the given and applicable resource and time constraints. They warn how weaknesses at this juncture can undermine proposals leading to subsequent failure. However, it should be expected that the identification and planning of a research design will be an iterative and time/resource hungry activity if it is to meet the required rigour. The following figure (Figure 2.1) clearly explains the scheme for analysing assumptions about the nature of social science (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

![Figure 2.1: A scheme for analysing assumptions about the nature of social science](image)

*Figure 2.1: A scheme for analysing assumptions about the nature of social science*

*Source: Burrell and Morgan (1979).*

The objective of discussing research philosophies is not to inform the audience philosophically but rather it is to provide a better reflection upon which the researcher chooses and defends their philosophical choice over alternatives that could have been
adopted. Research philosophy suitability, however, depends upon the research questions needing answering, but it is unlikely that a particular problem or research question will always fall within only one philosophical domain. Because of the way in which researchers thoughts largely differ, research philosophies tend to be categorised into one of the following approaches: i) ontology, ii) epistemology, and iii) axiology. Collis and Hussey (2009) summarise the differences between their contrasting assumptions concerning ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (what is acceptable as being knowledge), axiology (the beliefs about the nature and role of values), rhetoric (the appropriate style of language) and methodology (the research process).

2.3.1 Ontology

Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality, it raises questions over the researcher’s assumption about the way in which the world operates and over their commitment in relation to particular views. The researcher’s ontological position can be explained from three aspects, namely: objectivism, subjectivism and social constructionism.

Followers of objectivism believe that social phenomena confronts us as external facts which are beyond our reach and influence. Subjectivists, however, believe that social phenomena are created by the perceptions and subsequent actions of the actors concerned with their existence (Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis, 2009). Objectivism, is more likely to be static and deterministic as it ignores human feelings; in contrast, subjectivism is deemed to be more dynamic as it views social phenomena as constant states needing revision as social interactions change – it values the feelings of people.
Social constructionism, argues that it is necessary for researchers to understand the subjective meaning of the social actions that motivate people to perform particular actions (Collins, 2010). Constructionism frequently results in an interest in the representation of social phenomena; interestingly, it has become referred to as a term that reflects the indeterminacy of our knowledge of the social world (Taylor, 2012).

2.3.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is a research philosophy concerned with what constitutes to be acceptable knowledge within a given field of study. The central question in epistemology is whether the social sciences can and should be studied by the same principles, ethos and procedures as the natural sciences. Although recognising that the concept is not always applied consistently in research literature, Collis and Hussey (2009: 55) explain their view that a paradigm refers to “a framework that guides how research should be conducted, based on people’s philosophies and their assumptions about the world and the nature of knowledge”.

*Positivism:* The basic theme or principles of positivism is based on the philosophical stance of a natural scientist. Saunders et al. (2003: 83) and Remenyi et al. (1998: 32) note that positivism refers to “working with an observable social reality and that the end product of such research can be law-like generalisations similar to those produced by the physical and natural scientist”. In this philosophy, the researcher acts as an objective analyst and follows a very structured methodology to facilitate replication (Gill and Johnson, 1997). Furthermore, data are collected in a numerical form and statistical tools are used to analyse the collected data. This philosophy can make the research independent, whereby the researcher neither effects or is affected by the subject of the research (Remenyi, Williams, Money and Swartz, 1998).
Interpretivism: Interpretivism has been adopted as an alternative to the positivist orthodox, it recognises the subject matter of the social sciences – people and institutions – as being fundamentally different to that of the natural sciences. The studies in social sciences, therefore, require a different approach that reflects the distinctiveness between humans and the order of natural sciences. Consequently, social scientists aim to grasp the subjective meaning of social actions (Bryman et al., 2003).

Realism: Realism shares two prime features of positivism: a belief that both the natural and social sciences should apply the same kind of approach for data collection and explanation, and that objects have an external reality that is independent to our discretion (ibid).

Pragmatism: Pragmatism is an epistemological philosophy which argues that the most important determinant of the epistemology, ontology and axiology is based on the researcher’s adoption which will be chosen based on its appropriateness for answering their particular research questions. However, if the research question does not suggest unequivocally that either a positivist or interpretivist approach is most suitable then the pragmatist view will be chosen. This involves the use of mixed methods, both qualitative and quantitative, which are most appropriate to the study (Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis, 2009).

2.3.3 Axiology

Axiology is another branch of philosophy that is concerned with studying the value of the researcher’s judgment – this is of influence at every stage throughout the research process. The researcher’s own value plays a significant role in making the research
credible. Heron (1996) argues that values guide the reason for all human actions and for researcher’s demonstration of axiological skills in articulating their own values as a basis for making judgments about the research they are conducting and the way in which they go about doing it.

The researcher chose the ontological stance for this research as the author will interview academics and senior government officials in order to obtain their viewpoints on certain security measures. It is subjective as it is likely to be necessary to reflect on their background, their personal experiences/views and on their work experiences. A subjective observation will allow the researcher to investigate deeply so as to identify the root cause of the viewpoints and explanations. In applying an interpretivist stance, the author anticipates collecting mainly qualitative data, i.e. it will be nominal rather than quantitative, numerical form.

Collis and Hussey (2009: 65) state that one of the main advantages of the interpretivist perspective comes from its potential for generating high levels of validity where “research findings accurately reflect the phenomena under study”. They contrast this against the trade-off found in the positivistic which emphasises reliability and rigorous measurements.

In this study, the researcher will apply the interpretive approach. This will allow the researcher to reflect and focus on subjective perceptions, thoughts and values of the individual participants in order to attempt to understand their multiple points of view of the national security context. If the researcher followed an objective approach then
the external reality would be seen as the physical realm – this would not make sense and it could even bias the outcomes with regards to the national security issues.

In terms of the axiology, this research is open minded in terms of the political views about Saudi Arabia and the rest of the world. This research will follow an interpretive philosophy as the researcher’s values will have an impact on the research activities. As mentioned earlier, the main purpose of this research is to identify the key national security threats to Saudi Arabia – to identify these threats, interactions across the region and internationally will be considered in terms of security levels. In order for this research to be credible, it needs to be neutral, impartial and unprejudiced. As the debate continues, there is no right or wrong philosophical stance. Saunders et al. (2009) conclude that it is important for the researcher to have a clear value position, as it will help them to choose what is appropriate and ethical.

2.4 Research Data Collection Approach

Every research project comprises theories which may not be explicit in the research design, but the findings and conclusions should be presented in an explicit manner. The research approach is determined by the available theory, in accordance with the research problem. Gibbons et al. (1994) proposed mode-1 and mode-2 research which considers the amount of knowledge production. They explain that the primary focus of mode-1 research is knowledge creation which is driven by an academic agenda and follows a linear fashion in the further development of knowledge, i.e. theory to practice. Mode-2 research, in contrast, emphasises trans-disciplinarity, however, in order to overcome limitations in this research of single-disciplinarity, the academics, practitioners and policymakers need to exploit a range of skills and experiences in order to solve a practical problem rather than to create knowledge. Research can be
distanced into two types of categories qualitative and quantitative research (Creswell, 2003). In addition to the quantitative and qualitative approaches, there are two other approaches available: deductive and inductive, by which the researcher is able to create new knowledge and the acquisition of new knowledge (Hyde, 2000).

2.4.1 Qualitative vs. Quantitative Approaches

The division between quantitative and qualitative approaches is widely used and very important, but it is not often discussed (Marsh, 2002). The combining of both methods cannot be processed without problems because each approach is deeply different and impacts greatly on the methodology. Marsh (2002) argues that many authors ignore the ontological and epistemological issues by failing to link them to their methodology, instead they focus solely on the empirical questions in which they are interested in. But, all research should be aware of the ontological and epistemological position within the social sciences. Nevertheless, Marsh (2002) believes that the core problem of combining the quantitative and qualitative approaches is because of the links between the ontology, epistemology and methodology. On the other hand, it is difficult for researcher’s to adopt two different positions, at the same time, within the same research project, unless it is done in a way that ensures that the basic ontological and epistemological positions are not compromised.

Quantitative research has been defined as a method that primarily seek to express information numerically (Remenyi, 1998). Marsh (2002) argues that quantitative researchers tend to adopt a deductive approach by using theory to produce hypotheses. Nevertheless, he also argues that quantitative methods are most likely to
be used by foundationalist or positivist authors. Conversely, qualitative methods are often used by anti-foundationalist or non-positivist authors.

Unlike the quantitative approach, the qualitative approach is often small-scale and aims to obtain details rather than statistical information. It also aims to understand the phenomenon under investigation by way of observation and involvement (Bryman, 1992). In addition, qualitative research mainly involves collecting, analysing and interpreting data by observing what people do and say (Creswell, 2003). According to Lee (1992) one of the most fundamental distinctions often declared is that the qualitative approach is subjective and the quantitative approach is objective. In addition, qualitative research is concerned with observations, descriptions and the generation of hypotheses, as a contrast to positivist traditions.

However, in some cases, conducting a comparative method is needed because the use of just one of the methods (quantitative or qualitative) fails to allow the researcher to address all aspects of the research. However, in such cases the researcher needs to be willing to compromise on the quantitative and qualitative methods by being aware of the differences between the two approaches (quantitative and qualitative), from all aspects in particular with regard to the link between the ontological and epistemological position on the research – for many researchers this can only occur within the epistemological position.
### 2.4.2 Deductive vs. Inductive Approach

In a specific context, the inductive approach is an inference of a generalised conclusion. The inductive approach is basically a theory building process, starting from a specific instance that the researcher will attempt to prove in order to make a generalisation (Hyde, 2000). Zikmund (2003) stated that the inductive approach refers to establishing a general proposition supported by logic, on the basis of observation. Conversely, the deduction approach is the process whereby conclusions about particulars are linked predominantly with general or universal premise. The deduction approach is a theory testing process which considers an established theory or generalisation and then tests it to determine whether the theory is applicable to a specific context (Hyde, 2000). It is also a logical process whereby a conclusion is developed about a specific context, based upon a known general premise or some...
established truth (Zikmund, 2003). This approach has a unique property in that the findings may change the established theory, the results may also be generalised with the help of scientific tools.

For the purpose of this research, the researcher will follow the deductive approach because the research output is likely to propose a conceptual framework whereby Saudi Arabia’s national security is explained – this will be based on a framework of security analysis that will be identified and examined through two phases of data collection and analysis.

2.5 Research Strategy

This research will use a number of methods within the qualitative methodology so as to achieve the research objectives. Specifically, this study will employ an empirical, semi-structured interview method with key decision makers and academic consultants with experience of security in order to obtain a deeper understanding of particular security issues in Saudi Arabia. The findings should provide insight into broader phenomena using particular examples, it will also examine the secondary data outcome which is based on Buzan’s frameworks of security analysis (these will be examined in detail in Chapters 4 and 5).

In order to meet the different research objectives, the researcher has already used a multi-level analysis across different factors/sectors suggested by Barry Buzan in his book, People, State and Fears (1991b). Methodologically, this study constitutes a “thick description” (Ponterotto, 2006); a thick description of Saudi social, political, economic, military and environmental sectors of security threats and strategic contexts will be provided within which the policies and positions are formulated,
articulated and implemented for the domestic level of security. In addition, all of the perspectives of the national state’s systems and threats in relation to the other nations in the region and the international powers involved in the Gulf area will be acknowledged in order to fully understand the aims of the study which is to gain a detailed understanding of the dynamic nature of national security in Saudi Arabia.

Ultimately, this study will provide analysis of the internal challenges, regional conflicts and developing international security. The use of a thick description is similar to the way in which some neo-classical realists aim to “provide a richer portrait of the dynamism and complexity” of the insecurity dilemma (Lobell, Norrin and Taliaferro, 2009). Thick descriptions require the researcher to gain a “deep cultural immersion and understanding of a subject” (King et al., 1994). In this sense, the researcher is particularly well-placed as he was born into a family who played a major role in negotiation for a peaceful solution between the Saud family and the Ottoman Empire. The house in which the researcher’s father was born into is currently a national museum and cultural centre – the Bayt Naseef or Naseef House. The researcher has maintained close contact with his parents as well as family and friends who hold high political statuses within the country. The author therefore has a unique sense of intimacy with the national security issues in the region. The author’s understanding of the issues are of relevance to the security measures and he is uniquely a cumulative product of keen observation since his high school days and more recently in academic work. The researcher’s political milieu and his upbringing in such a politically engaged family has therefore enhanced the research conducted within this thesis.
Moreover, whenever a possibility exists, the researcher used the method of triangulation “using multiple perceptions [and datasets] to clarify meanings... or... interpretations... [and to] clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen” (Stake, Denzen and Lincon, 2000: 443-444). As such, the researcher will cross reference data from materials ranging from primary and secondary sources in Arabic and English. Practically, the research methodology will use a two-pronged strategy. First, the above-mentioned sources will be examined to obtain an initial understanding of the security concerns in Saudi Arabia. Second, insights from these sources will be supported by additional research in order to confirm or qualify the preliminary insights gleaned from the reading of the first primary and secondary texts and other types of sources. It is the combination of these sources which allows an in-depth examination of the security issues; ultimately, a full understanding of Saudi Arabia’s national security should be conceptualised from different perspectives by using different levels of analyses.

The first phase of the methodology will study the meaning of security in general, as such, the most appropriate security theories and frameworks of security analysis were located based on their suitable to the Saudi state’s features. The second phase of the methodology will study Saudi national security, dynamics and threats, by considering a range of secondary sources, including: drawing on the literature of international law, international relations theory, security studies, Saudi history, Saudi foreign policy, Saudi military history and strategy. Moreover, the secondary data collection will include official documentation, think tank, including: policy documents issued by the Saudi government; NGO and conference reports; and, relevant speeches from Saudi government officials that are involved with security in Saudi Arabia. A large number of sources, including: texts, translations of Arabic and other language documents,
books and online sources, have been examined in order to understand the overall representations being articulated and so as to provide an extensive understanding and evaluation of security policies and behaviours in Saudi Arabia. In addition, an analysis of expert studies on Saudi security such as Cordesman (2009), Peterson (2002) and Henderson (2006), as well as other analysts of international politics and state behaviour in relation to Saudi Arabia, will be conducted. Consequently, the research arguments have been developed further as the discussions have developed. Finally, audio-visual materials and media reports from the Gulf region and the Arab world, and from the West (in Arabic and English), will also be used.

The third phase of the research will utilise in-depth semi-structured interviews, so as to combine the advantages of unstructured and structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews can also give participants more flexibility and freedom in their responses; but, this structure will provide the researcher with some control over the interview. The sample will comprise of two categories; further explanation of the interview type and sampling will be discussed later in this chapter.

All of these research methodology phases will be employed to ensure that the study answers the research question thoroughly, and so as to not dismiss any aspect of Saudi Arabia’s security policy. Furthermore, to gain a full awareness of the Kingdom’s main behaviours and for a clearer understanding of Saudi Arabia’s national security practice, the differences between the foreign literature and the literature on security from within the region will be examined; ultimately, this should provide a detailed understanding of the regional security dynamics.

The respondents will be asked about how they evaluate the current security policies of Saudi Arabia in terms of the domestic, regional and the international arena. The
participants will also be asked to evaluate the main threats that they feel the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia faces. Respondents will also comment on the key aspects that Saudi Arabia needs to focus in order to strengthen its internal and external politics. Finally, the participants should identify the difficulties that they feel could result from improving Saudi’s internal politics and external diplomacy in this area.

2.5.1 Sampling and Participants

Sampling techniques can be broken down into two distinctive groups: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. When using a probability sampling approach, every member of the targeted population will have an equal chance of being sampled; whereas, non-probability sampling means that certain members of a targeted population will not have a chance of being sampled and it is unlikely that they will be statistically chosen at random (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007).

This study will use a purposive sample (a type of non-probability sampling) to gather the data; Figure 2.3 illustrates advantages and disadvantages of the different sampling tools. One advantage of using a non-probability sampling type is that it is simple to plan and organise. With a probability sampling method, there has to be a strict rule to decide on how participants will be selected, to ensure an equal chance of members of a population being selected. However, with a non-probability sample, this planning is not necessary, as the selected sample will not be representative. A specific advantage of a convenience sample is that it will be quick to find participants in large quantities; thus, aiding itself to the strict timeframe that will be followed in this study.
It is important to consider that the sampling frame used will be very large, therefore it would be difficult to obtain a sample large enough to be representative of the whole population if a probability sample were to be used (Bryman and Bell, 2007: 183). During the pilot phase of the study, the researcher struggled to extract any information from the interviewees selected because of random sampling. As a result of the nature and sensitivity of the information required in this study, as well as time and cost restraints, the researcher felt that it would be more relevant to use a non-probability sample as the sample does not need to be a representative of the whole population. Moreover, because of the collectivist nature of the Saudi society, it was assumed that the respondents would be more open to provide sensitive information if they trusted the researcher. Such bonds of trust are usually developed through social contact and recommendations from well-reputed personalities or high officials.
Hence, the researcher used his network of support to contact highly political officials, journalist, and academics that are experts in Saudi national security in order to obtain maximum support from the respondents which should generate more honest opinions on the subject.

The interview participants came from one of three categories. Firstly, officials and politicians associated with the Saudi Arabian government (as representatives of the Saudi view) were considered. All of these respondents were selected from the different government sectors that were connected in some way with Saudi Arabia’s national security, such as: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Education and Interior Ministry and other relevant parties that play a role in security in the Gulf region. The second group included various political scholars that were of relevance, and the third consisted of journalists involved in political matters. The participants were coded according to their background; the official and politicians will be coded as P1, P2, P3, etc.; the academics will be coded as A1, A2, etc.; and, the journalist as J1, J2, etc.

The participants came from various backgrounds, differing in: ethnicity, age, gender and socioeconomic status. But, they had other similar characteristics, including: nationality, religious affiliation, Arab nationalism and longstanding involvement in Gulf region affairs. Consequently, it is likely that the different participants will have different motivations and responsibilities which will affect their perception of Saudi security; thus, the use of varied interview questions was needed.

2.5.2 Conducting the Interview

Initially, a formal letter, using the university’s letterhead and signed by the supervisor, was sent to the participant prior to the interview to inform them about the interview.
This formal letter gives more validity and reliability as it informs the interviewee about the requested issues and allows them to gather any relevant supporting documents.

This letter also addressed the ethical issues related to the interview, including anonymity and confidentiality. It included an introduction to the study, its purpose and who authorised it, as well as acknowledging the participant’s right to not participate in the interview.

The letter identified a time, date and place of the interview, so as to encourage the participants to partake. The duration of the interview was also discussed.

All of the interviews began with a brief introduction to describe and explain the purpose of the study; information was also given on who had authorised the study. In addition, the research objectives were presented, the participant would also be reminded of the formerly agreed arrangements of anonymity, confidentiality and data protection – in some cases the interviewees agreed for certain statements and/or names to be included. Some of the interviews were recorded once the interviewee gave permission – these were used along with notes of the raised points. Ethical issues concerning the tape recordings were fully considered before and after the interview.

The interviews were designed to collect the following data:

1. The respondent’s understanding of the situation in the Gulf.

2. The respondent’s evaluation of the current security situation in the Gulf.

3. The respondent’s evaluation of the current threats and challenges that face Saudi Arabia internally and externally.
4. To identify what drives, effects and limits the policy-making process in Saudi Arabia.

5. To identify the main friends and allies to the Saudi states – the states which hold more importance to Saudi security should be identified.

6. Finally, to discover the areas (either internal or external policies) in which Saudi Arabia should focus upon in order to enhance its political behaviours.

The interview introduction included points on the following:

- Name; the purpose the project; and, the project funding.

- The purpose of the interview.

- Consent (in order to ensure that the interviewee agrees to be interviewed and recorded as well as discussions over protecting anonymity).

- Confidentiality (to reassure the interviewee that the recorded replies and interview information will remain confidential – only reviewed by the interviewer).

- Anonymity (to assure the interviewees that their opinions will remain anonymous – unless they have agreed to something different – otherwise they will be referred to solely by their initials. Assurances that all details that could lead to identification be removed/deleted from the transcribed text to ensure that only the researcher knows the interviewees actual identities).

- Advise on the time period that the audiotape will be safely stored.
2.5.3 Rationale for the In-Depth Interviews

One to one interviews were deemed to be more appropriate than group interviews or focus groups because of the following:

- Since the author was acting as an international researcher, it was easy to arrange individual interviews, especially during the summer holiday period.

- The opinions and views stemmed from one source, which made it easy for the author to locate the specific ideas and their owners.

- Since the research topics to be discussed were sensitive in nature, one to one interviews allowed the researcher to build trust with the respondent in order to allow them to be more open and impartial while responding.

- It was easy to control.

A semi-structured interview was chosen over a structured or unstructured interview for the following reasons:

- The research was aimed at discovering rather than checking.

- The interviewees were encouraged to use their own words and develop their own thoughts. This enabled the author to obtain in-depth information about complex issues.

- This research method is aimed at the conduction of in-depth investigations.
2.5.4 Actions

In light of such implications and in order to gain access to the necessary data and information, the respondents were assured of confidence (e.g. collected information will not be associated with them). Hence, the following actions were taken:

- Participants were given the research objectives and project scope and they were assured that the data would be used solely for academic purposes; thus, a letter from the university was given to ensure validity and to explain that the research was being conducted as part of the requirement for the researcher’s PhD.

- It was made clear from the outset that participants could choose not to participate at all.

- In some cases, where it is deemed to be necessary to show an organisation or an official’s name, the organisations/officials were asked to give their permission to mention their names explicitly. These organisation and officials were given the opportunity to read the work, once completed, to guarantee that confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. If there was any disapproval, the information would be modified to obtain agreement from the interviewee while also checking that the reliability of the presented information was not affected.

- The participants’ identities and names were coded in such a way that only the researcher would be able to identify their source – this maintained confidentiality and anonymity even if the data were stolen or accessed illegally.
2.5.5 Qualitative Data Analysis

Morse (1994, cited in Collis and Hussey, 2009) argues that every analysis of qualitative data requires the comprehending, synthesising and theorising of the full range of available material. But, as Collis and Hussey (2009) point out, if the data is collected and stored in an organised way, and a systematic approach is applied at the research analysis stage, this will help manage the high volume of accrued data; but, ultimately the analytic value lies in the interpretation. They also note that “few researchers describe their methods in enough detail to provide a comprehensive guide” (Collis and Hussey, 2009: 183). Again, qualitative content analysis goes beyond the mere counting of words to examine language intensely for the purpose of classifying large amounts of text into an efficient number of categories that represent similar meanings. Themes will be developed from two methods – looking through the responses (an inductive approach) and by considering the themes found in the literature review (a priori approach). The deductive approach will therefore involve revisiting the responses several times, to identify topics that occur repeatedly.

Both closed- and open-ended interview questions have been used. For the closed-ended question, the respondents were asked to choose from prepared answers about how they evaluate the current role of policies in Saudi Arabia; whereas, the open-ended question explored new solutions and ideas that could improve the policies in Saudi Arabia based on how they face difficulties that could result in improving their role in security.

The content was analysed and coded, using content analysis and computer software programs, to organise and process the data. According to the study’s objectives, the collected data were analysed and different values were derived through the analysis of
symbols and indicators for each question, the results were reported for each of the research variables. The researcher chose the content analysis technique for a number of reasons, including:

- This technique allows for a close relationship between the researcher and the data.
- It can give in-depth information.
- It can answer “how” and “why” research questions.

In addition, when conducting the content analysis for the qualitative data, the following steps were applied:

- A computer program called NVivo was used to analyse and code the data because it can identify important concepts and present the findings in graphical form.
- The interviews were transformed into a transcript.
- According to the researcher’s concerns, various sub-categories (such as: words, items, sentences, characters) were selected for analysis. Then, all of the categories and sub-categories were reviewed and compared.
- Finally, the outcomes were coded based on the numbers and words coded – this can help to obtain meaning from the data and answer the research question and aims by focusing on the content of the research.

After the interviews (units of analysis) were transferred into transcripts, the researcher could then start to identify the important categories by relating them to the main
research question. Once organised, an in-depth analysis of the text could be conducted in order to answer the research questions.

2.5.6 Presentation and Analysis of Interviews

The researcher managed to easily transcribe each respondent’s dialogue, word by word, since they were fluent in the native language (high communication skills). The researcher then needed to code the transcribed data into a number of colours. Each colour indicates a theme from the question sheet (based on the background theories). The purpose of this coding was to highlight the data that needed further discussion. Mason (1996) notes that the researcher needs to acknowledge that not all of the information/data obtained during the interview session is essential to the discussion part. As a result, the discussion chapter needs to be developed once the data has been construed by the author. Since this research contains sensitive matters, the author maintains trust with the interviewee and their organisation – this pronouncement may have encouraged participation in the interview. In order to compliment the respondent’s contribution, the researcher offered the interviewees the opportunity to comment on the empirical chapter – this assures credibility and is discussed in terms of the trustworthiness substance.

*Trustworthiness:* A qualitative method criterion basically concerns credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability when compared to the quantitative method which focuses on reliability and validity. According to Bryman and Bell (2003), the general term for the criterions concerned with qualitative studies accountability is trustworthiness which is comprised of the four abovementioned criterions. These criterions and how they are correlated to this thesis will now be discussed in turn.
Credibility: Basically credibility is sustained when the researcher develops a high scale of viability for the respondent – this is usually detailed in the empirical findings chapter. Hence, the basic need for credibility is firstly based on the findings of the study which require the accomplishment of good practice. In this area, the research needs to be conducted harmoniously with the obtainable rules and regulations. According to Bryman and Bell (2003), the second need for credibility is concerned with the fundamental nature of the research findings within which the data/information congregates in the social world; the respondent needs to achieve verification, respondent validation/triangulation.

Within this thesis, the researcher conducted 24 semi-structured interviews. During the interviews, the researcher again highlighted the rationale of the thesis by explaining how the empirical findings would contribute to knowledge of the particular national security context. Nonetheless, in the final stage, the researcher processed the findings into subjects and perceptions – at this stage the interviewees were offered the possibility of verifying their input (for the empirical chapter), by which they were sent a copy of the transcribed interview. The interviewees appreciated this and they then sent back any comments on the findings which needed to be amended (upon request). The implementation of this process allows for respondent validation.

Transferability: Qualitative research commonly examines minor groups or individual characteristics in the social world. Within this, transferability plays a crucial role in sustaining the findings perspective and its origin. This process can be complicated because the findings are obtain from one context and then applied to another (Bryman and Bell, 2003). In order to enhance and uphold the transferability of this research, the researcher has endeavoured to be as open-minded as feasible in demonstrating the
setup and background of the interviews. As per the researcher’s understanding, the empirical results are trustable and are likely to be applicable based on the country profile to other countries in the Gulf region as well as the developing world. In addition, the country profile, and its basic information in this thesis, can be used to guide discussions of further common understandings because the researcher feels that the findings are transferable because of the historical similarity to other countries in the Gulf.

**Dependability:** The function of dependability facilitated the researcher to apply the findings at another time. In addition, the frequency of use of the findings will increase the dependability of the empirical. To enlarge the dependability, researchers must fully document all of the research processes; from: developing the research question, choosing the interviewees and from making the analysis decisions – this provides verification that the research has been carried out in accordance with appropriate procedures. Consequently, similar research could be re-conducted and would attain similar objectives and outcomes (Bryman and Bell, 2003). In this thesis, the author attempted to illustrate that the research included many important details that could be explored again in future research.

**Conformability:** Qualitative research concedes subjectivity in its approach as the subject itself could be biased. As a result, the researcher needs to remain objective while analysing the data in order to avoid personal feelings and other unrelated preferences that could influence the direction of the research or the empirical collection so as to maintain conformability (Bryman and Bell, 2003). Furthermore, this thesis focuses on the preconceptions aspect by which respondents are able to obtain fair perceptions regarding their experiences. The researcher will now attempt
to explain how the interview session and data analysis were controlled to ensure that transparency was maintained throughout the conducted research.

2.5.7 Reliability and Validity

In order to check the reliability and validity of the interviews questions, the following elements occurred:

• The interview questions were firstly checked by a supervisor and by academic researchers experienced in questionnaire and interview design. This confirmed that the selection of questions and adjustments were made in accordance with their feedback.

• A pilot test was then conducted to check for validity. The completeness and readability of the questions were also checked and then reworded as required.
2.6 Conceptual Framework for the Study

Figure 2.4, below, shows a summary of the research methodology for this study.

Figure 2.4: Conceptual framework for the study
2.7 Ethical Issues

As this research’s strategy involves the use of interviews and meetings with executives from the Saudi government and experts in Saudi Arabia’s regional politics, some ethical issues relating to privacy need to be considered as this study aims to conduct research which targets the Saudi government, organisations and agencies involved in Saudi politics.

It is important to note that Saudi Arabia is a country whereby the collection of empirical data concerning such a sensitive nature issues, from primary sources, is difficult. Consequently, the researcher will use his judgment at different stages. Ethical issues pertaining to anonymity and confidentiality are also of importance; to illustrate, the participants were not always willing to talk about the government, despite confidentiality and anonymity being guaranteed. Thus, the interviewees generally preferred not to discuss the government – this was difficult as the subject of investigation is so closely linked to governmental policies.

Hence, ethical issues developed concerning the lack of participants’ freedom of speech. Therefore it is vital to consider the ethical issues from the perspective of the participant’s society. The collection of sensitive information, including governmental evaluations, has always been done by obtaining participant agreement and by explaining the topic of research, as well as the research objective. Furthermore, each participant must be given the opportunity to refuse participation or to withdraw from the interview. In summary, the author carefully followed the ethical guideline suggested by Saunders et al. (2009). Figure 2.5, below, provides detail on the ethical considerations for each stage of the research undertaken in this project.
Figure 2.5: Ethical issues at different stages of research

Source: Saunders et al. (2009: 188)
2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an outline of the various steps adopted by the researcher. A systematic, organised and logical approach were taken to justify the philosophical standpoint, in accordance with the chosen method, approach and strategy. In order to address the research settings, objectives and variables, the research methodology and data collection methods were designed to include an in-depth, semi-structured interview as it combines the advantages of the unstructured and structured interviews. A semi-structured interview was chosen based on its advantages in regards to the chosen topic. This chapter has also presented the data sampling techniques. This chapter has therefore considered all of the necessary elements that are concerned with analysing the use of a qualitative method, from the beginning to the final stage, including the criterions that focus on: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability, as well as reliability and validity.
Chapter 3

Locating Security Theories: Understanding Saudi National Security
3.1 Introduction

Despite the numerous efforts by scholars of security studies to conceptualise “security” in a coherent and systematic way, no single, generally accepted, definition of security has been produced. The evolution of the security paradigm and the changes in conceptions of security are based on different theoretical, political and historical assumptions, where each corresponds to specific values, threats and capabilities to meet the perceived challenges.

This chapter intends to analyse the ways in which the term security has been identified and how the academic discourse of security have evolved over time. The purpose is to provide an overview of the concepts and ultimately to provide a better understanding of the concept of security for certain cases like Saudi Arabia. The most appropriate framework of national security analysis will be identified based on how it best suits the Saudi state’s criteria. Hence, this chapter will predominantly aim to explain: the meaning of the term security based on the way in which the concept has developed in the post-Cold War and post-9/11 periods; it will also aim to explain how each approach views the concept of security by explaining the political nature of Saudi Arabia and by locating the most appropriate approach to understanding and analysing Saudi Arabia’s security.

This chapter is divided into six parts. A contemporary overview of the evolving concept of security will be given in section 3.2. Hereafter, in section 3.3, the key debates will be highlighted with regards to the aftermath of the Cold War which redefined the concept of security. Then, section 3.4 will illustrate how the different theoretical traditions have formed and identified the term security, as well as the non-traditional approaches to security. Sections 3.5 and 3.6 will locate the study referent
object in the light of the reviewed theories of international relations (IR). These sections will discuss the diverse dimensions of security based on their connection to the nature of the Saudi state and proposed on the identification of the referent object of security in this study. Section 3.7 will provide a discussion of Barry Buzan’s thoughts on security, it will also outline Buzan’s security analysis framework as a possible framework to follow in order to analyse Saudi Arabia’s security. Section 3.8 will introduce the basic assumptions of Saudi Arabia’s national security by relating IR general assumptions about security from different approaches to the case of Saudi Arabia. The last section (section 3.9) will provide a general review of how the wider literature approaches Gulf security. It will also illustrate where this study is located within the field, from a regional perspective. The literature presented in this chapter will therefore provide a basis for understanding the importance of security in the Gulf region.

3.2 The Meaning of Security and National Security

The concept of security is an indefinite concept because of its multi-dimensional nature. Defining security within the study of world politics or international relations remains a source of debate. Security is often referred to as an “essentially contested concept”, one for which, by definition, there can be no consensus as to its meaning. There is no single universally accepted definition or concept of the term “security”, “national security”, “international security” or “global security”. In this sense, each refers to different historical, theoretical or political periods and assumption. Every security concept corresponds to different values, threats and capabilities which are associated with meeting certain challenges (Haftendorn, 1991).
The meaning of security varies, depending on the time and place; but, in terms of academic and professional inquiries, security thinking has developed substantially since the Second World War. Historically, the concept of security is intertwined with military security – military power has been a prominent priority for most states.

According to Buzan (1991b: 1), in order to have a proper understanding of the national security problem one must first understand the concept of security, which is, in much of its prevailing usage, “so weakly developed as to be inadequate for the task”. Buzan (1991b: 1) considered five possible explanations for what he describes as “the persistent underdevelopment of thinking about security”. The first explanation is that the idea of the concept of security is too complex to attract analysts and has therefore been neglected in favour of more tractable concepts. The second, and in Buzan’s view the more convincing explanation for the neglect of security, lies in the real scope for overlap between the concepts of security and power which result in conditions of actual confrontation. A third reason, for the underdevelopment of security, lies in the nature of the various revolts against realist orthodoxy which occurred up to the end of the 1970s. Buzan argues that, rejecting the realist model as dangerously self-fulfilling and too war-prone for a nuclear-armed world by those with idealist notions as they organised themselves around the concept of security. Interestingly, many idealist critics turned instead to the grand concept of peace. A fourth reason, for the conceptual underdevelopment of security, can be found in the nature of strategic studies, a sub-field which has produced large volumes of empirical literature on the development of conceptual notions of security.

A fifth and final reason that Buzan imposed, as an enduring cause of the neglect of security, hinges on the argument that, for the practitioners of state policy, compelling
reasons exist for maintaining its symbolic ambiguity. The appeal of national security as a justification for actions and policies that would otherwise have to be explained is a political tool of immense convenience for a large variety of sectional interests, in all types of state. Because of the leverage over domestic affairs, which can be obtained by invoking it, an undefined notion of national security offers scope for power-maximising strategies for political and military elites (Buzan, 1991b: 7-11).

Conversely, Baldwin (1997) assert that security is an important concept, which has been used over the last 50 years to justify the suspension of civil liberties, the initiation of war and the reallocating of resources. Baldwin also stated that most recent works on security do not qualify as providing serious conceptual analyses. He argues that security has not received the serious attention that it needs for the concepts of justice, freedom, equality, obligation, representation and power. Baldwin (1997: 9) also declares that Buzan’s five explanations for the neglect of security are not convincing, but, he argues that security should still be described as a “neglected concept”, he states that:

Paradoxical as it may seem, security has not been an important analytical concept for most security studies scholars. During the Cold War, security studies was composed mostly of scholars interested in military statecraft. If military force was relevant to an issue, it was considered a security issue; and if military force was not relevant, that issue was consigned to the category of low politics. Security has been a banner to be flown, a label to be applied, but not a concept to be used by most security studies specialists.

Adding the adjective “national” to the term “security”, develops the concept to refer to the security concerns of the state, the security of the nation and/or the society (Al-Habbas, 1999). Haftendorn (1991: 9) also argued that:

The concept of international security is based on a mutual interest in survival under conditions on nuclear deterrence and on recognition that an adversary will be deterred from attacking out of its own self-interest. This is more than political restraint. International security, in contrast to national security, implies that the security of one state is closely linked to that of other state, at least of one other state.
Individuals, corporations, governments and academic specialists, all employ the term security to a large range of contexts and for a multitude of purposes. It encompasses and refers to things and individual subtleties, to means and ends, and state and global events (McSweeney, 1999).

3.3 Rethinking about Security

The general term of security still remains ambiguous– it is defined by dictionaries as relating to the state of safety. Traditionalists, in the field of security studies and international relations, regard the concept of security in almost absolutely military and state-centred terms, equating security with military issues and the use of force. But conceptualisations of the meaning of security became a dominant trend during the 1990s. As a result, this led to a paradigmatic change in the perception of security which focuses on a wider understanding of the concept of security that goes beyond military-political understanding – this was not considered until the latter part of the Cold War (Islam, 2009: 2).

The longstanding notion of security focuses on the military and state-centred concepts which were closely linked to the realist approach. As will be discussed in more detail later, the focus on military threats and the use of force or power as an approach to foreign policy seemed appropriate during the Cold War era. The following table (Table 3.1, cited in Collins, 2010) provides definitions of security from various key security studies authors.

Many academics have criticised the limited focus that the military threat considers with regards to security. Ullman (1983: 129) argues that: “defining national security
merely (or even primarily) in military terms conveys a profoundly false image of reality. That false image is doubly misleading and [is] therefore [a] false image of reality”. Ullman (1983) progressed to provide two reasons for this: firstly, it causes states to concentrate on military threats and ignore other, and perhaps even more harmful dangers. The second cause of misleading is that it contributes to pervasive militarisation of international relations, which increases global insecurity in the long run.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, Year</th>
<th>Definitions of Security</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bellamy (1981: 102)</td>
<td>Security itself is a relative freedom from war, coupled with a relatively high expectation that defeat will not be a consequence of any war that should occur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luciani (1989: 151)</td>
<td>National security may be defined as the ability to withstand aggression from abroad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayoob (1995: 9)</td>
<td>Security-insecurity is defined in relation to vulnerabilities – both internal and external – that threaten or have the potential to bring down or weaken state structures, both territorial and institutional, and governing regimes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kolodziej (2005: 25)</td>
<td>Security... implies both coercive means to check an aggressor and all manner of persuasion, bolstered by the prospect of mutually shredded benefits, to transform hostility into cooperation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hough (2004: 9)</td>
<td>If people, be they government ministers or private individuals, perceive an issue to threaten their lives in some way and respond politically to this, then that issue should be deemed to be a security issue.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Definitions of security

Source: Collins (2010)

In order to accept a broader definition of security, Ullman (1983: 133) attempted to provide “a redefinition of threats” where he argues that: a threat to national security is an action or sequence of events that: 1) threatens drastically and over a relatively brief span of time to degrade the quality of life for the inhabitants of a state, or 2) threatens significantly to narrow the range of policy choices available to the government of a state or to private, non-governmental entities (persons, groups, corporations) within the state.
Many other scholars have tried to provide definitions of security that consider a broad variety of possibilities. Haftendorn (1991: 5) argues that Ullman’s definition considers a broad variety of contingencies, but further clarification is required as different questions of applicability are raised. It must be seen in their specific cultural context of the highly industrialised democracies of the West. Other countries have their own concept of security, but, most of the developing countries emphasise the economic and social as well as the domestic dimensions of security.

Expanded definitions of security rarely fully clarify the security meaning, this can affect its theoretical and intellectual coherence, and it can even affect the scope of the solution to certain problems. Walt (1991: 213) argues that:

> Issues such as pollution, disease, child abuse or economic recessions could all be viewed as threats to "security". Defining the field in this way would destroy its intellectual coherence and make it more difficult to devise solutions to any of these important problems.

The idea of considering an issue as a security threat would have to follow the “securitisation” process. This idea is based on the concept of securitisation as formulated by Ole Waever (1997). According to Waever (1997), something becomes securitised when it has been declared a security problem by the elites; that is when they dictate that in issue is a threat to the state. It should be noted that Waever’s explanation is not harmonious as the elite security interests and the interest of the society rarely match – this could be in itself a source of threat to the state’s security. Such arguments however, raise debates around state-centric theories of security by questioning the “who” and “what” of security (the referent object).

The following sections will now highlight the different theoretical approaches by focusing on the concept of security and the referent object in each approach.
3.4 Security Theories and Trends

The concept of security within international relations (IR) has mostly focused upon the state’s security and the state’s survival as a political community by which the ultimate goal of state behaviour is to provide security for the state against anything that may threaten its existence or integrity (Lawson, 2003).

The previous chapter discussed and addressed the search for security meaning in terms of the issues raised about the referent object of security and the philosophy of knowledge, such as epistemology (how do we know things?), ontology (what phenomena do we think make up the social world?) and the method (how should we study the social world?). William (2008) argues that by accepting the notion that security is an essentially contested concept, by definition, such debates cannot be definitively resolved in the abstract as some positions are more dominant and enforced through the application of power. William (2008) progresses to note that security is most commonly associated with the alleviation of threats to cherished values; especially those that threaten the survival of a particular referent object in the near future.

3.4.1 Theoretical Traditions in Security Studies

In defining security, various authors take different philosophical stands in terms of the traditional perspectives, namely: realism, liberalism and constructivism. Although both realists and liberals clearly diverge in many respects, both still placed the state as the prime or ultimate object of security and they both assert the centrality of the state to the international system (Lawson, 2003).
Realism is the most significant theoretical tradition in international relations and security studies. According to Collins (2010), realism is not a single theory; it is rather a broad approach of theories and arguments. Despite the diversity of realist thought, nearly all realists assert the centrality of military threat and the use of force. Nevertheless, almost all realists believe that the international system suffers from a lack of authority, or what they described as international anarchy, which is defined as the lack of a single authority with sovereign power over states in the international system (Jordan et al., 2009). Since there is no central authority, realists believe that the state utilises self-help strategies to maintain their own survival.

Generally, realists believe that the possibility of war compels states to pursue security above any other interest, this forms a security dilemma between states as each state assesses their security with reference to the other states’ capabilities, rather than their behaviours or intentions (Ross, 2009). As the various states develop their security capabilities, they enhance the threat perceptions of the other states, which can then contribute to unintentional arms races (Collins, 2007).

The main criticism faced by the realist concept of security is that it limits other dimensions of security that are not solely military. Nonetheless, critics have questioned the state centrism of the realist approach. Realists argue that because of the influence of international anarchy the states will behave in a certain manner – regardless of their internal composition. Hence, the realist believes that the state will remain the main actor in international politics (Jordan et al., 2009).

Thus, the realist’s main position can be summarised in the following points:

1. The centrality of military threat and the use of force.
2. The international system suffers from a lack of authority or what they describe as “international anarchy”.

3. The state’s sovereignty and power shapes its international system.

4. Due to the “international anarchy”, when the state develops their security capabilities, they enhance the threat perceptions of the other states, which can then contribute to unintentional arms races and “security dilemmas”.

Liberalism, on the other hand, is another tradition of international relations and security studies. Liberalism focuses beyond the state to include other actors, such as intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), non-governmental international organisation (NGIOs), multinational corporations as well as domestic actors (interest groups, elites, and political parties). Liberalists believe that a state's behaviour is predominantly a result of the perceptions, preferences and decisions of the elites and officials; thus, the character of the international system changes according to the nature of its members and their objectives (William, 2008).

Conversely, constructivism, is another approach that focuses on the “society” as the most important referent object of security studies. According to this approach, the “reality” of the world, which includes the world of international relations, is socially constructed via complex inter-subjective understandings. Constructivists emphasise the impact of ideas and identities on creating and shaping a state’s understanding and their response to a situation (Taylor, 2012). Constructivist approaches are quite diverse and do not suggest a combined set of notions of ideas or identity issues. Constructivists believe that the security dilemma is an outcome of the social interaction between states (Lawson, 2003). They try to demonstrate how the social sciences can help IR scholars understand the importance of norms and identity in
world politics, as understanding could help to uncover important issues that are neglected by neo-realism and neo-liberalism.

The major criticism to constructivism concerns the separation between the state and society; to illustrate, those who speak for the society and the state may be political and manipulate perceived threats to societal security in order to legitimise specific political agendas (Baylis et al., 2011).

Below, in Table 3.2, a summary of all three theoretical traditions has been presented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main theoretical proposition</th>
<th>Realism</th>
<th>Liberalism</th>
<th>Constructivism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main theoretical proposition</td>
<td>Self-interested, states compete for power and security</td>
<td>Political or economic considerations override concerns for power</td>
<td>State behaviours are shaped by collective norms and social identities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest virtues</td>
<td>Power and security</td>
<td>Peace and freedom</td>
<td>Inter-subjective agreement; flow of norms and ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main units of analysis</td>
<td>States</td>
<td>State and non-state actors</td>
<td>Individual (especially elites); groups; states; supra-state actors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key instruments</td>
<td>Force, principally military; diplomacy</td>
<td>Varies (spread of democratic value; international organisations; economic exchange)</td>
<td>Ideas; discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main threat to (national) security</td>
<td>External military threat</td>
<td>Non-democratic regimes</td>
<td>Non-cooperation, externalisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Dominant theoretical traditions in the study of international affairs

3.4.2 Non-Traditional Theories of Security Studies

After the Cold War, subsequent thinking suggested different referent objects. The various schools of thought on security studies have developed beyond the traditional
philosophical stand of realism, liberalism and constructivism, and now focuses on the state as the referent object. Some analysts have argued that the priority should be given to human security as people are the referent object of security; thus, the state is only a referent object as it is a means to people’s security. They also believe that unless the ultimate goal of state-centric security is to the security of people, then the government’s security is unverified.

The notion of human security can be found in the publication of the *Human Development Report* of 1994, issued by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This report notes that human security should include the following seven areas: economic security, food security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security (Baylis et al., 2011). In fact, human security represents an ongoing effort to place the individual’s security at the centre of the national and global security concerns. However, Buzan (1991b) suggests that despite individuals being threatened by their own state, in many ways, the question of national security cannot be reduced to the individual level because both the state and the system have characteristics that make them more than the sum of their parts. Nevertheless, he asserts that it is the state that has to deal with or be responsible for state, sub-state and international security issues.

Critical theory or critical security studies is another non-traditional approach that rejects the focus of the state as the referent object; instead, it focuses on a much border range of factors. The critical theory offers an analytical framework for thinking about various possible referent objects, from the lowest level (the individual) through various sources of collective identities (including states, regions, civilisations), up to the international system, by analysing the relationships and tensions between the
different levels (William, 2008). This theory also focuses on societal security concerns and the maintenance of collective identity as being pivotal – if society loses its identity it is unlikely to survive; thus, military means may be employed to defend societal identities, especially when identity is linked to territory (Collins, 2010).

Another approach places the environmental change as a security risk by viewing the environment as a referent object of security. This approach calls for greater attention to be given to the planet earth itself rather than the human beings inhabiting it. As mentioned earlier, the environment is one of the seven sector identified in the early definition of human security in the UNDP (Collins, 2010: 232). Thus, for some time, environmental change has been identified as a human security issue; nonetheless, environmentalists have used environmental security to “securitise” environmental problems. The environmental and peace movement also focuses on environmental change as a cause of violent conflict rather than human security. This has led others to think that environmental security is more concerned with security than with the environment (ibid). The environmental movement has helped in raising the recognition of the environmental issues as it contests the practice of national security.

3.4.3 Security in Developing States

Many scholars place economic and social welfare in developing states as paramount aspects of national security (Sayigh, 1990; Al-Habbas, 2010; Ayoob, 2002). This approach is known as the development approach, which was first raised decades ago. The development approach incorporates anything which relates to economic or social progress, as such education, health and agriculture are important elements that enhance the civic aspects of developing countries. Failure to meet basic human needs
will lead to domestic instability in developing states, this is closely linked to the wellbeing of a society (ibid).

Al-Habbas (2010: 70-73) asserts that in most developing states physical protection from external issues is only one part of national security problems as “the security problem of developing states is about achieving political stability amidst sweeping social, economic and ideological change”. Therefore any comprehensive study of these states’ security would need to focus not only on the military dimension, but also on the internal sources of threats arising from a weak domestic environment.

Saudi Arabia however is not considered to be a developing country because of its economic status and state infrastructure (please see Chapter 5, section 5.4 for more detail); hence, it cannot be studied from the perspective of a developing state. It is worth considering various security theories when studying a completed state, such as Saudi Arabia (due to its social, religious, political and economic standpoints).

3.5 Buzan’s Framework of Security

Buzan introduced five important sectors of security (political, military, economic, societal and environmental) that need to be understood when analysing a state’s security. When Buzan introduced these five sectors of analysis, his aim was to analyse the effect of these sectors on the “periphery”, based on changes in the “centre”. Buzan explains that each of the five sectors cannot be analysed in isolation from the other sectors. Buzan (1991a) clarifies in his article, New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-First Century, that each factor has a point of concern in relation to state security. In other words, when Buzan introduced his framework of analysis, he aimed to measure the impact and consequence of changes in the north
which were directly linked to the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union) to the security agenda in the south, in terms of these five sectors. However, it became a valid framework of analysis that has since been utilised to conduct general security analysis. As argued by Stone (2009), Buzan provided a more complete understanding of the complexities of security by applying these concepts to current issues or states. Buzan’s approach can be adopted to breakdown most of the aspects that contribute to or affect security, from the individual and society as the main referent, which, for Buzan is the state. In connection to Buzan and the earlier dissection of the idea of the state, this notion led him to another level of analysis: insecurity, threats and vulnerabilities as referred to in Buzan’s book: *People, State and Fear*, whereby “a key divide [occurs] in security policy”. In this respect Buzan attempts to highlight the internal debate within national security based on how it deals outwardly with focusing on cutting off threats to the state at the source, or what Buzan refers to as the international security strategy which is inwards, whereby the state’s vulnerabilities are reduced as part of the national security strategy. Buzan then argues that a “policy which mixes elements of a national security strategy with elements of an international security one” is the best.

Buzan proposed an integrated model which incorporates the neorealist beliefs, such as anarchy, but the depth of his analysis is constructivist. This is a holistic approach that cuts through the traditional concepts by suggesting that national security needs to be assessed from the micro and macro perspectives, and the security at the three different levels of individual, national and system also need to be considered. This constructivist integrated approach allows researchers to address the contemporary issues, i.e. terrorism, by investigating the five identified sectors. Buzan suggests that the definition of security should not only include the military sector, but also the other
four sectors: economic, political, societal and environmental; this has opened up new horizons in the field of security literature. However, it should be noted that this framework is not a fool proof model that can be effectively implemented in all scenarios. Firstly, there is strong criticism from academics who are sceptical about the state itself as a referent object.

Buzan (2007) himself contradicted his work in the introduction section of his second edition of the *People States and Fear* book, by suggesting that if he had a choice, he would, “… weave securitisation arguments much more deeply throughout the text...”.

However, his national security framework is considered to be one of his major contributions to the theory of international relations. This is substantiated by the UN Report (2004) “A more secure world: Our shared responsibility”. The report intended to propose a security framework to reduce the national threat by making the world a more secure place. The findings of the report suggested that collective security is founded on the three pillars of national, regional and global security levels. The report also recommended the following (UN Report, 2004: 2):

There are six clusters of threats with which the world must be concerned now and in the decades ahead:

- Economic and social threats, including poverty, infectious disease and environmental degradation
- Inter-state conflicts
- Internal conflicts, including civil war, genocide and other large-scale atrocities
- Nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological weapons
- Terrorism
- Transnational organised crime.
One can argue that the UN’s framework is a reproduction of Buzan’s five sector framework, since it represents all the six clusters proposed above. Hence, it clearly validates his work on national security.

Moreover, Buzan also introduced another framework of security analysis which focuses on the concept of regional security – he describes this as a “relational phenomenon” because it includes several important assumptions. The first is that of “amity and enmity” among the various states – this can be understood by acknowledging that a states relationship can vary from that of friendship to an enemy or a source of threat. The issues that control these feelings range from things such as ideology, territory, ethnic lines and historical precedent. Buzan (2007: 190) argues that the concept of amity/enmity leads to the idea of “security complex”, which means: “A group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another”.

This is a very relevant concept for the current study since Saudi Arabia’s national security can be connected to several regional security complexes. Traditional established security theories in IR are inadequate to answer the research questions set. With the aim of performing the tasks set above, the study requires a framework that integrates several theories in order to assess the contemporary issues in a complex political situation in the context of politics in the Middle East. The exhaustive literature review demonstrates a significant mismatch between implementing the traditional theories of national security and the contemporary regional issues in the turbulent Middle Eastern region. The traditional schools of thought of political and military concerns are not sufficient to assess the current highly unstable region and
more factors therefore need to be considered, including: societal, environmental and economic. The traditional theories are mostly designed and developed in a particular time period of the Western or European historic perspective, hence they are unsuitable in eloquently engaging with the regional turbulence in the Middle East because it is a radically transformed world.

Ayoob (2002: 33) mentioned that realism and liberalism fail to:

> Explain adequately the behaviour of the primary units constituting the international system [by ignoring the historical experience and contemporary security practice of states in the global south] and fail to explain sufficiently the origins, both as beginnings and causes, of the majority of conflicts in the international system today.

This study will therefore use Buzan’s national security paradigms and frameworks as a guideline to concentrate on examining the empirical evidence of how practitioners, politicians, religious leaders and academics in Saudi Arabia perceive and interpret the national security in terms of the existing national and regional/international threats. As Waever suggests: “A theory is not basically a proposition about reality (true or false): it is a model from which one might produce empirical statements” (2011: 470).

It should be noted that, since there is no comprehensive framework on national security, the intention of the researcher is not to claim Buzan’s security theory as the most appropriate theory for all circumstances in IR literature; instead, the researcher will use the theory as a basis for gaining insight and understanding of Saudi Arabia’s national security practices/issues, so that structural similarities/dissimilarities can be assessed. This will allow the researcher to investigate a related topic for potential improvement of national security in Saudi Arabia.

In fact, Buzan introduced a set of frameworks to analyse state security which has offered a solid foundation of useful analytical tools for professionals, academics or
policymakers to handle national or international security concerns that can be useful to any policymaker. By understanding the general idea of security, as well as the breakdown of the different sectors and factors that affect security, it is expected that a more detailed understanding of the state’s security aspects and security policies will be obtained.


For each approach, a different referent object or research variables has been highlighted; however, it is important to recognise the elements that are considered to be security issues for each particular referent as these are the items that need investigation (individuals, states, global issues, etc.). According to William (2008), in order to identify what counts as a security issue for a particular referent, the process by which threat agendas are constructed needs to be analysed. It is important to consider how representatives of particular groups and organisations construct threat agendas because not all groups or threat agendas are of equal political significance.

3.6.1 Security for Whom? Which Values? What Threats?

The academic field of security studies contains various arguments about what should be considered a security issue. Some argue that security analysts should focus their efforts on issues related to armed conflict and the threat or use of military power; however, others argue that if security is about alleviating serious threats which prevent people from pursuing their cherished values then, for many, the lack of effective systems of healthcare are no less important than the threat of armed conflict (Collins, 2010).
Although most analysts reject the notion of total or absolute security, the study of security is significant as it may help in identifying the manner in which it can be achieved. Security cannot be achieved purely by understanding what security is or by understanding how different parties view it; but, knowledge of these elements could help to shape the future in desired ways through conscious efforts. Hence, knowledge of an ideal secure environment (including the how and what) could shape the security policies that are advocated (William, 2008).

Currently, IR studies generally focus on political “realism”. IR students are more involved with studying state actions and how the states formulates and implements their security policies. Nevertheless, in some cases the study of security is designed to revolve around the concerns of a state which determines the state’s behaviour within the international system. But, as argued by Weaver (1998), Lawson (2003) and William (2008), as well as many others, the study of security is mainly concerned with who and what needs to be secure – this relates directly to the specific referent object of the study.

3.7 State National Security Ends and Means: The Saudi State’s Nature

The previous sections of this chapter have discussed the nature of the security concept by explaining that the concept of security varies in accordance with its historical context. In order to create a study which focuses on security and these different approaches, one main factor, the referent object of the study (whereby security needs to be studied), must be identified and revealed. In this research the state security of Saudi Arabia or Saudi national security has been identified as the referent object of the study. Studying Saudi Arabia’s national security involves identifying and explaining the factors which have affected the building of the state and the state’s
nature (these generally incorporate: Islam, tribalism and oil). The existence of a shared Islamic and tribal cultural heritage is what distinguishes Saudi Arabia as a nation-state or as having an idea of state. The main causes of political instability in Saudi Arabia are not as a result of a lack of institutionalisation, but rather they are a result of the social environment which has created reluctance from the conservatives in the Saudi society, on the one side, and from the government, on the other side. The Al Saud family as a monarchy, unlike other Arab states, is not exposed to the pressure of democratic electoral politics; the monarch is, therefore, not at risk of losing power (caused by elections in other states). The system of government within the Kingdom is therefore based on tribal and Islamic traditions rather than on Western models.

Each state generally has different values and interests which may focus on physical safety, economic welfare, etc. As has been explained earlier, the traditional concept of national security considers political independence and territorial integrity as values which need protection (Baldwin, 1997). Legitimate governments are supposed to represent their citizens by developing policies that seek to protect their social values and national priorities. Hudson (1979: 18-24) attempted to explain the various instruments and strategies of legitimacy building that the Arab governments can employ. Hudson referred to David Easton’s threefold classification of legitimacy resources, which include: personal, ideological and structural legitimacy. Leaders tend to depend on their personality to legitimise their values that arise from the political culture, most notably nationalism. Leaders may also associate the regime with values and meaningful collective goals in order to strengthen or gain legitimacy. Finally, Hudson explains structural legitimacy as the extent to which the governmental system is institutionalised; this is dependent on the ability of the Arab regime to develop bureaucratic and party structural capabilities that extend the
governmental ideals and politics to perform services and extractive functions (Hudson, 1979: 18-24).

The state also usually designs their national security policies according to the state’s challenges and political objectives and values, this identifies ends and means in the form of desired outcomes. States attempt to influence their own people’s behaviours, as well as other states’ behaviours, so that they can develop the most appropriate national and international policies, some of which will be successful, failures or a mixture of both. National security can be achieved by reliance on the following three categories: military, diplomacy and economic (Al-Habbas, 2010). Each of these categories will be studied in this research in order to analyse the Saudi state’s internal and external dimensions of security in relation to understanding the Saudi state’s security features.

The question of state security cannot be reduced to the individual level because the state is responsible for the state, sub-state and international security issues. It is important to recognise the approach of human security theories in order to identify how individuals can be threatened by their own state; hence, the attitude of the Saudi government towards its citizens will be studied by focusing on the domestic politics conducted by the government. This will be examined in the literature that will be presented in Chapter 4 and again by the interview discussions in Chapter 6.

3.7.1 Saudi State Ends and Means

The illustration below (Figure 3.1) identifies the basic components, and how they interact with each other, of the national security processes in Saudi Arabia.
As illustrated above, the components of national security in Saudi Arabia include domestic, regional and international dynamics which are all interconnected. Regional factors, such as: geopolitical ethnic rivalry (e.g. Iran and Iraq); GCC complexity in terms of their relationship; as well as the security situation in the neighbouring states (e.g. Yemen internal security and economy), are all shaped by the international environment (e.g. international anarchy, security dilemmas and external interventions) and vice versa. Furthermore, the illustration also explains that the ends are obtained by the means available and the role-play of the domestic elements (for instance: elites interests, religion and cultural aspects, etc.). Thus, all of the factors mentioned appear to be interconnected in their influence. The ends to a means are decided based on the domestic elements as well as the influences by regional and international elements.
Similarly, the relationship between the regional and international elements is affected by the end results – the means that the government achieves. Thus, an analysis of Saudi Arabia’s actions, and how Saudi Arabia formulates and implements its security policies (state security policy and dynamics), is also vital.

Saudi Arabia’s national security needs to be analysed in terms of the internal dimension of security threats as well as the traditional military or external threats. The framework of analysis therefore needs to include all of its security threats, including the political, economic and social variables, besides the military factors, as principle components. An understanding of Saudi Arabia’s domestic and regional security policies is an important subject of study, especially as little research has been conducted on Saudi security policies. As explained earlier, Saudi Arabia is one of the largest nations in the region and a major player in the region’s security. Its economic strength and its huge energy reserves (natural gas and oil) have made it an important nation; it is also geographical significant for Islam as it contains the two holy places of Mecca and Medina. Furthermore, most of the oil and gas exports from the region are primarily dependent on the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries; hence, the global economy is heavily dependent on the Gulf’s energy resources and it will remain so for decades to come (Cordesman, 2009). Regional security in the Gulf region is inherently tied to socioeconomic development throughout the world; consequently, security in the Gulf region should be viewed as a global security issue.

3.8 Saudi Arabia’s National Security Framework of Analysis

The concept of security and its theorising has been predominantly studied in the West (Al-Habbas, 2010), whereby national security considers protecting states from external threats. Al-Habbas (2010: 56-59) assert that security is better conceptualised
in relation to particular cases and that the analysis of national security in developing states entails a border conception that includes internal and external security concerns. As discussed previously, national security definitions are useful in indicating the essence of national security which involves protecting the national values from threats; nonetheless, the concept of national security has been described by many as being uncertain in its nature (Baldwin, 1997; Collins, 2010; William, 2008).

It is therefore necessary for this study to identify some of the general and common assumptions about national security in order to relate these specifically to Saudi Arabia. Consequently, the specific nature of the state of Saudi Arabia will be considered in relation to the domestic, regional and international security as one of the main aims of this research. Hence, this study will present the following assumptions which will provide the basis for the study. 1) States are the primary unit in international politics. Due to the unique political nature of the Saudi state and its international political context, a realist framework will influence this study. Saudi security policy reflects the impact of the international structure and the exceptional system of government (drawing on tribal and Islamic traditions rather than Western models) of the Saudi policymakers. 2) State national security involves domestic, regional and international dynamics. 3) Threat goes beyond mere military threats, to include anything that forms a threat to the idea of security or the sovereignty of the state, including political, social, economic, environmental and military threats. 4) Most nation-states develop a national security policy that is composed of ends and means to deal with its threats. In the case of Saudi Arabia, this has been designed in favour of the ruler and the nation as well as being in accordance with religion, social/cultural aspects, as well as regional and international dynamics.
Hence, the adopted framework aims to understanding and conceptualise the national security of Saudi Arabia, by focusing on the following:

1. Analysing the state’s five sectors of security: political, military, economic, societal and environmental, from an internal perspective that will consider all three levels of security, individually, nationally and the system (these will be addressed in Chapter 4).

2. Analysing state regional security and external threats through the use of Buzan’s pattern of “amity and enmity”, and by reviewing each state in the region to determine what each state identifies as threats to the state’s five sectors of security, as mentioned above in the first point (these will be addressed in Chapter 5).

This framework will incorporate the theoretical underpinning of the different components of security that have been discussed in this chapter. Furthermore, this framework arguably covers most of the factors, including national, regional and international security dynamics and their interaction with the different internal and external elements. Hence, this thesis will be predominantly influenced and structured in accordance with the adoption of this framework since it includes the central issues of security measures, including: political, economic, military, societal and environmental components and regional/external threats evaluation as suggested in Buzan’s *People, State and Fears* (1991b) book. Thus, the structure of the following two chapters will be based upon this. Then, Chapter 7 will examine these notions further by presenting and analysing the collected data (semi-structured interviews).
3.9 General Review of Security Practices in Saudi Arabia (within the Region)

A general review of how the wider literature approaches Gulf security will now be given in order to identify where this study is located within the research field. The existing literature provides a basis for understanding the importance of the Gulf area as well as acknowledging the threats this area faces. It is commonly agreed that the Gulf region is one of the most important strategic areas in the world; thus, it is extremely important that this region is well secured. This thesis will differ from the other current literature in that it will not only be concerned with the issue of security in the Gulf, but instead Saudi Arabia will be analysed to determine the role it plays in regional security. The challenge in conducting research on this topic is that there is a paucity of existing literature, and access to the actual strategies (primary resources) applied by Saudi Arabia will be difficult.

Most of the Gulf monarchies have or are facing demands for political, judicial and economic reform. According to Khalaf and Luciani (2006), the regimes and critics agree on the need for reform, but they differ on the content of the “reform package” and on how the actors perceive the urgency and pace of reform, as well as on the means of sustaining the reform movement. Hence, this research thesis will analyse the Saudi Arabian domestic policy actions that affect security in the area; furthermore, an analysis of Saudi Arabia’s political actions in the Gulf region will also be given. Consequently, the threats and limitations affecting Saudi Arabia’s role and its security will be given. In addition, a political history and the main historical periods, that have shaped and influenced the Saudi state, will also be provided to include the rise of Islam and Shi’ism. Interestingly, Khalaf and Luciani (2006), also argue that other
similar political regimes, demographic structures as well as economic and social systems, in the GCC countries, make the path of reform comparable.

Others, including Cordesman (2009), argue that Saudi Arabia needs to reassess its priorities in order to deal with threats within the Gulf area. It is likely that they will need to adjust their forces to deal with real-world threats in the region for deterrence and defence, by utilising effective cooperation efforts and by examining the full range of threats rather than just the most obvious military and security issues. Cordesman (2009) provides a wide literature search, with rational and clear research objectives. He provided a broad multi-level approach which analysed the threats and challenges facing Saudi Arabia. He also analysed Saudi Arabia’s policy towards internal and external challenges and concluded by providing comprehensive solutions for confronting challenges in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region.

Other research suggests that over the last few decades most threats have emanated from two states, Iran and Iraq, along with other internal problems which have created more difficulties for the Saudi role in the region. Al-Saud (2002) believes that security ties between Saudi Arabia and the United States must be strengthened, taking into account that both nations have been affected by the global war on terrorism – they therefore have common interests. Al-Saud also believes that aggressive actors must be confronted by military capabilities; this clearly indicates his view on how regional threats should be addressed. However, Al-Saud fails to suggest an effective or comprehensive solution for facing the dangers that affect the Gulf region or that could improve the role that Saudi Arabia plays in the Gulf region’s security.

Henderson (2008) agrees with Cordesman, by noting that the GCC countries should prepare for the worst-case scenario, as any action by or against Iran could result in
problems with maritime traffic through or into the Gulf. Nevertheless, Henderson (2008) argues that Egypt has become inactive in leading the Arab World and, due to the increased importance gained by Saudi Arabia, Riyadh has become diplomatically powerful in the region through action over a number of issues in Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq and particularly in Iran. Both Cordesman and Henderson argue that most of the threats in this region come from Iran and terrorism in general, but Henderson fails to acknowledge whether Saudi Arabia or any of the other GCC states could work to improve security in the Gulf area.

Byman (2002) argues that the conflicts and instabilities that have affected the Persian Gulf, for a long time, have diminished over the last decade. He also notes that the conventional military threats affecting their US partners are reducing; however, this is contested by most of the authors under review who believe that instability and threats to US partners have increased. It should be noted that Byman’s paper was completed prior to the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 – thus, these findings are likely to now be dated. Byman also argues that many of the Gulf regimes may face increased pressure to cut ties with the US, particularly in terms of US military presence in the area. Conversely, Byman identified some of the factors that the GCC countries need to obtain in order to strengthen their security role in the Persian Gulf area. Similar to Cordesman (2009), Byman (2002) highlights some of the weaknesses of the GCC; he notes that these urgently need to be resolved as the first step to improving the situation in the region.

Russell (2009), notes that the US’ strategy and policy in the Gulf has changed little over the last 20 years – any changes have occurred in response to the need for access to reasonably priced oil, along with the need to ensure that no unfriendly force
controls the region. Indeed Hajjar (2002) also believes that the US’ security strategy is motivated by various factors of interest, but he also notes that the securing of Israel is also one of the main priorities of the US in the region. Furthermore, Hajjar (2002) is unique in his opinion that it is likely to be difficult for any of the GCC countries to develop security in the Gulf area without involvement from the US. Although Hajjar published his paper before the US invasion of Iraq, it can be argued that he demonstrates a particularly realistic grasp of the subject and the area.

Similar to Cordesman, Russell (2009) argues that the only available mechanism for the US is for it to work with all members of the GCC states, including Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, as this will provide integration by strengthening collective security across the Gulf region. Nonetheless, Russell (2009), among other authors, acknowledges that the GCC states have failed to develop a significant mechanism for collective security.

Russell (2009) also notes that conditions in the aftermath of Saddam Hussein’s regime highlighted that the US and the GCC countries needed to work together in order to strengthen regional security. However, other authors including Gause III (2003) believe that the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, in America, marked a turning point in US relations with the GCC states, especially with Saudi Arabia, where the relationship was affected negatively due to subsequent events and other political and religious aspects. This led to an increased US military presence in Saudi Arabia which became less acceptable for the US and Saudi Arabia; consequently, according to Gause III, this could lead the US to shift its alliance to smaller Gulf states who might be more willing to accommodate the US military forces. Similarly, Saudi Arabia could also look to other major powers (not just economically), such as
China or India, for support as new players in world politics. Gause III’s work provides detailed consideration of important issues surrounding the Gulf region’s security.

Peterson (2002), on the other hand, examines Saudi Arabia’s security from the Saudi point of view, focusing on external threats and internal challenges whereby he argues that Saudis view internal threats as being more serious to the state’s security. He also believes that many people in Saudi Arabia regard internal developments and challenges as the greatest threat to Gulf security; thus, Saudi Arabia should follow a policy of inclusion “vis-a-vis” for Iraq and Iran, rather than simply following the Western emphasis on the exclusion of these states. He also argues that the 9/11 terrorist attacks damaged cooperative relationships between Saudi Arabia and the United States; but, he asserts that maintaining close ties is important for both parties and for security in the Gulf region. He also argues that the governments of the West and Saudi Arabia share the same view over the essence of Gulf security – which is to protect the oil. Furthermore, he also asserts that past success in coping with regional threats is not a guarantee for the future and that the extent of fundamental internal change appears to generate increasing pressures on the country, government and the ruling family.

To summarise, most of the literature and approaches are based on ways to improve the US’ role in the Gulf region or based on the role of the US allies in the area, namely the GCC; thus, most of the published analyses is from an essentially Western perspective. In contrast, this study aims to investigate the domestic and foreign strategies employed by Saudi Arabia to maintain its role in regional security; consequently, more emphasis will be placed on the Saudi perspective. In order to
understand such strategies, the researcher will therefore develop notions for the determinants of such security issues. This summary of the literature illustrates the need for alternative accounts of Saudi Arabia’s internal and external security policies, and its role in the region. Saudi Arabia’s reactions towards its domestic and regional challenges will also be studied, by analysing the actions, laws, policies and practices that the Saudi government has undertaken to not only deal with, but maintain and improve upon, security for the challenges facing the Gulf region.

The context of how Saudi Arabia came into existence will be identified by examining the most important historical periods that have influenced the Arabian Peninsula and Saudi Arabia’s historical development. Hence, this research will focus on the Saudi political, economic, societal, environmental and military threats, as well as the regional pattern of enmity and amity. The significance of understanding how the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia originated and how the Saudi regime faces threats and challenges will be critical to gaining a full appreciation of their political approach to security. Questions such as: how the Kingdom views the current threat/situation within the Gulf region; how the Kingdom’s security policy works; how important the social elements are to Saudi security/politics; what effect/concerns do all of the three levels have – individual, state, system – on state security; and, what does oil (economy) mean to the Kingdom, will all help fundamentally in understanding the main question proposed by this research, which is “What are the main domestic and foreign strategies employed by Saudi Arabia to maintain its security within domestic and regional security?”.
3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a review of the different philosophies and theories of security, the meaning of security in general and national security in particular have also been identified. This chapter has provided a nuanced understanding of the insecurity dilemma facing Saudi Arabia, based on how it has manifested itself at the macro level, specifically in terms of the national and regional levels. A review of the existing literature and interviews with academics, practitioners and politicians will be given in the following chapters. From the extant literature review it can be argued that the definitions and theories of national security are continuously evolving because of their dynamic nature. Historically, the IR literature defines and focuses on the academic theories of national security based on how they have changed across three periods of time, in particular: during the Cold War period, in the post-Cold War period and in the post-9/11 era. During these phases, the IR literature has shifted its national security focus from the military perspective to the political, economic, societal and environmental perspectives. All of the theories mentioned have their own strengths and weaknesses, some are very relevant to specific time periods and are therefore not compatible to the current state of global politics.

An analysis of the concept of national security illustrates that the concept generally relates to the condition of safety, for the state and society, from anything that may harm the idea of the state. Historically, the term security has changed with time and it is dependent on various political and historical assumptions. The various approaches toward security indicate that each approach corresponds to different values, threats and capabilities in order to meet the perceived challenges. Hence, the state’s interests and values may differ in accordance with differences in their national security.
However, it should be noted that the anarchy of the international environment, as presented by the realist approach, implies that the state must develop their own capabilities in accordance with other regional powers – this can be observed in the case of Saudi Arabia and Iran. The realist view focuses on the anarchy of the international system. Whereas, liberalism focuses beyond the state by considering other actors such as intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), non-governmental international organisation (NGIOs), multinational corporations and domestic actors (interest groups, elites and political parties); while, constructivism focuses on “society” as the most important referent object of security studies.

The concept of national security, as a dynamic phenomenon, has been continuously evolving according to the global political situation and the policies of security at the regional level. Major events have occurred in the post-Cold War era, these have shaped the IR literature on national security. Interestingly, the traditional models have been heavily criticised and contested as they are one dimensional with regards to security; consequently, they fail to provide an examination of issues that are beyond the military/international organisations or the social issues. In contrast, Buzan proposed an integrated model which incorporates the neorealist beliefs by providing a detailed analysis using the constructivist approach. Buzan suggested that national security needs to be assessed from both the micro and macro perspectives, and the three different levels of security: the individual, national and system also need to be investigated. Such constructivists utilise an integrated approach to investigate the five sectors, in addition to focusing on the military perspective, the other four sectors of economic, political, societal and environmental are also considered to ensure that the specific nature of the state/issue under study is investigated. This perspective has
identified new perspectives that need investigation in order to fully understand state politics; thus, new horizons in the field of security literature have been identified.

The fact that the different states diverge in their nature and capabilities implies that national security and the source of threats differ from one state to another; thus, there is a need for a framework of analysis to be conceptualised that could be applied to different states to determine their situation. Hence, this chapter has helped to identify the referent object of this study; in particular, this is the Saudi state’s security or Saudi national security. Thus, in order to analyse Saudi Arabia’s national security, the different internal dimension of security threats and the traditional military/external threats need to be considered. The framework of analysis will include the following security threats: political, economic, environmental and social variables as well as military factors as principle components. It is important to understand Saudi domestic and regional security policies because of the pivotal role that the Gulf region plays in the whole world’s economy; thus, it is an important subject of study, especially in light of the fact that little research has been conducted into Saudi security. This chapter has introduced a conceptualised framework that matches the specific criteria of the Saudi state by taking into account the various theoretical perspectives of security analysis. All in all, this has contributed to the structuring of Chapters 4 and 5 which focus on Buzan’s framework for analysing national security, this will then be examined further through the data collection and analysis that will be presented in Chapters 6 and 7.
Chapter 4

Saudi Arabian National Security: Internal Dimensions
4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the first part of the adopted framework of security analysis which addresses the different sectors of security; this allows for a broader understanding of security based on levels and sectors. The three levels are: domestic, regional, and international. The sectors, which are addressed in Buzan’s book and also in the article, *New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-First Century*, are political, military, economic, societal, and environmental. These sectors affect the security of the state and cannot be isolated from each other when examining national security. Buzan argues that each one is interlinked with the others in a complex manner, forming a web of information that a security analyst must examine to understand each concept individually. Further, this examination will enable an analyst to understand how they affect each other on the whole. This micro/macro methodology is vital in obtaining a better understanding of how to deal with what Buzan calls the “National Security Problematic”. As Buzan, in *People, State and Fears*, stated:

*It is worth examining the character of threats within each of these sectors in order to try to get a general sense of the legitimate national security agenda. In this exercise, it is helpful to keep in mind the idea that national security is about the ability of state to maintain their independent identity and their functional integrity. It is also worth remembering that national security is a conservative concept inasmuch as it relates to existing states. Opinions vary strongly about the desirability of some states, and about the viability of others. But national security analysis has at least to start on the level of existing states, whether they are seen as desirable and viable or not (1991b: 116).*

Hence, this chapter will be divided in accordance with these five sectors. The meanings and assumptions relating to each sector will be explained in each chapter section. These meanings are consistent with Buzan’s basic assumptions, but do not go into detail about the arguments he discussed for each section, as most of his
arguments evolved around or were affected by the Cold War (the events of which were dominant at the time he published his works).

Although the frameworks are workable for all states, the specific characteristics of each state differ; accordingly, the nature and causes of threats will also differ for each state. Thus, this chapter will discuss internal security threat aspects from the five sectors while taking into consideration the three levels of domestic, regional, and international system. Additionally, the state structure in each of the five sectors will be explained.

The next chapter will discuss regional and international security/threats by reviewing each regional state under the pattern of enmity and amity, in addition to examining the sources of threats that it might pose or hold in the context of the other sectors. Each of the identified threats will be re-confirmed through semi-structured interviews later in Chapter 6.

4.2 Societal Security

Analysis of the security policy of Saudi Arabia first requires study of the main historical periods that have shaped and influenced Saudi society and politics, including the rise of Islam and Sunni and Shi’a. It is essential to comprehend the significant influence of the country’s social and traditional role on Saudi politics. This section aims to identify the most important historical periods that have influenced and shaped the social and cultural life of the Arabian Peninsula, including: the rise of Islam; the emergence of Shi’a; and the development of the various Saudi states that have materialised since the first Saudi state was established. The literature reviewed in this study demonstrates that the historical background of Saudi Arabia has not
always been fully recognised, despite it having a major role in shaping many of the current internal and regional threats, especially at the societal and political level (e.g. Shi’a and other social divisions).

Societal security concerns the ability of societies to reproduce their traditional patterns of language, culture, association, religious and national identity, and customs within acceptable conditions for evolution. However, most Western writing refers to Saudi Arabia as a “traditional” society; this misconception has led to a misunderstanding of a complicated Saudi society, which must be explained in order to fully understand the influence of social actors on Saudi politics (Fandy, 2001).

It is very important for any research in the field of security and politics to understand the deeply rooted historical origin of Saudi Arabia. This will ultimately help in understanding the current status, and comprehending most of the social threats occurring in Saudi politics and the political attitudes of the leaders. Islamic values have inspired and uniquely influenced the culture and people’s lifestyles in the Saudi desert. Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam. Islamic values began to emerge during the seventh century and have remained solid until recent years. The rise of Islam around 620 AD, and the subsequent religious importance of the two holiest native Arabian cities of Makkah (or Mecca) and Medina, in conjunction with the discovery of large oil reserves in the early twentieth century, have provided the rulers of this colony with a significant power that stretches much beyond its territories (Long, 2005).

Saudi Arabia is a relatively small nation, however, it holds an ancient history. King Abdul Aziz Al-Saud founded the modern Saudi state on September 23, 1932, after a campaign lasting for 30 years to unify most of the Arabian Peninsula. The unification
brought competing tribes together into a modern state, with differing borderlines, which in total covered nearly 80% of the Arabian Peninsula (Broberg, 2002). Many of the settled communities had lived within the peninsula for more than 6,000 years and interacted and related well with the nomadic tribes (Long, 2005).

The contemporary political history of Saudi Arabia started in the mid-eighteenth century, by the Al Saud dynasty. Prior to this time, the country had only fractured regions which were governed by various local political systems. Nevertheless, to better understand the country’s current position, the national political history and regional cultural history, from the differing periods, will now be reviewed.

4.2.1 Social Structures: Historic Origins

4.2.1.1 Pre-Islamic Period

4.2.1.1.1 The First Arabs

The first people to become known as Arabs lived in northern Arabia, between the period of the tenth and seventh centuries BC. (This area of the Arabian Peninsula is known today as northern Saudi Arabia and the Syrian Desert.) The nomadic camel-breeding tribes were linked with the oases, each of which also served as a cult centre. These tribes were the first recognised inhabitants of Arabia; however, history records the presence of people in Arabia as far back as the Stone Age (Facey, Lunde, McKinnon and Pledge, 2006: 29).

The southern part of Arabia has evolved significantly as a result of the continual contact, via the trade routes, with the outside world. Historically, the region indicates that it originated from the ancient culture of Dilmun, a major trading link between Mesopotamia (an ancient region of south-western Asia which is now part of present
day Iraq) and the Indus River Valley (an early civilisation in southern Asia). A network of trade was established between India and Africa which became known as the Arabia Felix. As a result of the trade routes between the Arabia Felix and Egypt, the trading cities in the west, collectively known as the Hijaz region, were created (Congress, 2006).

By 600 BC the Arab people had created a unique civilisation. The Arabs were co-existing with the other different great empires: the Persians, Greeks and Romans. By 500 BC, Arabia was becoming rapidly engaged in international commerce. To outsiders, the Arabian Peninsula acted as a barrier between the two major economic areas of the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean (Facey, Lunde, McKinnon and Pledge, 2006: 35-37).

4.2.1.1.2 The Jahiliyyah (the Age of Ignorance)

Despite significant achievements of the overland trade age, little survived or was recorded to the collective memory of the Arabs. Muslim historians viewed these Arabs that lived in the age of ignorance, as pagans who had changed their belief in one god to worship different local gods; their beliefs were embodied in natural features, such as dates or rocks (Facey, Lunde, McKinnon and Pledge, 2006).

The Jahiliyyah period marked the end of several centuries of commercial prosperity in Arabia. Overland trade was reduced and caravan towns decreased, as a result, political power also fell. It is probably from these times that the collective memories, represented by Arab traditions, began (Facey, Lunde, McKinnon and Pledge, 2006: 55).
The Arabs in the north, in the Syrian Desert, fell under the rule of the rival Persian and Roman Empires. Emperors in Byzantium assigned the border region of the western Syrian Desert, in north-western Arabia, to a series of warrior clans with Arab tribal confederations; this inadvertently acted as a shield against the Sasanian Persian Empire to the east (Lapidus, 2002: 185). The Sasanian’s maintained their confederation as client lords of powerful tribes in eastern Arabia; they also attempted to control commerce in the Gulf and Indian Ocean. By 570 AD they had taken control of Yemen and had placed a governor in Al-Hasa oasis to directly rule eastern Arabia. Other confederations continued to appear, claiming to be protectors of the trade area and producers of dates and grain (Facey, Lunde, McKinnon and Pledge, 2006: 55).

However, by the beginning of the seventh century, a process for establishing a new centre of political and religious influence, and identity, had begun to emerge in western Arabia, particularly in Makkah (Lapidus, 2002: 183). The Quraysh tribe (the tribe that the Prophet Muhammad belonged to) utilised their social position to invent a nexus and various alliances with other tribes; in doing so, Makkah became an important commercial and political centre. Concurrently, the Byzantium and Sasanian Empires had been warring, which had significantly weakened them (Facey, Lunde, McKinnon and Pledge, 2006).

During this time, many of the inhabitants of Arabia, especially in Makkah, believed that Makkah and Ka’bah (the central place of worship towards which all Muslims face when in prayer to God) were sacred. Although pilgrimages to Makkah were performed by many of the Arabs of that time, who were pagans because it was before Islam emerged; these Arabs were aware that the Ka’bah had been built by the Prophets Abraham and his eldest son, Ishmael, to represent the house of God.
The Prophet Muhammad was born into a powerful family within the Quraysh tribe, sometime around 570 AD; this tribe had already built a commonwealth in order to protect their trade with Yemen and Syria. The Quraysh family was the protector of the Ka’bah; however, as most of the people, including the Quraysh tribe, were pagan, they were also surrounded by many other idols (Facey, Lunde, McKinnon and Pledge, 2006).

In spite of the pagan beliefs and the success of the Quraysh commonwealth in Makkah, the forthcoming revelation of Islam would lead Makkah to become influential and central in revolutionising Arabian and Islamic affairs to the rest of the known world.

4.2.1.2 The Rise of Islam and Shi’a in Arabia

4.2.1.2.1 Early Islam

Modern Saudi Arabia has developed from the rise of Islam; the birth of the Prophet Muhammad shaped Arabia (Saudi Arabia) forever. As mentioned earlier, many Muslims refer to the period before Islam began as “the age of ignorance”. Prior to the seventh century, the tribes in the Arabian Peninsula fought a series of wars around the central aim of gaining control of the region.

Prophet Muhammad, with his Quraysh background – the most powerful tribe in that era – unified Arabia, spread Islam and brought most of the peninsula under Arab rule. A mixture of Arabian culture and Islam have shaped the region ever since. Prophet Muhammad established the first Islamic government in the region’s history. The Arabian Peninsula was ruled mainly by different Arab families and tribes, who generally believed that religion was more important than politics (Alsuud, 2002).
In order to spread Islam, Prophet Muhammad faced many difficulties. His own tribe forced him to leave Makkah after he received threats of death if he did not stop preaching. He established the first Muslim community in Medina, after he migrated from Makkah to Medina with his followers in 622 AD. Upon moving to Medina, Prophet Muhammad established the earliest Islamic political indenture, which became known as the constitution of Medina. This constitution regulated relationships between: the emigrants, the “Muhajirun” (those who immigrated with the Prophet to Medina), the supporters, the “Ansar” (those who accommodated and supported them when they arrived to Medina) and the rest of the inhabitants of Medina. This constitution also clarified the role of non-Muslims in the community of Medina. Three Jewish tribes became part of the commitment, which established how they would be treated during that time. They were given a commitment of protection and cohabitation if they obeyed the new laws.

Furthermore, all members of the commitment became an equal part of the community, irrespective of their origin. Those who would not accept or breached the commitment were expelled from Medina. To illustrate, a number of Jewish tribes experienced deteriorating relationships with the Muslim immigrants and, as a result, open conflict ensued, forcing the Jewish tribes out of the oasis (Facey, Lunde, McKinnon and Pledge, 2006).

Later on, many battles with the Quraysh tribe followed, these ended when Prophet Muhammad captured Makkah. The situation changed suddenly at the time the Prophet died in 632 AD. Prophet Muhammad and his political successor Abu Bakr, possessed the faithfulness of almost all of Arabia. For the 30 years following the Prophet’s death, the caliphs (the heads of the Muslim communities) ruled the Islamic world
from Medina. They responded to threats that emerged from the Byzantine and Persian Empires by utilising alliances from the Arab tribes. Consequently, the Islamic Empire expanded northward into what is known today as Spain, Pakistan, and the whole of the Middle East (Savory, 1976: 15).

4.2.1.2.2 Emergence of Shi’a

Maintaining unity has been a continual challenge in the region since that era. The differences between the Sunni and Shi’a became evident after the death of the third caliph, Uthman; as a result, splits began to appear in the Islamic Empire in 656 AD. There has been much disagreement about the various theories as to how the Shi’a emerged.

The first theory alleged that the Umayyads (661–750) and the Uthman workers in Syria and Egypt established a hereditary line of caliphs which were centred in Damascus. The Abbasids claimed a different hereditary line, centred in Kufah, in Iraq. Some rebels from the Abbasids revolted against Uthman, and despite the fact that they called for Ali ibn Abi Talib to be the new caliph, Ali ibn Abi Talib, himself, tried to provide advice to Uthman ibn Affan to save the prestige of the Islamic state; unfortunately though, Uthman was killed at the hands of rebels (Facey, Lunde, McKinnon and Pledge, 2006).

The second theory involves the idea that a political struggle, concerning the succession of Muhammad, started after his death, which was during the early history of Islam. According to this theory, the Shi’a were a political faction that supported the caliphate family of Ali and his descendants; this faction, gradually, developed into a religious movement.
Conversely, the Sunni or “ahl alsunnah wa aljam’ah” (the people of the Prophet’s custom and community) believed that the only successors of Prophet Muhammad should be heads of the community. This should have been an elected caliph, thus after the death of the Prophet, the selected caliph should have been, in order of importance: Abu Bakr, Omar, Uthman and then Ali. The Shi’a, on the other hand, believed that the caliphate (which they called the imam) should only become the head of the community if he is a descendant of Prophet Muhammad (Savory, 1976). An alternative perspective, which is common among some of the Sunni, views the Shi’a movement as an alien movement instigated by Abdullah ibn Saba, a Jew, which was utilised to ignite strife among the Muslims of that time by creating doubts and uncertainty (Lewis, 1984).

The caliph is considered by the Sunni to be the guardian of the Shari’ah law (Islamic law) and it is, therefore, his duty to ensure that society is regulated accordingly. In contrast, the Shi’a believe that the caliph, or imam, inherits not only the Prophet’s spiritual knowledge, but the Shari’ah as well.

However, the death of Uthman (the third caliph), had a marked and negative development on the relations with the Shi’a (the rioters), those who claimed to be supporters of Ali and the supporters of Uthman. The supporters of Uthman included Uthman’s cousin Mu’awiyah, the Governor of Syria, who refused to recognise Ali as the legitimate caliph because Ali refused to surrender to Uthman’s killers, because he was waiting to become caliph. A conflict launched in 657 AD ended with Ali agreeing to submit their disagreement to arbitration, where Mu’awiyah was chosen as caliph (Facey, Lunde, McKinnon and Pledge, 2006).
Despite this, one of the Shi’a religious groups, known as the Kharijitte from the Arabic word Khawarj which means “those who opt out”, began to undertake actions that ended in 661 AD with the assassination of Ali, who had become the fourth rightfully guided caliph, as successor to Prophet Muhammad (Division, 2004: 50). Ali had moved from Medina to Kufah in Iraq, this movement marked the beginning of the Umayyads. After the death of Caliph Ali, unity among the Muslims again possessed new challenges. The Kufans proclaimed that Ali’s son Hasan should be the next caliph; however, Hasan relinquished his rights to Mu’awiyah (who had previously proclaimed that he was the rightful caliph after Uthman), the governor of Jerusalem.

Mu’awiyah moved the capital of the Muslim state from Medina to Damascus in Syria. Although Mu’awiyah maintained his duties as caliph, he failed to resolve the dissatisfaction of the Shi’a. Prior to his death, he followed the advice of his council and chose his son, Yazid, to succeed him as caliph; however, when he died discontent arose again. The Shi’a refused to recognise Yazid as caliph and proclaimed that Ali’s son Hasan was the rightful caliph. A subsequent battle developed between the Yazid troops and Hasan supporters; the Shi’a were defeated and Hasan died, consequently, the public were outraged with Yazid (Ruthven, 1997: 52-53). The conflicts between the Sunni and Shi’a have continued to pose challenges throughout the ages and to the present day.

Zaydiyyah is another sect of the Shi’a which began when Zaid bin Ali repeated the attempts of his grandfather, Al-Hussein bin Ali, and rebelled against the Umayyad caliph, Hisham bin Abdul-Malik. This ended in 744 when Zaid bin Ali was killed; as a result, his followers established a sect based on his ideas and which has become known as Zaydiyyah. Although the sect is Shi’a based, the Zaydiyyahs agree with the
Sunni’s teachings most of the time, except in holding Ali in a higher position than the first three caliphs. The Zaydiyyah followers can be mainly found in north Yemen by the borders with Saudi Arabia, they are the nearest Shi’a sect to the Sunni (but, they are currently warring with Yemen and Saudi Arabia) (Elsergany, 2009).

It is worth noting, that the structures of Shi’a Islam are different from those of Sunni Islam. Rather than a specific school of law, there are sects founded by the followers of the various imams. The Twelver branch is the largest branch of the Shi’a, which has derived from their belief in twelve divinely ordained leaders. The second largest branch of the Shi’a is the Isma’ilis. Each of these branches has developed their own religious principles; thus leading to more disagreements within the different Shi’a branches, as well as with the Sunni Muslims (Lapidus, 2002).

The Shi’a sect is recognised as being one of the most important minority sects in Islam; this sect is becoming stronger in some areas, especially in Iran, southern Iraq, Saudi Arabia (in certain parts in the east and the south), Syria and India. The Sunnis, until the nineteenth century, controlled much of Islamic history. Throughout history, there were rival challenges from the Shi’a regarding claims about the rightful caliph; these challenges occurred during the Umayyad and Abbasid eras and through to the current day. The Islamic empires during the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries reached much farther than anyone would have imagined. Although the Sunnis controlled much of Islamic history, they allowed Shi’a states to rise in various parts of Arabia (Saudi Arabia), Iraq and Persia (Iran) (Savory, 1976: 18-24).

The political importance of Makkah and Medina has declined since the caliph’s capital was transferred to Damascus, during the Umayyad caliphate (661-750), and then to Baghdad, during the Abbasids caliphate (750-1258); however, the spiritual
significance and importance of both Makkah and Medina has remained constant throughout all of these times (Facey, Lunde, McKinnon and Pledge, 2006: 91)

4.2.1.3 The Portuguese Presence

Portugal was the first European power to establish a presence in the Arabian Peninsula; it was here that they faced the Ottomans (Ross, 1989). The Portuguese dominated the major ports in western India and along the east coast of Africa. In 1498 they took control of the spice and textile trade from India to the Arabian ports, which had an immediate effect on Arabia (Saudi Arabia) and Egypt (Facey, Lunde, McKinnon and Pledge, 2006: 109). As a result, the Mamluk Sultan, Al-Ghawri, built defences around the city of Jeddah, to protect it from the Portuguese. Consequently, an alliance between Mamluk Sultan Al-Ghawri and the Ottomans ensued, but this ended abruptly when the Ottomans killed the last Mamluk in 1517 (he had served the Muslim Arab caliphs from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries). The Ottomans inherited the Mamluk domination over Yemen while continuing to oppose Portuguese expansion and the securing of the holy cities of Makkah and Medina (Facey, Lunde, McKinnon and Pledge, 2006: 109).

4.2.1.4 Arabia and the Ottomans

In 1517, the Ottoman Empire (based in Istanbul, Turkey) established their authority over Al-Hejaz, including Makkah and Medina, in Arabia (Bowen, 2008: xi). They assumed the position of serving the holy cities and each year, at the time of the annual Hajj, the pilgrims and officials and their military attendants would express their protection with a ceremony from the imperial heartland to Makkah; a governor was based in the port of Jeddah on the Red Sea, but there was no official representation from Istanbul (Champion, 2003).
The local families in Arabia were recognised as holding the power. While in Al-Hejaz, the head of the Al-Sharif family, who was the current ruler of Makkah, was charged with rulership for the Ottoman sultan. As a result, their authority was extended from Khaybar (an oasis some 95 miles to the north of Medina) to Tihamah (which borders Yemen and the eastern province in the south). An Ottoman governor was now in control of Al-Hasa and, because of the Portuguese attacks on Bahrain, he remained in charge until the Bani Khalid tribe expelled him in 1663 (Facey, Lunde, McKinnon and Pledge, 2006: 113).

The Ottomans maintained control of Al-Hejaz with the suzerainty of the Sharif of Makkah. However, the growing British maritime power to the east of the Arabian Peninsula challenged the Ottomans in the area, and throughout the 1600s the tribes of Al-Hejaz and Najd were on the move. By the beginning of the 1700s, an alliance was formed between the ruler of Al-Dariya in Najd, Muhammad ibn Saud, and the religious reformer Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. As a result, the first successful movement against the Ottoman rule was launched, and out of this came the foundation of the first Saudi state (Champion, 2003).

4.2.2 The Emergence of the First Saudi State and “Wahhabism”

The Al-Saud family emerged as dominant within late Saudi Arabia’s history. Both the Bani Khalid rulers of Al-Hasa and the Al-Sharif of Makkah attempted to expand their control over Najd; however they both failed to conquer Najd and bring it into their realm. The Al-Saud family originated from Najd, a small town near Riyadh. Najd itself was not an attractive region because it only produced small volumes of dates and livestock. However, in 1727, a member of the Al-Saud family, Muhammad ibn Saud, became recognised as the town’s leader (Al-Rasheed, 2002: 15). The Al-Saud
family were recognised because they agreed with the teachings of the Muslim scholar Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab.

Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab preached against leaders and traditions, in favour of returning people to the simple and right beliefs, without idols and fallacy worshiping; he ultimately believed that political power could be utilised to implement his theologies (Alsuud, 2002). His preaching mirrored the teachings of the well-known scholar Ahmad ibn Taimiya, who was inspired by one of the four founders of the Sunni school of Islamic jurisprudence, Ahmad ibn Hanbal. Their theology called for the strict application of the early Islamic laws which specified absolute unity of Allah (God) and the missions of his Prophet, Muhammad, while maintaining strict living without indulgences, such as smoking and music (Safran, 1985: 9).

The followers of ibn Abd al Wahhab referred to themselves as “Al-Muwahhidun” meaning the people of unity or the believers in one God. His followers knew Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab as “Almujaddid” which means the reformer (Champion, 2003). The common use of the term “Salafi”, meaning the Sunni Islamic movement which encompasses the above followers, only came into use during the late nineteenth century (Niblock, 2006).

Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab, who belonged to a Najdi tribe called Banu Tamim, was not from a wealthy family. However, they did produce many religious scholars. Following his forefathers’ path, ibn Abd al Wahhab travelled to Medina, Basra and Al-Hasa to study religious education, he then returned to his hometown of Uyyaynah, where his father was a judge, to preach his new message (Al-Rasheed, 2002).
However, by 1744 he arrived in Dar’iyya seeking new support after the ruler from his hometown had expelled him due to his reform actions. Here he found a new political partner in Muhammad ibn Saud; and together they established a state ruled according to Islamic principles (Facey, Lunde, McKinnon and Pledge, 2006: 117). Their alliance was established based on Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab’s religious legitimacy, and Muhammad ibn Saud’s willingness to undertake jihad in defence of ibn Abd al Wahhab’s principles to extend his rule beyond Najd.

The reformist movement, under the hegemony of Al-Saud, spread the religious message. Those who accepted Wahhabism were asked to swear allegiance and show their loyalty by agreeing to fight; in contrast, those who resisted were vulnerable to raids. The same procedure of recruitment was also used for the tribal confederation (Al-Rasheed, 2002). By the death of Muhammad ibn Saud in 1765, his forces had established the first Saudi state, with the help of ibn Abd al Wahhab, and with it Al-Saud had political authority over most of Najd (Safran, 1985: 10).

Muhammad ibn Saud’s son, Abd al Aziz, took over in 1765 and broadened the realm by controlling an area that is relative to that of the modern Saudi Arabia. It reached from the frontiers of Damascus to the north, to the Rub Al-Khali desert in the south, as far as the Red Sea in the west and, in the east, as far as the Gulf (Alsuud, 2002).

The areas currently known as Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates were, at this time, subject to the control of the Wahhabists under Saudi rule. Parts of Yemen, on the Red Sea coast, were also part of the Saudi dominion. Furthermore, the famous cities of Makkah and Taif in Al-Hejaz came under the Saudi sovereign in 1802 and 1803, respectively (Champion, 2003: 26).
Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab died in 1792 and Abdul Aziz died in 1803, shortly before the capture of Makkah. However, Abdul Aziz’s son, Saud, who was the military commander and, subsequently, responsible for the majority of the invasions, became the ruler of the Saudi state that had initial been developed by his grandfather. Saud’s rule witnessed the establishing, to its widest extent, of the large first Saudi state which encompassed the taking of Medina, Yanbu, and Asir (Alsuud, 2002).

The capturing of the holy cities motivated the Ottoman government, in 1811, to start recapturing Al-Hijaz from Al-Saud. With the help of the Egyptian forces, the Ottomans fought on behalf of the sultan, and by 1814, they had free control of Makkah and Medina. By late November 1818, the rule of Al-Saud was in demise, the Ottomans had seized Dariya, the centre of the Al-Saud rule, and destroyed local forts and all of Al-Saud’s defences, thus bringing an end to the first Saudi state. However, these events were significant in the reconstituting of the Saudi state in the twentieth century. This was especially prudent in developing military forces which re-partnered the religious and political elements (which had previously been established by Muhammad ibn Saud and Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab in 1744), this will be discussed further later in the chapter (Niblock, 1982: 12).

4.2.3 The Second Saudi State (1824-1891)

Following a five-year period of Egyptian intervention, in 1823, the second generation of Al-Saud ruler’s repossessed political control over the Najd region. The leader, Turki ibn Abd Allah rebuilt Riyadh and established it as the new centre of Al-Saud power (Alsuud, 2002: 42). It was here that Al-Saud successfully masterminded the rise of the second state and resisted the Egyptian attempts to regain a foothold in the region; they re-joined military resources and collected tributes, but they had less
ambition for territorial conquering than the first state (Facey, Lunde, McKinnon and Pledge, 2006).

During the second state, Al-Saud maintained their new power and avoided clashes with the Ottomans and Egyptians in the Al-Hejaz; however, with the increasing power of the British along the Gulf, they could only control Najd and Al-Hasa (Safran, 1985).

During the rule of Faisal ibn Turki (the grandson of Muhammad ibn Saud who founded the first Saudi state), the Al-Saud’s faced a dramatic move from the Ottomans who were in the process of regaining control of Najd. Concurrently, the Al-Saud’s were experiencing internal conflicts with the rise of the rival Al-Rashid family of Hail. The Al-Rashid family received support from the Ottomans to gain control of Riyadh, which resulted in the Al-Saud’s being driven from Najd in 1891 – they temporarily resided in Kuwait and the Al-Rashid were declared to be the new governors of Riyadh (Niblock, 1982: 12).

4.2.4 The Third Saudi State: Establishing a Modern State

While exiled in Kuwait, King Abdul Aziz laid the foundations for the modern state of Saudi Arabia. Eleven years after the elimination of the second state he managed to re-impose the rule of Al-Saud. It was in January 1902 that King Abdul Aziz led a small force and entered Riyadh secretly at night; they killed the Al-Rashid governor of Riyadh, and his guards, and secured a foothold in Najd. This was the first step in the conquest of the area and eventually led to the declaration of the modern Saudi state (Champion, 2003: 37).
Unequivocally, Unlike most of the other Arab countries, Saudi Arabia existed independently of Western leadership. Upon capturing Riyadh, King Abdul Aziz cultivated his connections and established himself as the imam, the Al-Saud leader. King Abdul Aziz organised and was helped by the desert warriors to promote a unified state under the rule of Islam, using political, social, and military means (Ptersson, 2002).

Throughout the following 25 years, Abdul Aziz cautiously extended his authority. He gained control of most of the areas around Najd which ended with the conquest of Al-Hejaz in 1924. With British support, the King fought many battles with the Al-Rashid tribes, the Ottomans and with other local tribes. After nearly 30 years, Al-Saud finally gained control of the majority of the Arabian Peninsula (Champion, 2003: 38).

4.2.5 Social Threats and Challenges

Despite Saudi Arabia having such a grounded and ancient history, it has, over recent decades, experienced rapid social changes that have never been recorded before (Lacey, 2009). During the visit of the French President to Saudi Arabia in 1965, Charles De Gaulle, asked whether Saudi Arabia was a nation or a collection of tribes. His ambassador responded: “It is a collection of tribes in the process of becoming a nation” (Facey, Lunde, McKinnon and Pledge, 2006: 22). Perhaps this insight highlights the modern Saudi state: while the huge oil revenues have also generated social and economic evolution for the country.

In the past, borderlines and boundaries were meaningless and sovereignty was based on a tribe’s commitment to search for areas with water; these bloodlines lived over the whole Gulf region (Long, 2005). However, with the emergence of the Saudi state and the discovery of oil throughout the Gulf region, boundaries became more
strategically important and many of these people, the Bedouin, moved into settled residencies. Some of the Bedouin remain nomadic, but they now use cars in their transportation and use government-sponsored watering points, they also visit government health clinics and send their children to government-funded schools, thus reflecting their allegiance to their tribe, but with a strong consciousness and allegiance to their Saudi nation (Facey, Lunde, McKinnon and Pledge, 2006).

The roles and rights of women are restricted by some people in Saudi Arabia due to certain cultural preferences, while others advocate more women’s rights and roles; generally speaking, the government is still cautious when implementing laws and having discussions that relate to women. Additional dilemmas rise at the international level. When the United Nations put pressure on the Saudi government to give more roles and rights to women, they do not consider the internal dimensions of social/cultural values and rules. Which shows how social security can be affected by external values, which can extend to form a political threat (which will be discussed later in section, 4.3).

There are several factors that distinguish Saudi Arabia from its other Gulf neighbours: firstly, Saudi Arabia has never been under the control of a European power, whereas other states in the area have; and secondly, the first Saudi state, and the influence of Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab, was more significant and had a greater impact in Saudi Arabia than in any of the other neighbouring countries.

By the 1940s, oil revenues led Saudi Arabia to make huge developments in transportation and communication technologies, as well as in developing a new modern lifestyle. Sudden modernisation has caused rapid social change, yet this seems to have had a minimal effect on Saudi culture. Traditional values have been
preserved because of the strong links that the culture has to its powerful Islamic and Arabic roots (Long, 2005).

The main unique feature of Saudi society is that it is tribal. Conservative origins and values of certain tribes significantly affect political interactions in Saudi Arabia (Al-Habbas, 1999). Oil and modern systems of education created rapid social change as the social structures became more diversified. The rapid pace of modernisation, combined with oil revenues which have led to vast wealth, have threatened to affect the conservative nature of the Saudi society. It has also created a new middle class that includes newly educated elements and businessmen. These new elements have become interested in political participation and have caused pressure points for the government (Al-Habbas, 1999). Further discussion of the influence of cultural aspects on political decision-making is discussed in-depth later in this chapter.

Another important social change has involved the urbanisation of the population. Regional and tribal discrimination could also be a source of social division (Pterson, 2002). In terms of ethnicity, 90% of the Saudi population are Arab and 10% are Afro-Asian (Congress, 2006: 7).

Saudi Arabia’s conservative society is also influenced by external factors. Satellite television and the Internet have allowed citizens to absorb information from sources other than government-controlled media (Pterson, 2002). According to the 2010 US State Department’s annual report, Saudis currently have access to previously banned television broadcasts. The government monitors Internet sites for material that is regarded as pornographic, politically offensive, or anti-Islamic; although, Internet users in Saudi Arabia can access most of these banned sites by connecting through non-governmental monitored servers. In addition, the government has recently created
an appeals process, through the Internet, through which citizens can request that a particular website should not be blocked.

Newspapers in Saudi Arabia are privately owned, however, they are financed and controlled by the government. The government owns and operates the official radio and television broadcasts in Saudi Arabia. The mass media is also censored to remove any material that is considered unpleasant or offensive by the standards of Islam, this includes references to alcohol and sex. The Basic Law states that the role of the media is to educate and encourage national unity. Although self-censorship continues to be a method of self-preservation for the Saudi media, government censorship appears to be decreasing (Congress, 2006).

While the recent wave of protests and demonstrations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has not changed the political landscape in the country as in other Arab countries, such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, the Internet freedom landscape in the Kingdom has no doubt changed considerably over the past year. Inspired by the Arab Spring events in 2011, millions of people in Saudi Arabia flooded social media sites, such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, and hundreds, if not thousands, participated in political campaigns to demand political, social, and economic reforms, encouraging the emergence of innumerable political activists on social media. Overall, the emergence of these political activists added more difficulties for the Saudi government by forcing the government to take immediate steps to respond to what it regarded as a national security threat.

On the other hand, Shi’as in Saudi Arabia have protested against discrimination and for political rights numerous times before during the last few decades. But most of the past protests by Shi’as in Saudi Arabia arose in response to Iranian leaders. Since the
Iranian revolution, the Khomeini and other Iranian leaders have repeatedly called for revolution in the Gulf to overthrow Gulf rulers. Khomeini and other Iranian leaders publicly declared that the ruling families of the Gulf region were irreligious, corrupt, and pawns of the West (Byman, 2002). Iran also beamed a radio signal into Saudi Arabia, encouraging Saudis to revolt against Al-Saud. In response, local security forces in the Eastern Province began detaining Shi’as suspected of coordinating with Iran. All of this strengthened the role of the Shi’as in Saudi Arabia and, as a result, they reformed their earlier modest political objectives and embraced revolutionary politics: the Organization for the Islamic Revolution in the Arabian Peninsula (OIR). Since its establishment in late 1979, through the late 1980s, it has called for the overthrow of the House of Saud (Jones, 2009: 15-17). However, the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings gave new impetus to such movements. Saudi Arabia now faces a new wave of protesters in the eastern city of Qatif. Despite bans on demonstrations, Shi’a Muslims in the eastern part of the country have continued to stage protests, demanding political changes.

The majority of the country’s population are Sunni Muslims, as are the majority of Muslims worldwide. Despite this, a significant Shi’a community, of approximately 1.5 million, reside in the Al-Hasa region in the Eastern Province, and further Shi’a live in the small Shi’a community of Najran on the Yemen border (Long, 2005: 4).

The presence of Shi’a elements in the social structure of the Saudi Sunni state means that political and social consequences will be inevitable. The Shi’a practices are considered misguided acts. The Shi’a have always shown their discontent; they have always felt that they have been discriminated against both politically and economically, which has caused riots and uprisings from time to time.
Islam is recognised as the country’s official religion, and as a result Islamic law has shaped the basis for the legal codes within the country. The two holy sites of Islam, Makkah (Mecca) and Medina, make Saudi Arabia the most valued nation on earth to the Muslim world. The Saudi Ministry of Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah is the largest in the world)\textsuperscript{2} is a major element in why Saudi Arabia claims to be the leader of the Islamic world. Consequently, Islam has been vital to the Saudi royal family’s legitimacy. The King proudly carries the title of “the custodian of the two holy places”.

The religious establishment holds a significant central role and influence in Saudi Arabia; the government must often engage with the Council of the Senior Ulama in order to get their approval when introducing new innovations. But the emergence of anti-government and radical Islamists has created a divergence between the government and the religious establishment (Pterson, 2002: 47). On the other hand, pilgrimage usually engages over 2.5 million people and the annual pilgrimage is therefore very prosperous and a major part of the country’s regime (Marshall, 2006: 90). The Saudi government allocates a large annual budget for providing the required infrastructure for the pilgrimage sites. This encourages the dissemination of Islam throughout the world, and helps with the establishment of welfare programmes and the construction of new mosques in the name of Islam.

To summarise, the following list highlights some of the most notable social threats to Saudi Arabia:

\begin{itemize}
\item The fifth pillar of Islam, the Five Pillars of Islam is the term given to the five duties compulsory on every Muslim. These duties are Shahadh (profession of faith), Salah (prayers), Zakah (giving of donations), Sawm (fasting, specifically during Ramadan) and Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca).
\end{itemize}
1. **Rapid social change:** the discovery of oil and a climate of modern education introduced rapid social change as social structures became more diversified. The rapid pace of modernisation combined with oil revenues threatened to affect the conservative nature of society. It also created a new middle class that included newly educated people and businessmen who became interested in political participation and caused pressures for the government.

2. **Urbanisation of the population:** urbanisation is another important social change that could be considered a risk to the cultural identity of Saudi Arabia.

3. **Social division:** this is an important social threat. The division of the Saudi nation into regional, tribal, and ideological sects has caused many social difficulties that extend to the government in terms of making policies. Difficulties such as discrimination and ideological conflicts between the conservatives and liberalists are the most apparent (these conflicts are further discussed under the political structure category due to their extended influence on state politics). Society, in general, depends on a multiplicity of ideas and sects and such a variety is common in many cultures; the problem here arises from the attempts by each group to oust each other – this is what threatens these naturally diverse identities.

4. **Elements that can generate a culture of extremism:** factors such as opening up or making transformations to society or state politics are seen by some to be a threat to religious and social principles. This may be at the individual level, such as giving women greater roles in the labour market, or at the state government level which could involve women mixing with men and appearing in the media, or at the state level such as adopting Western policies that
involve aspects of Western values that would affect the religious and social values of the Saudi state. All of these could lead to extremist reactions from groups that use conservative/religious values as justification to establish extremist terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaeda and other outlawed extremist groups (due to the impact of terrorism going beyond internal state elements, terrorism will be discussed in the following chapter as part of regional and international threats). This shows that in some cases the individual level can play an important role in Saudi security, whether or not the government or the state level approve.

5. **The influence of external factors on Saudi society traditions:** Satellite television and the Internet has allowed citizens to absorb information from sources other than government controlled media. The mass media is also censored to remove any material that is considered unpleasant or offensive by the standards of Islam, this includes references to alcohol and sex. Many consider the Western values that are imposed through the media damaging to the conservatives values of Saudi society.

6. **The Shi’a component in Saudi Arabia and the impact of their loyalty to other states on Saudi social coherence:** The majority of the country’s population are Sunni Muslims, as are the majority of Muslims worldwide. Despite this, a significant Shi’a community, of approximately 1.5 million, reside in the Al-Hasa region in the Eastern Province, and further Shi’a live in the small Shi’a community of Najran on the Yemen border. Shi’a elements in the social structure of the Sunni Saudi state will lead to inevitable political and social consequences. Sunnis consider the Shi’a practices to be misguided. The
Shi’a have always shown their discontent toward Sunni practices. This makes them feel excluded from the Saudi social structure and leads to them feeling more associations with Iraq and Iran, where similar religious beliefs are shared. This can and will always affect social security and can cause threats that extend as far as political security by forming political threats (the Shi’a influence on Saudi Arabian policymaking is discussed in the political section).

7. **The roles and rights of women:** this issue is creating a divide within Saudi Arabia at the domestic level (conservatives and activists) that arises from social, cultural, and religious preferences and also at the international level (e.g. the United States). In general, it affects social and political security sectors at both domestic and international levels of security.

8. **The cultural effects of foreign workers:** many Indian and Filipino workers, North Arabian teachers, and Asian nannies have introduced different cultural behaviours which are gradually becoming integrated within the culture and attitudes of the growing generation of young Saudis.

### 4.3 Political Security

According to the adopted framework, political security concerns the organisational stability of states, systems of government, and the ideologies that give them legitimacy. Hence, in this section, the political factors and difficulties that arise due to the foundation of the current Saudi state are discussed. The segment also provides a clear view of the political dynamics and the process of policymaking in Saudi Arabia. In addition, this section shows the most important players in Saudi politics and outlines the ideologies that give the state its legitimacy.
4.3.1 Early Creation of State Challenges

In 1932, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia officially became a state (the current structure of the Saudi political system will be discussed later in this chapter); however it faced severe economic constriction during the late 1920s and early 1930s.

The basic security concern that always faced King Abdul Aziz was how to maintain the empire that he had created out of the many diverse regions and tribes. According to Safran (1985: 59) “His only way to maintain intertribal peace and acquiescence in his rule was a strategy based on deterrence, diplomacy, and blandishment”.

The most serious challenge for King Abdul Aziz was the hostility experienced from the Hashemite rulers of Iraq and Transjordan (Jordan), who had been divested, by King Abdul Aziz, of their Al-Hejaz patrimony. Hence, King Abdul Aziz developed an intelligent strategy where he recruited the British to contain this Hashemite threat. When the British became less able and willing to continue their role, he utilised his recently discovered oil wealth to establish a security guarantee from the US, in order to gain diplomatic allies and to build up a new security instrument to deter internal and external threats (Safran, 1985).

The importance of the US/Saudi partnership was reflected in the meeting on the 14 February 1945, between President Roosevelt and King Abdul Aziz. Most historians, and government officials, believe that the two leaders agreed an unconfirmed alliance (where the US would protect Saudi rule in return for a Saudi promise to uphold the US dominance on the Saudi oil fields) (Yeomans, 2004: 15-16).

By the end of the Second World War (1945), Saudi Arabia had joined Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, as Palestinian people who wanted to found an Arab League
which would protect the individual Arab States (Facey, Lunde, McKinnon and Pledge, 2006: 152).

While creating a modern state, King Abdul Aziz remained a strong leader; he maintained public support through his open door policy with his traditional “majlis” – public receptions. He was supported because he developed and maintained a comprehensive welfare state, which still exists today. Upon his death in 1953, his first son succeeded him as King Saud; in contrast, his reign was largely characterised by wasteful state expenditures which placed the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in debt. In 1962, the royal family and the ulama (the Muslim scholars who were recognised as having specialist knowledge of Islamic sacred law and theology), responded to the public’s discontent and, based on King Saud’s ill health, managed to depose Saud and appointed his half-brother Faisal as king (Facey, Lunde, McKinnon and Pledge, 2006: 154-158).

King Faisal’s reign (1964-75) was known for its developments and modernisations with technologies from the West and with a rise in public education. He increased diplomatic relations within the Arab world and on an international level. He is well remembered for the Arab oil boycott, which he led against the US (Champion, 2003).

In 1975, King Faisal was assassinated by one of his nephews, thus leading to an internal dispute over the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; his half-brother, Khalid, succeeded him and reigned until his death in June 1982. King Fahd followed and ruled until 2005. King Fahd then was succeeded by King Abdullah, the current king (Al-Rasheed, 2002).
4.3.2 The Political System

4.3.2.1 State Constitution

The establishment of the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by ibn Saud set about a new political era. In 1953, King Abdul Aziz established the Council of Ministers. During its history the Council of Ministers regulated policies for the Kingdom while also formulating state policy regarding both domestic and foreign affairs. It also led to the execution of policies related to the national economy, education, social welfare, and most public affairs. Focusing on the needs of the Saudi citizens, Saudi governmental agencies experienced a great deal of expansion during the 1980s. The Council of Ministers consists of the King, who is also the Prime Minister, the Crown Prince who is Deputy Prime Minister, the Second Deputy Prime Minister and Cabinet ministers (Ansary, 2008).

According to Alshamsi (2011), until 1992 Saudi Arabia was without a written constitution. In March 1992, a committee was formed in order to prepare a new constitution. Then, King Fahad announced three fundamental laws which changed the domestic political environment, these are:

- The Basic System of Governance
- The Consultative Council Law
- The Regional Law

The Basic System of Governance or the Saudi Basic Law is the most important constitutional document of the three fundamental laws launched in 1992. It articulates the government’s rights and responsibilities and places state legitimacy on a Sunni
Islamic foundation (Alshamsi, 2011). The Basic Law is a constitution code that is divided into nine chapters, consisting of 83 articles. The law covers the following: the law of governance, the values of Saudi society, and the financial affairs of the state. The royal decree asserts that Saudi Arabia is a fully sovereign Arab Islamic state, its religion is Islam, its constitution is the Book of God, its language is Arabic and the city of Riyadh is the capital. It also states that the system of governance in Saudi Arabia is a monarchy based on the Shura Council, according to Islamic Shari’ah. It covers authorities in the state which consist of executive authority, judicial authority and regulatory authority. The King is the supreme governor of these authorities, and councils headed by the King and Crown Prince are open to all citizens. It also denotes family as the nucleus of Saudi society and considers that its members should be brought up on the basis of the Islamic creed and its requirement of allegiance and obedience to God, to His Messenger and to those in authority. It also deals with the economic principles, and the state’s financial affairs (The US Department of State, 2011).

Although Saudi Arabia has hereditary succession, in October 2006, King Abdullah created an Allegiance Commission, which is a new succession law that amends the 1992 Basic Law. The Allegiance Commission is a committee of princes that decide who will play a role in selecting future kings – it is composed of some 35 sons and grandsons of ibn Saud (Cordesman, 2009: 9-10).

4.3.3 Authorities of the State

According to Article 44 in the Basic Law of Governance, the authorities of the State consist of:
4.3.3.1 The Executive Branch

The executive branch consists of the King, the Council of Ministers, local governments, ministry subsidiaries, and other public, independent and quasi-independent agencies. The King is also the prime minister, chief of state, the head of government, and commander in chief of the military of Saudi Arabia. The King appoints the King’s Cabinet, or Council of Ministers, every four years. The Council of Ministers is the direct executive authority in the Kingdom. According to the Law of the Council of Ministers, the Council of Ministers is headed by the Prime Minister (the King) and has the power to deal with the nation’s internal, external, general affairs, financial, economic, educational, and defence policies. It has final authority over the executive and administrative affairs of all ministries and other government agencies.

Article 24 of the Law of the Council of Ministers states clearly that the Council of Ministers also has the authority to monitor the implementation of regulations, by-laws and resolutions while following up on the implementation of the general plan for development. Article 24 also states that the Council of Ministers has the power to form committees that oversee the ministries’ and other governmental agencies’ conduct of business, or other governmental agencies, or any specific case which might be brought to its attention.
Regional Law was also launched in 1992 and divides the country into 13 regions that take into consideration the population, geography, security, environment and means of transportation. The Regional Law declares in Article 1, that the aim of the Law of Regions is to improve the standard of administrative work and development in the Kingdom. It also aims to preserve law and order, the rights of citizens and their freedom within the framework of Islamic Shari’ah. The law also indicates that each region should enjoy considerable financial and administrative independence.

4.3.3.2 Legislative (Regulatory) Branch

This is made up of Majlis al Shura (Consultative Council), which according to Majlis al Shura Law is entitled to propose new laws and amend current laws. It also has authority to approve international treaties, agreements, regulations and concessions. Article 44 in the Basic Law of Governance identifies that the King has the ultimate authority over all state authorities, including the legislative authority.

King Fahad decreed the by-laws of the council and their supplements on 22 Aug 1993 (Alsuud, 2002: 9). The first period council (1993–1997) had 60 members. The membership of Majlis al Shura was increased by 30 members in each of the second, third, and fourth terms. In the second term, the council consisted of a speaker and 90 members. In the third term, the council included a speaker and 120 members. In the fourth term, the council consisted of a speaker and 150 members (Majlis Ash-Shura, 2011). The Consultative Council has 12 committees that deal with human rights, education, culture, information, health and social affairs, services and public utilities, foreign affairs, security, administration, Islamic affairs, economy and industry, and finance (Ansary, 2008).
According to Shura Council Law the number of newly selected members shall not be less than half of the current council, which must be changed every four years. Shura Council Law states that meetings of the Shura Council shall not be valid and will not be able to approve a legislative proposal or amendment without a quorum of at least two-thirds of members, including the speaker or whoever deputises. Resolutions shall not be considered valid without a majority approval. The law also states that the resolutions of the Shura Council are subject to review by the King, who decides which resolutions will be referred to the Council of Ministers. If the views of both the Shura Council and the Cabinet are in agreement, the resolutions are issued once the King has granted his approval. The two Councils and the King must approve every legislative proposal or amendment which becomes law.

4.3.3.3 Judicial Branch

The current Saudi court system is governed and justice is administered according to Islamic Law (Shari’ah) and comprises the Supreme Judicial Council, Courts of Appeals, and First-Instance Courts (General Courts and Summary Courts). Saudi Arabia also has an administrative judicial body known as the Board of Grievances. The Board of Grievances stands at the side of the Courts System and is associated directly with the King. Each of these judicial bodies has jurisdiction over cases brought before it in accordance with the law. In addition, the Saudi legal system has several administrative committees that adjudicate civil, commercial, administrative and criminal cases. The judicial jurisdiction of each committee is always determined by the decree which constituted it.

Justice is administered by a system of religious courts whose judges are appointed by the King on the recommendation of the Supreme Judicial Council. Law protects the
judiciary independence. The King acts as the highest court of appeal and has the power to pardon. In 2007, a royal order approved changes to the judicial system. The changes included the establishment of a Supreme Court and special commercial, labour and administrative courts. The new regulations abolished the existing Courts of Appeal and established new Courts of Appeal in the Kingdom’s provinces which exercise their jurisdiction through labour, commercial, criminal, personal, and civil circuits. Moreover, First-Degree Courts were established in areas, regions and centres, according to the needs of the system, and exercise their jurisdiction through specialised criminal, commercial, labour, personal, and general courts. Some of these courts oversee disputes that had previously been addressed by special administrative committees (Ansary, 2008).

4.3.4 Political dynamics and state nature

According to Alshamsi (2011), the Saudi political system consists of institutions, trends and key powers, and include:

1. The Royal House

2. The Council of Ministers

3. Majlis al Shura (the Consultative Council)

4. Hay’at Kibar al Ulama (the Council of the Senior Ulama) (Muslim scholars specialising in knowledge of Islamic sacred law and theology)

These four influential and central components of the Saudi political system (and their inherent system ideologies) revolve around Islamism, nationalism and liberalism, which influences the Saudi political system and Saudi society.
The royal family, however, places their own protection among the highest priorities, in addition to protecting their citizens, and they are regarded as the only guarantor for state security. Saudi Arabia has no parliament, though it does have a consultative assembly consisting of citizens represented by the Majlis al-Shura.

The specific political and social nature of the Saudi state and that of the King affect the state’s political system. Given the state and the King’s religious and traditional role in policymaking, as well as the conflict between conservatives (Islamists) and liberalist (reformers) in Saudi society, the King must be in charge of the royal family and Saudi society and is the supreme authority in the country. His duty is to make decisions while ensuring the distribution of national wealth. The King derives his authority from the Holy Book (Quran) and Sunna (the traditional portion of Muslim law based on Muhammad’s words or actions) and, therefore, all powers of the state are under his control. Saudi Arabia levies no taxes on its citizens, apart from the religious tithe known as “zakat” (a 2.5% annual donation of private capital to charity and other public purposes). Hence, Islamism remains part of state policy. Official domestic Islamic policy can be advanced in the Council of Ministers through Islamic Ministers in charge of Islamic affairs. The Islamic voice is also heard in the Saudi Consultative Council where Islamic figures are members of the Council, and through the Council of the Senior Ulama, which also can influence Saudi politics. However, Alshamsi (2011) asserts that Saudi nationalism can be developed not only within the frameworks of Islamism, but also within other ideological frameworks where royalists, Islamists and liberals all speak of nationalism.

Tensions in Saudi Arabia arise from political and religious differences as well as regional variances. The Saudi regime can and has experienced conflict, differences
and tensions with the Islamic reformists within Saudi society, but they have also become strong allies. However, four major domestic players can also be identified as having an influence on Saudi politics:

1. Sunni political activism (which itself takes on many forms, from moderate voices, conservatives, to militant Jihad ideologies)

2. Liberals

3. Shi’a minorities

4. Tribal and regional politics.

4.3.5 Political Threats

Islamist reformist groups would like to see Saudi political and socioeconomic aspects transformed to be more in line with Islamic values. The liberals seek for more attention to be paid to the problems with the regime, which some may regard as being in line with Western-style human rights and greater political representation. The liberals also object to the revered alliance between the ruling family and the ulama that has lasted since the establishment of the first Saudi state. The Shi’a, as discussed earlier, would like full recognition of their status and integration into the political landscape. These groups often have criticisms and grievances, not only with the regime, but also with each other (Beranek, 2009).

The presence of the Shi’a minority in Saudi Arabia could create internal problems, especially with their great loyalty to Iran, which in turn could weaken their allegiance to Saudi Arabia, and could have a negative effect on social cohesion; this will not serve in the best interests of Saudi Arabia.
Satisfying each parties’ policies and agendas, creates extra demands for the state and make the Saudi government more cautious when policymaking; this also affects the Kingdom’s domestic and international behaviour. For many decades, the Saudi government has had to struggle with tensions between religious conservatives and social customs, and liberals and the need for change. During the 1990s, the Saudi Islamic movement started identifying official liberal influences within the Saudi political system. But, after 9/11, the Saudi Islamic movement started viewing liberal trends as representing interests associated with external and international players, such as the US government. This is particularly relevant in light of the fact that the US government has supported liberal trends in the Islamic world as a means through which to lead change and reform. On the opposite side of the fence, the Saudi liberals view Saudi Islamic conservatives as being “extremist” and provoking terrorism (Alshamsi, 2011: 20).

An examination of the politics of Saudi Islamism and Saudi liberalism is relevant to a theory that suggests that there is an essential influence of both trends on the whole of the Saudi political sphere. The conflicts between the conservatives and liberalists can take many forms and mainly take place in the media and the social arena, but Saudi royalist leaders tend to take a neutral position. However, sometimes they aim to apply containment policies to both, by applying some Islamic policies which will satisfy conservative voices, or sometimes applying policies classified as liberal by conservatives.

This, by itself, raises the dilemma of the Saudi monarchy that involves maintaining its position as an ally to the West, while maintaining its legitimacy based on Saudi Shari’ah Law and the Islamic identity. This has always been a major obstacle for
those involved in Saudi politics and policymaking, and is one of the main influential issues that affects political behaviour and the whole Saudi political arena. It also forces the Saudi monarchy to move slowly and carefully, as it must constantly express its religious legitimacy and commitment to Islam, while still advancing reform policies; this produces a certain series of challenges and resistance. The Saudi government must be cautious in making reforms and must limit any sudden waves or popular demands for secular reform (Cordesman, 2011).

Nonetheless, the legitimacy of the Saudi government (which is dependent on a mix of social, religious, and political views formed during the establishment of the third Saudi state), depends also on the economic and social well-being of the citizenry, due to the rapid growth of the population and the spread of social media. The government is facing a complex and urgent situation. Thus, the Saudi government must be cautious about immediately responding to and meeting public demands. The dilemma within the Saudi political and social arena has already caused many internal threats, including the Al-Qaeda establishment, along with many other domestic pressures on the Saudi government (discussed further in Chapter 5). But in fact, the real political power is in the hands of key members of the Royal House and the Council of Ministers (the Executive Branch), whereas the Consultative Council and the Council of the Senior Ulama are less powerful (Alshamsi, 2011).

Oil is also one of the main driving factors in the formulation of the Kingdom’s policies and the significance on Saudi policies and politics will be discussed in more detail in the following section (economic security).

Generally speaking, these issues necessitated the Saudi government developing and deploying one of the most influential and important security forces in the region with
huge responsibilities and duties in one of the most volatile regions in the world, in one of the most complicated regions for policymaking (Saudi security forces will be further elaborated upon later in this chapter).

Returning to Buzan, he considered anything that might affect the political entity or the legitimacy of the state as a political threat, but he carefully separated politics from those aspects that could be considered a military threat. The political threats can be summarised in the following points:

1. **Pressure caused by the demands of Islamic reformers and liberalists:**
   Islamist reform groups want Saudi political and socioeconomic to reflect Islamic values. The liberals seek to change the regime to be have greater political representation and attitudes that are favourable to women (arguably regarded as Western-style human rights). The liberals also object to the revered alliance between the ruling family and the ulama which originated from the establishment of the first Saudi state. For many decades the Saudi government has struggled with the tensions between religious conservatives and liberals, and social customs which often contradict the need for change. To deal with this, the Saudi royalist leaders tend to maintain a neutral position and make decisions which sometimes will satisfy the conservatives and sometimes the liberals.

2. **Shi’a demands:** Shi’a Muslims demand full recognition of their status and would like proper integration into the political landscape. However, this pressure is creating a threat to the regime. The presence of the Shi’a minority in Saudi Arabia could create internal problems, especially in terms of their
great loyalty to Iran, which in turn could weaken their allegiance to Saudi Arabia, and can have a bad influence on social cohesion.

3. **Internal demands and population expansion:** with the rapid growth of the population and the spread of social media, public demands for new policies and practices have risen which could threaten the state legitimacy and national security.

4. **Political dilemmas concerning internal legitimacy and external pressure:** the monarchy of Saudi Arabia is torn between maintaining its position as an ally to the West, and the need to maintain its position based on Shari’ah Law and Islamic identity. This dilemma has always been a major obstacle in the Saudi political sphere and is one of the main issues affecting Saudi politics and policymaking both domestically and internationally. The Saudi monarchy moves slowly and cautiously when making reforms to try to alleviate challenges and resistance.

5. **Terrorism:** terrorism is one of the issues that spreads across social, economic, and political threats. Terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda, have posed a serious threat to state politics and security. However, the impacts and causes of terrorism stretch beyond internal state elements, terrorism will be discussed in Chapter 5 as part of regional and international threats.

### 4.4 Economic Security

Economic security concerns access to resources, finance and markets necessary to sustain acceptable levels of welfare and state power. In this section, the structure of the Saudi economy, including its history, will be identified due to the complicated
involvements from external powers that it has gained throughout its history. It is important to expand this section to include an overview of the history of the Saudi economy as in addition to the external influences, it also witnessed an internal dimension that comprised social and political transformations caused by massive levels of oil discovery and subsequent production. Most of these influences are still present today and require careful explanation to gain a full understanding of the Saudi national security dynamics.

4.4.1 Saudi Economy: An Overview of the Historical Dimensions

The Arabian Peninsula’s environmental condition has fundamentally shaped the area’s economic pursuits for a significant period of its history. The economy, which was based on subsistence farming and stock rearing, faced state revenue restrictions from customs duties and charges on pilgrims. Modernisation began to occur in the 1930s with the development of aircraft, motor vehicles, radios and telephones, which emerged in the large cities such as Riyadh. However, the country was very large and had few financial resources; and things became even worse with the world financial crisis of 1929 (Facey, Lunde, McKinnon and Pledge, 2006: 142).

Since oil was discovered in the late 1930s, life in Saudi Arabia has changed significantly (Broberg, 2002). In 1933, the Standard Oil Company of California (SOCAL) started searching for oil in al-Hasa (Eastern Province) in Saudi Arabia, with a sixty-year concession (Yeomans, 2004: 16). Although the first debate about prospecting for oil in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia goes back as far as 1923. When a New Zealander, Major Frank Holmes, visited King Abdul Aziz in 1923, he insisted that there must be oil on the Arabian Peninsula (Simmons, 2005: 25-26). Holmes not
only obtained the Saudi concession, he additionally secured the concession in Kuwait and Bahrain.

Holmes then borrowed money from King Abdul Aziz, moved to Bahrain and obtained an oil concession from the Sheik of Bahrain, which by then was a British protectorate. Thus, the British were well placed to control any oil that might be found in Bahrain, but with British Petroleum (BP) having enough oil in Iran and in Iraq they showed no interest in the prospect of oil in Bahrain. They did not accept Holmes’ offer. So Holmes went to the United States with the Bahrain concession, where he offered the rights to Exxon for $50,000, but it was rejected. He then moved towards Gulf Oil who paid $50,000 and sent their geologist, but Gulf were not able to start on their own, as they were a member of the Iraq Petroleum Company, where they had recently agreed not to explore inside a certain area, the Red Line, without the other members (Sampson, 1975: 88).

Another member of the Iraq Petroleum Company, BP, still insisted that Bahrain would not gain oil. So Gulf Oil offered their Bahrain concessions to SOCAL. SOCAL were not involved in the Red Line Agreement, hence SOCAL bought the concessions for $50,000 and by May 1932, SOCAL had struck oil in Bahrain (Yergin, 1993: 283).

Two years later Bahrain was exporting oil to the world market. But Bahrain in fact was never to become a major oil producer; instead it remains a centre for trading and banking, rather than oil. For SOCAL, their major move involved going twenty miles across the water to the mainland of Saudi Arabia (Sampson, 1975: 88-89).

In 1930, King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud was desperate for new revenues, which made him start thinking about Holmes’ prospect. Unlike the Sheik of Bahrain, King ibn Saud was not under any British protectorate – he was in a position of independence. One of
his principal advisers, Harry St. John Philby (who had left the colonial service after a row, embraced Islam and later became close to the King), suggested that money could be found by exploiting the country’s mineral resources. However, the King was much more interested in exploring for water than oil (Yergin, 1993: 286-288).

Philby arranged a meeting with the American philanthropist, Charles Crane, who in turn arranged for an American geologist, Karl Twitchell, to visit. Twitchell was encouraged by what he saw and tried to interest American oil companies. In the beginning he went to Texaco, who showed no interest. He then went to Exxon. After that he went to Gulf Oil, who again turned him down because of the Red Line Agreement. He was then approached by SOCAL, who were already moving their attentions across the water from Bahrain towards Saudi Arabia (Sampson, 1975).

On May 29, 1933, 10 years after Frank Holmes first suggested that oil must be under the land of the Arabian Peninsula. King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud read the last draft of the agreement, he turned to his finance minister, Abdullah Sulaiman, and said, “Put your trust in God and sign” (Yergin, 1993: 291).

SOCAL and King Abdul Aziz signed the first oil concession for Saudi Arabia with an outside party. SOCAL was committed to loaning the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia the equivalent of sterling £50,000 in gold and agreed to pay £1 per ton for all oil that was produced, as well as rentals of £25,000 per year. They were also promised to receive a £50,000 advanced as soon as any oil was found and within less than a decade, it became clear to SOCAL that with this ordinary but risky agreement they had guaranteed their rights to explore and produce in an area with extraordinary oil potential (Simmons, 2005: 27).
In fact, two considerations fascinated SOCAL. Al-Hasa appeared to be encouraging as it shared many of the nearby features that Iraq and Iran possessed, where oil had been already discovered. In addition, oil had not yet been plotted by the European oil companies, as it had in other nearby countries. Escorted by an al-Hasa concession, SOCAL had exclusive rights to search and produce oil in the whole Eastern Province and became the first American company to take control over a major Saudi oil zone (Klare, 2004: 30-31).

By March 1938, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were on the road to fortune, as oil was discovered under its desert, but at that time the United States produced almost 62% of the world’s oil (McNaugher, 1985: 3-4). Saudi Arabia was, however, a country under construction, with limited education and health infrastructures in place. The rapid growth in the country’s revenue during the early 1950s, allowed them, with the help of the US’s technical support, to launch new development programmes with long-term plans. By July 1947, the government announced its plans to spend $270 million on road building, schools, hospitals, and in installing power generation plants and irrigation projects (McNaugher, 1985:152-153).

Until 1941, the United States was the world’s leading oil producer. As the Second World War started, it was estimated that the United States possessed around 20 billion barrels of oil, but the nation was consuming around 4 million barrels per day. Which in turn produced some concerns within the Roosevelt administration with regards to the future of American oil. Hence, the Roosevelt administration undertook the nation’s first systematic study which suggested that if the United States continued to use its domestic oil at its current rate (at that time) there would be only a little left for the future. So, from the American officials’ perspective, the development of newly
discovered oil resources in the Middle East – where American oil companies were already active and the local rulers were considered friendly – improved their US security by reducing pressure on the US and Latin American oil (Klare, 2004: 29). But by doing so the United States would become vulnerable to any effect that might interrupt these new supplies.

The US oil concerns were again raised in June 1943, by William Bullitt, the Under-Secretary of the US Navy, in a letter to Roosevelt, indicating that observing petroleum reserves outside the United States had become a vital interest. Bullitt also reported that SOCAL and Texaco were worried that the British could convince the Saudi King to replace their concession with them. Thus, Bullitt argued that the Americans should get a direct American government interest in their concession and buy a controlling interest in the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco) (Sampson, 1975: 95-96).

It thus became a new US strategy to search for oil in the Middle East, where the domestic governments were considered agreeable to US exploitation. The US started to rely primarily on one nation that would suit all their requirements – Saudi Arabia – and up until 1939 the United States did not see fit to set up formal diplomatic relations with them. It was only in 1943 when a resident ambassador was posted there that this occurred, although the United States recognised the government of King Abdul Aziz more than 12 years earlier in 1931 (Klare, 2004: 31).

By the end of the Second World War, the vast exploitation of oil in Saudi Arabia became a major foreign policy object for the United States, and the importance of the US/Saudi partnership became absolute vital. King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud started to be considered an important element in international arenas (Sampson, 1975).
The United States oil consumption in the aftermath of the Second World War rose dramatically. From 1.8 billion barrels a day in 1946 to 5.4 billion barrels in 1971. Much of it came from US domestic sources (Klare, 2004: 37). But US oil production peaked during the early 1970s. At that time, Saudi Arabia’s production was only exceeding three million barrels a day. There were several hundred high-volume oil wells at Saudi Arabia’s three most productive fields – Ghawar, Abqaiq, and Safaniya – collectively they produced 88% of the total daily output and were the nerve centre of the Kingdom’s oil output (Simmons, 2005: 47).

In the same way as Saudi oil production increased rapidly, US oil production slumped. The US oil production decline enabled Saudi Arabia to take advantage, especially in light of its potential resources. In fact, Saudi Arabia had the opportunity to increase its oil output to supply the new demand.

The major event and the turning point in OPEC oil politics came during the 1973-74 Arab-Israeli war and the oil crises. The Palestinians and neighbouring Arab states had been in deep-rooted conflict with Israel for many decades, ever since Israel declared a Jewish homeland in Palestine in 1948 after expelling the British from there (as will be discussed later in more detail) (Campbell, 2005). On 6 October 1973, a joint Egyptian-Syrian attack on Israel began in what became known as the Yom Kippur. On 17 October 1973, Sheik Ahmed Yamani announced OPEC’s intention to set new prices exclusive of any outsider consulting (Yeomans, 2004: 24).

The Arab oil embargo caused a sharp increase in oil prices. As OPEC first raised the price of oil by 70%, prices raised to $5.11 a barrel. This was followed by a Saudi ban on oil shipments to the United States and the West. The prices hike, combined with the oil embargo created a real panic around the world (Yeomans, 2004: 25-26). Iran
worked actively to stabilise the oil market during the embargo by increasing its oil output and the embargo cutback only a small percentage of global production and lasted for few months; yet, the prices increased by nearly 400% between October 1973 and December 1973, finishing the year at $11.65 per barrel (Simmons, 2005: 54-55).

The oil boycott revealed that the oil producing countries had started working together in an effective way. As the war launched on 6 October 1973, Sheik Ahmed Yamani (the Saudi oil minister) announced OPEC’s intention to set new prices. The King of Saudi Arabia at that time, King Faisal, became annoyed in late October when the Nixon administration announced that it was about to re-arm Israel, this increased frustrations with the US administration’s intentions towards Israel (Simmons, 2005).

Saudi Arabia was now the only country that had enough excess oil producing capacity to run oil production. King Faisal responded by pulling out his oil embargo, a threat that he had infrequently made in the hope of encouraging a more useful US policy with regards to the Middle East. Hence, a day or two later, ten Arab oil ministers met in Kuwait and immediately agreed to reduce their collective oil production by 5% per month until the Arab-Israeli conflict was resolved. The following day, Saudi Arabia announced a 10% reduction in its oil production and a total ban on oil shipments to the United States and Rotterdam, Netherlands, as this was the main Western port used to receive Middle Eastern oil (Simmons, 2005: 53-54).

Hence, the United States started questioning their control over oil supplies in the Gulf area. Mainly in terms of the length of time that the military needed to move into position (Rogers, 2008). Indeed, since 1973 the economic interests of Saudi Arabia and the United States have become so closely linked that the security and the stability
of the Saudi government has been considered a major US security interest. It also became obvious that any temporary disruptions to the Gulf oil supply, or raises in oil prices, could cause damage to the American and global economy (Remnek, 1980).

In addition, prices had grown fourfold to $12 a barrel, which increased Saudi Arabian oil revenues to $35 billion, an almost 16-fold increase. This represented an explosion of wealth in such a brief period that perhaps no other population had ever experienced (Simmons, 2005: 56-57). Oil and the petrochemical industry has dominated the Saudi economy for the past three decades (Simmons, 2005: 17). Since the mid-1990s, Saudi Arabia has attempted to diversify its sources of income and employment, mostly comprising partial privatisation of key industries, such as telecommunications and electricity (as reviewed later in this chapter). But as yet it is too early to identify their full impact (Cordesman, 2009: 14).

The explosion of wealth that occurred in the early 1970s marked a new phase in the development of the Saudi economy. The tremendous increase in oil revenues announced a new era of economic and social development. In response, Saudi Arabia decided to start a series of massive development plans represented by its cycles of Five-Year Economic Developments Plans that were launched in 1969.

4.4.2 Development Plans

The Saudi Arabian development process has been carried out since 1969 under the guidance of a series of Five-Year Development Plans, with the aim of developing and mobilising available human and material resources and utilising them to achieve several socio-economic objectives. These objectives included raising the standard of living of citizens, completing a basic infrastructure, diversifying the economic base,
developing human resources and encouraging the private sector to assume an effective role in development (Al-Habbas, 1999: 101).

The development process can be divided into three stages. The first stage (1970-1985) which included the First, Second, and Third Development Plans, focused on infrastructure, public facilities and services, and support to the private sector through the provision of concessional loans, along with direct and indirect subsidies to industrial and agricultural projects. The second stage (1985-2005) included the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Development Plans. This stage witnessed a decrease in oil revenues caused by the instability of world oil prices. The plans focused on rationalising public expenditures, improving performance of public institutions and diversifying the economic base (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2011: 4).

The third stage (2005-2025) started with the Eighth Plan (2005-2009) and will include the Ninth, Tenth, and Eleventh Development Plans. The Eighth Plan witnessed high oil revenues as result of the relative increase in world oil prices. The Eighth Plan represents the first stage in a long strategic phase of twenty years in four continuous five-year campaigns. This phases focuses on accelerating growth, diversifying the economic base, balancing regional development, and increasing expenditure on education. According to the Ministry of Economy and Planning, this phase aims to prepare the national economy to move towards a knowledge economy, to enhance its competitiveness, and to position it to deal in an effective and flexible manner with national, regional and international challenges (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2011: 5).
4.4.3 Natural Resources

Saudi Arabia has the biggest oil reserve in the world, which has helped to shape the country’s development to its current state. In addition, Saudi Arabia has wide natural gas reserves, as well as layers of coal, bauxite, copper, gold, silver, platinum, iron, phosphates, tungsten, uranium, and zinc, and other non-mineral resources including glass, stone, and limestone (Facey, Lunde, McKinnon and Pledge, 2006).

The country has developed techniques to drill and ship oil from its natural reserves, but this has presented growing environmental threats to the country. The Gulf region, in particular the Red Sea, has suffered harmful environmental effects caused by oil spillages. The oil production process itself creates damaging environmental effects from the contamination of wastewater utilised in the production process, which has drawn attention from several international environmental agencies.

4.4.4 Saudi Economic Structure

4.4.4.1 Oil Sector

The Gulf region contains over half of the world’s reserves of oil and one-third of the world’s reserves of natural gas (Korb, 2005: 2). Saudi Arabia alone has more than a quarter of the world’s total proven reserves; the second largest reserves are in Iraq with more than 10% of the world’s reserves, while each of the United Arab Emirates, Iran, and Kuwait hold about 9% (Byman, 2002: 3).

Saudi Arabia’s economy is an oil-based economy. Oil still accounts for 45% of Saudi Arabian GDP, 70% to 80% of state revenues, and around 90% of total export revenues (Cordesman, 2009: 14). A stable oil supply will continue to be a major factor for the Saudi economy. The size of oil and gas reserves and production plays a
key geopolitical and economic role for Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states as they are the region’s main resources. The enormous oil and gas reserves and levels of production have played a massive role in rapid socioeconomic development in Saudi Arabia and other GCC states (Joyner, 1990: 5).

Oil from several states in the region, such as Saudi Arabia and Iraq, has exceptionally low production costs, which allows them to make profits even if the price of oil plunges. That is because costs of oil extraction are higher elsewhere in the world (Byman, 2002: 3). Although oil represents a significant share of GDP, the oil sector does not require much manpower (Al-Asmari, 2008). According to Al-Asmari (2008), in 2000, 54,501 Saudis were working in Aramco (85% of ARAMCO’s total employees).

4.4.4.2 Non-Oil Sector

Saudi Arabia has sought over recent years to expand its economy beyond oil. Diversification of the state income mainly involves manufacturing, agriculture, construction and privatisation of key industries such as telecommunications and electricity.

Industrial production in Saudi Arabia can be divided into two units: main basic industries and manufacturing. Basic industries depend mainly on oil to provide the crude materials. Basic industries are funded and functioned through the public sector due to the large size of its investments and technology. In 1976, Saudi Arabia Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC) was formed, to create a domestic petrochemical industry that was designed to augment oil export earnings and to use available domestic resources, particularly associated gas supplies (Simmons, 2005: 17).
Manufacturing consists of a diverse range of industries such as food, building materials and chemical industries, and different mineral industries. These industries are managed by the private sector, which receives a number of fiscal incentives and support from the state, such as: long-term, interest-free industrial loans, leasing of land for factories and workers’ housing in industrial zones equipped with full facilities and services at nominal prices, preference for national products when state institutions are making purchases, and the full exemption of all types of taxes, except for the Islamic Zakat which is calculated at 2.5% of the capital, if one year has passed. According to the Saudi Industrial Development Fund website, in 2010, there were 4,645 factories producing goods in the manufacturing sector, investing about SR 404 billion ($107 billion) and operating with 530,000 employees.

In terms of investment size, the refined petroleum products sector took the leading position among the other industrial sectors, with SR 154 billion, representing 38% of total investments of operating factories, followed by the non-metallic minerals sector with SR 57 billion, representing 14% of total investment of operating factories (Saudi Industrial Development Fund, 2010).

4.4.5 Economic Threats

In several Gulf States economic problems may increase in the coming decade. Despite huge income and wealth from oil, a declining standard of living faces citizens and unemployment rates are rising. In fact, the dependence of the Saudi economy on oil presents one of the major economic difficulties. As mentioned earlier, Saudi Arabia’s economy is an oil-based economy. Oil still accounts for 45% of Saudi Arabian GDP, 70% to 80% of state revenues, and around 90% of total export
revenues. Developing the Saudi economy beyond oil still presents a major challenge to Saudi Arabia.

A rapid growth in population, and not being able to transform the economy beyond oil, will make it difficult for Saudi Arabia to remain a welfare state. Saudi Arabia’s population growth has averaged more than 3% per year during the last two decades and living standards in Saudi Arabia have remained at the same level in recent years. From 1980 to 1998, the Saudi economy grew at an average of only 0.2% a year (Byman, 2002: 47-48). Since 2004, the Saudi economy grew by an annual average of 6.5 percent which is three times higher than the average recorded during the two preceding decades. The average growth rate of the non-oil sector grew by an annual average of 7.8 percent that is around four times higher than the average recorded the preceding two decades (Rasooldeen, 2014). Yet, corruption in all forms has become a growing issue at all levels of society and needs to be reconsidered seriously (Pterson, 2002).

Saudi Arabia is facing a rapid growth in the population in conjunction with high unemployment rates and a struggling Saudisation programme that started in the early 1990s and aimed to encourage employment of Saudi nationals in the private sector. Yet, unemployment rates range from 15% to 25%, and given the rapid youth explosion, the government will have to create hundreds of thousands of new jobs every year (Simmons, 2005: 18).

Education systems are still insufficient and do not produce large numbers of skilled workers and therefore Gulf countries face a lack of comprehensive education systems. Although, young Saudi males and females are currently highly educated by global standards and are accustomed to high living standards, education systems do not
produce young men or women who are ready to work and have the required work ethics. Moreover, many Saudi women and men are working at jobs with no useful economic output (Cordesman, 2009).

The poor education system has created difficulties for Saudi efforts to replace highly skilled foreign labourers with local citizens. Meanwhile, expatriates in Saudi Arabia account for 25% of the population, which has a genuine effect on the Saudi identity (Pterson, 2002). For example, Indian waiters, Filipino workers, north Arabian teachers, and Sri Lankan nannies are all mixed within the culture and have an influence on attitudes of the growing generation of young Saudis. Public roles for women still have some restrictions and have become a focus for the struggle between liberals and Islamists, but those restrictions have eased significantly, especially among younger and more educated men (Pterson, 2002).

Unemployment presents one of the major economic problems facing Saudi Arabia. Despite the global financial crisis that begun in 2008, the Kingdom did not decrease its development and job creation programme in the 2009 budget, nor in the 2010 budget. However, Saudi Arabia introduced “the education plan” to resolve the job market needs by bolstering up the educational system to meet job market requirements (Marshall, 2006). King Abdullah has also approved the construction of six new economic cities. The six economic cities are expected to be finished by 2020 and will provide $150 billion in contribution to GDP growth; they are also expected to create 1.3 million jobs and accommodate 4.8 million people (Qust, 2007).

Another key economic reform strategy that Saudi Arabia has undertaken since 2002, is the privatisation of nearly all of its state controlled assets. If the privatisation strategy is successful, the Saudi programme will be one of the most ambitious of any
privatisation programmes ever announced in the world. In GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries, privatisation has been used as a means of diversifying the economic base of the region, as well as a means of wealth distribution for a larger section of society by creating a shareholding class. The Saudi privatisation programme has already partly privatised some of the government corporations such as Saudi Telecom Company (STC) and Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC) (Ramady, 2006).

Saudisation is another key economic strategy for the Kingdom to ensure certain jobs for local citizens, reduce the country’s dependence on a foreign expatriate workforce, and reduce the unemployment rate in the Kingdom. Although the programme has faced many difficulties since it started, the Saudi government is still trying to persuade the private sector to comply with the Saudisation programme. Saudi Arabia also launched an initiative to support the unemployed financially, by introducing an unemployment benefits programme in late 2011 (Gause III, 2011).

The Saudi economy faces many difficulties and threats that can be summarised in the following points:

1. **The need to modernise the oil industry and diversity the economy:** Despite huge oil income and wealth, a declining standard of living faces citizens and unemployment rates are rising. In fact, the dependence of the Saudi economy on oil presents one of their major economic difficulties and developing the Saudi economy beyond oil is a significant challenge to the Saudi state.

2. **The need to grow the economy:** Rapid growth in population and not being able to transform the economy beyond oil will make it difficult for Saudi
Arabia to remain a welfare state. Saudi Arabian population growth has averaged more than 3% per year during the last two decades while living standards in Saudi Arabia have remained at the same level over recent years. From 1980 to 1998, the Saudi economy grew at an average of only 0.2% a year.

3. **Unemployment:** Saudi Arabia is facing a rapid growth in population, high unemployment rates and a struggling Saudisation programme that aimed to encourage employment of Saudi nationals in the private sector. Unemployment rates range from 15% to 25%, and given the rapid youth explosion, the government will have to create hundreds of thousands of new jobs every year.

4. **Poverty:** as mentioned earlier, unemployment rates are increasing in Saudi Arabia, hence, there is a chance that a section of people will experience poverty levels in the near future. This raises huge concerns for the government since there is a strong positive correlation between poverty and terrorism.

5. **The inability of the education system to produce skilled workers:** education systems in the Gulf are still insufficient for preparing young Saudis to work and do not produce large numbers of skilled workers, this is despite the fact that education standards are high by global standards.

6. **Huge dependence on foreign expatriate workers:** the poor education system has created difficulties in terms of trying to replace high-skilled foreign labourers with local citizens. Foreign expatriates in Saudi Arabia account for 25% of the population, which has a genuine effect on the Saudi identity.
4.5 Military Security

Military security comprises the very basic duty of a state to protect its citizens. In Saudi Arabia there might not be direct threats in terms of an external invasion, however the ability to protect the country does incur some concerns and security challenges. This part of the chapter discusses the current state of the defensive and offensive capabilities of Saudi Arabia.

4.5.1 Historical Origins

The historical origins of the Saudi military force go back to the 1920s. King Abdul Aziz relied on tribal fighters (Ikhwan) to conquer Hail and Hejaz (Western) regions. By 1925, Abdul Aziz and the Ikhwan succeeded in their mission and conquered what is now known as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. However, the Ikhwan insisted on Abdul Aziz conquering more areas to the north and north east, which were controlled by the British. King Abdul Aziz’s reluctance was understood by the Ikhwan to mean that he had a deal of peace with the British (Lacey, 2009: 15). As the Ikhwan interference increased, King Abdul Aziz started to recognise the need to have a more conventional and disciplined army, which he achieved by relying on the Hejaz army (which he inherited after overthrowing Hejaz) and on British assistance (Al-Habbas, 1999). Therefore, when the Ikhwan revolted against King Abdul Aziz in early March 1929, he was able to defeat them and achieve a crucial victory. The Ikhwan who stayed loyal to Abdul Aziz were then regrouped to form the White Army, which later became known as the National Guard (Lacey, 2009: 16).

Saudi oil was starting to become a significant concern for American leaders, as such, American policymakers considered access to Saudi oil to be a vital national security interest that must be defended; this demonstrates that economic security does overlap
with military security. It is, therefore, apparent why increasing oil reserves in Saudi Arabia extended the importance of Saudi state security for other foreign countries. In reality, during the 1950s, Saudi military forces were not equivalent to those of their heavily armed neighbours. Hence, the American administration sought to improve the defensive capabilities of Saudi Arabia. As a result, US military aid was quickly sent to Saudi Arabia. In addition, the United States also agreed to help Saudi Arabia create a modern army. This was formalised on 18 June 1951, in the Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement, allowing the delivery of US arms and combat gear and the deployment of the US Military Training Mission (USMTM) to Saudi Arabia (Klare, 2004: 37-40).

The US military aid programme was strengthened in 1957, following Gamal Abdul Nasser’s (Egypt president 1954-1970) actions toward the Western interest in the area (nationalising the Suez Canal) and his rising ties with the Soviets. In addition, the US Department of Defense started supplying arms and assistance to the Saudi Arabia National Guards (SANG), a force responsible for defending the royal family against internal revolt (Klare, 2004: 41).

Since 2003, Saudi Arabia has devoted considerable resources to ensure the usefulness of its Saudi security forces, the National Guard (SANG) and Ministry of Interiors Security Forces, especially in term of dealing with terrorism and protecting oil facilities. To counter terrorism it was estimated to have allocated $8.5 billion, $10 billion, and $12 billion in 2004, 2005 and 2006, respectively, to increase the training, facilities, and professionalism of its counterterrorism forces. Even so, in order to further strengthen its borders, a complete overhaul of the Saudi security system was completed, whereby sophisticated measures were employed to protect its borders.
The violence experienced by the Kingdom in 2003 led Saudi Arabia to establish a Joint Counterterrorism Centre in the Ministry of Interiors (MOI), and a separated Counterterrorism Operation Centre in the Ministry of Defence and Aviation (MODA). Furthermore, the Saudi government established a National Joint Counterterrorism Command Protection Force (NJCC), headed by the Assistant Minister of Interiors for Security Affairs, Prince Muhammed bin Nayef (to later become the Minister of Defence in 2012), to improve the cooperation, and command and control capabilities among MOI, SANG, and MODA (Cordesman, 2009: 130).

Saudi Arabia recognised the need to have more tactical power to deal with Iran’s growing capability, and the need to rapidly deploy forces to deal with terrorist threats to their population and critical infrastructure, especially with threats of attack from Yemen and the growing instability in the Horn of Africa. Hence, the Saudi government set up a new arms deal with the United States; this brought about huge attention due to the total cost of the arms transfers being worth $60 billion over a period that may well take around 8 to 10 years, as the US Department of Defense notified to Congress on October 20, 2010 (Cordesman, 2010).

The deal will include 84 new F-15 fighter jets, upgrades to 70 existing Saudi F-15s, 190 helicopters and a wide array of missiles, bombs and delivery systems, as well as accessories such as night-vision goggles and radar warning systems (MacAskill, 2010).

According to Cordesman (2010), in his analysis on the Saudi-US arms deal:

*If one looks at the content of the proposed new sales, rather than the cost, it also becomes clear that they are part of an effort to enhance Saudi capabilities in ways that serve both Saudi and US security interests, and promote the stability of the entire Gulf region. This is reflected in a mix of ongoing arms transfers and upgrades that will give Saudi Arabia far stronger air capabilities and a major*
increase in tactical mobility and strike power for dealing with any contingency involving Iran, terrorist elements, and threats from Yemen.

Moreover, these same transfers are improving Saudi capabilities to secure facilities and shipping in the Gulf and Red Sea areas, deal with coastal and offshore attacks and infiltrations across Saudi Arabia’s borders, and to help other Gulf states in an emergency.

As a result, the Saudi armed forces, which includes the Royal Saudi Land Forces (RSLFs), the Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF), the Royal Saudi Navy (RSN), and the Royal Saudi Air Defence Force (RSADF), enjoys some of the best conventional military in the region. It provides them with significant advantages over Iran, one of their main rivals in the Gulf region (Russell, 2009). The overthrowing of Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq has already removed a key military threat to Saudi Arabia’s national security. In addition, the newly proposed arms sales will develop the Saudi Air Force to such an extent that it will be more of a threat to Iran than Iran’s conventional missiles are to Saudi Arabia. Additionally, it will help Saudi Arabia create a combination of effective air and naval power that will improve security for tankers and other shipping resources in the Gulf of Oman and the Red Sea. Furthermore, the new arms sales will provide the mobility and military capabilities against any terrorist attack (Cordesman, 2010).

4.5.2 Saudi Security Forces

The oldest unit in the Saudi armed forces is the Land Force, but as threats have become more sophisticated, the Kingdom’s defensive priorities have moved to air forces and air defence (Pterson, 2002). As Figure 4.1 shows, Saudi Arabia’s security structure is a complex mix of military forces in the Ministry of Defence and Aviation (MODA), a separate National Guard (SANG), and numerous internal security and intelligence services in the Ministry of Interiors (MOI) – all of which play a crucial role in helping the Kingdom counteract its challenges. Figure 4.1 also shows that
Saudi Arabia’s military forces form only one part of the Saudi security structure, which is divided into five major branches: the Army, the National Guard, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Air Defence. Saudi Arabia also has large paramilitary and internal security forces and a small strategic missile force (Cordesman, 2009).
Figure 4.1: The Saudi intelligence and security community

Source: Adopted from Cordesman (2009)
4.5.2.1 The Saudi Armed Forces

Saudi Arabia is one of the largest countries in the region, so defending a large country of about 2.2 million square kilometres presents a major challenge to the armed forces that comprises of a total of around 300,000 men (Cordesman, 2009: 122) – which is broken down as follows:

4.5.2.1.1 The Royal Saudi Land Forces (RSLFs)

The army is the largest force, comprising around 125,000 men to defend the country; they are supported by the SANG (Cordesman, 2009: 123). Although possessing heavier equipment than the SANG, the Land Forces have serious problems with motivation, deployments, and training (Pterson, 2002).

4.5.2.1.2 The Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF)

The Air Force is a prime branch of the country’s national defence structure. Although it is smaller in number than that of Iran, it is the most capable air force in the Gulf region. Initially, the Saudi Air Force was oriented toward defensive operations, to defend the vast territory with an emphasis on protecting the onshore and offshore oil infrastructure, holy cities, and the country’s borders, with four major air bases Dhahran, Taif, Khamis Mushayt, and Tabuk (Pterson, 2002). The development of the Saudi Air Force has relied largely on American assistance; it started with a supply of fighters in the 1950s, then transport aircraft in the 1960s, and continued with purchases of F-5 and F-15 combat aircraft and AWACS radar aircraft in the 1970s and early 1980s. But when the Saudis tried to purchase F-14 and F-16 aircraft, political problems through a pro-Israeli US congress appeared. This forced the Saudis
to turn to Britain for Tornado aircrafts (Pterson, 2002: 28). More recently they have purchased 72 BAE System Typhoon multirole fighters (Wilson, 2009).

4.5.2.1.3 The Royal Saudi Navy (RSN)

The Saudi Navy has about 15,000 personnel, including 3,000 marines, and was initially formed as an adjunct of the army in 1957. Later, in 1969, it started functioning as a separate force (Pterson, 2002: 29). It is regarded as a powerful force by regional standards, but faces challenges when defending Gulf waters, the Gulf of Aden, and the Red Sea and sees a major challenge from Iran’s naval forces (Cordesman, 2009).

4.5.2.1.4 The Royal Saudi Air Defence Force (RSADF)

The Royal Saudi Air Defence Force was detached from the army in 1984 to form the fourth pillar of the country’s national defence structure, with 16,000 men with a wide range of batteries, including Shahine/Crotale missile fire units and Chinese ballistic missiles (Pterson, 2002: 29). The Air Defence Force’s six major group commands are supported by an Air Defence Operations Centre. Air Defence has control of the surface-to-air missile installations, largely to defend the Eastern Province and the capital of Riyadh. During wars, however, the command structure of the RSADF falls under the control of the Air Force commander (Pterson, 2002).

4.5.2.1.5 Saudi Arabia National Guard (SANG)

Saudi Arabia divides its land force manpower between the Saudi Land Forces and the SANG. The SANG operates both as a defence force against external threats and as a security force against internal threats. SANG is a distinct force from the Saudi army.
and their principle tasks include the protection of the royal family, counterterrorism and maintaining order and security by protecting the holy cities and oil infrastructure.

SANG got their first real modern combat experience during the 1991 Gulf War. Since then they have steadily improved their readiness and training and have grown into a 100,000 man force whose strength is steadily increasing towards 125,000 men. Around 75% of the total personnel of 100,000 are active and are equipped with large wheeled armoured fighting vehicles and armed personnel carriers (Cordesman, 2009: 176-177)

According to the official website of SANG, the SANG General Headquarters is located in Riyadh and directly controls the three regional sectors, the training facilities, and the King Abdul Aziz Independent Mechanised Brigade of four battalions. The three regional (Eastern, Central and Western) sectors each command one or more mechanised or motorised brigades.

4.5.2.2 Internal Security Forces

Saudi Arabia’s intelligence service and internal security forces are mostly under the control of the Ministry of Interiors and play the major role in counterterrorism and defending the country’s borders and critical infrastructure (see Figure 4.1) (Cordesman, 2009). The Ministry of Interiors is the largest employer in the Saudi government with more than 500,000 employees; including 160,000 directly employed in several security agencies (Pterson, 2002: 30). Cordesman (2009) provides the basis for the main internal security agencies under the command of the Minister of Interiors (MOI):
• **The Public Security Director (PSD):** the PSD is under the control of the director-general of the PSD in the Ministry of Interiors, and controls the regular police forces that maintain security of the cities and the villages.

• **The Special Emergency Force (SEF):** the SEF was created after the siege of the Grand Mosque in Makkah (Mecca) in 1979. It is under the control of the PSD and is estimated to have a total strength of 10,000 men. The SEF is considered to be one of the most mobile and capable forces in the Saudi counterterrorism forces and controls a fleet of helicopters.

• **The General Directorate of Investigation:** this directorate is in charge of domestic intelligence gathering and analysis, counterintelligence operations, criminal investigations, and counterterrorism forces and controls the Saudi domestic intelligence service – the General Security Service (GSS).

• **The National Information Centre:** the Minister of Interiors created this. The centre is considered to be one of the most sophisticated systems in the world and maintains comprehensive information on Saudi citizens and residents.

• **The General Intelligence Presidency (GIP):** The GIP president reports directly to the King. Among its many responsibilities, it has foreign security functions, anti-terrorism functions, foreign liaison functions, strategic analytical assessments, and coordination of the foreign covert networks on Saudi Arabia.

• **Other agencies under the MOI:** The MOI has a number of other agencies that are responsible for internal security, including: the Special Security
Forces, the Border Guard, the Coast Guard, the Drug Enforcement Agency, the General Prisons Services, and the Civil Defence Force.

4.5.3 Military Threats

There are two levels of interplay that concern military security – armed offensive and defensive capabilities of states and states’ perceptions of each other’s intentions. Currently, Saudi Arabia maintains a status quo in terms of armed offensive and security defensive capabilities. Saudi Arabia has strong ties with the US and NATO, as well as being the biggest role player in the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) security wing (further details regarding the Saudi-GCC military role and security within the Gulf region are discussed in Chapter 5). Due to its current relationships with super powers of the world, Saudi Arabia intends to maintain a minimum profile in terms of investments in defensive and offensive mechanisms, since this affects the balance of relationships with other partners with regard to demonstrating intentions of the nation. However, Saudi Arabia is well equipped in defensive and offensive security capabilities when it comes to internal security of the country. Saudi Arabia has invested heavily to equip the defence sector to be able to fight terrorism and maintain and protect the sovereignty of the country by dealing with any factors heavy-handedly, if it threatens the current governance in any way or form.

Despite the considerable progress that the Kingdom has made in creating modern and effective forces, Saudi Arabian armed forces are dependent on external Western powers such as the US and the UK to quite a large extent, for example, the Saudi Air Force are equipped and trained by the United States and United Kingdom, and some other European states (Blanchard, 2009). Although Saudi Arabia’s internal security forces are much more independent from any external reliance, the Saudi armed forces
still face some problems in terms of organisation between military and other internal security forces – a traditional problem that all states face in organising and commanding large military forces. Additionally, Saudi security forces also suffer from a lack of manpower quality to deal with the demands of modern security technologies and tactics, which would be able to create an advanced forces structure to deal with both regional and external allies (Cordesman, 2009).

Saudi Arabia must secure its oil exports, not only on its soil, but also in the face of the Iranian’s build-up of forces that could and has threatened maritime traffic through the Gulf. Saudi Arabia must also secure its oil exports in the face of piracy in Somalia and at other points along the flow of its exports. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia must protect its holy cities, the capital, the urban cities, and its long borders, all of which come under the responsibility of the Saudi security forces. Overall, this raises the issue of the importance of the security forces and highlights the challenges that the Saudi security forces face.

Further military threats regarding each regional or external state are discussed in the next chapter, whereby regional and external power threats are discussed for the five sectors (social, political, economic, military, and environmental). However, the main internal military threats posed, from the perspective of organisational and security force performances are summarised in the following points:

- **Coordination between military and security forces:** traditionally all states face problems in how best to organise and command large military forces.

- **Manpower quality and readiness to deal with the demands of modern security technologies and tactics:** Saudi security forces suffer from a lack of
manpower quality in some fields, such as certain technologies and tactics of contemporary security demands. An ability to overcome this issue could create an advanced forces structure to deal with both regional and external allies.

- **SANG needs to adapt to more demanding security missions**: and undertake better training to deal with developing internal and regional threats and duties.

- **Heavy reliance on arms and defence from foreign countries**: mainly the United States.

### 4.6 Environmental Security and Environmental Concerns

Environmental threats such as millenarian groups and economic ideas can damage the physical base of a country to such an extent that it may threaten its ideas and institutions. Environmental concerns are not a major political issue in Saudi Arabia yet, since there is little political debate in the media, or on the global stage regarding any misconduct to the environment. This is despite the fact that current Saudi society is not considered the most environmentally friendly. People are not generally worried about environmental issues, however, due to technological developments and the advancement of social media, gradually people’s understanding of this phenomenon are expected to increase.

Currently the main environmental concerns in Saudi Arabia are desertification, depletion of underground water resources, the lack of perennial rivers or permanent water bodies (which has prompted the development of extensive seawater desalination facilities), and coastal pollution from oil spills. The country has developed techniques to drill and ship oil from its natural reserves, but this has presented growing environmental threats to the country. The Gulf region, in particular
the Red Sea, has suffered harmful environmental impacts caused by oil spillages. The oil production process itself has many damaging consequences for the environment, including the contamination of wastewater utilised in the production process. This has drawn considerable attention from several international environmental agencies.

4.7 Conclusion

Adoption of the societal, political, economic, military and environmental security framework has enabled identification and understanding of Saudi Arabia’s national security, in respect of its structure, threats, dynamics, and interactions in a range of sectors. Although some threats, such as terrorism, poverty, and tribal roles do spread through more than one sector, examination of the interaction and variety of threats throughout the sectors (at all three levels of individual, state, and system) enabled identification of the most prominent threats at the internal/domestic stage.

A review of these sectors has showed that in terms of Saudi security, social and political issues represent the most essential deep-rooted threats to internal security. These do interact with various other aspects, but they also show a high degree of socio-political cohesion. The social and political threats mainly involve: religion; tribalism; conservative and liberalist conflicts and demands/pressures; social division and Shi’a demands; and propensity to external sources, which all cause harm to the state’s social and political integrity and identity and can affect state security and policymaking.

Analysis of economic security, on the other hand, revealed the seriousness of the huge Saudi dependency on oil and highlighted the fact that the country seems currently unable to transfer the economy beyond oil. This presents the most prominent
economic threat as Saudi Arabia has also experienced rapid growth in the population and has a subsequent need to create new jobs to avoid further associated threats, i.e. poverty, unemployment, and corruption. These associated threats could then extend to form social and political threats, and perhaps even military threats. Furthermore, oil dependence can be a threat to other aspects of military, societal and political security due to the vulnerability of the economy to oil and its global prices and future, which could affect state spenders and budgets.

The review of the five sectors also showed that military security is not much less important than social and political security, although for a long time military security for the Saudi states has depended on Western allies, namely the United States and United Kingdom. It still faces problems with coordination between security forces and manpower quality, readiness, and seriousness to deal with a wide range of challenges that the massive country holds.

Finally, environmental security was of less significant importance for Saudi security compared to the other sectors. Threats involved desertification, depletion of underground water resources, a lack of perennial rivers or permanent water bodies, and coastal pollution from oil spills. The country has developed techniques to drill and ship oil from its natural reserves, but this has presented growing environmental threats to the country.
Chapter 5

Saudi Arabian National Security: External Dimensions
5.1 Introduction

The Gulf is one of the most strategic waterways in the world due to its importance in oil transportation around the world; Persian Gulf countries together hold more than half of the world’s oil reserves. There have been, and will continue to be, significant territorial disputes between Gulf countries as well as revolution, disruption, and extremism (terrorism) within the region. Those interruptions have led to serious international disturbances and will continue to do so due to the economic dependence on the Gulf’s energy resources and other matters which will be illustrated later in this chapter.

Over several decades the Gulf region has been plagued by wars, revolution, disturbances, and extremism. This includes the Iranian revolution, the Iran-Iraq war in 1980-88, riots and demonstrations in Saudi Arabia, a Shi’a Muslim coup attempt in Bahrain, the US-Iran naval clashes during the 1987-1988 re-flagging effort, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991, the United States war in Iraq under the war on terror, and the recent political changes that started in 2011 and are taking place in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Bahrain, and Yemen; in addition to many other events causing political unrest in the region. In most crises or instances of political unrest occurring in the region, Saudi Arabia, one of the largest states in the region, has to get involved in one way or another. This puts Saudi Arabia in a difficult position in terms of maintaining its domestic and global role, and its security. Whether Saudi Arabia gets involved directly or indirectly in any of the crises, it can have a serious impact on national security and politics, and ultimately the security of the nation.

This chapter will outline the threats and challenges that occur at the regional and international level under the pattern of amity and enmity. It will also examine the
extent of each threat on the three levels of security (domestic, regional, and international), by reviewing each of the regional/neighbouring states and external states involved in the region’s security, taking into consideration the position of each state in terms of Saudi national security ranging from friendship to hostility. By identifying the nature of the threats that go beyond the state boundaries under domestic, regional, or international level a security linkage can be made relating to these three levels. Threats such as terrorism (which extend beyond a state border) can be examined at the regional level to identify the origin of any causes and impacts, whether it holds international, regional or domestic aspects and involvements. In fact, identifying the regional security issues will fill the gap in security dynamics between the state (as already discussed in Chapter 3) and the international level.

Hence, a number of issues need to be addressed to identify the external threats and challenges facing Saudi Arabia, and the impact of those threats on its regional and global position and security. The first subject to be considered is the security interdependence of Saudi Arabia at the regional level. The second issue involves identifying elements of “amity and enmity” among its main neighbouring states (Gulf regional context). The third topic will examine the nature of external power interventions on regional politics and consequences and indicators about the nature of the global system (anarchy/polarity). All of these will be examined through reviewing each regional/neighbouring state and other external powers involved in regional affairs and external threats (such as due to terrorism) under the three elements.
5.2 Saudi Arabian External Threats, Dynamics and Policies/Diplomacy

5.2.1 Iran

For decades Iran has been a source of security concern to Saudi Arabia. Although relations during the reign of Shah Muhammad Reza were good, and both countries were foundations for the United States’ regional allies, old sensitivities remained. The ancient Arab-Persian suspicions in the Gulf, combined with ancient Sunni-Shi’a mistrust remains active, despite the fact that it stretches back to the early days of Islam in the seventh century AD, through the war and conflict occurring between the Ottoman Empire (mostly Sunni persuasion) and the Persian Safavids Empire (espoused by Shi’as) (Buzan and Weaver, 2003).

In 1979, a revolutionised Iranian power emerged from the ashes of the coalition that overthrew the Shah in 1978 (Jabber, 1989: 4-6). Ayatollah Khomeini managed to control the revolutionists against Iran’s ruler Shah Reza Pahlavi and bring into existence the first Islamic government of the modern age. The 1979 Iranian revolution represented a major turning point in the politics of the region and in the Western view of Islam as a political power. The merging of the Shi’a fundamentalists and nationalists led to the emergence of the Islamic Republic of Iran, causing a threat to all other political systems in the region. The threat partly originated from the ideological underpinnings and from their position and objectives in the war with Iraq (ibid).

From Iran’s point of view, Iran’s foreign policy is an expression of its revolutionary and Islamic incentive for national security. Iran’s leaders view the Saudi government as clients of the United States. Iran’s leaders also believe that the Saudi government
takes instructions from Washington. The Iranian government’s claim to speak for a supposed widespread Islamic authority, has been seen as a clear challenge to the Saudi government, which sees its legitimacy as being attached to its role of protector of the holy places (Chubin and Tripp, 1996).

This revolution, however, appealed even to the non-religious Shi’a. Iran attracted the Gulf region’s Shi’a Muslims, who constitute roughly 70% of Bahrain’s population, about 25% in Kuwait, and 5% to 10% in Saudi Arabia. This Shi’a community is concentrated in areas such as al-Hasa, where much of Saudi Arabia’s oil reserves are located (Byman, 2002: 43). In 1980, Ayatollah Khomeni instigated Shi’a demonstrations in Bahrain, which unsettled the area and which was followed by an attempt to overthrow the government in December 1981. Iran gave assistance to organise the group and offered naval support in the event of a successful coup. In response to the Iranian revolution, demonstrations took place also in Kuwait. On another occasion, Shi’a groups linked to Iran blew up the United States Embassy in Kuwait and tried to assassinate the Emir of Kuwait. Also, in 1979 and 1980, in response to Khomeini’s return to Iran and calls for revolution, rioting took place in Saudi Arabia (Byman, 2002: 43-44).

More recently, in association with the Arab Spring, thousands of Shi’as demonstrated in Bahrain to demand democratic reforms. Saudi Arabia also witnessed a wave of young Shi’a protesters claiming they had suffered anti-Shi’a discrimination and wanting more equal rights. But, as discussed in the previous chapter, whether or not these disputes are connected directly with Iran, they still create pressure for the Saudi government and form a threat to the political and social identity of the Saudi state.
5.2.1.1 The Impact of the 1980-88 Gulf Wars

The greatest danger in the near past derived from the Iran-Iraq War, where the two states fought over the Shatt al-Arab waterway. Iran and Iraq fought a brutal eight-year war with each other from 1980 until 1988, which became known as the longest-running conventional war of the twentieth century, with an estimated death toll of 850,000 to 1 million people (Baxter, 2008: 109). This war highlighted the geopolitical interests at risk. It also led to disruptions in the flow of oil, destabilised the region and threatened the long-standing arrangement of Western states which aimed to preserve friendly relations with Gulf states through a stable balance of power and maintaining regional security. Together this created a greater opportunity for Iranian hegemony to spread throughout the Gulf (Joyner, 1990).

Iran viewed the outbreak of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War as an attempt by Iraq and its allies, Saudi Arabia and the West, to quell the Iranian revolution. Iranians viewed the silence of the UN with regards to the Iraqi attack, the other Arab Gulf states’ support for Iraq, and the United States’ entry into the war on Iraq’s side, as evidence to support the theory that the war’s aim was to eliminate the Iranian revolution (Chubin and Tripp, 1996: 10). To Iran, the Iraqi attack was unprovoked and therefore see Arab support for it as evidence of hostility. Furthermore, Iran saw itself as the aggrieved party (ibid).

This war also led the Soviet Union to become much more involved in the region, both politically and militarily. Such involvement had the potential to alter the balance of power in the region, threaten local Arab governments, and risk the access to Gulf oil for Western states. To continue the chaos, Iran tried to bully Kuwait and other regional states by attacking their shipping, especially their oil tankers, which became
known as the Tanker War. However, the war underlined the high-cost of political, social, and economic dislocations as a result of personal animosities and historical antagonisms in the Gulf (Joyner, 1990).

Since then, other low points have been reached in relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran. As a result of the hostile relationship between the two countries, in one event in 1984 Saudi Arabia shot down an Iranian F-4 combat aircraft, and the Iranians attacked Saudi shipping lines (Pterson, 2002: 15). Iran, however, tried to intimidate Kuwait and other regional states by weakening their support for Iraq by attacking their shipping, particularly their oil tankers. The “Tanker War” did not slow the Saudi oil exports, but it damaged ships and created a high tension situation. All these activities led Saudi Arabia to build a new alternative oil pipeline under the Red Sea (Karsh, 1989). Again the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran reached a critical point during the Iranian demonstration in the 1987 Hajj (the Muslim pilgrimage to Makkah) that left hundreds dead, followed by a bombing set by Iranian agents during the 1989 Hajj (Moller, 2001).

5.2.1.2 The Impact of the Second Gulf War and 2003 US Invasion

The defeat of Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War changed the balance of power in the area, as Iraq had previously been considered the dominant power in the Gulf (Cordesman, 2009: 74). The losses in Iraq allowed Iran to extend its control and influence in the region to fill the power vacuum caused by Iraq’s diminishing political power in the region. Despite the destruction of a large part of Iraq’s army in the 1991 Gulf War, it still had considerable power, but the 2003 US war in Iraq officially dissolved the Iraqi army and meant that Iraq’s army were no longer a great power. Thereby, insurgency
groups and militia groups were able to gain a greater role in Iraqi state security and politics.

The seriousness of the problem has been highlighted by many studies and reports, such as Cordesman (2009), Henderson (2009), and Beehner and Bruno (2008). It has been noted that Iran has been accused by Iraqi officials, the United States, and by Saudi Arabia of using its military and intelligence assets to support Shi’a militia groups, such as the Mahdi Army, to expand Shi’a power in the south of Iraq and to form a major political force that could directly influence the shape of the future in Iraq. Analysts note that the Shi’a-led country is filled with influential figures such as Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, who spent time during Saddam Hussein’s tenure exiled in Iran. Some even fought in Iranian-armed military units against Iraqi forces during the long, bloody Iran-Iraq War. Evidence of Iranian tactical support being supplied to the Iraqi Shi’a insurgency is worrying the United States and other regional states. Hence, Iraq is no longer a significant body against Iran’s revolution agenda and their intentions to spread their principles in the region. In fact, it has become a new starting point through which to spread the principles in other countries. Despite the threat that Iraq previously formed to Saudi Arabia and other Arab Gulf states, the loss of an important state such as Iraq, and Iran’s control over politics – plus their proclaimed intention to spread their ideologies in the region at the expense of the regional countries – pose uncountable threats and could cause serious threats to Saudi Arabian security in a number of security sectors, namely political, social, economic, and military threats.
5.2.1.3 Current Situation

Despite a healthy trend in the relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran that lasted during most of the 1990s, Iran has showed aggressiveness in their intentions on a regular basis. This research runs up until June 2013, just before the election of President Hassan Rouhani.

There is no general consensus in Iran with regard to foreign policy strategy or domestic-policy challenges of the country. Important moderate groups would prefer to have policies to transform Iran into a regional power by means of a process of social and economic reform, by integrating into the world’s economy through political dialogue with its neighbours and the West. In contrast, the hardliners or the extremists would prefer to stabilise the regime and Iranian supremacy in the Gulf through a mix of isolation and threatening policies. The hardliners in Iran also consider the army of the United States as bound to Iraq. They also believe that they are qualified to assume a political, economic and technological supremacy in the Gulf region. Additionally, they claim the United States and Israel are central threats (Hanelt, 2007).

Iranian support for and interference in issues such as Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Lebanon through Hezbollah, in addition to its nuclear programme, are increasing the levels of fear among other Gulf countries. These issues all serve to feed religious and political confrontation between the Shi’as under Iranian leadership and the Sunnis under Saudi Arabian leadership. Internal and external perceptions of Iranian politics are far removed from each other; while many doubts occur regarding the United States’ political intentions, which results in the Iranians feeling threatened and giving highest priorities to the continuation of their regime. The option of nuclear armament is seen
as a threat to the region and world peace, which will be discussed in further detail later in the chapter.

The Iranian navy also poses a significant irritation in the Gulf. To overcome the limitations of its surface forces, Iran relies heavily on alternative naval warfare through obtaining small submarines from North Korea and Russia (Ekovich, 2004). Iran is, thus, still considered to be an aggressor and a source of threat and irritation for regional and international security. Furthermore, in the ongoing US war on terror, which includes the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, there are serious controversial concerns that the Iranian’s are disrupting the United States’ role in their war in Iraq, which is undermining the US situation and creating a sort of breach in Iraqi security; this, in turn, will have a significant effect on security in the Gulf region (Hanelt, 2007: 4).

Yet, any military action that might be taken against Iran by the United States will most likely interfere with oil flows from the Gulf to the United States. As the Iranian Supreme Leader stated on 4 June 2006: “If the Americans make a wrong move toward Iran, the shipment of energy will definitely face danger, and the Americans would not be able to protect energy supply in the region.” (Henderson, 2008: ix). If such incidents take place, it will have serious consequences for the economy and security of the Gulf region and, in turn, will also affect the world’s economy and security.

5.2.1.4 Iran’s WMD and Military Capabilities

Iran’s nuclear programme is becoming a source of concern to political analysts around the world. Iran’s rapid development of a non-peaceful purposes nuclear programme became widely known after a recent confession by Abdul Qadeer Khan.
(Pakistan’s top nuclear scientist), that he and other scientists from his laboratory, along with a number of Pakistani diplomats and intelligence agents, sold nuclear weapon plans to states including Iran (Korb, 2005). Control of such proliferation of nuclear, radiological, biological and chemical weapons, as well as long-range missile systems that can threaten far-off populations, has been a primary strategic priority for the United States for many years. The existence of such Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in the Gulf and the Middle East is presenting a serious concern for Iran’s neighbours, and the US and its major allies.

During the Iran-Iraq War, Iran demonstrated its ability to deploy chemical weapons and is assumed to have accumulated fairly large stocks of chemical weapons and an active biological weapons programme. American analysts are uncertain whether or not Iran is capable of producing these weapons that can be delivered via ballistic missile warheads. To prove Iran’s claims, Iran has developed and tested the Shahab ballistic missile, which has a range of 1,300 km and can reach targets throughout the Middle East. Iran also has a range of shorter-range missiles (Korb, 2005: 9).

According to Rogers (2010), some Israeli sources insist that Iran might only need a year or two to produce a nuclear weapon, whereas other sources suggest a much longer time. Rogers explicates that in theory, the low-enriched uranium could be run repeatedly through centrifuge cascades to enrich it towards the 85%+ level of weapons grade uranium. Iran has previously announced that it has enriched samples to 20% to supply a nuclear reactor used to produce medical and other isotopes; Rogers believes that this indicates that Iran could be close to a very limited nuclear weapons potential. In short, his arguments suggest that Iran is slowly developing a nuclear-related technology and personnel systems. Despite this, if Iran is really
planning to develop a small arsenal of nuclear weapons, then it will need a timescale of three to seven years (ibid). The existing literature sources on Middle Eastern security policies do not provide any solid evidence that such a decision has already been taken.

American analysts do not believe that the Iranian government would transfer hard-earned WMD materials to terrorist groups, yet, any possibility of such events taking place is enough to cause a major strategic concern for the United States and the Gulf region.

According to Cordesman (2009: 81), “the two Iranian entities that pose a special threat to Saudi national security are the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Quds Force, and the IRGC naval force”.

Moreover, Iran has attempted to develop its ballistic missile force. Currently, Iran, with extensive help from North Korea, has deployed its Shahab-3 missile with a range of 800-1000 km (Rogers, 2010: 7). However, the greater concern is driven from the development of the Shahab missile into a longer-range Ghadr-1 missile, which ranges up to 1,600 km (ibid). Likewise, Iran’s long-term commitment to develop more powerful ballistic missiles, with much faster pre-launch procedures and that use solid fuel rather than liquid fuel, is also generating concerns to Israel and perhaps to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia remains extremely concerned with Iran’s military potential. Tehran promises that Iran is not building a nuclear bomb. Saudi Arabia does not have much confidence in such promises, perhaps since Saudi Arabia continues to see the regime in Iran as essentially aggressive, due to the fact that the Iranian intention is to become
a supreme power in the Gulf region (Peterson, 2002). Undoubtedly, a nuclear-armed Iran would disturb the balance of power in the area and would probably force the Saudis and other major GCC states to develop their own nuclear capabilities and remain under the defensive umbrella of the United States.

The military balance in the Gulf region is being shaped by a US effort to deter and defend against Iran by strengthening its military capabilities in the Gulf, and those of its partner countries on the Arabian Peninsula – particularly in the realm of air power, missile defence, and air-sea operations. The resulting partnership must deal with an array of threats that range from low-level attacks or clashes in the Gulf, to the possibility of closure of the Strait of Hormuz, or Iranian intervention in the Syrian civil war, or Iranian missile strikes.

5.2.2 Iraq

Iraq under the rule of Saddam Hussein was a nightmare for Saudi Arabia. But even without Saddam Iraq has become more complicated. For more than half a century Saudi Arabia has viewed Iraq with suspicion. When Saddam Hussein was in power Saudi Arabia observed Saddam as an oppressor and a regional troublemaker (Gause III, 2003). But Iraq has become a power vacuum without Saddam, which has caused almost the same destabilising effect. Saudis saw the overthrow of Saddam as unavoidable but also unwelcome, and Saudi cooperation during the 2003 US invasion of Iraq was limited, especially when compared with the Saudi assistance in the 1991 Gulf War (Gause III, 2003).

When the Iranian revolution leaders took control of their country, Saddam Hussein played a massive role in facing the revolution (Byman, 2002). During most of the
Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88, Saudi Arabia and other GCC states financially backed Saddam Hussein, as he was considered to be a great defender in the face of Iranian ambitions in the Gulf area. Saddam’s obsession with Iran blunted his ambitions to interfere in Arab politics, and he became known as a defender in the face of Shi’a Iranian revolution influences (Henderson, 2005).

All other Gulf countries also sided with Iraq, hoping that Iraq would work as a bulwark against the Iranian revolution. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates financed Iraq with approximately $50 billion in loans (Sean, 2008: 45). The Iran-Iraq War further separated Iran from the Gulf states, brought the remaining Gulf states together and encouraged a shared security among them to fight against Iran; this ultimately promoted the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Saudi Arabia’s alliance with Saddam Hussein’s regime during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War occurred mainly because of the common interest that emerged as a result of the Iranian revolution and the Iranian’s intentions that together caused fear among the countries in the area. Yet, the Saudi-Iraqi alliance was surrounded with suspicion (Pterson, 2002).

Saudi Arabia’s suspicion over Saddam Hussein’s regime revitalised in August 1990, with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Saudi Arabia contributed a lot to freeing Kuwait by providing military assistance and access for the US-led coalition forces, as started to occur in January 1991. Iraq responded with a Scud missile against Saudi Arabia (Baxter, 2008). The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait brought Saudi Arabia even closer to the United States, since Saudi Arabia supported all United Nations (UN) resolutions on Iraq, including the sanctions regime and the no-fly zone over Iraq’s southern area (ibid). Saudi Arabia’s support for the last, in particular, caused a lot of difficulties.
The United States kept huge numbers of troops in Saudi Arabia in order to keep the no-fly zone over Iraq’s southern area and to prevent Saddam Hussein from taking any further action towards the Gulf oil states (Rogers, 2008). As a result, this foreign presence motivated an anti-American feeling between some sectors of Saudi society and gave fuel to the terrorist campaign that Bin Laden launched in 1990 – Al-Qaeda (Klare, 2004: 27).

The US invasion of Iraq in 2003, under the “War on Terror” campaign, produced a new challenge for the Gulf region’s security and has triggered debate regarding the United States in the Islamic world (Gause III, 2003). After the US invasion, Saudi Arabia became disappointed with the Shi’a dominance over the Iraqi government, which damaged the Saudi interests and gave a greater chance for Iran to control Iraq and the region (Henderson, 2007).

Saudi Arabia’s policies have always aimed to safeguard the security and stability of Iraq. However, the fall of Saddam, the traditional defender against Iran, has changed the Sunni-Shi’a balance of power in Iraq and in the region. Increased Iranian interference or movement in Iraq means more influence of Iran in the area (Baxter, 2008). On the other hand, Saudi Arabia is ready to put pressure on the Iraqi government to either make concessions to Iraqi Sunnis or to separate itself from Iran. Indeed, Saudi Arabia did not withdraw from the prospect of confronting Iran more directly, but with additional threats from Iran, it will be difficult to achieve a happy compromise between the two states (Henderson, 2007).

5.2.2.1 Current Situation

Currently, Iraq is facing several problems. This research covers the period up until June 2013, at which point, security in Iraq varies from region to region. The country
is facing the risk of breaking apart into separate ethnic-religious parts. The central
government is weak and faces local and regional authorities and militia groups who
also fight among themselves. Moreover, a climate of fear is being produced due to the
spread of terrorism in the country that is forcing thousands of Iraqis to flee to
neighbouring countries every day; this by itself is creating new problems. Iraq,
therefore, represents a condition of uncertainty which is a core problem for Saudi
Arabian national security.

Iran has been accused of using its military and intelligence assets to support Shi’a
militias to expand Shi’a power in the south of Iraq and make it a major political force
in shaping Iraq in the future. Whereby, Cordesman (2009) argues that Saudi Arabia
has a strong stake in curbing Iran’s influence and halting the creation of a Shi’a
crescent between Iraq and Iran that could cause further Sunni-Shi’a conflicts in the
Gulf and beyond. The real fear is that Iraq will become like Palestine or Somalia, and
most likely become the central scene for American-Iranian conflicts of interest, or a
land of selfish interests or Jihadists (Hanelt, 2007: 4). As a consequence of Iran’s
intervention and involvement in Iraq in many areas, including military, political and
economic aspects, Iraq can be seen as an extended territory for Iran. Beehner and
Bruno (2008) argue that the United States alleges that Iran is involved in Iraq on a
number of fronts:

1. Military: through the Quds Force, a special operations wing of Iran’s
   Revolutionary Guard Corps.

2. Religious: by sending thousands of religious students and scholars to Shi’a
   holy cities of Najaf and Karbala, where one-third of them belong to Iranian
   intelligence units.
3. Economic: Iran has become one of Iraq’s largest trading partners, with Iranian exports to Iraq topping $1.8 billion in 2006.

4. Social: Many powerful Iraqi Shi’a political parties made Iran their home base.

All in all, these factors make Iraq a hostile force and a similar source of direct threat to Saudi Arabia’s national security as Iran, caused by their dependence and direct association with Iran.

5.2.3 The Northern Arab States (Syria and Jordan)

For few decades, the sort of threats that Syria and Jordan posed during the Nasser era of Egypt and Ba’athist ideologies of the 1950s and 1960s were low (Pterson, 2002: 21). More recently, for most Arab states, an assumed alliance between Iran and Syria is seen as proof of a rising Shi’a crescent, demonstrated by the shared religious identity of the Shi’a governments, and therefore evidence of an emerging political order for a new Middle East. As explained earlier (Chapter 4), the Shi’a evolved as a powerful political movement in 680 AD, but as Shi’a Islam spread across the Middle East and into Syria in the first half of the eighth century, it developed a tiny sect today known as “Alawites” which means the “followers of Ali”. The Alawites represent a joint mix of Phoenician paganism and Christianity (Kaplan, 1993) and they incorporated Shi’a Islam into their belief system by deifying Ali, along with the Prophet Muhammad and Salman of Persia, to form a trinity reminiscent of the triune monotheism of Christianity (Proctor, 2008: 33-34).

Syria fell into the French sphere of influence after World War I and the new colonial officials tried to forge a more inclusive, secular government in Syria by encouraging minority sects to fill government and military positions. Over the decades, the sect
slowly began to dominate the military (Corm, 2010: 109-110). The Alawite minority currently makes up around 10% of the Syrian population, but due to the assiduous French recruitment of minorities (especially Alawites) into the troops, the Alawites have gradually taken over the military from within. But it was the coup of 1970, which brought an Alawite air-force officer, Hafiz al-Assad (the father of Bashar al-Assad) to power (Proctor, 2008: 35).

As Hafiz al-Assad began to back up his regime, a new threat was to threaten his success. The Muslim Brotherhood, a Sunni Salifi movement which originated in Egypt, was growing in popularity. The movement wanted to restore the world dominance of Islam by establishing Shari’ah law as the foundation upon which Syria would be based. The Muslim Brotherhood found direct popularity with the majority Sunni population in Syria. The new Alawite regime was an easy target for the Muslim Brotherhood due to its apostasy from both Sunnis and Shi’as who had historically seen Alawites as heretical (Ulph, 2006). A decade of violence with the Muslim Brotherhood culminated when Hafiz al-Assad ordered a massive military assault against the city of Hama in 1982 (a stronghold of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria), where between 10,000 and 30,000 residents were murdered (Zambelis, 2005: 100).

As Assad tackled the Muslim Brotherhood at Hama, they started to develop a more tolerant form of Sunni Islam for Syria; however, the 1990s witnessed the rise of Salifist jihadism. This new strain of Salifism merged the Muslim Brotherhood’s desire for a return to governance by Shari’ah law with the terrorist tactics of Hezbollah (Proctor, 2008). Meanwhile, Hafiz al-Assad disliked Sunni-dominated Iraq and viewed it as a threat, as lots of its Sunni tribes were placed across the Iraqi-Syrian border. Thus, when Iraq was involved in war with Iran, Assad lined up with Iran.
Later, when Saddam Hussein was again under attack, this time from the US-led coalition, Syria participated in the break-up of Iraq’s army (ibid).

Syria has had a constant presence in Lebanon since 1976, where Syria refused to officially demarcate the border and would not open an embassy in Lebanon, as it believes that Lebanon is part of a greater Syria. The Syrian government sent troops into Lebanon in 1976 to try to stem a civil war. However, under pressure from the United Nations, it withdrew 14,000 troops in 2005 after the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafik Hariri. A UN tribunal is investigating allegations that Syria was behind that murder and those of other Lebanese politicians, but even after international pressure to leave Lebanon, they continued to maintain a small military presence, which, according to a report put together by the International Lebanese Committee for the UN Security Council Resolution 1559, claims that Syria maintains army camps in Lebanon, and dozens of smuggling passages to permeate foreign fighters and weapons. It adds that it allows members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and Palestinian militants allied with Syria to stay on Lebanese soil (Slavin, 2007).

It is worth noting that Syria under the Alawite regime became isolated and suffered from hatred from most of its neighbouring Arab states, either due to its ideologies or policies. Thus, Syria allied itself with Iran because Iran was the only country that would fully tolerate it. Furthermore, Syria was the only country to accept Iran at the regional level. Hence, Syria is Iran’s only supporter in the region and vice versa, which explains the Syrian position beyond the concept of the Shi’a crescent (Proctor, 2008).
5.2.3.1 Current Situation

The Syrian civil war, which started in 2011, created a major challenge for Saudi Arabian national security, as well as for other countries in the region. It also created a collision between Saudi Arabia and the United States, and Russia, in addition to some of the GCC countries. The current Syrian civil war also produced internal divisions between Sunnis, Alawites, Kurds, and Syria’s smaller minorities, and has launched a long-lasting anger and hatred between Sunni and Shi’a (Alawite) Muslims. The war has already spread to involve Lebanon and Iraq, unleashing a reawakening of sectarian tensions and conflict in each country. It has developed into a religious war within Islam that gradually positions Sunni against Shi’a, and religious extremists against mainstream Islam, across the entire Islamic world. The civil war has also led to Qatari, Saudi, Turkish, Jordanian, and UAE involvement, either through them providing money, training, or weapons to the opposition, or where Iran and Russia have supported Bashar al-Assad, along with Hezbollah. More than 93,000 people have been killed in the Syrian conflict so far (Black, 2013). According to Cordesman (2013), Saudi Arabia and the UAE were divided from Qatar in both Syria and Egypt because of Qatar’s willingness to support the Muslim Brotherhood and the more hard-line Islamist elements of the Syrian rebels.

Hence, the Syrian civil war is adding a possible political, economic, social, and military threat to Saudi Arabian national security at all three levels of state security (domestic, regional, and international) and will probably continue to do so in the near future.
5.2.4 Israel and the Palestinian Issue

The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is one of the most serious causes of instability in the Middle East. The US’s ongoing support for Israel has greatly complicated and continues to complicate the Arab-US relationship and the peace process (Baxter, 2008). However, in terms of Saudi Arabia’s relationships with Israel, neither have ever been in direct relationship or had direct connections. There has never been direct confrontation with Israel and it is unlikely to happen, given Saudi Arabia’s history of non-confrontation and the limited military threat that it poses (Pterson, 2002).

Saudi Arabia, like many of the Arab countries, objected to the creation of Israel at the heart of the Arab world, but unlike Egypt, Syria and Jordan, Saudi Arabia’s participation in the Arab-Israeli conflict was small; where it was involved more in diplomatic and financial approaches than military (Bahgat, 2007). To briefly summarise, the conflict began in the nineteenth century. Palestine was under two administrative districts of the Ottoman rule which lasted four centuries (1516-1918), the ‘Sanjak’ of Jerusalem and the ‘Vilayet’ of Beirut. The Ottoman government did not consider Palestine’s districts as being important until the middle of the nineteenth century when the Muslim Sultan decided to protect the holy places of Islam, Christianity and Judaism as a political and religious obligation (Fraser, 2008: 2). By the beginning of the First World War (WWI), Palestine was inhabited by 650,000 Arabs and 90,000 Jews (Ahmad, 2008: 7).

During the First World War, the Ottomans joined the German camp against the allied powers of Britain, Russia, and France. Britain rushed to secure allies, and made promises to both the Arabs (in the 1915 McMahon commitment) and the Jews (in the
Balfour Declaration), whereby Arab nationalists and Jewish Zionists both aspired for the creation of their own homeland in Palestine (Thomas, 1999: 9-11).

At the end of the First World War, the League of Nations established the British Mandate over the territory of Palestine as the governing authority. But the British appeared to be unsuccessful in appeasing the national aspirations of the Zionist Jews and Palestinian Arabs, hence, the United Nations voted in 1947 to partition Palestine into two states, Arab and Jewish (Ahmad, 2008: 8).

Meanwhile, the British Prime Minister of the time, Lloyd George had some sympathy for the idea of creating a Jewish homeland in Palestine. In 1948, Britain experienced pressure from the “Lehi” Jewish terrorist group (the last organisation that referred to themselves as a terrorist group) – an armed group of Zionists who were a faction of Mandatory Palestine, and whose aim was to evacuate the British authorities from Palestine so that they could form a Jewish state (Rapoport, 2006: 10-11).

The Jewish repossessed their right to this area as their homeland which was lost more than 2,000 years before and the British had to withdraw in 1948. Consequently, the State of Israel was proclaimed and it instantly started receiving aid from the United States. Since then, the Palestinians and neighbouring Gulf countries have been in deep-rooted conflict with Israel that has developed even further in recent years (Campbell, 2005). Despite the short history of Israel, wars have characterised most of its brief past. The Suez war of 1956, the six-day war of 1967, the Yom Kipper war of 1973, the 1982 Lebanon war, and the 2006 war in Lebanon (Baxter, 2008: 46-65).

The 1967 war was a marker point, since Saudi Arabia got involved in the Arab-Israeli conflicts. After 1967, Saudi Arabia carried on being the leading state in designing
Arab policy for Israel and since then a major development emerged (Bahgat, 2007: 50). As part of the Arab defeat in the war, Israel captured East Jerusalem, and united the entire city, including the holy site of the al-Aqsa Mosque, under Israeli sovereignty. Israel also captured the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in addition to Syria’s Golan Heights and Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, under King Faisal, could not afford to be uninvolved, and King Faisal who had prayed at al-Aqsa several years earlier, expressed his desire to pray again at al-Aqsa before his death, but his wish was never satisfied (Quandt, 1981: 31).

Another important factor in the 1967 war was the defeat of radical Arab nationalists, led by President Gamal Abdul-Nasser of Egypt. This is important because the threat to Saudi Arabia was then eliminated (Bahgat, 2007). Before the 1967 war, the Arab world was divided into two groups: pro-Western conservative regimes and radical socialist-nationalist states and this situation reached its peak in the proxy war between the Egyptian and Saudi armies in Yemen, as will be seen later in this chapter. The

Figure 5.1: Map of the Gulf of Aqaba

Source: Graphic Maps, from www.worldatlas.com/aatlas/infopage/gulfaqba.gif

Another important factor in the 1967 war was the defeat of radical Arab nationalists, led by President Gamal Abdul-Nasser of Egypt. This is important because the threat to Saudi Arabia was then eliminated (Bahgat, 2007). Before the 1967 war, the Arab world was divided into two groups: pro-Western conservative regimes and radical socialist-nationalist states and this situation reached its peak in the proxy war between the Egyptian and Saudi armies in Yemen, as will be seen later in this chapter. The
Egyptian defeat in the 1967 war ended its involvement in the Yemen conflict. Egypt became more concerned with liberating the territories it lost to Israel, rather than supporting Arab revolutionary movements. The loss of the Suez Canal also caused massive damage to the Egyptian economy. This condition made Egypt increasingly dependent on foreign aid and some of their major economic reliance came from labour remittances from Arab oil-producing countries (ibid: 50).

After that, Saudi Arabia increased its role in the Arab-Israeli conflict. In the early 1970s, Saudi Arabia started offering financial and diplomatic assistance. Then in 1981, Saudi Arabia offered its first peace plan for their vision of a comprehensive peace; this marked the first public Saudi attempt to play an active role in resolving the conflict (Cordesman, 2009: 43). However, during the 1956 war, Israel had occupied several unpopulated Saudi islands (Sanafir and Tiran) in the Gulf of Aqaba (part of the Red Sea see Figure 5.1), returning them later to Egyptian control. Saudi Arabia recovered them following the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in 1979 (Bahgat, 2007: 50).

In 2001, King Abdullah, while Crown Prince, offered the second peace plan. He and the Foreign Minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, actively supported the peace plan and it was reapproved unanimously by the Arab leaders at the Beirut summit on 2 May 2002. Unfortunately, it was not fully accepted by the Israelis (ibid). Although many senior Israeli leaders expressed support for talks based on King Abdullah’s proposal, some of the details divide both sides. The emergence of the latest Saudi peace plan came about due to a common interest between Israel and the moderate Arab states with regard to Iran’s regional ambitions (Bahgat, 2007).
The continual Israeli construction of settlements in occupied territories is causing complications and difficulties for the peace process between Israel and Palestine. The ongoing expansion of existing settlements is often criticised as an obstacle to the peace process by the Palestinians and other parties, including the United Nations, the Arab League, the United Kingdom, Russia, the European Union, the United States and others.

Israel’s nuclear programme is still posing a threat to Saudi Arabia and the Middle East and may possibly play a part in Saudi Arabia’s strategic perception. Israel is one of four nuclear-armed countries not recognised as a nuclear weapons states by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the others being India, Pakistan and North Korea. Officially, Israel has never been approved to own nuclear weapons, instead repeating over the years that it would not be the first country to “introduce” nuclear weapons to the Middle East (Thowhidul, 2012: 71). Israeli nuclear capability was achieved in the late 1960s and it is believed that they have more than 200 nuclear warheads, ready to be delivered by aircraft or surface-to-surface missiles. Furthermore, Israel might also be developing nuclear warheads for submarine-launched cruise missiles – Israel currently has four German-built Dolphin-class submarines (Rogers, 2010: 4). Although Israel believes nuclear capability is essential to its security, whether or not Israel or other countries in the region obtain nuclear weapons, the very idea will still pose a threat to the security and the peace of the region, in addition to any environmental consequences that such programmes hold.

Israel mainly forms a political and military threat. Moreover, it is traditionally a hostile element to Saudi security as it comprises a series of ideological, territorial, and ethnic threats on a historical level. But, its threats are mainly limited to the regional
level, and to some extent the international level, caused by Israeli lobbying and support in and from the United States.

5.2.5 Yemen

Saudi Arabia and Yemen are the biggest and oldest countries – in terms of geography and demography – on the Arabian Peninsula. During the last seven decades their relationships have seen marked ups and downs with brief military conflicts, border disputes, and political differences. Yemen has been a source of concern to Saudi Arabia since the Yemeni revolution of 1962, when a successful military revolution brought about the establishment of a republican system which formed a serious threat to Saudi Arabian security and stability (Alsaud, 2000: 2-3).

According to Alsaud (2000), the Soviet Union and its camp offered assistance in all fields to the new Yemeni government, in order to gain influence near the oil fields of the Arabian Gulf, thus putting the Western interests in danger. Alsaud argued that this development alarmed the Saudis and led them to side with the prior royalist ruler of Yemen, who started to regroup to remove the new government from power. Egypt on the other hand, under the rule of President Gamal Abdul-Nasser and some of the Arab states who supported revolutionary Arab nationalism (Nasserism) sided with the new regime by offering them political and military support. This all led to a civil war in 1962 in Yemen, which lasted for seven years and involved a proxy war between the Egyptian and Saudi armies in Yemen.

Saudi Arabia’s policy from 1967 until 1990, was balanced between supporting the moderate regimes in North Yemen and containing the Marxist regimes in South Yemen. As a result of the Soviet Union’s collapse, South Yemen merged with North
Yemen in 1990. Furthermore, the relations between the Yemenis and the Saudis between 1967 and 1990 were overshadowed by long territorial disputes and ideological differences that started during the civil war of the 1960s (Pterson, 2002: 24).

Currently, Saudi Arabia experiences friendly relations with Yemen. Saudi Arabia’s border disputes with Yemen were resolved in 2000, after the twentieth round of negotiations. Moreover, Saudi Arabia has stopped its efforts to turn Yemeni tribes against the central government and has also worked towards including Yemen as a member in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Yemen’s government does not support radical fundamentalists who are unfriendly to the Saudi government and has built far more positive relations with Saudis compared to the past (Cordesman, 2009).

Yet, past tensions between the southern and northern regions of Yemen, which were shaped by sectarian cleavages and failures in power sharing, continue to pose challenges to the Yemeni government and to the Saudis as well. Yemen has been a major shelter for Al-Qaeda terrorists operating against Saudi Arabia in the Arabian Peninsula, where they have targeted the rugged and inhospitable Saudi-Yemeni border to pursue activities such as illegal immigration, importation of drugs and arms, and other types of smuggling.

Counterterrorism experts suggest that the presence of Saudi militants in Yemen demonstrate that Al-Qaeda’s presence in Saudi Arabia has been significantly obstructed by Saudi security forces (Sharp, 2010), nevertheless, experts also suggest that Al-Qaeda has chosen Yemen as a safe place and potential long-term base of operations to conduct terrorist attacks internally and even abroad. Sharp (2010)
indicates that throughout most of 2009, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) were responsible for several attacks in Yemen and inside Saudi Arabia.

In addition to the Al-Qaeda threat in Yemen, the Yemeni government faces other domestic insurgencies that pose a more immediate risk to government survival. The Al-Houthi conflict (its name originates from the revolt’s leaders, the Al-Houthi family, a prominent Zaydi religious tribe who claim to be descended from the prophet Muhammad), has been raging for nearly six years in the northern most governorate of Sa’dah, adding another element of instability to a country that is already facing a nationalist struggle in the south and global jihad movement (Atarodi, 2010).

The significance of Yemen, as a field of struggle between regional powers, is growing. Since 2004, fighting has been going on in Yemen’s northern province of Sa’dah. Saudi Arabia was dragged into the fighting in November 2009 (Sharp, 2010: 18). Although the war has ended, many lost their lives and more than 100,000 people were displaced by the clashes between government troops and the north western Al-Houthi (or Houthi) rebels. Additionally, a regional dimension arose from the conflict, with the Yemeni authorities accusing Iran of backing the rebels, while the rebels accused Saudi Arabia of supporting the Yemeni government (Atarodi, 2010).

The conflict not only threatens Yemen’s unity, it also generates a growing threat to Saudi Arabia over and above the whole region. According to Guzansky (2009), the fighting is turning Yemen into another arena of struggle (which is highly important because of its strategic location), between the pragmatic Sunnis seeking to include Yemen in their midst, and the radical Shi’a country of Iran, which is seeking to expand its regional influence and establish a presence in the Red Sea and Horn of
Africa area. Iran has already increased the presence of its navy in the Gulf of Aden area, claiming it aims to deal with the rising risk of piracy in the region.

Returning to the subject of Al-Houthi, the leader of the family, Hussain Badr al din Al-Houthi, believed that Zaydi Shi’ism and the Zaydi community were becoming marginalised in Yemeni society for a variety of reasons, including government neglect of the Sa’dah governorate and Saudi Arabian proselytising in Sa’dah. Hussain Badr al din Al-Houthi formed a radical organisation called the “Organisation for Youthful Believers” as a revivalist Zaydi group for Al-Houthi followers to dispute the legitimacy of the Yemeni government; they were firmly opposed to the rule of President Saleh. However, Hussain Badr al din Al-Houthi was killed by Yemeni troops in 2004. His son, Abdul Malik Al-Houthi, is now the leader of the group, though there have been numerous government claims that he was killed during the war in December 2009. The Yemeni government claims that Al-Houthi rebels seek to establish a Zaydi theocratic state in Sa’dah with Iranian assistance (Sharp, 2010).

Sa’dah remains one of the poorest areas of Yemen, and experts believe the Al-Houthi family focused upon the desperation of many of the province’s inhabitants to build a religious, insurgent movement capable of fighting in the region’s mountainous areas. The Saudis, on the other hand, connect Al-Houthi rebels with Al-Qaeda militants who are exploiting the circumstances in Yemen to destabilise the region. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been concerned with Yemeni fighting spilling over and concerned with the possibility that Yemen-based Al-Qaeda militants could take advantage of the tense situation by smuggling militant forces, arms and drugs across the difficult-to-control border. In addition to the northern rebels, the government in Sanaa is also confronting a separatist movement in the south, which weakens the authority of the
government even further (Cordesman, 2009). None of these elements are in the best interest of the Saudis. Hence, Saudi Arabia became involved in fighting against the rebels, as this aspect has a vital impact on Saudi Arabia’s own national interests in the region. Any political instability in Yemen will have effects on the stability of the Arabian Peninsula and the flow of oil from the Gulf of Aden.

The domestic political situation in Yemen is critically important to the security and stability of Saudi Arabia. Thus, Yemen poses a source of threat that stretches the regional, or external level and goes into the sphere of domestic security for Saudi Arabia; this affects Saudi Arabia’s political, military, economic and social security sectors.

5.2.6 Horn of Africa and Other Red Sea Challenges

Piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean poses a serious challenge to the security of the Red Sea lanes and the flow of Saudi exports. In 2008 alone, piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean was cited as being the cause of 80 attacks which involved a number of outside nations, including the United States, the Ukraine, Russia, India, and many other countries (Cordesman, 2009: 34-35). No international navy has been involved in any serious action against the pirates. It is unclear how Saudi Arabia or other regional states would deploy their forces to tackle piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean.

There is no clear evidence in the literature that suggests whether the political instability in Sudan, or tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea, will affect the shipping flow through the Red Sea or Saudi Arabian security. But, it is almost certain that Saudi Arabia cannot rely on the security of the Red Sea or the Indian Ocean. The
Kingdom has already faced threats of piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. In November 2008, a Saudi super tanker (the MV Sirius Star), was hijacked by pirates from Somalia, while carrying some $100 million worth of Saudi oil (Cordesman, 2009: 34). The Saudi Foreign Minister, Saud al-Faisal, said his country would join international efforts to battle piracy after the seizure of the Saudi oil ship.

According to Cordesman (2009), the local navies in Somalia and Yemen have little capabilities to parallel the naval assets required to enforce security in the area. Somalia has no real navy, and Yemen has small numbers of patrol boats. Oman on the other hand, must focus on defending the Strait of Hormuz, which makes Saudi Arabia the only southern Gulf state with naval assets capable of contributing to naval security, but the area is beyond its territorial waters. Altogether, the circumstances make it very difficult to form a permanent solution to the piracy issue in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean.

Perhaps threats coming from insecurity in the Horn of Africa region (which mainly involve piracy) will remain regional problems that do not extend to the internal or state level, however, they certainly extend to the international or global level due to the typical overseas destinations and high capacity for valuable loads that these ships carry, especially when the flow of oil from the Gulf region is considered. In terms of Saudi national security, these threats mainly present a danger to economic security.

5.2.7 Oil Security and US Connections

Oil security was discussed in Chapter 4 while discussing the economic security sector in Saudi Arabia and so it was addressed at the domestic level of security. However, oil is a global strategic commodity, and so it has constituted regional and international
challenges and threats to the Saudi state by involving external parties. This aspect will be examined in this section, primarily through examining the external risks and challenges that occur due to the existence of such a strategic commodity.

One of the primary concerns for Saudi Arabia is the protection of its oilfields. Most of the Saudi oilfields are located in uninhabited areas and are easy to monitor. The protection of the oilfields, pipelines and terminals against any disruption is the responsibility of the Saudi Arabia National Guard (SANG), with the assistance of the Saudi ARAMCO oil company. The strategic job of protecting oil does not fall to Saudi Arabia alone. Ever since the Second World War, oil for the United States has become central to their foreign policy, a matter whereby oil has been considered a vital resource and access to it must be secured by all manners, including military action (Klare, 2004). In the aftermath of the Arab oil embargo, the United States placed the security of the oilfields in the Persian Gulf, and access to energy supplies in the region, as a major US security interest. Oil security became one of the main elements contributing to the establishment of the Joint Rapid Deployment Task Force (JRDTF), which was later devolved into a new unified military command, the US Central Command (CENTCOM), where their main responsibility is to protect the oil flow from the Gulf area.

While Saudi Arabia was enjoying its rising control of the global oil market and new revenues, the US was becoming more and more concerned about three elements: oil security, Soviet involvement in the Gulf area, and its own military deployment within the Gulf region. All of which contributed to the United States undertaking a serious analysis study (done by the Congressional Research Service) which focused on the military deployment that might be needed to control foreign oil fields; this chiefly
looked at the main oil-producing countries in the Middle East and North Africa, especially Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait and Algeria (Rogers, 2008).

The Congressional Research Service analysis with regards to oil security focused on the intervention capacity of the US Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine corps. By 1977, the huge need to secure oil had become evident. President Carter issued a Presidential Order I8 which required the US armed forces to engage in structured planning towards operations in places behind areas of US military operations, the emphasis being on the Gulf area (ibid). The Congressional Research Service analysis was followed by a period of planning and arguments which ended with the Chiefs of Staff agreeing to the JRDTF. It was established immediately at the end of the Carter presidency, but had only a little impact on crises at that time, such as the Iranian revolution and the occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviets (Rogers, 2008: 52).

It was strongly argued by some that the JRDTF did not secure the Gulf region sufficiently. This contributed to the Reagan administration’s decision to upgrade the JRDTF force into a new unified military command, US Central Command (CENTCOM), which plays the “nerve centre” role for all US military operations in the Persian Gulf area and the whole Middle East. CENTCOM was established in January 1983 (Klare, 2004, p. 4).

When Iraq invaded Kuwait, at the end of July 1990, in what became known as the Gulf War, Saudi Arabia became involved in the war, and the United States showed that it wouldn’t hesitate to defend Saudi Arabia, confirming its commitment to ensuring the flow of oil through the Gulf region. This became evident when President George H.W. Bush, on 8 August, 1990, said on national television: “Our nation now imports nearly half the oil it consumes and could face a major threat to its economic
independence. Hence, the sovereign independence of Saudi Arabia is of vital interest to the United States” (Klare, 2004: 5).

As a consequence, hundreds of thousands of US forces were deployed to stop a possible attack by Iraqi forces on Saudi Arabia, in which the American forces succeeded and the United States decided to embargo Iraq’s oil exports. This operation instantly removed more than five million barrels a day from the markets, and the threat of new record oil prices emerged again. As mentioned in Chapter 4, Saudi Arabia responded to this threat by raising its oil output from more than five million barrels per day in September 1990 to more than eight million barrels per day.

The American intervention produced a new series of complications and consequences. After expelling the Iraqi forces from Kuwait, the US kept large numbers of troops in Saudi Arabia in order to maintain the no-fly zone over Iraq’s southern area and to prevent the Iraqi president, Saddam Hussein, from taking any further action towards the Gulf oil states. As a result, this foreign presence motivated an anti-American feeling between some of the sectors of Saudi society and gave fuel to the campaign that Bin Laden launched in 1990: Al-Qaeda. Bin Laden had previously been regarded as a CIA asset during the 1980s, when he was fighting against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (Rogers, 2008: 120-121).

In the aftermath of the war, the United States placed vast quantities of arms and missiles at supply depots in Qatar and Kuwait, in order to allow faster deployment for the US troops in the area in case of any further attack. This strategy was the driving factor for the US-Saudi military relationship from the 1991 Gulf War which led to the attacks of September 2001 on New York and Washington. In fact, the Department of Defence used its command centre at the Prince Sultan Air Base outside Riyadh to
direct US air combat operations in the Gulf. Furthermore, vast quantities of modern weapons were sold to the Saudi military and the National Guard by the United States. Around $40 billion worth of arms and military services were directed towards Saudi Arabia through the Foreign Military Sales Program between 1991 and 1999 (Klare, 2004: 53).

Osama bin Laden viewed the Saudi royal family as being friends with the Americans, whereupon he called his followers to drive the Americans out of the country, declaring in 1998 (Klare, 2004: 54):

... the United States has been occupying the land of Islam in the holiest places, the Arabian Peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbors, and turning its bases in the Peninsula into a spearhead through which to fight the neighboring Muslim peoples.

He continued to make statements which highlighted that it was an individual duty for every Muslim to kill Americans and drive them out of all of the lands of Islam.

Bin Laden then began attacking the US power in the region, especially military bases and embassies. He was responsible for the bombing of the Saudi Arabia National Guards headquarters in Riyadh, killing five Americans, followed by the bombing of Al-Khobar Towers (a residential complex occupied by US Air Force personnel in Dhahran) in 1996. Those attacks were then followed in 1998, by the bombing of the American embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. Following this was the attack on the USS Cole, in Aden, Yemen, in October 2000, which was followed by the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington on 11 September, 2001 (Klare, 2004).

As discussed earlier, the impact of the US presence became glaringly obvious through the attacks of 9/11. Analysts attributed a wide variety of motivations for the
September 11 attacks. Perhaps most famous, was the view that the 9/11 attacks represented the re-opening of a clash between the Islamic world and the West (mostly Christians). While others believe that it represented growing rage against economic globalisation, or against the continual American support for Israel against the Palestinians (ibid).

Even so, the United States was acquiring more and more oil from the Gulf area. While it has tried to diversify its energy imports from regions other than the Gulf area, no other region has reserves large enough to satisfy the US and rising international demand. The six Gulf states of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Iraq, and Iran jointly possess 64% of the world’s supplies or around 780 billion barrels of proven reserves, and Saudi Arabia alone possesses 22% of the world’s supplies (see Figure 5.2).
The attacks of 11 September, 2001 announced a turning point in US relations with GCC countries. The relationship was affected negatively, especially with the Saudi Arabians, as it was reported that most of the 9/11 attackers were from Saudi Arabia. Although in the aftermath many US and Saudi officials declared that Saudi Arabia and the United States still had excellent relations, the US military presence in Saudi Arabia became no longer useful for Saudi Arabia due to domestic opposition.
US military and political support for Saudi Arabia and some of the Gulf states generated internal problems for citizens within these states. This is added to the US’s ongoing diplomatic and military support for Israel, which is generating negative attitudes across the Arab and Muslim world. Furthermore, there is wide belief within Arab and Muslim communities that the war on terror was essentially “a Zionist-Christian crusade” targeted at the Arab World (Rogers, 2008).

This view was given weight by the attitude of key US officials, including the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, and Deputy Secretary, Paul Wolfowitz, who indicated their support for the regime change in Iraq before the attacks of September 2001, in order to install a new regime that was friendly to the US interests. Vice President Cheney had for a long time affirmed both the strategic importance of Gulf energy for the United States and the need to deploy forces in the Gulf area (Yeomans, 2005).

Saudi cooperation during the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 was limited, when compared with the Saudi assistance in the 1991 Gulf War (Gause III, 2003), and by April 2003 the American troops, that in the 1990s had been responsible for ensuring the no-fly zone in the southern part of Iraq, began to leave and by the end of September 2003 they were gone (Klare, 2004: 90).

The withdrawing of troops from Saudi Arabia does not means that the US is downgrading its commitment to protect the Saudi oil fields. The military training missions and the US facilities remain the same and will also be available in the event of attacks on Saudi Arabia. Indeed, due to the occupation of Iraq in 2003, the Gulf region currently hosts the largest concentration of US troops in the world; hence, the area is central to US security strategy (Korb, 2005).
The Gulf region is also crucial for the transportation of energy supplies. More than 90% of the Gulf’s oil exports (at least 40% of the world’s oil exports) pass through the Strait of Hormuz on a daily basis (Korb, 2005: 4), which makes it a critical maritime area for the world’s economy. This is primarily because oil-shipping alternatives are not comparable, for example, pipelines or trucks are inflexible and more expensive, and would impose serious economic costs. Thus, it is very important that maritime navigation in the Gulf and through the Strait of Hormuz is free of disruption.

Access through the Strait of Hormuz to the Gulf is also important to the US military presence and power protection within the region, which significantly depends on the ability of carrier battle groups to launch air and cruise missile strikes, and the ability to rapidly resupply troops using sealift. Therefore, maintaining access within the Gulf presents a special challenge (Korb, 2005). On the other hand, many believe that the United States should limit its reliance on Gulf oil, especially from Saudi Arabia. For example, the former Deputy Secretary of the Treasury, Stuart E. Eizenstat (in a speech to congress in 2002) said: “our dependence on Persian Gulf oil in general and Saudi oil in particular leaves us vulnerable to attack, both abroad and at home” (ibid: 20).

Some of the previous and current strategic US choices within the Gulf and surrounding regions has been acknowledged by some US analysts to have played a serious role in the rise of terrorist networks and extremist religious ideologies. Along with other factors, the costs of various policies to support stability in the region and secure energy sources in the Gulf have fuelled these ideas. Certainly, in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks the United States recognised that securing the region’s
energy supplies, especially in religious sites such as Saudi Arabia can produce a significant cultural and political reactions (Gause III, 2003).

At the present time, CENTCOM is playing a crucial role in the war on terror including the war on Afghanistan and the operations in Iraq. During the last two decades CENTCOM has developed to the point where it is considered to be in a suitable position to secure US interests in the Persian Gulf region using extensive force (Rogers, 2008). The US security strategy in the region is primarily motivated by the three permanent elements of interest: access to oil, Israeli security, and the stability of the region (Hajjar, 2002: v). With the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is getting harder to distinguish US military operations intended to fight terrorism from those intended to protect energy resources (Klare, 2004).

Since the attacks of 11 September, 2001, US conservative policy towards Saudi Arabia has changed. In the past both neo-conservatives and the religious right had accepted the close Saudi-American relationship on a strategic basis. Nevertheless, there was a shift in the Saudi’s public opinion of the American military presence, not only from a religious perspective, but also from a political point of view, as it implies a lack of independence (Gause III, 2003).

US dependence on imported oil has declined since peaking in 2005, as a result of a variety of factors, including a decline in consumption and shifts in supply patterns (US Energy Information Administration, 2011). In spite of that, Gulf countries will remain leading oil exporters in the next decade, though their dominance will depend heavily on the price of oil.
Oil obtained from several states in the region, such as Saudi Arabia and Iraq, has exceptionally low production costs, which allows these states to make profits even if the price of oil plunges. That is because costs of oil extraction are higher elsewhere in the world (Byman, 2002: 3). But, since the discovery of oil in the Gulf region, many economic and social problems have challenged those states, where many Gulf countries have failed to diversify their economies beyond oil, reduce unemployment or create new jobs (Simmons, 2005).

Despite the fact that the United States’ policies towards the Gulf may differ in many aspects, there is general agreement that the United States wants to ensure that there is no rival power in the area that would want to control the region and its energy supplies. A number of issues may increase tensions between the United States and the Saudis, including different positions on Iraq, the Arab-Israeli issue, control of oil, and the conduct of the war on terror (Gause III, 2003).

Saudi Arabia has also faced a series of threats to its oil facilities. On 24 February, 2006, Saudi security blocked an attack against one of its largest oil facilities at Abqaiq, consequentially oil prices jumped by more than $2 a barrel. According to Cordesman (2009), threats on this scale not only present a threat to the physical security of key oil facilities, but also add to the “security premium” in the global oil market.

Hence, Saudi Arabia must secure its oil exports, not only on its own soil, but also in the face of the Iranian build-up of forces that can and has threatened maritime traffic through the Gulf. Saudi Arabia must secure it oil exports also in the face of piracy in Somalia and at other points along the flow of its oil exports. Overall, the above discussion demonstrates that oil poses a threat at all three levels of security (domestic,
regional and international) and through all state security sectors: social (American presence and involvements); political (global vital commodity and powerful state interest); economic (reliance on oil and inability to diversify); military (protecting oil, powerful state interest, and arms race in the region); and finally, environmental (e.g. damaging oil production processes).

5.2.8 Global Terrorism, Religious Extremism and US Presence

Terrorism was discussed in Chapter 4 with regard to social, political, and economic security sectors in Saudi Arabia; this dealt with the internal level of security. As the effects of and motivations for terrorism involve other regional and international players, terrorism and its causes and effects will be further investigated in this section on all three levels – state, regional, and international – in order to fill any gap that might occur if the issue was studied at one level only.

The Gulf area plays a crucial role in that it is the main environment within which the struggle against terrorism is fought. The area comprises the historical and cultural centre of the Muslim world, and due to a mix of social, cultural, religious and economic reasons, the area could possibly serve useful for enrolling terrorists or funding terrorism (Gause III, 2003). For the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Al-Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula is the first major internal threat that Saudi Arabia has experienced. Although Saudi Arabia has faced a long series of internal challenges from Islamic extremists, since the Ikhwan (Islamic religious militia that rebelled against King Abdul Aziz when he forbade them to neighbouring states) in the late 1920s, as well as from revolutionary Arab nationalism movements, or the Nasserists and the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1950s (Cordesman, 2009).
It is worth noting that the term Al-Qaeda only came into use in the late 1990s; it was originally used in the early 1980s to describe a hostel of young Arab jihadis in Peshawar, Pakistan, who were preparing to aid fighters (the mujahideen) in the fight against Soviet forces in Afghanistan. The hostel was established by Osama bin Laden who arrived in Pakistan in the early 1980s, and was closely linked with the Pakistani Inter-Service Intelligence and the CIA (Rogers, 2008: 120). The Soviet war in Afghanistan brought Pakistan into the Cold War, through which it gained support from the United States, along with Osama bin Laden, who was regarded as a CIA asset. They received significant aid and armaments, which were flown from the CIA and other US agencies through Pakistan into Afghanistan (ibid: 120).

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan encouraged Saudi Arabia to join the Western powers, where the transnational Islamic organisation issued calls for jihad against the Soviet occupation, relying on the idea of Muslim unity summarised in the Qur’an (Islam holy book) as the unity of “ummah” (the community of believers) (Hegghammer, 2010). Saudi Arabia funded the Afghani jihad and cooperated closely with the CIA and the Pakistani intelligence by sending financial aid, which came mostly from semi-official organisations, such as charities and religious organisations. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia also funded the Muslim guerrillas in Bosnia, Chechnya and elsewhere, and this Saudi involvement unconsciously gave birth to the first wave of Saudi jihads that differed significantly from the following waves (ibid).

In the aftermath of the first Gulf War, the foundations of new extremist movements that were hostile to any US or Western military presence on Saudi territory began to be built. As mentioned in the previous section (5.2.7 Oil Security), this hostility towards the US arose as a result of the American strategy to keep the no-fly zone over
Iraq’s southern area, which provided a stimulus to the Al-Qaeda movement. But until the early 1990s Al-Qaeda did not have a clear agenda, mainly because it was ideologically divided into two groups with different mid-term objectives. The first was mostly made up of Egyptians that had a revolutionary point of view and wanted to use Al-Qaeda to overthrow Arab governments. While the other group, which involved people such as Osama bin Laden, had a more “classical jihad” outlook and saw their role as an elite reaction force to be used against invaders (ibid: 101). From 1992 onwards, both revolutionary and classical jihadists utilised the idea of an anti-American jihad. They were mainly motivated by the ongoing US military presence in Saudi Arabia, and were motivated also by the US deployment in Somalia and the arrest of radical Egyptian Sheikh Omar Abd al Rahman in New York. By the mid-1990s, Osama bin Laden moved pan-Islamism to its most radical state and declared jihad against Americans in the land of the two holy mosques – Saudi Arabia – and began building an Al-Qaeda network in Saudi Arabia (ibid: 101-113).

However, during the mid-1990s, Saudi Arabia came under many direct and indirect attacks by Islamic extremist groups. All of which led the Saudi government to strengthen its internal security and counterterrorist programmes. It also cooperated with the United States in many investigations, including the 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers, the 1995 attack on the Saudi National Guard Headquarters, and the 2000 attack on the USS Cole (Cordesman, 2009: 45).

The impact of the US presence was still to become fully obvious. Then, on 11 September, 2001, the World Trade Center and the Pentagon came under attack, leaving nearly 3,000 people dead and some 6,000 injured (ibid: 47). The United States recognised clearly that protecting the region’s energy supplies, especially in Saudi
Arabia, could cause a substantial political, cultural and religious reaction to a massive
degree. Despite this, some theorists insist that the attacks of 9/11 must have involved
some of the US internal agencies, or that the attacks were an inside job. Nonetheless,
the terrorist attacks of 11 September, 2001, marked a turning point in US relations
with Saudi Arabia, whereupon the relationship was affected negatively. The
American military presence in Saudi Arabia became no longer sustainable in either
the United States or Saudi Arabia (Hajjar, 2002).

Saudi Arabia was also directly affected by the events of 11 September, 2001. The
involvement of 15 Saudis, out of the 19 aeroplane hijackers that conducted the attacks
on the World Trade Center (WTO) and the Pentagon, put the Kingdom under huge
pressure, and Saudi-US relations came under real fear of severe damage. Notably, the
Saudi government, the media, and religious leaders all condemned the attacks of 9/11.
But the Kingdom still faced a huge wave of blame, stoked in the main by the
mainstream media.

American liberals have always been cautious about the strong associations between
Washington and Riyadh. But since the attacks of 9/11, the American right wing policy
towards Saudi Arabia has changed (Gause III, 2003). Previously, both neo-
conservatives and the religious right accepted the close American relationship with
Saudi Arabia on strategic grounds, even though this relationship contradicted many
aspects of Saudi politics and society. They have now become vocal critics of the
relationship, which was associated with a parallel shift in the Saudi public opinion of
the presence of the US military, not only from a religious perspective, but also from a
political point of view, as it implies a lack of independence for the country (ibid).
More recently, the Americans have identified that their political and military assistance for certain Gulf countries is causing internal problems for citizens within these states. Ongoing US diplomatic and military support for Israel is also creating a similarly negative association throughout the Muslim and Arab world (Gause III, 2003).

Since May 2003, Saudi Arabia has witnessed a new wave of attacks by terrorists, wherein they have faced several bombings, shootings, assassinations, and clashes between police and militants who call themselves Al-Qaeda. These clashes have caused numerous deaths. According to Hegghammer (2010), Saudi Arabia has not experienced violence on this scale in its modern history. Apart from the 1979 Holy Mosque incident, until recently there had been only one major attack by Sunni Islamists in the Kingdom, namely the 1995 Riyadh bombing which killed seven people; he believes that the 1996 Khobar bombing was carried out by Shi’a Muslims.

Despite the widespread success that the Saudi government has achieved with regards to suppressing Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the release of a new wanted list of 85 suspects in February 2009, many of whom are suspected to be abroad, suggests that a new threat is posed by the return of hardened fighters from overseas. Saudis in Iraq present an important source of concern, and the re-integration of Saudi militants who may seek to return from Iraq present a new challenge.

Previous interventions by the United States and the occupation of Iraq have incurred a number of strategic risks and costs. Such interventions have fuelled a heated debate that the United States is involved in a worldwide conflict against Islam in general, but under the cover of fighting against terrorism. As mentioned previously, these debates have created a rich environment for those looking to harm Westerners and United
States’ forces; this ideology is unfortunately reinforced in practice by a steady flow of small arms and other weaponry left over from Saddam Hussein’s arsenals not secured by the coalition or Iraqi security forces. The circumstances create an unstable environment that is ideal for recruits of anti-American organisations. However, in spite of the fact that Gulf countries may have received unwanted attention due to the issue of terrorism, no solution can be undertaken without them.

American policymakers fail to understand the direction of some regimes in the region, whereby they allow or even support anti-Western or anti-American ideologies. Terrorism deriving from the Gulf has mainly focused on regimes that have been associated with or allied with the West or the United States.

Saudi security does not focus on Al-Qaeda alone, two other factions have also threatened Saudi internal security: first, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, an associated group of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt; second, Shi’a groups, supported by Iran, were furious at the claimed Saudi mistreatment of their fellow Shi’a in the Eastern Province, they also resented the fact that Makkah and Medina were under Saudi Sunni control (Cordesman, 2009). In the past, Iran has conducted its own terrorist attacks to show the West the cost of being involved in the region (Ekovich, 2004).

American analysts admit that some of the previous and current strategic US policies within the Gulf region have played a serious role in the rise of terrorist networks and extremist religious ideologies (Gause III, 2003). Although United States policies towards the Gulf may differ with regard to many aspects, there is general agreement that the protection of energy exports from the Middle East region is one of their first security priorities, and they want to ensure that there is no rival power in the area that would want to control the region and its energy supplies. It is highly probable that US
priorities will remain the same during the current Obama administration and perhaps for decades to come.

The United States presence and involvement in the region, especially within Saudi Arabia, can, at least in part, be considered a stimulus for the emergence of terrorism in the area; thus, this presence can be considered a serious threat to state security involving all security levels. It mainly involves social/political factors (Saudi state legitimacy and internal pressure, and anti-Saudi and anti-American motivations caused by what appears to be Saudi-US dependence); military factors (caused by terrorists attacks and regional arms races, as a result of external power interests in the area); and economic aspects (terrorists attacks).

The main Saudi efforts to reduce threats from terrorism involve the following:

5.2.8.1 Facing Terrorists

The Saudi government has always condemned the 9/11 attacks and has constantly denied any involvement or knowledge of the attacks. As discussed earlier in Chapter 5, since May 2003, the Kingdom has itself witnessed a new wave of attacks by terrorists, involving several bombings and clashes between police (Cordesman, 2009: 10). Since then, the Saudi government has been extremely focused on combating the domestic terrorist threat from Al-Qaeda. Members of Al-Qaeda have carried out a number of attacks on government officials, foreigners, oil facilities and even civilians. Saudi officials maintain that they are working closely with the United States against Al Qaeda and its supporters (Blanchard, 2009: 7).

As both the Saudi regime and the United States became targeted by Al-Qaeda, the Saudi government launched massive efforts to eliminate Al-Qaeda internally and
internationally. Inside the Kingdom, Saudi forces confronted terrorist groups ferociously, through which they were able to eliminate many of the terrorist cells and enumerate them significantly. Since May 2003, Saudi Arabia has devoted considerable resources to combating terrorism: the budgets allocated to counterterrorism in 2004, 2005 and 2006 were estimated at $8.5 billion, $10 billion, and $12 billion respectively (Hegghammer, 2010: 217). A total overhaul of the Saudi security system motivated forces; and determination and attitudes within the security services increased in line with their salaries. This resulted in dramatic changes in Saudi security services capabilities (ibid: 218). The Saudi government also took measures to strengthen its borders, where the Ministry of Interiors worked to upgrade the overall infrastructure and security of its land, sea, and air borders (Country Reports, United States Department of State, 2010).

5.2.8.2 International Cooperation

Saudi Arabia is operating with other states and organisations concerned with combating terrorism. According to Blanchard (2009), since 2003, US government statements have generally praised the Saudi cooperation with US counterterrorism initiatives. Blanchard refers to the US Country Reports on Terrorism, 2008 (published on 30 April, 2009), where the US Department of State praises improvements in Saudi counterterrorism practices, and credits Saudi cooperation with US counterterrorism efforts as “significant”. The report also states “Saudi Arabia needs to continue to take steps to exercise oversight of fundraising activities in the Kingdom and Saudi charitable activities abroad.”

In August 2003, Saudi Arabia and the United States established a second joint task force. This was initiated by the Crown Prince Abdullah and aimed to combat terrorist
financing (Cordesman, 2010: 297). The establishment of such a task force reflected the Saudi regime’s commitment to the fight against terrorism and the significant level of Saudi-US cooperation.

Saudi Arabia has also hosted several conferences to combat terrorism. In February 2005, Saudi Arabia held the first Counter-Terrorism International Conference. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia presented representatives from over 50 countries, including 15 from the Arab world, as well as representatives from several international organisations. According to the website of the Saudi embassy in Washington, the aim of the conference was to improve bilateral, regional and international cooperation in counter-terrorism. The conference also focused on the capabilities to combat terror financing, money laundering, and drug trafficking.

On 11 July, 2005, Crown Prince Abdullah renewed his call for more improved cooperation in the war on terrorism at the international level, and for the formation of an international counterterrorism centre – Abdullah first called for the formation of an international counterterrorism centre in an address in February 2005, at the first Counter-Terrorism International Conference in Riyadh (Cordesman, 2009: 299).

On 24 February, 2008, the Saudi Interior Minister, Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz, signed a civil service agreement with the French Interior and Overseas Territories Minister, Michele Alliot-Marie, to enhance bilateral cooperation in the fields of counterterrorism, anti-narcotics, and the combat against money laundering (ibid, p.299).

In March 2008, King Abdullah announced his intention to sponsor an interfaith dialogue between the world’s monotheistic religions, including Jews. Furthermore,
Saudi Arabia aimed to promote reconciliation between Shi’a and Sunni Muslims through it, which became clear with the invitation of the former Iranian president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. This was followed, in June 2008, by the first interfaith dialogue hosted by the Muslim World League in Mecca (Makkah), which represented the first step towards a unified Muslim voice, with a view to creating a culture of tolerance and working to broaden horizons in light of common denominators between civilisations (Merritt, 2009: 26).

In July 2008, the second interfaith dialogue took place in Madrid; it was sponsored by Saudi Arabia and brought together nearly 300 Muslim, Christian and Jewish delegates and other experts on interreligious understanding (Times, 2008). The overall aim was to promote a peaceful coexistence among nations, and to put an end to international conflicts and problems (Heneghan, 2008).

In October 2010, Saudi intelligence passed information to London, Washington, and Berlin – early warnings of an impending Al-Qaeda-Yemen airborne terror. Explosives, which were rigged inside computer printers, were shipped from Yemen and discovered in Britain and Dubai – their targets were inside the United States (Murphy, 2010). According to many experts, the Saudi intelligence tip reflected huge improvements in Saudi Arabia’s counterterrorism capabilities and more improved intelligence on AQAP in Yemen, which resulted in more accurate inside information about extremist Islamic networks.

Saudi Arabia is also expanding its external relationships through the establishment and strengthening of partnerships with a number of developed and developing countries, perhaps most recently with China, India, Russia, and Japan. These relationships are based on cooperation in many areas, including security, to conjure
active cooperation in combating terrorism internationally, and also to enhance the
security and stability of the Gulf region, which reflects the Saudi Arabian keenness to
enhance global security and stability.

5.2.8.3 Combating Terrorist Financing and Money Laundering

Saudi Arabia has continued to make progress in combating money laundering and
terrorist finance. From 2003 onwards, Saudi Arabia has established a series of new
entities and laws designed to combat terrorist financing in accordance with US and
international standards (Blanchard, 2009: 8). It is worth noticing that Saudi Arabia
was one of the first countries to take action against terrorist financing by freezing the
assets of Osama bin Laden in 1994. Saudi Arabia also established units countering
money laundering at the Ministry of Interiors, in the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency
(SAMA), and in the commercial banks in 1995 (Cordesman, 2009: 299).

By February 2003, the SAMA started to employ major technical programs to guide
judges and investigators on legal matters involving terrorist financing and money
laundering methods; they also outlined the international requirements for financial
secrecy, and noted methods followed by criminals to exchange information. This was
followed in August by new legislation that put strict penalties in place for the crime of
money laundering and terror financing; it set a prison sentence of up to 15 years and
fines up to $1.8 million for offenders. The new legislation implements the 40
recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATA) on money laundering
and their eight recommendations on terror financing (ibid: 299-300).

In 2004, Saudi Arabia and the United States jointly designated several branches of the
Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation, under United Nation Security Resolution 1267, as
financers of terrorism (Merritt, 2009: 9).
In its 2007 *Country Report on Terrorism* in Saudi Arabia, the US Department of State praised Saudi authorities for arresting dozens of terrorist financing suspects and for enacting new declaration requirements for the cross-border transfer of cash and other high value items (Country Report, US Department of State, 2007). Furthermore, the Saudi regime was a leader in developing and approving an aggressive plan by the G-20, designed at freezing the roots of terrorist worldwide (Cordesman, 2009).

The Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) hosted the sixth annual Gulf–European Symposium on Combating Terrorism Financing during the period 4-5 May 2009. Several government bodies, including the Ministries of Social Affairs, Interiors, and Islamic Affairs, and the central bank, continued to advise Saudis to be cautious when selecting charity groups to which they contribute (Country Reports, United States Department of State, 2010).

The Saudi government also banned any cash contributions to charities, required charities to seek permission from the Ministry of Interiors before opening a bank account, and required charity bank accounts to be in the name of the organisation (Cordesman, 2009).

5.2.8.4 *Reintegrating Terrorists*

Saudi Arabia has established a rehabilitation centre for extremists and jihadists in an attempt to reform extremist’s ways of thinking. The Saudi government is searching for new ways of reforming its radicals, apart from using violence towards them (Maher, 2008). Since it was launched, the programme has worked to reintegrate 120 of some 800 former Guantanamo detainees, into Saudi society (Dodds, 2010). The rehabilitation programme relies on the involvement of Saudi counterterrorism officials, psychologists, and religious clerics with terrorist detainees, in an effort to
discourage detainees from supporting extremism and violence. Successfully rehabilitated detainees are presented with various types of social and financial support designed to prevent recidivism (Blanchard, 2009).

Some outside observers have criticised the Saudi programmes for being “soft” and for not using repressive measures of the Egyptian and Algerian type. While others have questioned the wisdom of releasing and supporting former detainees because of the tangible threats that potential recidivism could pose. Yet, experts like Hegghammer, a research fellow at the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, believe that it is precisely the restrained and diversified nature of Saudi counterterrorism which makes it so effective.

5.2.8.5 Campaign against Terrorism

Saudi officials consider efforts to combat violent extremist ideologies as being fundamental in their campaign to counter terrorism. The Saudi government and religious clerics have launched public campaigns that condemn extremism and violence (Merritt, 2009). The Saudi government launched a public campaign concerned with public awareness of terrorism; the programme was initiated in school and universities, in mosques, and on media and billboards to alert Saudis about terrorism and extremism (Cordesman, 2009).

Hence, the Saudi institutional efforts to fight terrorism can be outlined as follows:

- The elimination of terrorist cells (facing terrorists)
- International cooperation
- Combating terrorist financing and money laundering
5.3 Inter-GCC Security: Sub-Regional Dimensions

The Arabian countries in the Gulf (Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman) have a vital relationship, within which there are many problems and altercations between certain states. However, the Arab Gulf states share common regional, cultural, socio-economic and political structures, which made a sub-regional strategic partnership a possibility; the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was therefore formed in 1981 (Buzan and Weaver, 2003: 190-191).

The GCC states share obsessions of securities and threats, especially if Iraq is excluded. There are distinguished relations between the rulers of most of these countries that go back centuries. Thus, the inter-GCC threats and challenges will be investigated as a single entity. The interacting and shared elements of national security among GCC states will be examined through elements such as ideology, territory, ethnic lines and historical precedents, to view shared cross-boundary links that can test the validity of such sub-regional partnership under the idea of “security complex”, as suggested by Buzan in his book People, State and Fear (1991). Buzan implies that security complex applies for “a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another.”

5.3.1 GCC Establishment

On 25 May, 1981, the southern Gulf states or the Arab Gulf states, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, met to establish a
collective security council that would involve all fields of partnership. They had particular concerns arising from Iranian military power and thought they may have to respond to threats evolving from the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (Joyner, 1990: 91-92). Since its establishment, the GCC states have faced serious challenges: the Iran-Iraq war was the severest point, where Arab Gulf states were afraid of being dragged into the war. There were other disturbing developments, such as military build-ups by the Soviet Union in South Yemen and Ethiopia (Henderson, 2003: 67). Furthermore, the GCC states also faced the threat of the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and later the 2003 US invasion of Iraq and the consequences of the war on terror (Cordesman, 2009: 35).

Cooperation has been intensified in significant areas by setting up different specialised committees to achieve the instructions of the main constituent bodies of the GCC (the Supreme Council, Ministerial Council and the Secretariat General) (Pridham, 1985: 110-112). Initially, the GCC states attempted to function as a unified political force. Military and security cooperation were an important implication on the May 1981 original charter of the GCC, which made no mention of defence or security cooperation, but clearly emphasised coordination and cooperation in economic, social, and cultural affairs. This was later agreed to include defence cooperation in the activities of the organisation at the December 1981 meeting of the leaders of the GCC states (Pinfari, 2009: 5).

In January 1982, the GCC defence ministers met to discuss a common security policy (including a joint air-defence and weapons system), which was followed by several military exercises. Then, in November 1984, the GCC states agreed to form a unity called the Peninsula Shield Forces, with the intention of fighting any external attack.
This force consists of units from each member of the GCC under a central command at the King Khalid military base in north-eastern Saudi Arabia (Henderson, 2003: 67). The unity of the GCC states was evident when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, whereby all GCC states denounced the Iraqi aggression and stood by the Saudi position to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait (ibid). These convergent attitudes show and reflect the extent to which these states are coherent and apply consensus in the face of any threat, which also indicates that these countries will be in united positions in the face of any future threat.

The existence of well-built relations between Saudi Arabia and other GCC states does not mean that differences and disputes do not occur between those states. Although the nature of threats has changed considerably when compared to the threats in the 1980s when the GCC was established, all GCC members still face the same national security challenges. The GCC could develop an interoperable force and develop their defence capabilities and counterterrorism efforts. But improvements have been deferred as a result of border disputes, political rivalries, economic instability, and pressure from other states such as the United States, Iraq, and Iran. In 2005, the GCC rapid deployment force was formally disbanded, resulting in the GCC being without a real military structure, other than a headquarters in Riyadh and some elements of a secure air force communications system. Despite this, disputes along borders between Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries continue to be the focus of feuds, along with differences in certain domestic and international issues (Cordesman, 2009: 35-36).

Lately, the GCC countries have taken the idea of transforming the GCC into a joint unity seriously, to form a unified authority that can confront common regional threats and challenges. All GCC countries face almost the same regional threats as Saudi
Arabia, but with different intensities that vary from one country to another. Whether this relates to Iran, Iraq, instability in Yemen, Israel (as the traditional enemy), terrorism, or the US presence and its internal consequences on state security, the same-shared national security challenges could provide a means through which to develop a comprehensive force (Cordesman, 2009).

Listed below are the main prominent problems or challenges that could limit or affect Saudi relations with the GCC states.

5.3.1.2 Political Disputes (Border/Ruler/Political Differentiations)

Border disputes have become the greatest element of threat within the GCC states; there are border disputes between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait on the so-called neutral zone or divided zone, where the land borders between them reach the coast of the Arabian Gulf. This zone was established in 1922 when Sir Percy Cox, the British high commissioner in Baghdad, infuriated by the disputes between the ruler of Nejd (ibn Saud) and the emir of Kuwait, took a pen to a map and drew two neutral zones, the first between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and the other between Saudi Arabia and Iraq, but which touched the Kuwaiti border and enabled the Bedouin tribes to move freely. However, when oil was produced in the shared zone in 1953 it led to angry disagreements over the liability of the oil field (Henderson, 2003: 25). Later they agreed to divide their neutral zone and share equally the zone’s oil and gas revenues, but negotiations came to the fore again in 2000 when Kuwait claimed sovereignty over two islands in the neutral zone (Qaruh and Umm al-Maradim). This ended in July 2000 with a maritime agreement that gave the titles of the two islands to Kuwait (ibid: 26).
Saudi Arabian disputes with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) publicly reopened over two parts of their common border after years of quiet diplomatic frustration. The issue reverts back to 1974, when Sheikh Zayed al-Nahyan, the governor of Abu Dhabi, agreed to a treaty in Riyadh with King Faisal of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia was given a strip of coastline between the UAE and Qatar and control over most of the discovered, but as of then unexploited, Shaybah Oil Field. The Saudi claim to maritime rights in the Khor al-Aideed between Qatar and the UAE is putting the multi-billion dollar Dolphin Gas Project into danger; a project that is supposed to link Qatar, Oman, and the UAE. If maritime rights are conceded, Saudi Arabia might be able to lay claim to at least part of the Qatari gas asset. The UAE went public with the dispute in the aftermath of the death of Sheikh Zayed in 2004 (Henderson, 2006).

A 2006 edition of the official UAE yearbook map shows that the UAE has extended westward, across Saudi Arabian territory (Cordesman, 2009). The map in the 2005 edition does not show this. The map also represents the extent of their southern border to include most of the Shaybah Oil Field (Saudi Arabia’s newest oil production area). Notably, UAE officials have not shown disapproval to local journalists for writing about the new map issue, although it arguably could damage relations with a friendly state, which is considered an offence in many Arab states (Henderson, 2006).

The current campaign led by Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed, the UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, mentioned in June 2005 that parts of the 1974 agreement have become irrelevant. On the Saudi side, the Interior Minister, Prince Nayef, confirmed that a diplomatic protest note had been obtained in response to the UAE claims. The UAE might feel that the succession of King Abdullah, after the death of King Fahd in August 2005, might allow Saudi Arabia to be more conciliatory.
Saudi Arabia’s difficulties with Qatar do not only refer to land borders, but also maritime boundaries, which often involve individual personalities. Qatari officials privately admit that Qatar took advantage of the Saudi interruption in the 1990-91 Gulf War to push the borderline south into Saudi Arabia, which involved an armed clash in 1992 between the Saudi and Qatari forces at the borderline between the countries. This resulted in at least one Qatari soldier dying, and ended by Qatari forces surrounding the Saudis (Henderson, 2003: 27).

The maritime boundaries of the Qatar peninsula have also been in contention. In March 2001, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) drew a maritime border between Bahrain and Qatar, which enabled Saudi Arabia and Qatar to draw their own maritime borders west of the Qatar peninsula (Henderson, 2006); the problem of the eastern Qatari maritime borders (borders between Qatar and UAE) remains unsolved.

Saudi Arabia and Bahrain have close relationships, despite the 1980s riots in Bahrain by the Shi’a. The only lasting problem for Bahrain is government income, especially as it does not have any natural wealth resources. However, the Saudi government has long provided for the Bahraini exchequer by transferring revenues from the Abu Safaa oil field (located between the two countries) (Henderson, 2003).

The relationship with Oman becomes problematic when referring to the border between Saudi Arabia and Oman. After the UAE settled the southern borders problem with Saudi Arabia in 1974, Oman claimed that a part of what Abu Dhabi surrendered belongs to them, however, the association between Saudi Arabia and Oman remains controversial with regard to this issue (Legrenzi, 2007).
There are other areas where rivalry creates problems. However, Qatar and Saudi Arabia appear to be solving border disputes, since both sides stated that agreements have been reached on the global companies that will sponsor the demarcation process, and on the method of implementing boundary marks in the aftermath of the joint Qatari-Saudi committee for demarcation of land and maritime borders meeting on 3 January, 2009 (Cordesman, 2009: 36). Despite this, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have different opinions about many issues.

According to Cordesman (2009), some experts feel that Qatar is lining up with Iran as a counterbalance to Saudi influence, and that the Al-Jazeera television network, which has its headquarters in Qatar, remains anti-Saudi. Cordesman also indicates that some Saudi experts question the extent to which Iranian-Qatari and Libyan-Qatari relations might have anti-Saudi elements.

5.3.1.2 Military Cooperation Difficulties

The GCC states have some of the most advanced armaments in the world, with vast military spending and arms imports. But, in general, the GCC military forces face the same major problem that the Saudi military security sector faces (Saudi security forces, structure and threats were discussed in Chapter 4), in that it suffers from a lack of effectiveness, sustainability, and interoperability. Russell (2009) argues that, in spite of the enormous military expenditures and sophisticated Western weapons that the GCC states possess, they are realistically unprepared to defend themselves in “low-end” (insurgency and militia sponsorship) and “high-end” (ballistic missile, perhaps with nuclear warheads) scenarios against Iran (Russell, 2009: 40). Russell also highlighted a number of areas that limit the military effectiveness of the GCC: poor tactical and information management, weak training and weapons handling, and
poor maintenance. Cordesman (2009), on the other hand, noted the limited large-scale training and coordination between the GCC forces.

5.3.2 The GCC Security Complex

The GCC security complex mainly experiences difficulties with regard to its military security, as it still suffers from military dependence on the United States. This makes them vulnerable to security at the international level, in addition to rival threats caused by Iranian policies at the regional level, not to mention each state’s own particular threats and challenges at the domestic level of security. In particular, the 2003 US invasion of Iraq and the consequential fundamental political and strategic changes. As discussed earlier, the two most remarkable features of the altered regional dynamics comprise the ultimate rise of Iran as a regional power, and a corresponding decline in the American influence in regional matters. This largely affects the GCC sub-regional complex of security, by increasing the influence and range of power of its most dominant rival state, Iran. All in all, this adds a further challenge to the GCC sub-regional complex.

The Gulf Cooperation Council has further problems with regard to concessions and counter-concessions among its members, in addition, the members lack an actual collective cooperation power that works effectively. Furthermore, the GCC members have developed a sort of mistrust in each other, as a result of a combination of recent independence (for most of the GCC countries) and recent financial power, which has also created a range of tensions within and among the GCC states, which adds limits to a successful unity between GCC members. On the other hand, elements of a successful security complex among the GCC states are still possible, as they uniquely
share many socio-political links and face similar threats and challenges at all three state levels of security.

5.4 Conclusion

Due to economic and religious circumstances, the Gulf area has become one of the most vital areas in the world. The above threats and challenges (Iran, Iraq, Israel, instability in Yemen and the Horn of Africa, weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, US presence consequences, oil security, and internal problems of Gulf states) are the main threats facing Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries; these affect the security not only of the region’s countries, but other states that are involved in the region through its resources. This makes Saudi Arabian security and the security of other GCC states an international security problem.

Threats such as weapons of mass destruction present a serious challenge to Saudi Arabia. Riyadh is very concerned with Iran’s military potential. A nuclear-armed Iran would unbalance power in the area and would probably force the Saudis and other major GCC states to develop their own nuclear capability, and remain under the defensive umbrella of the United States. Tehran’s ambition to become a supreme power in the Gulf region also disturbs Saudi Arabia and other GCC states, especially in light of the increased Iranian interference in Iraq, Bahrain, Yemen and other Arab countries in the area (Syria and Lebanon).

Instability in Iraq and Yemen also pose a threat to Saudi security. Iraq is facing several problems. The country is facing a danger of breaking apart into ethnic-religious sections. The central government is weak and faces local and regional authorities and militia groups who are also fighting among each other. Instability in
Yemen will have consequences on the stability of the whole Arabian Peninsula and the flow of oil from the Gulf of Aden. Poverty is the root cause for most of the problems in Yemen. Political instability in Yemen has provided more opportunities for Al-Qaeda to flourish, and this will have a direct effect on Saudi Arabia and oil dependent economies around the world. Thus, domestic political development in Yemen is critically important to regional security and the stability of Saudi Arabia, which involves many security sectors (political, social, economic, and military).

The protection of Saudi Arabia’s oilfields is one of the primary concerns for Saudi Arabia. But the importance of protecting oil is not the sole concern of Saudi Arabia. Since the Second World War, oil for the United States has become central to their foreign policy, whereby oil has been considered a vital resource and access to it must be secured by whatever action necessary, including military action. This US commitment caused huge internal and regional challenges to the Saudi regime, which led later to the establishment of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

The GCC security complex suffers from a lack of effective unity and political disputes among GCC countries – disagreements are therefore common. There have been numerous unsuccessful attempts to develop an integrated and effective common military force that can face threats and dangers in a proper manner, and without any external intervention; this by itself is creating internal problems for these countries, as the absence of an effective force has led to a lack in confidence in the existing forces. This is harming the Saudi/GCC role in the area and must be resolved in the best possible manner.

Most of the regional and external threats have emerged either in response to a United States military presence in Saudi Arabia and in the Gulf area (that goes back to the
early part of the last century), or as a result of other neighbouring countries internal threats that extend to regional security dynamics of threats. Whatever the reason for the US existence in the region they will continue to pose challenges for decades to come. Therefore, the United States must recognise the risks caused to their partners through their involvement in the Gulf, particularly Saudi Arabia, and try to minimise the US military presence. They must also focus on and reconsider their policies toward the area, as the United States largely controls security at the international and regional levels of security.

Saudi Arabia is as important to the region’s security and stability as it is to the world’s economy. Key efforts of the Gulf Cooperation Council include creating local defences, and enabling US strategic cooperation with the southern Gulf countries. The GCC plays a critical role as a counterbalance to the radical and more aggressive Iran; it is the source of the Arab League plan for peace with Israel, and it has become a key partner in the war on terrorism. The strategic posture of the US in the Middle East depends on Saudi Arabia having a friendly and moderate regime. Finding this balance means that the monarchy, and the Saudi elites and technocrats, must work with the unique political and social system, and the various cultures to achieve a balance. The cultures and social systems are not fully understood by the Americans, yet they are controlling and influencing the security for these states at the international and regional levels – this makes it hard to put this aspect into just one perspective.
Chapter 6

Re-Examining National Security Dimensions: Saudi Perspective
6.1 Introduction

This study aimed to explore the threats, motivations, dynamics and weakness of Saudi Arabia’s national security, by focusing on the following research question:

*What are the main domestic and foreign strategies employed by Saudi Arabia to maintain its national security, what are their determinants and how are they evolving?*

Initially, this study considered Saudi Arabia’s domestic, regional and international security by analysing the relevant literature on Saudi national security, this included literature on state structures and threats, in term of: societal, political, economic, military and environmental security (discussed in detail in Chapter 4). Consequently, a deeper understanding of the state’s ideas, dynamics and state formation were obtained. In addition, by examining the regional and external threats affecting the state, as well as state actions and reactions to these threats, could be identified. Consequently, the nature and effect of each threat was identified based on the following elements of: a) amity and enmity; b) the effect of each regional threat on all three state security levels: domestic, regional and international; and, c) the nature and extent of each threat on the five sectors of security (social, political, economic, military and environmental). These elements could be viewed as indicators for the nature of the global system of security (further discussion was provided in Chapter 5).

Most of the research questions were identified in accordance with the secondary data findings that were based predominantly on the foreign literature noted in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5; it was identified that there was limited research providing analysis of Saudi Arabia’s security from an internal perspective. Therefore, this Chapter will focus on re-examining the foreign literature by conducting interviews with Saudi officials, academics and experts with detailed knowledge of Saudi national security.
This chapter will be divided into five parts, in accordance with the main research questions, by examining the findings from the literature reviewed in Chapters 4 and 5. The findings from these chapters will be applied within the interviews in order to confirm the national security factors and dynamics affecting Saudi Arabia.

Firstly part one will focus on the current regional threats, by which several overall questions will be composed to evaluate the main threats and challenges affecting Saudi national security. These elements were identified in the literature to involve: Iran’s policies, Iran’s nuclear programme, the situation in Iraq, the situation in Yemen, terrorism, the conflict in Israel-Palestine as well as the role that oil plays in security. The second part will address Saudi Arabia’s internal challenges based on how these affect Saudi security and policymaking. The challenges or threats (identified in the literature) mainly involve corruption, unemployment, poverty, social differences among some sections of society and the existence of a Shi’a minority that has a different orientation. Part three will consider Saudi Arabia’s relations with the other major powers in the political arena, by reviewing relations with the regional/neighbouring states in the Middle East. This will include an evaluation of the current relations with these states and an assessment of the importance of each state to Saudi Arabia’s state power and security. Part four will evaluate Saudi Arabia’s domestic and global security policies by assessing the effectiveness of Saudi Arabia’s security and policymaking processes, in terms of the international, regional and domestic actions and policies. Finally, part five will inspect Saudi Arabia’s future in terms of politics and security. The participants’ opinions and their personal beliefs, views and thoughts on Saudi Arabia’s security and the manner in which the state could improve and enhance its role will be provided. In addition, the participants’ regard for the main obstacles or determinants of any enhancement to Saudi Arabia’s
politics and security will be considered in terms of the internal, regional and global spheres.

This sixth chapter will also discuss the results and findings of this study by identifying the implications that the results have on each element of security. This chapter will also provide a summary of the interview results by relating the results to the relevant literature viewpoints. As mentioned in Chapter 2, this study will apply an interpretive research methodology in order to focus on the subjective perceptions, thoughts and values of the individual participants. Consequently, multiple points of view of the national security context should be considered as part of the interpretive methodology. The results of the study will then be integrated within the broader literature base. The research questions will be introduced again in accordance with the researcher’s assumptions and based on a review of the traditional and non-traditional security theories.

The final research findings will therefore be based on the reviewed literature and the feedback from the interviews; consequently, a comparative result of each view will be given, to include the various advantages and disadvantages. In addition, in order to provide a validation of the adopted framework of state security analysis for the Saudi context, a detailed analysis will be illustrated in Chapter 7.

For more detail about the data sampling method used and for more information on the participants’ backgrounds and the coding of their responses, please see Chapter 2.
6.2 Part One: Assessing External Dynamics of National Security

Research Question 1: How do you evaluate the current situation (threats) in the Gulf area?

In order to answer the first research question, the participants were asked several other questions to evaluate the main threats affecting security in Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf in general, as well as questions to specifically focus on the threats that were provided in the literature review in Chapter 5.

As indicated in the first stage (literature analysis) of this study, various studies have been conducted to understand the situation and the serious threats and the dynamics of the Saudi national security in terms of the regional level (Peterson, 2002; Hajjar, 2005; Rogers, 2008; Cordesman, 2009). These studies, among others, imply that much work has been undertaken in an attempt to understand the real situation affecting the Gulf region in general, including Saudi Arabia’s national security as part of the region’s security. However, the main question aimed to investigate the participants’ views of the situation in the Gulf area based on their assessment of the threats that have evolved there and as suggested by studies involved in Saudi national security.

6.2.1 Iran

In order to understand the assessment of each threat, the researcher firstly asked whether the current Iranian policies posed a threat to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region.

Overwhelmingly, 22 participants agreed that Iran poses a serious threat to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region, the remaining two participants (both academics) did not
feel that Iran was a threat to Saudi Arabia or to the Gulf’s security, but instead they viewed it as an ideological conflict in which each state acts in the favour of their own nation. None of the participants viewed Iran as an ally. Several participants stated that it would have been “better” if Iran changed its policies toward regional security; however, irrespective of the participants’ answers, little further explanation was given. Most of participants answering yes asserted that Iran had threatening policies and official statements and that Iran appeared to attempt to destabilise security in the Gulf by mobilising all of the resources that could cause insecurity in the Gulf region; hence, Iran being considered a threat to Saudi Arabia. One expert of Gulf affairs noted that Iran employed all means in order to extend its Persian and Shi’a influence in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf area. Seven other participants emphasised that Iran’s interference in the internal affairs of other Gulf states is considered to be threatening by these countries, as seen in Bahrain, Iraq and Syria. To illustrate, one participant stated:

*The current Iranian regime involves fragile leadership because it believes that by extending its influence beyond its borders, especially in the Gulf area, it will reap economic and political gains as Iraq was an easy prey for Iran while the Syrian government allowed the Iranian regime to extended its influence in Lebanon and Palestine. On the other hand, Iran’s ambitions in Bahrain sustained a point of conflict, which has been used to raise disorder in the region (P1).*

Iranian involvement in Iraq and in other parts of the Middle East will be addressed later in this chapter; it should be noted that this represents one of the most controversial issues with regards to Iranian policies. In addition, many studies suggest that Saudi Arabia must deal with the fact that Iran has obtained long-range missiles which have already strengthened their role outside the gulf region, particularly in Syria and Lebanon (Cordesman, 2009). While some other participants commented on Iran as being “not trustworthy” or as having “radical thinking”, one participant stated that:
Iran does not pose a risk or threat to the existence of Saudi Arabia or other Arab
Gulf states as disagreements are merely due to political differences caused by
ideological differences.

As displayed in Figure 6.1, Iran was identified as being a threat whereby the majority
of participants agreed with similar comments and views about Iran’s regional policies.

It is worth noting that most of the participants were representations of the Saudi view
as most of them worked or lived in Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, many other Western
experts supported this outlook. To illustrate, Saudi Arabia’s policies and actions were
considered to be “Westernised”, especially to those with radical thoughts or to those
in support of anti-American opinions. However, it should be noted that Iran is seen to
be interfering in GCC states’ internal affairs as all of the participants acknowledged
that Iran interferes in other regional states’ internal affairs – it is this interference that
is the main reason for them placing Iran as a main regional threat.

Despite containment policies being implemented by Saudi Arabia and other GCC
countries with Iran to strengthen relations, Saudi Arabia still views Iran as its biggest
potential rival and military threat. According to Cordesman (2009), the Saudi leaders
do not view Iran as being the most serious potential threat because of Iran’s current
behaviour toward Saudi Arabia. Instead, Saudi Arabia is committed to peace and
diplomatic solutions with Iran; to illustrate, Saudi Arabia has refused to take any
military action against Iraq or Iran (including Iran’s nuclear programme) because of
the sensitivity of these issues in the Arab and Muslim worlds – the aim is to keep the
area clear of any conflicts.
6.2.2 Iran’s Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Programme

To follow-up the first question, the participants were asked whether they considered the Iranian nuclear programme to be a serious threat to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region.

As indicated in Figure 6.2, 13 participants asserted that Iran’s WMD programme poses a threat, of which, 12, considered the programme to pose not only a military threat but also an environmental threat, and six participants failed to see any threat in Iran’s nuclear programme. The remaining five participants were not sure whether Iran’s WMD programme posed a serious threat to Saudi Arabia and the region.

One of the participants who argued that the Iranian WMD programme doesn’t pose a threat to Saudi Arabia stated:

*Iran is surrounded with countries that have WMD and it’s not necessarily directed towards Saudi Arabia and other GCC states (A2).*

Whereas, another participant stated:

*Iran aims to obtain WMD is real and many evidence suggests that, which is clearly for a military proposes that is directed towards other neighbouring countries that got WMD plus towards GCC states (J1).*

Interestingly, the other eight participants added similar statements with regards to the threats from Iran’s WMD programme.

Iran’s WMD programme is still controversial as it is unclear whether its intentions are peaceful or not (clean energy purposes). Many studies and reports have been conducted by various experts, including Cordesman (2013), Rogers (2010) and Henderson (2011), who suggest that the Iranian nuclear programme implies that Iran is seeking to obtain nuclear weapons. This adds to the rising notion that Iran poses a
threat to the Gulf state’s affairs as their programme increases the risk of Iran gaining more power and influence to the Gulf region’s security. Iran’s nuclear programme has become a source of anxiety not only for the regional states but also for other leading Western countries. These anxieties can be seen in the thorough and alarming coverage by the Western media who report on the seriousness of Iran’s nuclear programme – the speed at which Iran has developed and acquired nuclear weapons is seen to be alarming in the West.

The researcher agrees with the participants and foreign experts about the significance of Iran’s policies as threatening security in the Gulf region; nonetheless, Saudi Arabia must focus and insist upon diplomatic approaches towards Iranian policies, including the desire for WMD in order to avoid any war or confrontation with Iran. To illustrate, even if Saudi Arabia were not a part of it, any new war in the area would add new risks and threats to the region and the world. It is also important to acknowledge the consequences of any attack on Iran as this would have a negative effect upon the other countries in the region as well as regional security; thus, security in this region is integral to the world’s security and economy. Furthermore, even if Iran did not retaliate, the situation would still be affected as repeated Iranian conflicts would most likely obstruct the vital navigation of oil transportation in the Gulf. It could be predicted that this obstruction would discourage the other regional countries from participating in any such attack.

6.2.3 Iraq

Participants were then asked whether the current security situation in Iraq presented a serious threat to security in Saudi Arabia and the region. Of the 24 participants, 19 argued that the current situation in Iraq presents a serious threat, these participants
were then asked to provide a brief explanation to their answer with regards to Saudi Arabia and regional security. All of the participants that answered yes confirmed that as a result of the lack of security in Iraq and due to the rising influence of Iran, they considered the Iraqi situation to be a threat to the Kingdom’s security. One participant added that the neighbouring borders with Iraq result in a situation that is extremely important to Saudi Arabia and it therefore cannot be dismissed. Interestingly, 14 of the participants suggested that as a result in changes in the leadership in Iraq, Shi’ism will is likely to rise within the region. It is therefore likely that this will slowly affect the internal politics in Saudi Arabia because of the minority Shi’a community in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia may be affected because of their high association with religious scholars in Iraq and Iran. To illustrate this point, several participants expressed their opinions by stating the following:

*The current situation in Iraq is unpleasing, instability in Iraq is affecting Saudi national security as all Gulf states’ security is connected (A3).*

*The rise of sectarian conflict in Iraq is really a worrying sign that cannot be ignored especially with Iran’s involvements and its attempt to play a significant role there (P4).*

The remaining five participants did not acknowledge any threat from Iraq. It should be noted that the participants were from different fields of work (with interviewees from all three categories: officials and politicians [P], academics [A] and journalists [J]), but none of the answers correlated in any way with their job nature.

The participants’ answers to the situation in Iraq, plus the experts for Gulf region affairs, revealed that Iraqi politics and security is highly connected to the situation in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region. In fact, Iraq is facing several problems because security itself varies from region to region. The country is facing risk with regards to breakdown into ethnic-religious parts. The central government in Iraq is weak and is
continually facing local and regional authorities and militias who are fighting among each other. Moreover, the spread of terrorism across the country has forced thousands of Iraqi to flee to neighbouring countries – this, in itself, is creating new problems.

6.2.3.1 Iran’s Involvements in Iraq

As a follow-up question, the participants were asked whether they felt that Iran was interfering in Iraq’s internal politics and affairs. Ironically, all of the participants stated that they believed that Iran was interfering in Iraq’s internal politics and affairs, even those who had answered no to the previous question. Those who answered no did not view Iran’s interfering in Iraq as a threat, but rather as a competitive arena by which a rivalry situation was occurring between the regional powers of Saudi Arabia and Iran. One of the participants noted:

Iranian interference in Iraq and the extension of Iranian influence is clear and explicit which was enhanced by Al-Maliki’s government and some of the Shi’ism, both of which have played a great role against the American troops by arming militant groups and allowing Iran to help in this matter.

Several other participants stated:

Iraq is an important country for the Arabs, and the subordination of Iraq under Iranian influence constitutes a hazard to the entire region.

Furthermore, as indicated in Figure 6.4, most of the answers clearly show that Iran interferes in Iraq. Not all of the participants viewed this as a potential threat to Saudi Arabia, but 19 of the participants felt that it posed a threat. This view is supported by various other studies which suggest that Iran interferes with Iraqi politics and security, whereby the Shi’a parties are supported by the Iraqi government – this leads to more sectarian divisions where armed groups that resist the US presence are supported to destabilise security and peace in Iraq (Cordesman, 2009; Henderson, 2005).
Nevertheless, many studies and reports (such as: Cordesman, 2009; Henderson, 2009; Beehner and Bruno, 2008) suggest that Iran has been accused, by Iraqi officials, the US and by Saudi Arabia, of using its military and intelligence assets to support Shi’a militias. To illustrate, they indicate that the Mahdi Army is being supported to expand Shi’a power in the south of Iraq by making it a major political force that will influence and shape the future of Iraq. Analysts note that the Shi’a-led country is filled with figures, including Prime Minister *Nouri al-Maliki*, who spent time during Saddam Hussein’s tenure exiled in Iran. Some even fought in Iranian-armed military units against Iraqi forces during the long and bloody Iran-Iraq War. Evidence of tactical support, supplied by Iran to the Iraqi Shi’a insurgency, is worrying to the US and other regional states. Furthermore, according to Beehner and Bruno (2008), *President Bush* said that the US had evidence of Tehran supplying “material support”, including mortars and elements of sophisticated roadside bombs, to insurgents in Iraq who in turn targeted and killed US forces. Conversely, Proctor (2008) argues that Saudi Arabia has a “strong stake” in curbing Iran’s influence and halting the creation of a “Shi’a crescent” between Iraq and Iran as this could cause further Sunni-Shi’a conflicts in the Gulf and beyond.
Hanelt (2007), however, argues that Iraq is most likely to become the central scene for the American-Iranian confrontation of interests as the land of selfish interests or jihadist actions. The data collected from the interviews suggested a similar view of the situation in Iraq. Most of the participants agreed on the seriousness of the situation in Iraq, both politically and in terms of security for Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region; nevertheless, most of the participants agreed that Iran plays a role in Iraq’s politics and security; it thus spread its influence across the whole area. Some of the participants also supported Cordesman’s (2009) notion that Iran is creating a “Shi’a crescent”.

This research shares a similar view about the situation in Iraq, it is apparent that Iran is playing an involved role in the political and security situation by spreading its influence and by providing tactical support to the Iraqi Shi’a insurgency.

The final research findings for threats from Iran and Iraq will be presented in the following chapter (please see Chapter 7 for more detail).

6.2.4 Situation in Yemen

The next question asked participants about the level of security and the economy in Yemen with regards to whether it reflected either negatively or positively on Saudi Arabia’s regional security. A total of 23 participants felt that the level of security and economy in Yemen reflected on Saudi Arabia and regional security. They all believed that the geographical neighbouring location and long rugged borders of Yemen were associated with security in Saudi Arabia and the region. The following quotes illustrate how the current situation in Yemen affects Saudi security. Firstly,

*I believe Yemen is a bigger threat to Saudi security than Iran, due to its economic condition that makes people from Yemen migrate to Saudi for economic reasons*
primarily. As a result, there are more than a million Yemeni’s in Saudi who are illegal, hence its very difficult for the government to track their movements. (A1)

In contrast, other participants noted that:

The migration from Yemen to Saudi and blending to Saudi community has made the borders and smuggling more difficult to control (P2), and

The huge population in Yemen with low economic performance ultimately pushes people to serious crime (J1).

With regards to Yemen there were similar views regarding the seriousness of the situation which are linked to connections over the conditions of Saudi Arabia’s security. The participants, as well as other researchers (such as Petersons, 2002), argue that Yemen has been a source of concern since the Yemeni Revolution of 1962.

Although it is unlikely that Yemen would attack Saudi Arabia, there is still concern that Yemen is fragmented by its poverty as well as the existence of Al-Qaeda and the independent and armed tribes in Yemen. Yemen has been a safe haven for Al-Qaeda terrorists operating against Saudi Arabia, this region has become a staging area in the Arabian Peninsula targeted along the rugged Saudi-Yemeni border by illegal immigrants, drugs, arms and other types of smuggling and illegal activities.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the experts suggest that Al-Qaeda decided to form Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen in 2009, when various Al-Qaeda Yemeni and Saudi branches combined. Consequently, Yemen provided a potentially safe haven for a long-term base of operations by which terrorist attacks could be conducted internally and even abroad. It should also be noted that Saudi security forces have significantly obstructed Al-Qaeda’s presence in Saudi Arabia – thus, pushing these forces further into other territories in the area.
The other rising issue that poses an indirect threat to Saudi Arabia is the tribe of Al-Houthi who belong to the Shi’a community (see Chapter 4 for more detail). As can be seen from the map in Figure 5.1, the Al-Houthis cover the southern border area of Saudi Arabia. The participants were asked whether any other security issues affect the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), two of the respondents acknowledged Al-Houthi as a developing security threat from Yemen to Saudi Arabia as a result of insurgency or uprising within the Kingdom. One respondent quoted:

_They are Shi’a with high loyalty to Iran, and they do not want Saudi to have a peaceful status in the region._

Thus, Al-Houthi is proving to be problematic to Saudi security because it involves various critical elements (as discussed in Chapter 5) that affect security and stability in a country that is already facing a nationalist struggle in the south and with a global jihad movement that is in addition to poverty and weak security forces. In fact, any political instability in Yemen will have a serious consequence on the stability of the Arabian Peninsula as it will affect the flow of oil from the Gulf of Aden. Thus, the domestic political development in Yemen is critically important to the security and stability of Saudi Arabia. Consequently, it is important that the Yemeni difficulties are addressed in order to rectify the situation before it becomes unworkable.

Ultimately, it needs mentioning that poverty is the root cause of most of the problems in Yemen. Political instability in Yemen has provided Al-Qaeda with opportunities which are having a direct effect on Saudi Arabia and the economies from around the world that are dependent on the oil from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf.
6.2.5 Terrorism

The following question asked participants whether they believed that terrorism was still a threat in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region. Of the participants, 12 felt that terrorism remained a serious threat to Saudi Arabia and the world because it is still active despite the military tactics that have resulted in hiding it rather than resulting in its decline. In contrast, 10 participants felt that terrorism was not as serious a threat as it had been in Saudi Arabia – but, it was commented that it still exists in other countries, including: Yemen, Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan and North Africa. The remaining two participants indicated that terrorism only exists in individual cases and it therefore poses no or little threat to the states in the Gulf region. Many participants acknowledged that various strategies had been adopting, included security and ideological approaches through the use of media and counselling in an attempt to contain misguided terrorist thoughts. It appears as though these strategies have achieved some success, but it should be noted that it is extremely difficult and time consuming to attempt to eliminate terrorism as the intellectual attitudes need to be changed in order for terrorism to be eliminated. The following quotes indicate how some of the participants expressed concern that terrorist actions had not diminished:

What raises my concern that threat rises from terrorism, and Al-Qaeda in particular, were not completely finished in Saudi Arabia, despite the fact that Saudi Arabia has succeeded in eliminating terrorism militarily but it did not eliminate it intellectually which is even more important. (J1)

What feeds terrorism and extremism in general is presence of a culture of not accepting the others among some who raises their children on such notions. (P1)

Despite the adoption of multiple policies and strategies by Saudi Arabia which achieved many successes that led to a significant decrease in terrorism, but yet it’s the intellectual elimination that takes significant time and effort. (A2)

As indicated in Figure 6.2, the participants who felt that terrorism still exists were then asked about the future of terrorism in Saudi Arabia. Of these participants, 12
(50%) thought that terrorism is likely to be diminished in the near future in Saudi Arabia. In contrast, the other 12 thought that terrorism had faced military confrontations which resulted in it being more hidden; nonetheless, they felt that it was not totally eliminated because it had not been sufficiently confronted in terms of ideology.

6.2.6 Israel

The participants were then asked for their opinions on Israel, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The majority of respondents, 19, believed that the conflict in Palestine is the most important issue affecting regional security; furthermore, they noted that if this conflict were to be resolved then the whole region would be more
secure and stable. The remaining five participants did not provide a response to this question.

Several participants stated that it would have been “a better region” if the conflict between Israel and Palatinate were resolved. Some interviewees stated the following: “If the Israeli-Palestinian [conflict is resolved then] many other regional threats will [also] be solved”, “[this] must be dealt with as a first priority”, and with regards to these conflicts they “must never be forgotten”. Most of the interviewees acknowledged that they would not be able to forget or accept Palestine. In general, all 19 participants (from all three categories) believed that the issue of Israel, and the occupation of Palestine, is even more important than Iranian threats to Saudi Arabia’s national security; however, the issues with Iran are “more recent” and “direct”.

As indicated by many of the interviewees, Saudi Arabia’s leaders have demonstrated their commitment to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since the days of King Faisal. Both the interviewees and other researchers have suggested that Saudi Arabia’s western border is more secure than any other part of the Kingdom, as many suggested that the Arab-Israeli conflict has a major and direct impact on Saudi national security. Yet, previous studies and the interviewees suggest that any serious Israeli-Palestinian conflict will have a major destabilising effect on Jordan and Egypt. Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia must not ignore the impact that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has on its relations with the US; this research will explore these notions further in the next chapter.
6.2.7 Oil and Security

The literature presented in Chapters 4 and 5, demonstrated that the oil in Saudi Arabia has created challenges and threats to the Kingdom’s national security; hence, the next question asked participants to evaluate the role that oil has played in the process of policymaking and national security in Saudi Arabia, in order to determine whether the oil has caused challenges to security in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region as foreign ambitions and interferences have increased. All of the participants unanimously agreed that oil plays an essential role in Saudi politics, security and policymaking because it forms the basis of the Saudi economy. Consequently, this has led the Saudi state to be integral to international politics; to illustrate this point, the interviewees used the following quotes:

*It’s the first and the foremost important factor in Saudi politics, oil is the main axis around which most Saudi relationships evolve.* (P2)

*Oil plays a very essential role in Saudi politics but gives a false sense of safety to the Kingdom where it generates a large income which helped in placing the Kingdom among the major players in the political arena.* (J1)

*Of course oil plays a key role in the Saudi policy-making and Saudi national security and the higher oil prices contributes in raising of the state policies even at the internal level by raising the state budgets and thus spending on citizens.* (A2)

In the second part of the question, the interviewees were asked whether they thought that the oil had caused challenges to Saudi security and regional security, by involving the country/region in conflicts and/or challenges, such as the Second Gulf War. Interestingly, only three participants believed that the oil had resulted in challenges to Saudi or regional security, and 20 participants believed that the oil would always result in challenges to Saudi security and regional security because oil is a needed energy resource. Many emphasised the “seriousness” of the challenges that oil had caused to Saudi national security. As a follow-up question, the
participants were asked whether they felt that oil had been the main reason for the American involvement in the 1991 Second Gulf War. Of the participants, 17 argued that oil was the main reason for American interference in the Second Gulf War, five believed that other geopolitical reasons, in addition to the oil, had resulted in American interference and two participants did not answer the question. The following figure, Figure 6.3, illustrates the manner in which the participants responded to all of the suggested regional threats.

![Figure 6.3: Response towards regional threats](image)

6.2.8 Additional Comments

Finally, the participants were asked whether they wanted to suggest any additional regional threats that had not been previously mentioned. Six of the participants provided some additional regional threats. Three interviewees noted that interference from the West in the Gulf countries’ internal affairs should be considered a serious threat to the national security of Saudi Arabia because of the effect it has on the regional level. One participant acknowledged the high number of foreign labourers
within the Gulf countries as a potential threat, and the remaining two participants argued that the so called “Arab Spring” is a vital and serious threat to Saudi and regional security.

6.3 Part Two: Assessing Internal Dynamics of National Security

Research Question 2: What are the main internal threats and challenges affecting the policymaking process in Saudi Arabia? What are their main dynamics and players in Saudi Arabia’s national security?

In this second part, the participants were introduced to a number of internal threats and challenges – they were asked to determine whether they posed any form of threat to the national security of Saudi Arabia. The threats were identified in accordance to the five sectors of threats which were identified in the literature review presented in Chapter 4. Consequently, this part will help to provide an understanding of the internal dynamic dimensions of security in terms of the social, economic, political, military and environmental threats.

6.3.1 Economic Threats

The following economic threats were introduced to the interviewees: a) unemployment, b) administrative corruption, c) poverty and d) the huge economic dependence on oil. They were firstly asked to evaluate each of these threats and then they were secondly asked to consider any other economic threats that they felt might affect Saudi national security.
All of the participants agreed on the first three economical threats as being serious threats to national security because they all affected the policymaking process within the country. Nine of the participants added that unemployment, administrative corruption and poverty all directly affected the state’s development and prosperity; these factors must therefore be considered, however it is unlikely that total elimination would be possible. Some participants asserted that these threats should be dealt with more “seriously” and “urgently” and one participant, a well-known ex-Saudi official (P2), stated that these three factors represent the classical internal threat to Saudi national security – these are presenting a difficult task for the government to overcome or solve.

6.3.2 Social and Political Threats

As a result of the overlap between the social and political threats identified in the literature analysis, both of these threats will now be addressed together. The participants were introduced to the following social and political threats: a) social divisions and rapid changes – participants were asked about the social division that arises from the social conflicts between conservatives and liberalists, and the Shi’a minority within the Saudi social unity, they were asked whether each of these social divisions affects the policymaking process and Saudi national security; b) Shi’a demands and loyalties; c) internal demands and social media spread; and, d) the effect of the state’s internal social, cultural and religious nature on the state’s political system as well as internal and international policies.

The participants were asked about the extent of influence or threat of social conflict between conservatives and liberalists with regards to national security and political influence. Interestingly, 13 participants believed that the social conflict between the
conservatives and liberalists has an effect on the policymaking in Saudi Arabia. Some of the participants disagreed and 11 participants felt that this was not a conflict but rather simple disagreements in opinion between the youths (new generations) and the clerics, rather than between the liberalists and conservatives. Those who disagreed with the titles had predominantly worked for the Saudi government for a long period, they argued:

These Western titles do not apply significantly in the case of the Saudi society, where the majority of society does not clearly belong to any category or group, but these names have been adopted by some of the media in order to promote some of the Western terminology and ideas inside the Saudi society.

One expert who had experience and involvement in the Saudi national security affairs stated that:

The conflict between the so called “liberalists” and “conservatives” are artificial and in fact it’s more of a conflict between class, power and religion which has been used for years to monopolise and dominate the political scene by refusing any competitions to their role by any other party. Whereas, the other party is regarded as “liberalists” but it is mainly people who want to reform and change the current statues but they do not form any class or party, and this conflict threatens the security and national unity and is making the state and the policymaking process difficult, which could also lead to the emergence of some extremist groups as a product of this conflict. (J1)

The participants also differed in their evaluation of the effect of the Shi’a minority division from the Saudi society, based on their demands and loyalty effects on Saudi national security. Of the participants, 12 considered the existence of the Shi’a minority to be a limited threat which would be affected by their loyalty to Iran and the Shi’a sect as well as to the Saudi policy and decision-making in Saudi Arabia. Seven participants asserted that their history and current actions posed a serious threat to the Kingdom’s security as this had an effect on the process of policymaking despite the fact that they cannot be treated as enemies as they are part of the Saudi society. Five participants believed that the Shi’a minority are being used to pressure Saudi Arabia,
despite the fact that they pose little or no threat to Saudi security or the Saudi policymaking process. The following quotes represent these participants’ attitudes:

*The Shi’a minority in Saudi Arabia are part of the nation and they cannot be excluded no matter what.* (A3)

*... Shi’ism in Saudi Arabia must be contained and fused within the Saudi society.* (A5)

*... Although they (Shi’as in Saudi Arabia) sometimes appear to be leaning towards Iran, they cannot be treated on the basis that they are another part or the enemies to Saudi Arabia.* (A6)

Interestingly, it was predominantly the academics that thought that the Shi’a posed no threat to Saudi Arabia’s national security; they therefore felt that they should not be excluded from the Saudi society; in contrast, the politicians and journalists generally viewed the Shi’a as threatening to Saudi national security, due to their acts and favouritism towards Iran.

When the participants were asked about the effect of the state’s internal social nature, which involves many cultural aspects, including tribalism and certain exclusions on women, to the state’s political system that are caused by Western political pressures that ask for a greater political presentation and more rights for women. Of the participants, 14 asserted that the West in general were trying to “impose Western ideologies” that contradict with “our” culture and traditions. While, six participants argued that Saudi Arabia needs to maintain its global development to ensure that the Kingdom is not excluded from the other nations. As such, one academic stated:

*... Lately Saudi Arabia is doing fine with regards to women’s roles and rights... despite the existence of those who call for woman to be kept away which is putting pressure on the government... yet, the government has managed to overcome many of these calls and were able to get females involved in political and economic life.* (A4)

Another politician stated:
In support of the explanations provided in Chapter 4, many of the interviewees commented that social aspects create pressures on the government that are in addition to the pressures from the West because of opposition with the internal aspects and social structures in the Gulf region.

6.3.3 Military Threats

The participants were asked to identify any military threats by evaluating the effectiveness of the Saudi security forces, both in terms of the military and other state security forces, so as to determine the extent to which they fulfil their role.

Of the participants, 15 thought that there were no current or live direct military threats affecting Saudi Arabia or their security forces; consequently, they are currently managing internal and external threats as they develop. Conversely, the remaining participants felt that the security forces needed to develop in terms of manpower and quality. Some participants raised concerns about Saudi Arabia’s dependence on its military for security with regards to the US, one academic stated:

*The Saudi dependence and reliance on its military on the United States and Western states are making their security exposed and tied to these countries (A4).*

There is no straightforward method for assessing the overall effectiveness of the Saudi security efforts. But, the literature and interviewees indicated that Saudi Arabia’s security forces could work to identify the overall trend required for the Kingdom’s military in order to make internal security more effective.
Some participants identified internal terrorism as one of the main and serious military threats to Saudi national security (the effect of terrorism on Saudi Arabia’s national security was discussed earlier in this chapter as part of the analysis of the external threats).

Another participant, who had been involved in the Saudi Ministry of Defence since 2001, argued that the Saudi forces had witnessed a huge shift in personnel and apparatus in the aftermath of the 2003 terrorist attacks within Saudi Arabia.

One famous Saudi politician argued that Saudi Arabia has always been keen to develop its military forces. However, the literature suggests that the US led in supplying arms to Saudi Arabia. To illustrate, between 1950 and 2006, Saudi Arabia purchased and received weapons, military equipment and related services through foreign military sales (FMS) that were worth over $62.7 billion and from foreign military construction services (FMCS) that were worth over $17.1 billion, from the US (Blanchard, 2009: 17).

6.3.4 Environmental Threats

The participants were asked about the environmental threats that had been identified in the literature review; specifically, these threats included: desertification; depletion of underground water resources; the lack of perennial rivers or permanent water bodies which prompted the development of extensive seawater desalination facilities; and threats from coastal pollution from oil spills. Most of the interviewees (20) asserted that due to other “significant” internal and regional threats, the environmental threats and security were not deemed to be threatened and they were therefore not part of the state policymaking agenda.
In the last part of this section, the participants were asked to identify any additional internal threats; the following were identified by some of the participants:

1. Distribution of wealth.

2. Large numbers of foreign labourers.

3. Racism.

4. Rapid increase in population.

5. Marginal area that mainly exists in the southern and northern regions.


7. Increasing gap between the rich and poor.

Figure 6.4: Assessment from the 24 participants on Saudi Arabia’s internal challenges
The researcher’s final findings with regard to the internal threats and the dynamics of Saudi national security, as identified from the interviews and the secondary data analysis, will be presented in the following chapter.

### 6.4 Part Three: Saudi Arabia’s Relations and Diplomacy

*Research Question 3: What are the main states that play a major role and are vital to Saudi Arabia’s politics and security? And, what elements of Saudi diplomacy are associated with each of the presented states?*

In order to answer this third research question, several general questions were asked in order to evaluate the main states that are considered vital to Saudi Arabia’s regime for national security. The participants were introduced to most of the main players in the international arena, as well as the major states in the Gulf region, they were then asked to assess the importance of each state to the Saudi government in terms of its relations and diplomacy as well as the connections to security and state politics (these relations will again be discussed further from the researcher’s point of view in the next chapter, see section 7.3).

#### 6.4.1 US-Saudi Relations

The participants were firstly asked to assess the Saudi-American relations. All of the participants assumed that Saudi-American relations were strategic and of significant importance to both parties; despite the turbulence of the post-9/11 period, these relations are considered to be normal in the current era. The participants were then asked to provide information on the main aspects that influence Saudi-American relations. Various answers were provided, but 14 of the participants focused on the following key points: oil and energy resources, the Arab Spring effect and stability in
Saudi Arabia. In addition, eight of the participants provided answers which can be summarised by the following quote:

*Due to the existence of interests on both sides and as long the United States is the superpower and Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region hold a huge reserves of oil and energy resources, the strategic relations will remain and stand based on the requirement to provide protection and security in return for ensuring that oil supply is maintained and oil prices are kept stable.*

This notion is supported in the literature which shows that US relations with Saudi Arabia have been strategically important for both nations for more than 60 years, despite various periods of sensitivity (Peterson, 2002; Cordesman, 2009; Hajjar, 2002). Two other participants argued that the US is unlikely to remain the most powerful superpower given the fact that the US has started to face huge economic difficulties that are likely to affect the state’s supremacy – this in turn will affect the foreign policies and strategies of the US.

The following question asked whether the presence of US troops in the Gulf region would be affected by the US’ power/economical status. Of the participants, 20 (85%) felt that it would most probably continue as it is now as it is connected to the existence of oil and the power of the US as a state, they also felt that the relationship had both negative and positive effects. Some even felt that the US presence was necessary for the security of the Saudi state. The remaining four participants felt that the US’ presence would not continue for much longer.

Many of the participants acknowledged the fact that some of the terrorism in the Gulf states has emerged in response to the US’ military presence in the region – this can be traced back to the early part of the last century. However, it should be noted that most of the interviewees identified the strategic importance of the US to the relationships and diplomacy in Saudi Arabia as these were deemed to be integral to Saudi Arabia’s
national security. The researcher will comment further on these findings and on the trends and importance of the US-Saudi relations to national security and diplomacy in Saudi Arabia in the next chapter (see section 7.3).

6.4.2 EU-Saudi Relations

The next question asked the participants to evaluate Saudi relations with European Union (EU) countries. All of the participants believed that relations with the EU countries were important, but not as important as relation with the US; furthermore relations between Saudi and the EU were currently considered to be good.

Saudi Arabia is currently enjoying strong relations with most of the EU countries as a result of trading and political and security ties. Britain and France are deemed to have significant EU relations with Saudi Arabia – these strong ties, through the GCC, can be dated back to the establishment of the Saudi state.

6.4.3 Sino-Saudi Relations

The participants were also asked about their relations with China. All participants asserted that these relations should be considered very important as China’s importance is rising in the international arena; nonetheless, this relationship has been affected by the Chinese attitudes toward the United Nations. Key terms used by the participants included: “new superpower” and “China is the number one economic power”.

The researcher will explain the trend and importance of the Sino-Saudi relations to the Saudi state’s national security and diplomacy in the next chapter (see section 7.3).
6.4.4 Russia-Saudi Relations

The participants were then asked about relations with Russia. All participants asserted that relations with Russia are very important but that they are not as significant as the relations with the US or China; nonetheless, this relationship is also affected by the Russian stand in the United Nations. Key terms used by the participants to describe Russian importance, included: “under estimated great power”, “the old superpower” and “power balancer”.

Again, the researcher will discuss the importance of Russia to Saudi relations and diplomacy, in more detail, in the next chapter.

6.4.5 India-Saudi Relations

The participants were also asked to assess Saudi relations with India. All of the participants agreed that these relations were important and need to be improved and extended; however, they all asserted that the strong ties that Saudi has with Pakistan have always affected this relationship. Furthermore, a large number of Indian labourers work in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region, in general (further discussion of the importance of Saudi relations with India will be given from the researcher’s viewpoint in the next chapter, see section 7.3).

6.4.6 GCC-Saudi Relations

Participants were then asked to evaluate relations with the GCC countries. All participants commented on the uniquely important relations with other GCC states, these relations have created vital unions by which strong ties and capabilities have been enriched among the GCC states. Eight of the participants argued that these relations have been affected by disagreements among the rulers of the different states
with regards to their position toward some of the regional and international issues as well as border disputes. In contrast, other participants argued that all of the historical disagreements and disputes between Saudi Arabia and the other GCC countries have been removed (these relations will be discussed further in Chapter 7).

6.4.7 Iran-Saudi Relations

The next question asked participants to assess the Saudi relations with Iran. Of the participants, 20 (90%) agreed that the relations faced conflict and harmony; however, these relations are currently considered to be tense because of differences in the ruling regimes in Iran and Saudi Arabia, consequently, their policies towards the whole region and relations are important and also conflicting. Four participants argued that the relations are no more competitive than other rival relationships between two neighbouring states (nonetheless, the researcher will provide further explanation of the importance of Saudi-Iranian relations in the following chapter).

6.4.8 Iraq-Saudi Relations

With regards to relations with Iraq, most participants believe that relations have been affected by the Iranian interference in Iraqi politics. The interviewees argued that these relations are currently quiet, despite the importance of Iraq to the whole region’s status. Some participants even described relation with Iraq as “bad relations” and “in its worst time”; yet, all participants asserted that relations with Iraq are important as it is an important part of the Arab world.

Iraq has become a power vacuum without Saddam Hussein – this has resulted in a similar destabilising effect. Saudi Arabia saw the overthrow of Saddam Hussein as unavoidable, but also unpleasant. But, the Saudi regime is dissatisfied that the Shi’a
are dominating the Iraqi government and they are concerned about security in Iraq. The Iranian interference in Iraq will always present a challenge to Saudi-Iraqi relations; this needs reconsideration from Saudi Arabia and the other GCC states as this is deemed to present the biggest threat to the Gulf area.

6.4.9 Turkey-Saudi Relations

Participants were also asked about relations with Turkey, many participants argued that Turkey is an important state for Saudi relations because Turkey is having a positive effect on various aspects in the region, especially with regards to the Iranian regional impact. One participant (academic) used the following phase to describe the importance of these relations:

*It is essential to Saudi national security... especially in the light of Iran’s rising role in the Gulf region (A1).*

In addition, one politician commented:

*Relations with Turkey must be developed in various fields... especially with the presence of the Sunni faith in common (P2).*

6.4.10 Egypt-Saudi Relations

The participants were also asked about relations with Egypt. All participants agreed on the importance of relations with Egypt, they argued that this relationship cannot be affected by regime change because Egypt has strong social ties and a shared political Arab association. Hence, it is most likely that relations with Egypt are not likely to change significantly, irrespective of the rulers of Egypt; it is therefore expected that the long lasting interrelationship between the two nations would continue to provide common ground for the two countries.
6.4.11 Additional Relations

The final question, presented in this third part, asked participants to identify any other countries that they felt were of importance to Saudi foreign politics. Most of the participants felt that no additional states needed to be added, but a number of participants listed the states of Japan, South Korea, South Africa, Pakistan and Malaysia as potential strategic partners in the future – this was based on their possible future relations and need for Saudi oil. Others argued that Saudi international relations may become diversified so as to benefit and enhance Saudi partnerships – this would most likely ease the dependence of Saudi international relations with the US.

Saudi Arabia is clearly expanding its external relations with some of the new growing political powers, perhaps most notably China, India and Russia, in order to better provide security and stability for the region and the world; however, it should be noted that previous approaches and efforts, undertaken by Saudi Arabia and other states in the Gulf, have failed to achieve the desired results. This, perhaps, represents the need for a stronger, more active, Saudi role within the international arena whereby the relations enjoyed by Saudi Arabia represent the strength of Islam and the Arab states that have continued to develop since the reign of King Faisal during the 1970s.

6.5 Part Four: Evaluating Saudi Policies and Strategies on the Domestic, Regional and Global Levels

*Research Question 4: How effective are Saudi Arabia’s state and security policies and strategies in terms of the domestic, regional and global levels?*
In order to answer this fourth research question, the participants were introduced to several questions aimed at assessing the effectiveness of Saudi Arabia’s policymaking process.

6.5.1 Assessing Regional Policies

Firstly, the researcher asked whether Saudi Arabia was fulfilling its role toward region security in the Gulf. Of the participants, 14 argued that Saudi Arabia was doing enough and 10 argued that Saudi Arabia was not doing enough to maintain regional security. As a follow-up question, the participants were asked whether Saudi Arabia’s regional policies and actions were being effectively directed toward addressing and eliminating regional threats. Of the participants, 16 believed that Saudi Arabia’s regional policies and actions were being effectively directed towards addressing and eliminating these regional threats; to illustrate, one interviewee stated:

*Its difficult to assess Saudi Arabia’s regional policies... but recently Saudi Arabia has definitely starting having more effective foreign policies and that is what was needed (A2).*

Another stated:

*Although Saudi Arabia plays a huge role... it cannot play a bigger role alone, it needs the other GCC countries and some other regional countries, such as Turkey to become involved (P3).*

While eight of the participants thought that that Saudi Arabia’s regional policies and actions were not being directed effectively toward addressing and eliminating the regional threats, some of the participants stated that Saudi Arabia needs to reassess its regional policies in order to reshape them to address the regional challenges in a more serious and appropriate manner. In addition, it is worth noting that six of these eight responses were from academics; conversely, most of the interviewees who thought that the regional policies were effective were politicians (in total 16).
6.5.1.1 Arab Spring Effect on Saudi Arabia

The interviewees were also asked what influence they felt the so called “Arab Spring” had on Saudi Arabia. The respondents were briefed about the recent events that had occurred in Libya, Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen and Syria. They were asked to provide opinions on these events with regards to how they impacted on Saudi security. Of the participants, 20 believed that the Arab Spring had a huge influence on Saudi Arabia, only three felt it had a limited influence and one participant felt it had no influence on Saudi Arabia because there were no significant similarities between these states and Saudi Arabia.

It is important to note that many participants consider the “Arab Spring” term incorrectly, as the term fails to adequately describe and reflect on what is really occurring within these countries with regards to harm, torture and deaths. Some of the participants with academic backgrounds stated:

Unless Saudi Arabia tries hard to cope with changes in other parts of the Arab world, the affect of these changes will be enormous on Saudi internal politics and these regime changes might result in alliances shifting whereby a state like Egypt might become a state of collision rather than alliance or friendship.

As a follow-up question, the participants were asked to predict Saudi relations with the new governments in these countries (those that had witnessed regime change). Of the participants, 14 argued that relations with the new regimes would remain unchanged as a result of the Islamic position that Saudi Arabia holds and eight thought that relations with the new regimes would be tense and complex (most of these eight participants were either academics or journalists); furthermore, two participants refused to answer this question.
6.5.2 Assessing International Policies

The participants were then asked to evaluate Saudi Arabia’s policies and actions in terms of the international level (foreign policies). Of the participants, nine rated it as excellent and a further nine rated it as good. The remaining six participants believed that additional effort is needed, five of which were academics. One politician stated:

> At the international level... Saudi Arabia is doing a successful job across all fields.

6.5.3 Assessing Internal Policies

The following question asked participants to evaluate Saudi Arabia’s social, political, and economic internal policies. In addition to determining this, the participants were asked whether the policies were successful at tackling and eliminating the internal threats and challenges. Of the participants, 19 believed that Saudi Arabia’s internal politics needed more effort as it wasn’t felt that it was currently effectively eliminating internal threats, three interviewees rated Saudi Arabia’s internal politics as good and two rated the internal politics as excellent.
Ironically, as Figure 6.5 above illustrates, Saudi Arabia’s internal politics signifies the highest level of security that needs more consideration as it was deemed to be lacking in effectiveness. Interestingly, 19 of the 24 interviewees raised concern over the internal level of security, this was followed by regional policies whereby 10 participants viewed Saudi regional security as insufficient, this was then followed by international policies whereby six participants stated that it needs more considerations. The researcher’s final findings on the effectiveness of Saudi Arabia’s...
policies and strategies will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter (see section 7.3).

6.6 Part Five: Saudi Arabia’s Political and Security Future

Research Question 5: What are the main obstacles that limit or affect Saudi Arabia’s potential political outcomes? And, what are the perceptions of Saudi Arabia’s politics and security?

To answer this fifth research question the participants were asked questions relating to the different sections of state politics and security, these were linked to Saudi state policymaking through the provision of personal beliefs on the way in which Saudi national security could be improved. This question was divided into three sections, each of which addressed the following areas of: a) regional, b) international, and c) internal security and politics.

6.6.1 Regionally

Many opinions were introduced by the participants with regards to the ways in which the Saudi regional role could be improved – they generally focused on the following points:

- Activating King Abdullah’s call to transform the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) into a strategic union.
- Maintain and improve the support and role of Saudi Arabia in the Arabic and Islamic world.
- Supporting the Arab states economically by investing in these countries, not only through the use of grants and aid.
• Using the media and international forums to further illuminate Saudi Arabia’s views and orientations with regard to regional issues.

• Manage regional circumstance, with more seriousness, with the other GCC states.

• Develop a clear declared strategy towards regional concerns and establish the means to measure the implementation and success of these strategies.

• Give more attention to the internal conditions, this will lead to the development of the regional and international position.

• Improve regional relations with other regional powers, such as Turkey and Egypt, to curb the Iranian influence.

6.6.2 Internationally

The participants were asked how the international role and position for Saudi Arabia in foreign politics could be improved. Many believed that the current foreign political situation was perfectly fine as it was much better than the internal and regional positions. However, the following items were noted for improvement:

• Stronger and clearer relationships with some of the major powers, such as Japan, South Korea, Malaysia and Russia, should be developed.

• Saudi Arabia’s views and positions should be clearly expressed with regards to international issues to ensure they represent the nation’s interests.

• Focus should be given to ways to encourage the Kingdom to become a greater leader.
6.6.3 Internally

In terms of the internal field, it was felt that:

- State institutions should be renewed and developed in order to meet with the internal and external developments and challenges as this will encourage the new generations to be involved in these institutions.

- Clear strategic systemic solutions need to be developed to meet the challenges, and committees need to be developed to review and follow-up on the progress of these strategies.

- Greater permissions should be given to the Shura Council and the media.

- Citizen participation should be enhanced to encourage decision-making through the Shura Council and the Saudi National Dialogue Centre.

- Corruption should be combated more seriously.

- The judiciary should have more integrity.

- The culture of moderation and tolerance should be encouraged to oppose extremist thoughts.

- Political and social developments should be kept abreast with, in an attempt to meet the demands of the younger generations, to ensure that the current civil service system is relevant.

- More institutions should be elected.

- Social cohesion should be strengthened.
• Greater attention should be given to the education system with special consideration to child breeding methods.

The participants were then asked their predictions on whether the challenges facing Saudi Arabia and the other GCC states would be resolved in the near future. Of the participants, 11 suggested that most of the current challenges would be resolved in the near future, eight indicated that they were unsure, and five felt that they would not be resolved.

The next question asked whether Saudi Arabia was capable of adopting a greater role within the Gulf region. All of the participants felt that Saudi Arabia could adopt a bigger role, many participants asserted that Saudi Arabia has all the elements required for them to play a greater role and they could therefore hold a more effective position.

The following question asked whether Saudi Arabia was capable of resolving the various challenges and threats that have evolved within the Gulf region, or whether they would need help from other GCC members. Of the participants, 20 felt that Saudi Arabia could not act alone as they needed the cooperation from either the other GCC states or other Western superpowers. This view is supported by the literature review which suggested that Saudi Arabia needs to enhance its cooperation through the GCC in order to better assess and manage the Gulf challenges, more seriously, along with the other Arab Gulf states (Cordesman, 2009; Khalaf and Luciani, 2006; Peterson, 2002). The remaining four participants felt that Saudi Arabia could resolve all of the regional challenges and threats on their own – they argued that Saudi Arabia has all of the elements needed to face all of the challenges and threats alone.
The following question asked whether the internal politics in Saudi Arabia would have a positive effect on regional and global politics. All of the participants answered yes to this question; in particular, one participant who had worked for the Saudi government for more than 30 years stated:

There is no doubt that this old theory is very important which is based on two factors, social justice and national unity, it states that the achievement of these factors does not weaken it and it will not be defeated easily.

6.6.4 Main Obstacles

In the last part of this final section, the participants were asked to identify the main obstacles or determinants affecting the enhancement of Saudi Arabia’s politics in terms of the internal, regional and global spheres. Most of the participants provided answers, the main notions are now mentioned below:

6.6.4.1 Internally

• Groups and people that resist reform and changes.

• Unsolved problems and challenges.

• Bureaucracy.

• Western intervention in internal matters.

6.6.4.2 Regionally

• Great power intervention in regional issues.

• Regional disorder and chaos.
6.6.4.3 Globally

- Alienated from some superpowers at the expense of others (i.e. US and Russia).
- Global balance of power.
- Economic global crisis.

At the end of the interview, the interviewees were asked whether they had anything else to add; none of the participants added anything.

The researcher’s final findings on the future of Saudi Arabia’s national security will be presented in Chapter 7.

6.8 Conclusion

This sixth chapter has provided additional information in an attempt to overcome the gaps in the current literature, as a result the threats suggested from the internal perspective have been re-examined by this research. The five main research questions, utilised in the interviews, were formulated in accordance with the main threats that the previous literature suggested were of relevance to the analysis of Saudi Arabia’s national security (see Chapters 4 and 5 for detailed discussions of the various relevant studies). This research project was therefore based on some of the assumptions obtained from the literature presented; in particular, the meaning of security was considered based on the unique status of the Saudi state. The specific structures of the Saudi state were identified, the state’s internal and external threats were also identified and finally these elements were then linked to the Saudi state’s relations
with regional and external powers. All in all, a deeper understanding of the dynamics and dimensions of Saudi national security were obtained.

This chapter, in the first instance, proposed the use of a distinctive framework to help to further understand and analyse national security in Saudi Arabia – this will be explored further in Chapter 7. The five questions were devised in an attempt to provide better understanding of: the state’s internal and external threats, the state’s relations and diplomacy strategies for managing other regional and major powers, as well as a better understanding of the suggested future obstacles that may affect Saudi national security.

This chapter has also illustrated that the key findings from the interviews have influenced the researcher’s opinion with regards to the regional and internal threats that were identified in the secondary data analysis. In addition, this chapter has also discussed the relationship that Saudi Arabia has with other states, these discussions acknowledged the views of the Saudi participants as well as the existing foreign literature. Based on these findings and discussions, the researcher will now, in the following chapter, present a systemic analysis of Saudi Arabia’s national security.
Chapter 7

Conceptualising Saudi National Security: Researcher’s Final Findings
7.1 Introduction

This chapter will present a systemic analysis of Saudi Arabia’s national security. This analysis will be based on the findings and discussions from the predominantly foreign literature, that were reviewed, and the findings of the semi-structured interviews in order to re-examine the situation in Saudi Arabia. The specific structures of the Saudi state were identified in accordance with the state’s internal and external threats, and the strategies deployed to counteract these threats; in addition, the state’s relations and diplomacy strategies were identified in an attempt to understand how Saudi Arabia managed the other regional and external powers.

This chapter will present Saudi Arabia’s internal and external dimensions, and dynamics, in relation to their strategies of security; consequently, information concerning the state’s internal dimensions and threats of security will be identified for all five sectors of security (social, political, economic, military and environmental). In addition, the main internal players affecting Saudi Arabia’s national security, on the domestic level, will also be addressed. Furthermore, this chapter will suggest key points for improving internal security in Saudi Arabia, these suggestions for improved efficiency will be developed based on Saudi Arabia’s internal security policies and strategies that were suggested in the literature and interviewees. This chapter will also present the external threats affecting Saudi national security, as well as the main players affecting the regional and international levels of national security. Furthermore, the researcher will present an evaluation of Saudi Arabia’s external relations and diplomacy while also providing key ways in which external security and diplomacy in Saudi Arabia could be improved.
Consequently, this chapter will provide a more detailed understanding of the dynamics, strategies and dimensions of Saudi national security in terms of the internal and external perspectives. This chapter will therefore suggest a distinctive framework for understanding and analysing Saudi national security; as a result, the internal and foreign perspectives and thoughts, from all state security aspects, will be presented as the main aim of this study.

7.2  Researcher’s Findings on Internal Dimensions and Dynamics of Saudi National Security

7.2.1  Main Players in Saudi Arabia’s Internal Dimension of National Security

The Saudi political system consists of various institutions and key powers, including:

1. The King via the Royal Court.
2. The Council of Ministers.
4. Hay’at Kibar al-Ulama (the Council of the Senior Ulama) which consists of Muslim scholars with specialist knowledge of Islamic sacred law and theology.
5. Saudi security forces via the Interior Minister.

The literature and interviews indicted that the first four are the most influential central components and most powerful players in the national security of Saudi Arabia. Topics and ideologies revolving around Islamism, nationalism and liberalism are the
main manipulated issues and elements within the internal arena of Saudi national security. The following four major domestic players influence Saudi internal security:

- Sunni political activism.
- Liberals.
- Shi’a minority.
- Tribal and regional politics.

Figure 7.1: Saudi political system and its interaction with the key players (Source: Author’s own)
Figure 7.1, above, shows the interaction between the Saudi political system and the key players that affect security in Saudi society. The figure illustrates that the following four authorities: the King via the Royal Court, the Cabinet of Ministers, the Majlis Al-Shura (the Consultative Council) and the Council of the Senior Ulama, hold the control of power in the country. Although the King holds the supreme authority in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, it is the four authorities that convey control over the other state institutions (i.e. the ministers, the security forces, the judicial system and the municipal councils, etc.). However, the politics and the management of the institutions and government agencies are all shaped by the influence of several key socially and religiously motivated players, namely: Sunni political activism (which itself takes on many forms, from moderate voices, conservatives to militant jihads ideologies), liberals, Shi’a minority, as well as tribal and regional politics. The figure illustrates that the relationships are two-way; consequently, some of the players are more influential than others and the players with the bigger circles are generally more influential than those with smaller circles.

7.2.2 Main Internal Threats

7.2.2.1 Social and Political Security Threats

The social and political threats form the most serious threats to Saudi Arabia’s internal level of national security. The discussions from the secondary and primary data about the internal social and political threats showed a huge overlap between the social and political threats and the dynamics of security. Tension has developed in Saudi Arabia as a result of political and religious differences, as well as regional differences. The Saudi regime has experienced conflict, differences and tensions from
Islamic reformists within the Saudi society; nonetheless, it would be possible for Saudi to become allied with these reformists. The researcher will now identify the main social and political threats that he feels are of influence to Saudi Arabia.

First, with regards to balancing the internal demands of all conflicting parties: Saudi Arabia faces the “internal dilemma” of creating balance between the elements of society that are demanding reform and change, with the other elements of society that are more conservative about change – this has created conflict between the cultural and social aspects of the Saudi society. As suggested by many of the interviewees, and the reviewed studies, the Saudi monarchy is not faced with the pressure of democratic electoral politics or the risk of losing power (as other Arab states face through elections). Nonetheless, the system of government in the Kingdom is based on Islamic and tribal traditions rather than Western models whereby an open society is repressed and women face a restricted way of live. The royal family endures internal influence struggles between those who are more open to economic, political and social reform (reformists) and those who are more conservative and attached to the status quo (conservatives).

Second, with regards to Shi’a demands and loyalties: Saudi Arabia is home to a wide variety of faiths, sects and tribes. This diversity plays a part in the domestic pressures for reform and policymaking changes. The presence of the Shi’a minority in Saudi Arabia has created internal difficulties, especially as many of these Shi’a have shown loyalty to Iran. This could, in turn, weaken their allegiance to Saudi Arabia and result in a negative effect on social cohesion and Saudi Arabia’s interests. Irrespective of this, this minority group cannot be excluded and they must be considered within the Saudi context in order to ensure their loyalty.
Third, with regards to social media developments: it is clear, in light of the recent media revolution, that Saudi Arabia has faced pressure to respond to internal demands for reform and change. The introduction of social media communications, including Twitter, Facebook and Whatsapp, allow people to access unmonitored communications systems by which people can share information that the Saudi government may regard as confidential. Millions of people from Saudi Arabia now use the Internet; consequently, the control of information exchange has become impossible in this new social media era.

Fourth, with regards to complying with external and internal commitments: many Western, and external, states dismiss or fail to understand how the social and cultural aspects are genuinely affecting Saudi Arabia’s national security. To illustrate, social and cultural aspects are restricting and influencing the state policymaking, consequently a political/social dilemma has been created between Saudi Arabia and other Western states with regards to issues such as women’s freedom which have created difficult dilemmas for the government – in the West, these notions are regarded as a suppression of freedom and human rights. However, the religious and social systems upon which Saudi Arabia was created, as founded by Mohammad ibn Abd Al-Wahhab in the eighteenth century (as discussed in Chapter 4), developed a highly religious and conservative society that is followed by many other Arabic and Islamic countries. Thus, any policies or agendas that are not compatible with these social and religious thoughts are considered to be of a threat to social and political security.

In fact, these main four social and political threats illustrate the dynamic environment that Saudi Arabia faces with regards to its national security and they are considered as
the main current serious internal threats which rise the importance of urgent dealing with them in order to resolve and sustain internal stability and security. Nevertheless, those threats expose the country progress towards the process of political development within the Saudi state. Embracing a clear series of Political Development pedestals that calls for political participation as mean to reduce the public pressure should enhance public participation in the state political system. Ironically, the majority of internal threats and challenges that the Saudi state faces comes as a result of the collision and the rising of the public demands which could be reduced and eased through an effective mechanism to engage further the pedestals of political participation and social integration as a mean to tackle most of the country internal threats and challenges and to enhance the state national security (for further details, please see section 7.3).

7.2.2.2 Economic and Environmental Security Threats

The interviews and secondary data analysis conducted in Chapters 4 and 5 indicated that Saudi Arabia, and the other states in the Gulf region, may face increased economic problems in the coming decade. The researcher considers the following threats to be the most serious to Saudi Arabia’s economic and environmental security.

First, in terms of the oil-based economy: the Saudi economy needs to face the challenge of transferring its economy beyond its oil revenues. Oil still accounts for 45% of Saudi Arabia’s GDP, this accounts for 70% to 80% of the state’s revenue and around 90% of their total export revenue.

Second, Saudi Arabia needs to grow its economy to fulfil the rapid growth in population: Saudi Arabia’s population is growing on average by 3% every year.
Third, unemployment: the unemployment rates range from 15% to 25%, in line with the rapid explosion of youths; consequently, the government needs to create hundreds of thousands of new jobs every year.

Fourth, poverty: although the Saudi government has already taken several steps to tackle poverty and unemployment, especially since the events of the “Arab Spring”, because unemployment rates have continued to increase; thus, it is likely that in the near future, a section of people will be under the poverty level. This raises huge concerns for the government because of the knowledge that there is a significant positive correlation between poverty and terrorism.

Fifth, the education systems are insufficient in developing skilled workers: the education systems across the Gulf are still unable to produce large numbers of skilled workers, as a result of other social/cultural factors. Consequently, Saudi Arabia and other GCC states face inadequate education systems. Currently, young Saudi people (both male and female) are highly educated, in terms of global standards, they are also accustomed to high living standards; unfortunately, the education system fails to produce young men and women who are able to work as they have little or no work ethic. Moreover, many Saudi women and men are working in jobs that have no useful economic output.

Sixth, Saudi Arabia relies heavily on foreign expatriate workers: the poor education system has faced problems as efforts have been made to replace highly-skilled foreign labour workers with local citizens. Consequently, the foreign expatriates working in Saudi Arabia account for 25% of the population, this has a genuine effect on Saudi Arabia’s identity.
Seventh, the shortage of fresh water resources and the lack of perennial rivers or permanent water bodies, makes the Kingdom inherently, depended on extensive seawater desalination facilities and with the country’s rapid growth, the demand for water is increasing.

7.2.2.3 Military Security

With regards to military threats, Chapter 5 acknowledged that Saudi Arabia has devoted its full resources to making more use of its security forces; specifically, the National Guard (SANG) and the Ministry of Interior security forces have been working since 2003 to deal with terrorism and to protect their oil facilities. Furthermore, with regards to counterterrorism, in 2004, 2005 and 2006 it is estimated that Saudi Arabia allocated $8.5, $10 and $12 billion, respectively, to increase the training, facilities and professionalism of its counterterrorism forces. Furthermore, in order to strengthen its borders through employing sophisticated measures to protect its borders, a total overhaul of the Saudi security system was provoked.

The violent experiences faced by the Kingdom in 2003 led Saudi Arabia to establish a Joint Counterterrorism Centre in the Ministry of Interior (MOI) as well as a separate Counterterrorism Operation Centre in the Ministry of Defence and Aviation (MODA). Furthermore, the Saudi government established a National Joint Counterterrorism Command Protection Force (NJCC) that was headed by the Assistant Minister of Interior for Security Affairs, Prince Muhammad bin Nayef, to improve the cooperation, command and control capabilities among the different divisions of the MOI, SANG and MODA (Cordesman, 2009: 130).

Saudi Arabia is still facing direct active military threat, most of the possible threats to its military security are discussed in terms of the external dimensions of national
The Saudi military are therefore facing many challenges that are affecting their capabilities. This thesis has discussed the opinions of various foreign analysts and opinions from Saudi experts, but the researcher would now like to summarise the following points as the key military elements needing consideration:

1. Saudi security forces lack coordination within and between their military forces: this is a problem associated with most of the Gulf states in their attempt to organise and command large military forces.

2. Manpower quality and readiness to deal with the demands of modern security technologies and tactics: the Saudi security forces have suffered as a result of problems in the quality of their manpower who have limited or no knowledge of some fields such as technologies and contemporary security demand tactics. Consequently, it is difficult to create an advanced force structure that can deal with both regional and external possible threats. Saudi Arabia needs to recognise that they need more tactical independence in order to deal with Iran’s growing capabilities; they therefore need to be able to rapidly deploy forces to deal with terrorist threats that attack their population and infrastructures – examples of such threats include the Al-Houthi attacks from Yemen and the growing instability in the Horn of Africa.

3. The SANG needs to manage more demanding security missions and be better trained in order to deal with developing internal and regional threats and duties.
4. Saudi Arabia is reliant on arms and defence from foreign countries, mainly the US, this linked Saudi national security to these countries. Consequently, security could be weakened as a result of this dependency and allegiances with these other countries.

7.3 The Effectiveness and Future of Saudi Arabia’s Internal Policies

Most of the interviewees indicated that Saudi Arabia needed to focuses on its internal policies rather than the external policies and dimensions of security. Nonetheless, much of the reviewed literature identified Saudi Arabia as one of the most active states in diminishing conflict and in advancing internal policies within the region.

Lacy (2009) believes that the Saudi government is aware that, in order to maintain and strengthen their security, a broad process of reform must occur not only in terms of their militaries and internal security but also in terms of the country’s political, economic and social systems. According to Cordesman (2009), Saudi Arabia began implementing a “reform package” in the mid-1990s. These reforms have been steadily developing momentum by reforming the economic, educational, social and political systems. To illustrate, in recent years, Saudi Arabia has: held municipal elections, relaxed its media censorship, modernised its educational curricula and limited the power of the religious police.

The Saudi government has therefore been implementing counterterrorism efforts by reforming the economic, educational, social and political systems. These reforms date back to before 2001, but various internal challenges have occurred in the Kingdom in the post-9/11 (2001) era. These challenges were discussed in detail in Chapters 4 and
in response, the Kingdom re-organised its reform process in an attempt to tackle the most prominent challenges of terrorism, economic and demographic pressures, social and political dilemmas, and educational efficiency.

These different reforms and policies were implemented in an effort to tackle Saudi Arabia’s internal threats and challenges and to develop Saudi national security further; however, the researcher believes that Saudi Arabia still needs to make drastic steps in order to manage and improve the internal dimension of national security. Saudi Arabia needs to seriously re-consider and re-sharpen the state practice of political development as it should improve the state stability, integration, equality, and institutionalisation; these elements are vital to reduce and overcome most of the current internal threats and challenges as most of these internal threats rise as a result of the rapid growth in the population with higher demands and social divisions which increase the importance of the state role in satisfying public needs and public demands. One way of doing so is by re-arranging the state policy-making institutions and regulations to meet these new needs and changes and thus reduce the pressure on the government caused by the increased and conflicted demands mentioned earlier in chapter 4.

The reviewed literature and the interviews highly asserted that the internal dimension of Saudi national security is in more need for further considerations than the external dimension as it effects the state stability especially that of the political system which need to adapt a clear strategy in order to meet the public demands by reviewing and reconsidering the state political development process and achievements which should enhance further the citizen participations in the state policy-making while taking into account the impact of the social, cultural and tribal complexities and divisions on the
state politics in a way that could improve the state social and national integration and led for a further socio-political coherence.

The researcher agrees with all of the key obstacles that were presented by the interviewees. In particular, the reviewed literature and the interviews presented various obstacles and solutions that need to be considered. Here are some of these key points that the researcher suggests as to be the most significant and important for the Saudi government to address in order to enhance its national security at the internal level and to overcome most of the current obstacles facing the national security in Saudi Arabia which also consider readdressing the idea of political development and other economic, military, social, and environmental factors of national security.

1. An independent high committee or ministry needs to be developed, this needs to be connected directly to the King and supreme authority needs to be implemented to organise and follow-up progress of the state policies. Consequently, a clear strategic and systemic method needs to be devised under the King’s direction as this will help to address the challenges and threats (including corruption and other internal threats) affecting the state.

2. Superior authorisation needs to be given to the Shura Council (Saudi Parliament) and citizen participation needs to be enhanced to encourage decision-making through the Shura Council and the Saudi National Dialogue Centre. Consequently, the Shura Council could then play a greater role in the policymaking process. Also, in designing general policies of the state and review the annual budget and issues.
3. To give the Shura Council resolutions with greater force in decision-making and to give it more legal jurisdiction and responsibilities that enables it to raise and reflect the interest and demands of the citizens.

4. The judiciary needs to be reformed in order to facilitate sincerity, independence, and equality.

5. The media, government agencies, schools and universities should be used to spread the culture of moderation, tolerance and enhances integrity as part of the political development process and as a tool to face extremism, corruption and other internal threats.

6. The youths should be given a greater role in the state reform initiatives that were initiated in 2003 by King Abdullah, in an attempt to reconsider the current Civil Service System.

7. More elected institutions should be considered and presented, similar to the Municipal Council elections of 2005, which could represent, satisfy and meet with the public increasing demands and reduce the pressure on the government to fulfil this task and the develop a special committee that overlook the state institutions performance.

8. A special department within the Ministry of Social Affairs should be developed in an attempt to enhance the national integration and to develop strategies to integrate the Shi'a minority further within the Saudi society – this should help to encourage national social cohesion.

9. High quality programmes and strategies should be implemented to encourage the child breeding methods in schools. This should become an essential part of the
education and training system whereby new generations would be established to encourage a culture of work and workmanship, honesty and sincerity would be spread. Consequently, reliability, corruption and other negative morals would be reduced.

10. Deliberate and clear strategies should be developed to meet with the outstanding economic and environmental threats and challenges, especially economic dependence on oil and water shortage.

11. Saudi Arabia needs to further advance the water sector infrastructure while balancing desalination and wastewater treatment capacities, with those of water demand management and conservationist measures. As water security is a growing concern in the region, cost-effective integration of desalination and/or wastewater, and aquifer storage recovery technology can secure a reliable, sustainable and high quality fresh water supply for the Kingdom.

12. To develop strategies and plans that would increase the military and security self-reliance and to reduce reliance on external arms supplies.

7.4 External Dimensions of National Security in Saudi Arabia: Threats Dynamics

7.4.1 Dynamics of the Iranian and Iraqi Threat

The Iranian and Iraqi threats will be commented on together by the researcher because of the deep connection between these two threats. Based on the analysis of the secondary data, and the data collected from the interviews, it can be concluded that Iran’s regional policies represent one of the most serious and significant issues to affect regional security. This has a possible and direct threat to the internal security of
the GCC countries, especially as Iran has a desire to spread its influences across the region, starting with Iraq by creating the “Shi’a crescent”. This crescent includes Syria and Lebanon, where Iran is currently playing a major and obvious role there through the Hezbollah group. It is expected that Saudi Arabia may form strategic alliances in the north, a region that had previously been obstructed by Saddam Hussein. Now, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon have become an open field in which Iran can exercise its influence and power; Saudi Arabia therefore needs to develop strong and close relations in order to influence these countries before it becomes too difficult.

It is also worth noting that Iran has attempted to obtain power and influence in other areas in the south of Saudi Arabia, namely in Yemen through the Al-Houthi tribe’s movements (this was discussed in Chapter 5 and it will be discussed further in the next section). Hence, Saudi Arabia and the other GCC countries need to address Iran’s penetration into the region in a serious and realistic manner.

Iran therefore represents a regional threat that extends to Saudi Arabia’s domestic level of security as the Shi’a minority within Saudi Arabia are being used to threaten the legitimate Saudi rulers (mainly via the Iranian leaders statements and declared agenda). Iran poses various threats, socially, politically and militarily, to Saudi Arabia’s internal security. Iran is therefore affecting the Saudi state’s security as Russia and China are being used in a veto position, internationally. In addition, Iran is a threat because it is an imposing interdependent state that is affecting Saudi Arabia as it is one of the most powerful regional states. Based on these threats, Iran can be considered as an enmity to Saudi security, as it is a source of ideological, territorial and ethnic threats that exist from an historical precedent.
7.4.2 Dynamics of the Yemeni Threat

Again, based on the analysis of the secondary data, and the data collected from the interviews, it can be argued that Saudi Arabia has, in recent years, become the most important donor and key partner supporting the economic and social development in Yemen. Moreover, Saudi Arabia has imposed various and significant efforts to support Yemen within the framework of the GCC countries. Saudi Arabia is keen to encourage relations between Yemen and the GCC in order to accelerate the rehabilitation process by which Yemen’s economy will be integrated into the GCC stands. Consequently, Yemen needs to overcome various problems both economically, in terms of poverty and demographics, and politically, in terms of domestic insurgencies and instability, as the situation in Yemen makes it an ideal choice for insurgence groups, such as Al-Qaeda.

It is important to note that instability in Yemen would affect the security of global energy; furthermore, any instability would most likely persuade Somali pirates to become involved through Yemen which could have a negative effect on the Horn of Africa. Furthermore, Yemen overlooks the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, between the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, and therefore influences the flow of trade from the Red Sea; consequently, any instability here would disturb these trade routes.

Interestingly, more of the interviewees (which represents an internal perspective of national security) viewed the situation in Yemen to be a more serious threat to Saudi national security than the situation in Iran or Iraq. Conversely, the literature viewed Iran as the most serious threat to Saudi Arabia’s national security affairs. Consequently, the situation in Yemen should be considered to be a significant threat (and it should be considered to be at least no less important than the Iranian threat.
7.4.3 Dynamics of the Terrorism Threat

The secondary data and interview analyses suggest that a mix of social, cultural, religious and economic reasons affect the way in which the Gulf region and the Middle East area provides a practical environment for terrorist activities, through the forming and enrolling in groups to the funding of terrorism that are motivated by the Western involvement, ambitions, and interferences in the area. Thus, the Gulf region plays a crucial role in the struggle against terrorism as this region is known, historically and culturally, for being the centre of the Islamic world. As discussed in Chapter 5, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) was the first major internal threat that Saudi Arabia experienced. Recent reports show that the US plans to increase its attempts to target members of AQAP. According to a report published in the Washington Post, the US’ campaign to target the killings of AQAP members is likely to expand with more strikes being launched against terrorism suspects, even if the identities of those killed are unknown. In 2012, several secret drone bases were constructed in the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa; as a result, drone strikes in Yemen are on the rise (Miller, 2012).

It is important to note that Saudi security is not only facing terror threats from Al-Qaeda. There are two other factors threatening Saudi security: firstly, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, an associated group of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt; and, secondly, Shi’a groups, supported by Iran, these Shi’a groups are furious over the mistreatment of their fellow Shi’a in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. In addition, various US policymakers emphasised that Iran had allegedly attempted to sponsor terrorist groups and the efforts of revolutionary Islamic Shi’as – this resulted in the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996. Even though Iran demonstrated some
cooperation in the campaign against the Taliban, it is widely acknowledged that Iran, most likely supported, in some way, the terrorist groups, as agents to support terrorist and insurgent movements in Iraq were sent; furthermore, Iran has also been suspected of harbouring Al-Qaeda members who had/have planned attacks against Saudi Arabia (Korb, 2005: 12).

Jamal Khahoggi, a well-known journalist and an expert in the national security of Saudi Arabia, provided information that was of interest to the researcher in his interview. With regards to the basis of terrorism in Saudi Arabia, he noted that:

In general, there are countries that accept terrorism and Al-Qaeda intellectually, like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, and there are countries that reject terrorism, such as Egypt, Syria and North African Arab countries, and that is due to many intellectual factors that include cultural and social aspects that interfere with religion and politics.

Many studies and participants asserted that in order to resolve or compress terrorism, the causes of terrorism must be identified and dealt with. As discussed previously (see Chapter 5), some of the critical analyses accused the Saudi government of being responsible for the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Many also criticised various Saudi policies that encouraged fundraising in Saudi Arabia by some foundations that are believed to support extremist ideologies or that were in some way linked to or exploited by Al-Qaeda or other terrorist groups. Moreover, others have argued that for several decades the Saudi policy decisions have both directly and indirectly supported the development of certain types of religious extremism. In addition, Osama bin Laden and other extremists had long criticised the Saudi government for its close relations with the US. Furthermore, it is worth noting, as mentioned in the previous chapter, that Al-Qaeda emerged as a result of the US troops that were left in Saudi Arabia in the aftermath of the 1990 Gulf War. To illustrate further, in order to maintain the “no-fly zone” over Iraq’s southern region, and to prevent the Iraqi president Saddam
Hussein from taking any further action towards the Gulf Oil states, Al-Qaeda declared war on the US in 1996 in attempt to make them withdraw their troops from the Arabian Peninsula.

American analysts declare that various strategic US policies (old and new), within the Gulf region and the Middle East, have played a serious role in the rise of terrorist networks and extremist religious ideologies. Additionally, it is believed that the political and military assistance for some of the Gulf states, from the US, has and will continue to cause internal problems for the citizens within these states. To illustrate, as indicated in Chapter 5, both revolutionary and classical jihadists have applied the notion of an anti-American jihad in response to (and motivated by) the ongoing US military presence in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the ongoing US diplomatic and military support for Israel is also creating similar negative associations throughout the Islamic and Arab world. All in which have contributed to increasing and fuelling terrorism; as a consequence to the seriousness of these matters, the importance of tackling each factor has also increased.

7.4.4 Dynamics of the Israeli Threat

As mentioned previously in Chapter 5, Israel has been involved in many wars since its establishment in 1948, including: the Suez War of 1956, the Six-Day War of 1967, the Yom Kipper War of 1973, the 1982 Lebanon War and the 2006 War in Lebanon (Baxter, 2008: 46-65). Consequently, the way in which the Israeli state was configured created unpleasant feelings among the Palestinian and Arab people as they felt that the West, specifically Britain, had abandoned them as the official protectors at that time. Concurrently, the US has provided immediate and significant support to Israel since its inception.
As indicated by many of the interviewees, Saudi Arabia’s western border is more secure than any other part of the Kingdom, it has been suggested that this is in response to the Arab-Israeli conflict which clearly directly impacts on Saudi national security. Various studies and interviewees suggested that any serious Israeli-Palestinian conflict would have a major destabilising effect on Jordan and Egypt. Therefore, Saudi Arabia cannot ignore the impact of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as this affects not only their relations but also relations with the US.

Saudi Arabia’s leaders appear committed to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, ever since the days of King Faisal. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the war in 1967 marked a point in Saudi involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflicts. Saudi Arabia is one of the most important states responsible for designing Arab policies toward Israel (Bahgat, 2007: 50). King Faisal had prayed at the Al-Aqsa mosque several years earlier, he had a deep desire to pray again at the mosque before his death, but his wish was never satisfied (Quandt, 1981: 31).

During the 1970s, Saudi Arabia began offering financial and diplomatic assistance. Then, by 1981, Saudi Arabia offered its first peace plan, this was their vision of a comprehensive peace plan that marked the first Saudi public attempt to play an active role in resolving the conflict, this was initiated by King Fahd while he was still the Crown Prince (Cordesman, 2009: 43).

Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince, Fahd, at this time presented an eight-point peace plan that called for Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories, in 1967, this involved the dismantling of all Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. It also demanded for the right for all Palestinian refugees to return, as well as the creation of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, with Jerusalem as its
capital. Both Israeli leaders and the Reagan administration described the Saudi proposal as a positive step; irrespective of this, the Saudi plan was in essence dismissed by Israel (Bahgat, 2007: 52).

Then, King Abdullah, in 2001 while he was the Crown Prince, offered the second peace plan. Similar to the plan proposed by Fhad, the Prince called for a complete Israeli withdrawal from the Arab territories that had been occupied since the 1967 war, including: full withdrawal from the Syrian Golan Heights and the remaining occupied parts of southern Lebanon; it also demanded for an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with Jerusalem as its capital; and, it confirmed the Palestinian refugees’ right to return to their land in Israel. The Abdullah plan progressed further than Fahd’s plan; instead of simply identifying the existence of a Jewish state in the Middle East, the Abdullah plan offered Israel political, economic and cultural normalisation (Pollack, 2002).

Prince Abdullah and the Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal keenly supported this peace plan which was reapproved unanimously by the Arab leaders at the Beirut Summit on 2 May 2002; but, it should be noted that it was not fully accepted by the Israelis.

As mentioned previously, the emergence of the latest Saudi peace plan came to exist in response to a common interest between Israel and the moderate Arab states, with regards to Iran’s regional ambitions. Unlike their counter-parts in Egypt, Jordan, Oman and Qatar, the Saudi leaders had no preference to engage in joint, direct or open talks with the Israelis; nonetheless, they still took a leading role in promoting the comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace talks (Bahgat, 2007). Many Saudi’s, however, believe that the US has failed to push Israel towards peace with the Palestinians;
instead, they feel that the US’ media and congress, driven by an Israeli lobby and its supporters, incorrectly identifies Saudi Arabia as a supporter of terrorism and as a potential threat to Israel (Cordesman, 2009).

Many Senior Israeli leaders also expressed support for talks based on King Abdullah’s proposal, but various issues remain in the details which have divided both sides. These issues include: divisions over the future of Jerusalem, adjustments of the 1967 case-fire lines, and the rights for Palestinian refugees to return home; these issues have presented significant problems in the past and they may continue to do so in the near future. Consequently, Saudi Arabia must bear these elements in mind and thus form its security accordingly.

Saudi Arabia has maintained connections with the two main Palestinian political movements: the Fatah Movement and the Islamic Resistance Movement, known as Hamas. But, since 2006, the political opposition between Hamas and Fatah has led to complex Saudi policies toward the Palestinians. As a result, Saudi initiatives toward Palestinian have sought to promote a resolution between Hamas and Fatah in order to encourage inter-Arab unity and block further progress that is affecting the Palestinian-Israeli peace process (Blanchard, 2009: 28). This clearly demonstrates Saudi Arabia’s commitment to resolving peace in Palestine, and across the region.

According to Blanchard (2009), the US Special Envoy for Middle East Peace Senator George Mitchell visited Saudi Arabia repeatedly with other high-ranking US officials. The Saudi officials continued to call for Palestinian unity and the forceful engagement by the US to support a balanced approach to the conflict by restraining potential Israeli military operations against Hamas as well as other regional threats. But, as suggested by the interviewees (from all three categories), Israeli will never accept any
approach that does not satisfy their original plans for establishing a Greater State of Israel.

It is worth noting that Israel’s settlement policies and its treatment of Palestinians will always create more tension between the Arabs and Israelis. The ongoing construction of settlements, across the occupied territories of Israel, have been criticised as negatively affecting the peace process, along with its nuclear programme. More elements have therefore been added to the Iranian threat, in addition to Iran’s race for nuclear arms; consequently, this will most likely cause more trouble and insecurity to the whole region.

7.4.5 Dynamics of the Oil Security and US involvements

In addition to the interviewees, many studies considered the increased attention that the West had given to the Gulf region and the enormous oil reserves in this area. Klare (2004), Rogers (2008), Cordesman (2009) and many others, illustrate that the US began focusing on the oil located in the Gulf region during the 1970s. Furthermore, the US identified the importance of securing this oil, by all means including military means. As a result, a Joint Rapid Deployment Task Force (JRDTF) was established at the end of the Carter presidency; but, this had little impact on the crises at that time, which included the Iranian Revolution and the occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviets, the JRDTF grew into a new unified military command, the US Central Command (CENTCOM), in January 1983 during the Reagan administration. CENTCOM continues to act as the “nerve centre” for all US military operations across the Persian Gulf and the whole of the Middle East.
CENTCOM also operated in the Gulf War of 1991; this war illustrates the extent to which the US was willing to secure and protect the Gulf area and its oil. It should be noted, as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 and as mentioned earlier in this chapter, that this war also facilitated anti-American feelings in some sectors of Saudi society. In addition, it fuelled various campaigns including the one launched by Bin Laden in 1990; consequently, “Al-Qaeda” developed in response to the large number of troops that the US had in Saudi Arabia. Interestingly, most of the interviewees (politicians, academics and journalist) believed that Al-Qaeda used the US presence as an excuse to gain public sympathy. To illustrate, a well-known politician said:

> Al-Qaeda has tried to exploit the situation of the American presence in order to gain supporters.

In addition, an academic said:

> Al-Qaeda started during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan... the US presence in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War was used as an excuse to launch attacks and gain public opinion.

Hence, in one sense the oil caused difficulties to Saudi Arabia as attention and presence in the area from the West resulted in anti-Western and anti-government motivations. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the oil has made Saudi Arabia one of the richest country in the world and the securing of oil fields, pipelines and terminals has not caused any serious threats apart from the 2006 Abqaiq attacks (see Chapter 5 for more detail). Consequently, the securing of Saudi oil not only involves Saudi Arabia as the oil itself is not enough, in addition the oil flow from the region also needs to be secured; this is where involvement from some of the major powers, with their high risks and consequences, are concerned.

It is worth noting that only two participants considered oil to also be an environmental threat. This, perhaps, reflects that security and military aspects, caused by the
presence of large amounts of oil in Saudi Arabia, may have led the other participants to overlook the environmental threats that are caused by oil production.

7.5 The Main External Threats

There was agreement over the regional and external threats that face Saudi national security from the literature and the interviews, but differences were observed in the extent to which each threat was deemed to be important. This section will present the researcher’s opinions with regards to the most serious threats, in an attempt to analyse the situation further and to develop the notions that were presented in Chapter 5; each threat will be discussed based on an assessment of its importance/seriousness.

7.5.1 Iran’s Policies and Interference in the Gulf Area and its Military Capabilities

Iran is seen to represent the most serious threat to the area. The current Iranian regime aims to extend its influence beyond its borders in the Gulf area, especially into Iraq, Bahrain, and Syria, the consequences of such a strategy/policy cannot be ignored as it is likely to affect security in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region – it must therefore be managed seriously and sensibly. Iran’s involvements in Iraq include political hegemony and the spread of insecurity through its military and intelligence which is supporting Shi’a militias, such as the Mahdi Army, to expand Shi’a power across the south of Iraq. Consequently, Iran is a major political force that is influencing the future of Iraq. Furthermore, the creation of a “Shi’a crescent”, between Iraq and Iran, is likely to cause further Sunni-Shi’a conflicts in the Gulf region and beyond.

As discussed in chapter 5 (see section 5.2.1.4), it is unclear as to the extent of the nuclear programme and its military capabilities. A nuclear-armed Iran would defiantly unbalance the power in the area and will probably increase the arm race in the region.
Consequently, Saudi Arabia must undertake all possible means to encourage the US to adopt peaceful solutions by which more control and supervision can be imposed over Iranian nuclear facilities – this will help to ensure that they being used for only peaceful purposes.

7.5.2 The Israeli-Arab Conflict and Israeli military capabilities

The Israeli-Arab conflict represents the second most serious threat to security and peace in the Gulf. The western border of Saudi Arabia is deemed to be more secure than any other part of Saudi Arabia; however, the Arab-Israeli conflict is still impacting significantly on Saudi security. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is seriously affecting Saudi relations with the US. To illustrate, the manner in which the Israeli state was created, instigated objections among the Palestinian and Arab people who felt abandoned by the West, and specifically Britain. The West and the US acted as administrator protectors of the area, at that time, and they have continued to provide significant support to Israel since its inception. In addition, the land of Palestine represents the holy land of Islam and thus, it is argued this cannot be changed. Finally, the ongoing Israeli construction of settlements in the occupied territories has been criticised as affecting the peace process, along with the recognition that their nuclear programme could lead to a nuclear race with Iran which is likely to cause more trouble and insecurity across the whole region. Israel undeclared WMD programme in addition to its military capabilities is also representing a serious threat to Saudi national security.
7.5.3 The Political and Economic Situation in Yemen

The third most significant threat to Saudi Arabia comes from Yemen which has been a source of worry since the Yemeni Revolution of 1962. Despite the fact that it is unlikely that Yemen would attack Saudi Arabia, there is still concern that Yemen could become fragmented as a result of its poverty – this could fuel the existence of Al-Qaeda and other independent armed tribes/militia in Yemen. The Al-Houthi tribe also presents a problematic matter to Saudi security across various critical areas. Any political instability in Yemen will have serious results on the stability of the Arabian Peninsula and the flow of oil from the Gulf of Aden. Hence, the domestic political development in Yemen is critically important to the security and stability of Saudi Arabia. Consequently, it is imperative that the situation in Yemen be resolved soon before a resolution to these problems becomes unviable.

7.5.4 The US Partnership with Saudi Arabia and its Involvement in the Region

Although its vast oil resources have given Saudi Arabia a significant position of strength in the international arena, these resources have also instigated major involvement from the West, which could potentially have initiated various routes for terrorism. US authorities acknowledge that their involvement with partners in the Gulf is risky, particularly in Saudi Arabia; as a result, the US have attempted to minimise their military presence in Saudi Arabia and in other Gulf states. However, their continued political and strategic relations with Saudi Arabia and the other GCC states will continue to create difficulties in the Gulf region.
7.5.5 The Situation of Iraqi and Syria

The situation in Iraq since the US intervention, represents the fifth most important threat to Saudi security as Iran has, since this time, become more involved with Iraq. Saudi Arabia and the other GCC states must hold frequent meetings with the US and other coalition countries in order to facilitate Iraq to recover in the post-war era, in the best possible manner, so as to finally have a complete withdrawal of the US from Iraq. Furthermore, steps need to be taken to identify ways in which Iraq can find unity and cohesion while stopping the insurgent attempts to increase division within Iraq which, if not controlled, will result in increased tension and conflict with other states, including Iran.

The US’ invasion of Iraq created instability which will threaten security across the Gulf if Iraq fails to become unified. The distrust from Iraqi Sunnis in their Shi’a dominant government resulted in a boycott of the first elections whereby voting was linked directly to ethnicity and religion. As a result, dominance of politics in Baghdad by the Shi’a increased – this dominance will most likely create more problems internally and externally.

It is also imperative that all forms of partisanship and all types of weaponry, that are feeding the conflicts and violence including the placing of more control on the arms depots of the American and Iraqi army, are combated to eliminate corruption within Iraq as this will critically obstruct the reconstruction operations in Iraq. In addition, by placing more control over the Iranian shipments to Iraq, and any money transfers from Iran to figures within the Iraqi government or Shi’a militias, the situation will become more controlled. Saudi Arabia must therefore impose more control over its
border with Iraq to prevent terrorists from gaining access to Iraq while also preventing the smuggling of weapons or dangerous materials from Iraq into Saudi Arabia.

Situation in Syria

The Syrian civil war, which started in 2011, created a major challenge for Saudi Arabian national security. It caused a collision between Saudi Arabia and the United States, and Russia, in addition to some of the GCC countries. The current Syrian civil war also produced internal divisions between Sunnis, Alawites, Kurds, and Syria’s smaller minorities, and has launched a long-lasting anger and hatred between Sunni and Shi’a (Alawite) Muslims. The war has already spread to involve Lebanon and Iraq, unleashing a reawakening of sectarian tensions and conflict in each country. Thus, the Syrian civil war is adding a possible political, economic, social, and military threat to Saudi Arabian national security at all three levels of state security (domestic, regional, and international) and will probably continue to do so in the near future.

7.5.6 Terrorism

Since 2003, counterterrorism abilities have improved significantly among the GCC countries. To illustrate, Saudi Arabia has made specific efforts and developed strategies aimed at confronting extremism and terrorist groups, namely Al-Qaeda, this appears to have resulted in a decrease in terrorism. Nonetheless, terrorism has not diminished completely and terrorist ideologies remain within the country and region which need confronting ideologically and more comprehensively.

7.5.7 Effective Unity Among the GCC States

The GCC countries have competitive and sophisticated military resources. However, worrying, there is a need for effective unity among the GCC countries as there is a
lack of actual leadership among them. Consequently, disagreements are common and 
have, in the past, led to unsuccessful attempts to develop accepted integration and 
effective common military forces which would be dangerous and threatening if 
external intervention is not employed. Thus, the GCC countries are most likely 
concerned with the state of other forces within the region.

Saudi Arabia must focus on strengthening and enhancing security within the GCC 
countries, in terms of self-defence forces such as the Peninsula Shield Forces, which 
have enormous military assets. Consequently, one of the main requirements of joint 
military forces includes the need to be responsive to real-world needs, by being 
effective in deterrence and defence over the region’s challenges. To summarise, these 
defences needed to have little or no external interference and they need to be 
passionate about serving the security and stability of the region.

It would be worth focusing on and considering the experiences of others, for example 
NATO. Consequently, it is important to attempt to overcome the border problems 
between the GCC countries in order to find common, peaceful solutions which 
overcome differences and achieve a common and effective cooperation council. It is 
also important to eliminate bureaucracy and inefficiency as these elements are likely 
to obstruct the effectiveness of any developing processes within the GCC.

### 7.6 Regional Threats Effects on the State’s Three Levels of Security

The impact of each of the aforementioned threats will now be demonstrated in 
relation to Saudi Arabia’s three levels of security (specifically: domestic, regional and 
international security). The following table, Table 7.1, illustrates the way in which
security is affected for each level, based on the previous literature reviewed and the feedback from the interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/threat</th>
<th>Levels of security</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Domestic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Iran</strong></td>
<td>Yes (via Shi’a sect within Saudi Arabia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Iraq</strong></td>
<td>Partly (via Iran and Shi’a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yemen</strong></td>
<td>Yes (via large numbers of Yemeni workers in Saudi Arabia and through trafficking)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Terrorism</strong></td>
<td>Yes (socially, politically, economically and militarily)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Israel</strong></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 7.1: The regional threats affecting Saudi Arabia’s various levels of security*

### 7.7 Main Players at the External Level of Saudi National Security (Saudi International relations)

Understanding Saudi Arabia internal and regional dimensions and dynamics of security and threats in addition to the nature of the international system, showed that Saudi Arabia foreign policies are shaped and influenced by the specifics of all these components, either caused by the state internal threats and weakness or by the...
surrounding regional threats and revivals or by the changing policies of the superpowers towards the region. In fact, Saudi Arabia foreign policy is hugely driven by the strategic concerns of national survival through many serious internal and regional threats and challenges, while lacking actual sufficient self-reliance defensive capabilities, which makes the Saudi state foreign policies and relations highly dependent on alliances as a means of survival, making state security dependent on the outputs of the international system and the foreign policies of the great powers.

An analysis of Saudi Arabia’s regional and external dimensions of national security has revealed the main external players that influence security. On the whole, most of these states have already been considered in terms of how they affect Saudi Arabia’s internal and regional security, but they will now be addressed again in terms of how they affect the Saudi state on the external level (International relations).

7.7.1 United States

The US is likely to continue to pose challenges for decades to come for Saudi Arabia in terms of security. To illustrate, the Gulf region still hosts the largest concentration of US allied troops in the world outside the US, and this area is therefore central to the US’ security strategies. As discussed earlier in Chapter 5, strategic relations between the US and the GCC countries began in the post-World War II era, these relations continued throughout the Cold War and into the post-Cold War period. The US security strategy in the region is mainly motivated by the three perennial factors of interest: access to oil, security of Israel, and the stability and security of the region. The US has political, economic and strategic interests in the Gulf region resulting in the Gulf as a region being a priority within the US’ foreign policy agenda; this has been made clear in various presidential administrations. Oil, however, has always
been a key interest of the US in the region, especially as Saudi Arabia alone has the largest oil reserves in the world. Irrespective of this, there are a number of issues that could increase tensions between the US and Saudi Arabia: firstly, is the fact that they hold different positions on Iraq; secondly, involves the Arab-Israeli issue; thirdly, is the oil issue; and, the fourth and final issue concerns the war on terror.

All of these issues could encourage the US to shift its presence to other smaller Gulf states who may be more willing to accommodate the American military. To illustrate, Qatar and Bahrain are currently hosting many of the US military troops and it is felt that the smaller Gulf states may feel the need for greater American protection than Saudi Arabia. In addition, Saudi Arabia may also widen its relations with other major powers, such as China or India, as these are new major powers. This could all contribute to counterbalancing the connection that the US has with Saudi Arabia.

With the instigation of the war on Iraq in 2003, the US made Iraq, either intentionally or unintentionally, an active scene for Iran whereby Iran’s power strengthening it within the region. As been discussed earlier in chapter 5, Iran has extended its influence in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Lebanon. Furthermore, with the withdrawal of the US troops from Iraq, this area became a more fertile location for Iran to develop its influence. Nonetheless, as a result of US recent policies with respect to Syria or the Iranian nuclear programmes, it can be seen as though the US has left the Arab Gulf states to face the rising Iranian power. The US has more recently become less dependent on the Gulf region’s oil (discussed previously in Chapter 5). Consequently, Saudi Arabia and the other GCC states need to quickly advance and strengthen their military, political, social and economic stances in order to become more strategically dependent across all necessary internal and regional elements. However, the various
literature and the interviewees agree that neither China nor India are likely to replace the US’ security provisions in Saudi Arabia in the short-term. On this respect, it is more likely that the Saudi-US partnership is likely to remain solid in the near future.

7.7.2 Iran

In general, the interviewees and literature argue that the overthrow of the Iranian Shah, when the Iranian revolution leaders took control of the country, resulted in relationship crises between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The Iranians, tried to penetrate the Saudi debate which included the self-declared custodianship of the two holy places of Islam (Mecca and Medina). Without Saddam Hussein, Iraqi Shi’as became powerful, while the Iranian influence, as discussed earlier in this chapter, increasing in Iraq as well as Bahrain, Syria and Yemen. Consequently, this Iranian influence also reached the Saudi Shi’as living in the east of Saudi Arabia – an area which contains most of the important oil fields. The notion of spreading Shi’ism among the Gulf and Arab countries has resulted in official rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran; consequently, this is likely to always play a role in Saudi-Iranian relations.

7.7.3 Turkey

Due to the rise of Turkey’s regional power, Turkey is constituted to be one of the important states for Saudi international relations and national security whereby Saudi Arabia and the other GCC states could gain more influence and power on the regional level. Thus, as discussed previously, this is likely to increase Turkey’s effectiveness at restricting Iran’s policies and ambitions in the region.
7.7.4 China

The emergence of new states within the international field has broadened Saudi Arabia’s choice for relations; as mentioned previously, this could lead to not only a halt in the Saudi-US relationship, but it may also act as a counterbalance for the US’ influence in Saudi Arabia, especially as countries like China become stronger to potentially rival the US’ role in international relations (Rogers, 2008). According to Petrini (2007), both security and political economies played a pivotal role in Saudi Arabia’s decision to shift to powers such as China and India. In fact, China is the second largest importer of oil after the US and it is most likely that this will continue to increase in the near future (Hufbauer, 2006). China represents the most important Asian partner for Saudi Arabia. It should be noted that relations were affected by the Chinese attitudes to the United Nations, especially when China (in February 2012) vetoed with Russia against the Arab League’s peace plan for a political transition in Syria (MacFarquhar and Shadid, 2012). Nonetheless, China and Saudi Arabia still share similar views on many important international issues, such as the establishment of a new international order, a multi-polar world and continued reconstruction efforts in Iraq. Therefore, the cooperation on the energy front is likely to facilitate the basis for friendly political relations (Petrini, 2007).

7.7.5 Russia

Russia is still a great power and is a member of various important international groups, including: a member of the permanent UN Security Council of the United Nations, it is also a member of the Group of Twenty (G20) and the Group of Eight (G8) industrialised nations which comprise the major industrialised countries in the world, along with the United States, Japan, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom,
France and Canada. Russia also can use its power of veto over any resolution presented to the Security Council.

Despite the recent opponent position that Russia played in the United Nations during the crises in Syria, Russia remains a vital state to Saudi Arabia’s international relations and national security which must not be underestimated. Saudi Arabia is considered to be allied with the US, but it is unlikely to ever dismiss Russia from its future considerations as the dimensions of this relationship are greatly valued.

7.7.6 India

In January 2006 King Abdullah visited India whereby he and the Indian Prime Minister, Singh, signed a joint declaration to focus on active cooperation in combating terrorism. This declaration is deemed to have not only empowered the two states but also encouraged stability in the Gulf and India. This was the first visit in more than 50 years, and, in spite of a strong Saudi-Pakistan relationship, it is likely that the two countries have established grounds for a long-term partnership. The visit provided a framework for cooperation over various fields of mutual interest. A further visit, by the Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to Saudi Arabia in 2010, reflects the level of joint commitment to a “strategic partnership”; furthermore, the “Riyadh Declaration” signed during this visit further enhanced the cooperation on the political, economic, security and defence levels (Embassy of India in Saudi Arabia, 2013).

It should be noted that India is seen to be one of the most important emerging powers, especially in terms of the changes in the global balance of power; this is in addition to Saudi Arabia’s relations with Pakistan. India’s economy is growing and with it is a
need for greater energy; currently, Saudi Arabia supplies around 30% of India’s oil, as a result trade between the two countries in the 2012/2013 fiscal year reached around $43 billion, an increase by 18% over the previous year (Hassan, 2013). It is expected that relations with India could be developed in more than one area, but it must be considered with caution as India has strategic relations with both Israel and Russia.

### 7.7.7 GCC

All participants asserted that the GCC countries share a common regional culture, as well as socioeconomic and political structures; consequently, these countries share similar security concerns. There are distinguished relations between the rulers of most of these countries that date back centuries; but, the existence of strong relations between Saudi Arabia and the other GCC states does not demonstrate that there are no differences or disputes between these states. As discussed in Chapter 5, the differences and disputes predominantly revolve around border disputes and differences with regards to certain domestic and international issues that have caused tension. Furthermore, the GCC states have experienced problems with regard to concessions and counter-concessions among its members. There is also a lack of effective unity among the GCC states and political disputes and disagreements are common; as a result, there have been various unsuccessful attempts to develop integrated and effective military forces for facing threats and dangers, without any other external intervention. By itself, this created internal problems for these countries, especially in the absence of effective forces which led to reduced confidence in the forces. As a result, the Saudi-GCC relationship has been damaged and must be resolved; the final chapter will suggest some recommendations with regards to the GCC-Saudi abilities and their future.
7.7.8 Egypt

From an official Saudi perspective, the overthrow of President Mubarak, in February 2011, represented a strategic loss, not only because he was an important ally in the containment of the Iranian-Syrian axis but he also played a significant role in the control of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. After around six decades of government repression, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood was legalised in 2011 when the regime of Hosni Mubarak was overthrown. As the country’s strongest political organisation, the Muslim Brotherhood won the 2012 presidential election and Mohamed Morsi became Egypt’s first democratically elected President. However, only one year later, on 3 July 3 2013, Morsi was himself removed from power when the military took him into military custody (Kirkpatrick, 2013).

7.8 Saudi International Relations and Diplomacy Under the Pattern of “Amity and Enmity”

Saudi relations can be observed under the pattern of “amity and enmity” as a way of assessing the regional and external powers that vary from hostility (enmity) to friendship (amity). The following table, Table 7.2 summaries the states mentioned above in terms of their pattern of amity and/or enmity – this table has been developed in response to the literature presented and the interviewee responses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amity</th>
<th>Amity/Enmity</th>
<th>Enmity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCC (a sup-regional security complex)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Iran (due to Iran policies and regional agenda)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.2: Saudi relationships under the pattern of amity and/or enmity

7.8.1 Saudi Diplomacy and External Security Future and Efficiency

While assessing the interviewee opinions of Saudi Arabia’s external policies and national security practices toward regional and external threats and challenges, many of the interviewees indicated that they were satisfied with Saudi Arabia’s regional and external threats and challenges and the role that Saudi Arabia plays in the regional perspective. However, much of the literature and interview responses indicate that the Saudi role is restricted and influenced by external elements. As such, the following key points may be suggested as an approach for the Saudi government to advance their national security on the external level.
7.8.1.1 Regionally

- The GCC needs to be transformed into a strategic union, urgently and seriously, in order to overcome all of the inter-GCC disputes by identifying common solutions and overcoming differences for common and effective cooperation. In addition, it is also important to eliminate bureaucracy and inefficiency in order to develop the GCC’s role further in this area.

- The security of the GCC’s self-defence forces in the Peninsula Shield Forces, need to be strengthened and enhanced, especially in terms of the existence of important military assets (this is one of the main requirements in having joint military forces). Consequently, it would then be more: focused on real world needs, effective in deterrence and defence, and more able to face challenges within the region without needing external interference. Finally, the experiences of others should be considered, such as NATO’s experience, in order to learn from their experiences.

- A greater role needs to be played in improving the inter-Arab relations and disputes.

- A clear and declared strategy towards regional concerns needs to be developed to manage regional circumstance in a more serious manner, alongside the other GCC states to ensure that their strategies deal with all elements as well as crises.

- All of the means that make Saudi Arabia’s actions and policies in the regional and international arena should be utilised to ensure that they are a true and actual representation of the voice of the Arab and Islamic nation.
• The Arab states need to be developed economically through investment in these countries, not solely through the use of grants and aid.

• Regional relations into strategic partnerships need to be improved with other regional powers, such as Turkey and Egypt, in order to control and reduce Iranian influence.

7.8.1.2 Internationally

• Stronger and clearer relationships need to be developed with some of the major powers, such as China, India, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia and Russia, in accordance with each state’s condition.

• There should be more involvement in international issues to ensure that national interests, and the interest of the Arabic and Islamic nations, are represented; thus, the Saudi state should utilise its status for development (including its religious, economical and geopolitical status).

• Access to the state needs to be developed in order to advance the state’s international position and partnerships with major powers so as to foster these relationships rather than it becoming a de facto dependence.
7.9 Discrepancy Between the Secondary Data Analysis (Western Literature) and the Primary Data Analysis (Saudi Interviews)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>Saudi interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mainly focuses on military and economic aspects of Saudi national security and dismiss social and cultural factors while analysing Saudi national security.</td>
<td>Mainly focuses on social/cultural and the religion aspect of Saudi national security.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacks a deep understanding of Saudi national security, and fails to focus on the internal dimensions of the policymaking process in Saudi politics.</td>
<td>Provides a deep rooted understanding of the state’s national security by mainly focusing on the internal dimensions of the policymaking process in Saudi politics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Views Saudi Arabia from the logic of the benefits that Saudi Arabia has with regards to the importance of Saudi Arabia to the West.</td>
<td>Looks at the logic of how to protect the country while considering the national interest, internally and externally, as well as considering how national security can be advanced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focuses mainly on the external dimensions of Saudi security, with limited consideration of the internal dimensions.</td>
<td>Focuses mainly on the internal dimensions of Saudi national security.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.10 The Effectiveness of Buzan’s Framework in Saudi Arabia’s National Security

Buzan’s framework provided a well-founded tool to study national security. But while attempting to apply Buzan’s framework of national security analysis to the Saudi Arabia context, several gaps were found. Such gaps occurred mainly due to the factors, mentioned previously, concerning Saudi Arabia’s uniqueness in terms of the triple influence, and the religious role that it plays within the global platform. In this study, while trying to apply Buzan’s factors to analyse the security situation in Saudi Arabia, several obstacles occurred. As such, the findings show that the major security concerns in the Middle East currently concern the impact of social pressures caused
by social media channels (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.). Buzan’s framework fails to carefully indicate where these technological issues should be included, should they form part of the social, the political or the environmental factor. Due to the nature of the politics and the social dynamics of Saudi Arabia, this study considered the technological issues/findings within the political factor. This in itself creates confusion with regards to security analysis studies. To illustrate, threats such as cyber attacks cannot be assessed using Buzan’s framework, thus suggesting the need for further analysis. Hence, this study recommends the use of technology as a separate factor/heading which should be considered in isolation from the other factors, as it appears to be of direct significance to this study.

Another issue with Buzan’s framework, as observed from this study, is that it ignores the historical aspects of the state. While applying Buzan’s framework the researcher struggled to acknowledge some of the important historical incidents that have impacted significantly on the current political and security systems in Saudi Arabia. Although Buzan asserts the importance of gaining an understanding of the idea of the state before addressing its security, this should include the historical factor as the history of the state as further understanding of this is necessary for a country such as Saudi Arabia. The rise of Shi’ism in Saudi Arabia and its indirect influence in the politics has made the Saudi government take several steps to reduce security threats from within its own territory. Furthermore, it should be noted that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has faced various struggles and challenges even before the current states was formed – some of these challenges are still of relevance today; but, their incidence has been dismissed by Buzan’s framework in his analysis of a country’s security situation.
Nonetheless, Buzan’s framework of security analysis was selected in this study as it incorporates the theoretical underpinning of different components of security, as discussed in Chapter 2. Both of the selected frameworks cover most of the factors involved in national, regional and international security dynamics and their interaction with the different internal and external elements. The central concerns over security measures at the domestic level (i.e. the political, economic, military, societal and environmental components) as well as an evaluation of the regional/external threats using the pattern of amity and/or enmity, and an evaluation of the extent to which each state/threat affects the three levels of security, were all considered.

Consequently, this study intended to not make claims as to whether Buzan’s security theory was the most appropriate theory for all circumstances in IR literature, but it intended to use the theory as the basis for gaining insight into Saudi Arabia’s security practices/issues in a manner in which the structural similarities/dissimilarities could be assessed. As a result, the researcher has managed to investigate the potential issues that are involved with Saudi Arabia’s national security.

7.11 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed understanding of the dynamics and dimensions of Saudi national security. It presented a conceptualised analysis of Saudi Arabia’s national security was based on findings and discussions from the secondary data analysis. The analyses consisted mainly of foreign literature and the data collected from the interviews of Saudi participants in an approach to re-examine and re-assure the findings from the literature.
This chapter identified Saudi Arabia’s internal dimensions of national security, which included the state’s internal threats and dimensions of security, for all five sectors of security (social, political, economic, military and environmental), which also assessed the state protection of its national interest and values. The findings indicate that the internal threats to Saudi Arabia’s security are more apparent and significant than the regional or international security threats are (external). The social and political security threats were deemed to be the most serious threats affecting security, followed by economic, military and then environmental threats. In addition, the main players on the internal level of security were also identified and suggestions were also presented with regards to the improvement of the state’s internal security, whereby the efficiency of their policies and strategies were identified in relation to the internal dynamics and threats affecting Saudi Arabia.

In terms of the external level of national security, the external threats and players affecting Saudi Arabia on the regional and international level were also presented. Specifically, Iran was playing a major role as its policies and agendas were extending and affecting the whole region, this can clearly be seen in their influence in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. Consequently, Iran is considered to be the most serious threat, followed by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as the second major traditional threat to Saudi national security and then, thirdly, by instability in Yemen which is affected by the US presence and policies in the area.

This chapter also provided an evaluation of Saudi external relations and diplomacy; as a result, the key points influencing the advancement of Saudi Arabia’s external security and diplomacy were identified. This has sought to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics, strategies and dimensions of Saudi national security.
for the internal and external levels. Hence, this chapter has proposed a distinctive framework that can be used to help provide further understanding and analysis of Saudi national security as it considered all of the internal and foreign perspectives and thoughts, which were identified as the main aim of this study.

This chapter also provided a comparison of the secondary data analysis (Western literature) with the data obtained from interviews. The analyses indicate a number of differences between the various perspectives provided to the researcher with regards to obtaining a detailed and comprehensive outlook of the external and internal perspectives. Ultimately, the analyses were combined to allow the researcher to conceptualise and review national security, for both perspectives, for Saudi Arabia.

Finally, this chapter also accomplished the final objective of the study whereby the validity of Buzan’s framework of security analysis was examined in terms of the Saudi context. A number of gaps were identified with regards to the application of Buzan’s framework – in particular, it fails to consider clearly the technological and historical elements that are clearly integral to the study of states in the Gulf region.
Chapter 8

Conclusions
8.1 Research Achievements and Outcomes

How does Saudi Arabia implement and formulate its national security policies and diplomacies? And, who are the main players influencing Saudi politics? To answer this research main question, an investigation of the manner in which the state’s policies and actions are formulated for their security; as a result, the threats, motivations, dynamics and limitations of the national security process in Saudi Arabia were examined. As has been explained earlier, an understanding of the domestic and regional security policies in Saudi Arabia is an important subject of study, especially as little research has been conducted into Saudi national security. Thus, the intention of this study was to focus on the subjective perceptions, thoughts and values of the individual participants as well as experts and various literature items associated with this topic, in order to better understand and interpret the multiple viewpoints of the national security context in Saudi Arabia. Consequently, the research design was structured in order to achieve the following objectives:

- To examine the dynamics of Saudi national security and policymaking.

- To identify factors that may limit or affect the effectiveness of Saudi Arabia’s national security and policymaking.

- To identify and analyse the key aspects and weakness in each of Saudi Arabia’s social/historical, political, economic, military and environmental structures.

- To discuss and assess various measures which could be deployed to improve the overall effectiveness of Saudi Arabia’s security policymaking.
• To examine Buzan’s framework of security in the context of Saudi Arabia.

In order to attain the above objectives the following research questions were investigated:

• How does Saudi Arabia implement and formulate its security policies and diplomacies? And, who are the main players influencing Saudi politics? (State dynamics, structures and nature.)

• What are the main internal and external threats affecting Saudi Arabia? (State threats and concerns.)

• What states play a major role and are vital to Saudi Arabia’s politics and security? (State relationships and diplomacy.)

• How effective are Saudi Arabia’s state and national security policies domestically, regionally and globally? (State performance.)

• What are the main obstacles that limit or affect Saudi Arabia’s potential political outcomes? And, what are the perceptions for Saudi Arabia’s politics and security? (State’s future prospects.)

To answer the previous questions, four hypotheses were formulated in response to the reviewed literature:

• H1: Saudi Arabia will maintain and advance its role as the leader in the Gulf region, and the Muslim world, by improving its domestic and foreign national security.
• H2: Religious and social issues play a central role in policymaking and security in Saudi Arabia.

• H3: Oil procurement and distribution is viewed as the most important issue in Saudi Arabia’s security policymaking.

• H4: Foreign involvement in Saudi policymaking is seen as one of the major obstacles in reforming and improving Saudi Arabia’s security policy and regional security.

To achieve the research objectives mentioned above, the researcher firstly utilised a number of methods. This was done in chapter 2, which provided an outline of the various steps adopted by the researcher; it justified the philosophical standpoint for the chosen research method, approach and strategy. It also demonstrated that in order to track the research setting, objectives and variables, an in-depth semi-structured interview were this most appropriate as this method combines the advantages of unstructured and structured interviews. The methodology chapter therefore provided all reasoning for choosing this qualitative method, from its beginning to the final stage, this included criterions for: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability, as well as reliability and validity. In particular, this study employed an empirical, semi-structured interview method by which key decision makers, experts and academic consultants of Saudi security were interviewed to obtain a deeper understanding of the particular security issues that are affecting Saudi Arabia. Viewing various methodological approaches and techniques guided the researcher to deploy various strategies by which the research broad parameters were addressed.
The researcher then started to develop his work by identifying the meaning of security and the border concept of security in relation to the international relations (IR) approach and the different views of security, which led the researcher to adopt Buzan’s framework of analysis. Examining various IR approaches also appraised the importance of identifying the referent object for this study; in this case, the referent object of my study was the Saudi state’s security or Saudi national security. Chapter 3, therefore, provided a review of the different philosophies and theories utilised, in an attempt to understand the general meaning of security as well as national security in particular. The analysis of various philosophical approaches in chapter 3 showed that the concept of security is complex and related directly to various historical contexts. Studying various approaches toward security indicate that each approach corresponds to different values, threats and capabilities so as to meet the perceived challenges. Therefore, the researcher analysed and critically evaluated the different security meanings that were proposed, this led to consider the importance of conceptualising a framework of analysis in accordance with the specific features of the Saudi state. Hence, within chapter 3, the researcher developed a conceptualised assumption about national security with regards to Saudi Arabia – this was based on the unique characters that the Saudi state encounters which in general involves its exclusive political and tribal systems and religious statuses.

While studying various IR theories, Buzan’s frame particularly was chosen. Buzan imposed a different approach to analysing and understanding security. As a result, this framework theoretically considers the different components of security, in terms of most of the factors and dynamics that are involved in national, regional and international security on the internal and external levels.
Thus, this section of the study has revealed that in order to investigate Saudi Arabia’s national security, the study needed to examine the state domestic dimension of security threats in addition to external dimension that goes beyond the traditional military threats. The framework of analysis therefore considered the following security threats: political, economic, environmental and social variables, as well as military factors as the principle components that are in addition to the regional threats. Thus, this framework contributed to the structuring of the rest of thesis whereby the researcher utilised the framework of security analysis to identify national security variables, dynamics, motivations as well as the internal threats and challenges (Chapter 4). In addition, the framework was also used to identify the various regional and external threats and players that affect security (Chapter 5).

*Internal Dimension of National Security*

Chapter 4 focused on the literature concerned with the internal aspect of Saudi national security. It was structured in accordance with the adopted framework of security analysis that addressed the different sectors of security, as proposed by Buzan to include the following five sectors of threats; political, military, economic, societal and environmental. It suggested strongly that these sectors are believed to affect the state security and it can therefore be difficult to isolate them from one another when examining state security. Consequently, the main focus was on the impact of each sector on the domestic level of security; hence, this chapter was sub-divided to address these five sectors.

*Part One: Societal Security*

This first section helped to identify the most important historical periods that influenced and shaped the social and cultural identity of Saudi Arabia, including: the
rise of Islam; the emergence of Shi’ism; and, the development of the various Saudi
states that have materialised since the establishment of the first Saudi State. This part
assisted in the understanding of the current social status of Saudi politics and the
political mindset of the leaders by comprehending the significant influence of the
country’s social and traditional roles.

An analysis of the social structure demonstrated that Islamic values have inspired and
uniquely influenced the culture and lifestyle of people in the Saudi desert. In addition,
this section also showed that, in conjunction with the discovery of the large oil
reserves in the early twentieth century, the rulers of this colony were also given
significant power that stretches much beyond the Saudi territories. The last few
decades have instigated rapid social change in response to the discovery and the huge
revenues obtained from the oil within the state. This section also showed that the
Bedouin mindset has influenced the whole state as one of the main unique feature of
the Saudi society that is based on tribal ancestry. To illustrate, the conservative tribal
origins and values have significantly affected political interactions in Saudi Arabia.
Furthermore, it also demonstrated that Islam is the country’s official religion and, as a
result, Islamic law has shaped many of the legal codes within the country. The
existence of the two holy sites of Islam, in Makkah (Mecca) and Al-Medina (Medina),
make Saudi Arabia the most valued nation to the Muslim world. Consequently, Islam
has been vital to the Saudi royal family’s legitimacy whereby religious establishments
hold significant roles and influence in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the government must
often engage with the Council of the Senior Ulama in order to obtain their approval
when introducing new innovations. However, the emergence of anti-government and
radical Islamist groups have created a divergence between the government and the
religious establishments. In this respect, this section also provided the main social threats that are affecting the Saudi state identity and thereby the national security.

**Part Two: Political Security**

The second part examined the political structure and political threats that could create difficulties which might affect the foundation of the current Saudi state. A clear view of the political dynamics and the process of the policymaking in Saudi Arabia were also given. In addition, this section also identified the most important players within Saudi politics. This chapter therefore provided insight into the institutions, trends and key powers within the Saudi political system by identifying the major domestic players that influence the politics and policies in Saudi Arabia. This section also located the main political threats that affect the political entities and the legitimacy of the Saudi state.

**Part Three: Economic Security**

The third factor demonstrated the economical structure of the state as a means to understand the state access to resources, finance and markets that are necessary to sustain acceptable levels of welfare and states power. However, this section showed that the state’s income is predominantly based on the revenue from oil production, this accounted for 45% of Saudi Arabia’s GDP, 70% to 80% of the state’s revenues and around 90% of the total export revenues. There is also involvement from the non-oil sector, which is still expanding and mainly incorporates: manufacturing, agriculture, construction and the privatisation of key industries such as telecommunications and electricity. The part also introduced the various difficulties and threats that the Saudi economy is currently facing and might need to consider.
Part Four: Military Security

This section of the study demonstrated Saudi Arabia’s military structure which showed that it consist of a complex mix of military forces that are controlled by the Ministry of Defence and Aviation (MODA). This includes the four sections of the Saudi Armed Forces, a separate National Guard (SANG) as well as numerous internal security and intelligence services within the Ministry of Interior (MOI). All in which play a crucial role in helping the Kingdom overcome its various challenges. This fourth part also discussed the current state of defence and the offensive capabilities of Saudi Arabia. It demonstrated that Saudi Arabia currently maintains a status quo in terms of its armed offensive and security defensive capabilities. Due to its current relationship with other superpowers in the world, Saudi Arabia intends to maintain a minimum profile in terms of its investments in the defensive and offensive mechanisms, since it influences relationships with other partners while demonstrating the intentions of the national security. In addition, this section showed that Saudi Arabia is well equipped in terms of its defensive and offensive security capabilities for the internal security of the country. Saudi Arabia has invested heavily in equipping a defence sector to fight terrorism and to maintain and protect the sovereignty of the country by dealing with any factors that may, in anyway, threaten the current governance of the state. this section also located the main military threat to its military structure that can effect the state ability to protect its citizens.

Part Five: Environmental Security

The fifth and final section focused on the environmental/ecological concerns affecting Saudi Arabia. These concerns do not appear to form a national security threat as the current Saudi society appear not to be fully concerned by environmental elements. To
illustrate, people are not generally worried about the environmental issues; however, it is expected that technological developments and social media will gradually influence the understanding that people have for this phenomenon. However, studying environmental threats to Saudi security showed many environmental concerns which included: desertification; depletion of underground water resources; the lack of perennial rivers or permanent water bodies which has prompted the development of extensive seawater desalination facilities; and, coastal pollution from oil spills.

*External Dimension of National Security*

Chapter 5 solely reviewed the literature (mainly Western) concerned with Saudi Arabia’s regional and external security. Consequently, it was identified that most of the regional and external threats to the Saudi state were principally associated with amity and/or enmity, based on threats to the state’s: legitimacy, ideology, territory, ethnic lines or historical precedent; specifically, this included the five threats to the proposed state sectors of societal, political, economical, military and environmental security. The literature analysis identified the following regional and external threats to Saudi Arabia:

- Iran and its policies and agenda.
- Iran’s missiles and nuclear programmes.
- The uncertain future of Iraq.
- Iran’s involvements in Iraq.
- Iraq’s border threat (i.e. foreign fighters and smuggling).
- Yemen’s internal situation (i.e. demographics, poverty and instability).
• Yemen’s border threat (i.e. illegal immigration and smuggling).

• AQAP in Yemen.

• Syria as part of the Shi’a crescent at the northern border of Saudi Arabia.

• Al-Houthi fighters and Iranian involvements.

• Other Red Sea challenges (i.e. piracy).

• Arab-Israeli challenges.

• The United States partnership.

• Terrorism.

• The GCC’s internal border and international positioning disputes.

• The effectiveness of the GCC’s collective security.

The Saudi view

Chapter 6 was structured in accordance with the secondary literature analysis and findings from Chapters 3, 4 and 5. Thus, this chapter helped to fill the gaps in the literature by illustrating the key findings, from the interviews conducted as well as the researcher’s observations which were related directly to the reviewed literature. This part aimed to re-examine and re-confirm the findings from the literature analysis through the researcher’s utilisation of semi-structured interviews to obtain more detailed, and possibly more relevant, Saudi viewpoints which was sub-divided into five parts that related directly to the five research questions. The five main questions used in the interviews were based on the threats identified in the literature and studies
that had attempted, in some way, to analyse Saudi Arabia’s national security and threats (see Chapters 4 and 5 for more detail). Furthermore, they were formulated based on some of the assumptions made concerning the meaning of security in relation to the unique state status that the Saudi state preserves (discussed in Chapter 3). The specific structures of the Saudi state were identified, along with the state’s internal and external threats, dynamics, policies and strategies; in addition, the state’s relations and diplomacy with regional and external powers and the importance of each of these as allies or enemies was also identified. Consequently, a deeper understanding of the state’s national security was identified as the researcher revisited all aspects and perspectives associated with Saudi national security.

Final Findings

Based on the secondary and empirical findings (chapter 4, 5, and 6), Chapter 7 provided a discussion of the final outcomes of the whole thesis in terms of the elements that conceptualise Saudi Arabia’s national security. Chapter 7 considered the views presented in the existing literature by analysing and re-examining these notions against the internal views obtained from the interviews with Saudi officials, academics and journalists. The domestic dimensions of national security were investigated which present one of the main objectives of this study; the findings indicated that the internal threats were deemed to be more serious and important than the external threats to Saudi national security. In particular, it showed that social and political security threats were the most serious threats which mainly involved public demand pressures and clashes between many sectors of society as a result of cultural and religious preferences. Social and political threats also included the degree of national unity as one of the main issues that needs to be focused upon because of its
The study also re-identified (via literatures and interviews) the main political players within the Saudi politics and they include various institutions and key powers:

- The King via the Royal Court.
- The Council of Ministers.
- Majlis Al-Shura (the Consultative Council).
- Hay’at Kibar al-Ulama (the Council of the Senior Ulama) which consists of Muslim scholars with specialist knowledge of Islamic sacred law and theology.
- Saudi security forces via the Interior Minister.

While the following four major domestic players influence Saudi internal security:

- Sunni political activism.
- Liberals.
- Shi’a minority.
- Tribal and regional politics.

What the interviews suggested strongly is that Saudi Arabia needs to focus more on its domestic area of national security and specifically the social, political and economical aspects as the main serious threat to the Saudi national security. The researcher views on the internal threats to Saudi national security which is based on what was found from interviews, as well as through the analysis of the literatures are
as follows: I) Societal security, the existence of conflicts and differences between some parties within the society (conservatives and liberal) and the degree of social cohesion forms the main societal threat that forms a threat to the national identity and to the national security. II) Economic security: unemployment, the huge economic reliance on oil and the increasing rates of poverty as the many economic threats that threaten the national security. III) Political security: the most prominent political problems lies in the existence of conflicted demands depending on the each party of the society and the ability of the state to fulfill the demands of each group despite the collision of these demands because of the social and religious background of each group. IV) Military security, there have been some problems related to the efficiency and quality of military personnel and their ability and readiness to deal with external threats realistically, as well as, the heavy reliance on arms purchases and security protection on the Western countries and the U.S. in particular as one of the problems that might extended to form a political threat by affecting the sovereignty of the state and its overall power. VI) Environmental security, there have been some environmental threats, but it dose not rise to the form a national threat.

In fact, as discussed in Chapter 7, most of the internal threats and challenges could be encountered by reconsidering the strategy of the Saudi government towards the political development process, which should aim to promote political participation and lead to ease the pressure on the government caused by the public increased and complex demands, especially in light of rapid growth in the population and the spread of social media in Saudi Arabia. The government duty to fulfill and to meet the demands is usually the main duty of any state which could directly affect the state political stability and security. The Saudi government should always review and develop the public participation with carefulness due to the presence of different
social and religious groups that carry conflicted orientations and demands that always position the government in a dilemmatic situation to deal with each party demands while conducting the state policy-making. To solve this dilemmatic situation and to ensure that the government is fulfilling the public demands, the government could endorse and reapprove the state commitment towards the principles of political participation and political development through enhancing the citizens participation further in the state policy making while taking into account the circumstances and complexities of social and tribal dimensions that the Saudi state has.

Furthermore, the final findings of the study also highlighted the external dimension of Saudi’s national security as part of the main objectives of this study by providing a view of Saudi Arabia’s external threats and the main players on the regional and international levels. At the external part of the Saudi national security, both Saudi and Western analysts provided a similar view on the possible regional and external threats to Saudi national security. The researcher found that the most important external threats to Saudi Arabia’s national security as follow: The first external threat rises from the Iranian policies and agenda in the region, there was a consensus between the Saudi and foreign analysts on the seriousness of the Iranian threat which had been extended into the region through the gaining of influence in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Bahrain, and Yemen. The second threat which is no less important than the first is as indicated by the interviews come from the economical and political instability in Yemen as a direct threat that affects the Saudi national security. The third threat rises from the US direct involvements in the region which caused the beginning of other threats, such as, Al-Qaeda which also highlights the role of oil security and the US dependency to the oil from the Gulf area which included a number of military, economic and political complications to the Saudi state. The Israeli-Palestinian
conflict was also identified as one of the major traditional threat to Saudi national security. Finally, The political and military situation in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon as part of Iran extended influence areas (the Shi’a crescent) represented a challenge to the Saudi national security at the regional and international level of security.

Nevertheless, this study also presented in chapter 7, an evaluation of Saudi International Relations and diplomacy by suggesting the main states and key points that are affecting the regional and international part of Saudi Arabia’s national security which present one of the main objectives of this study. Thus, understanding Saudi Arabia internal and regional dimensions and dynamics of security and threats in addition to the nature of the international system, showed that Saudi Arabia foreign policies are shaped and influenced by the specifics of all these components, either caused by the state internal threats and weakness or by the surrounding regional threats and revivals or by the changing policies of the superpowers towards the region. Saudi Arabia foreign policy is hugely driven by the strategic concerns of national survival through many serious internal and regional threats and challenges, while lacking actual sufficient self-reliance defensive capabilities, which makes the Saudi state foreign policies and relations largely dependent on alliances as a means of survival, making state security dependent on the outputs of the international system and the foreign policies of the great powers.

An analysis of Saudi Arabia’s regional and external dimensions of national security has revealed the following states as the main external players that influence security at the regional and international levels: the United States; Russia; China; India; Iran; Turkey; Egypt and GCC.
The study also showed that for a long period Saudi Arabia adopted a quiet diplomacy and foreign policy to protect the interests of the state which included preserving the internal security of the Saudi Arabia while at the same time preventing regional issues from rising and damaging the state’s fundamental interests. The Arab Spring, presented Saudi Arabia with a set of new challenges which required Saudi Arabia to adopt a more activist role. The recent US lack of decisiveness role in the regional affair, as in the case of Syria, in addition, to the active Iranian role in the regional affairs, has encouraged Saudi Arabia to conduct a more visibly active role, either in Syria, Lebanon, Bahrain, Yemen, and Egypt. The Saudi view on Iraq is largely pessimistic due to Iranian huge influence in there. As it been suggested strongly by the interviews, given the regional disorder, it is vital for Saudi Arabia and for the rest of the GCC states to have a strong and positive relations with the regional power, including Egypt, Turkey and Iran. Due to Saudi Arabia’s multiple and effective features as a leading Gulf, Arab, and Muslim country, Saudi Arabia therefore can promotes a moderate version of Islam that can play a enormous role in terms of stability. Although Saudi Arabia will eventually go through a series of internal changes in the near future, the basic principles of Saudi policy will probably remain the same. Within those factors, Saudi officials need to look at the domestic, regional and international developments, given the responsibility of Saudi Arabia to play a role on all these levels.

Finally, this study demonstrated a number of gaps in Buzan’s framework as the final objective of the thesis; to illustrate, the framework fails to consider the historical and technological factors that are of relevance in today’s society. Consequently, the findings and outcome of the literature and the data analyses were documented to identify several gaps in this research project. It was noted that these mentioned factors
generally relate to Saudi Arabia’s uniqueness in terms of the triple influence and religious role that the state plays within the global platform. Ultimately, the testing of Buzan’s frameworks, in the Saudi context, provided verification that most of the security aspects can be applied to the specific features of the Saudi state.

At the end of this study it can said that analysing Saudi national security from both Saudi and Western perspective has allowed the researcher to ensure that all aspects of national security are covered. Studying both Saudi and foreign views revealed number of differences on how each views the internal section of the national security of Saudi Arabia. Foreign/Western analysts and experts tend to focus on the aspects and components of the security that are of interest to the Western states, mainly involving economical and military aspects. It also appeared that Western analysts do not fully consider other social, historical, cultural, and other national aspects that are of national interest to the state. Whereby, Saudi analysts tend to focus on social, historical, cultural, and other aspects that are of the national interest in addition to other economical and military security. Saudi/internal analysts also view regional and external relations and threats while considering the national interest which are more vital to national security analysis than external sources analysis. Therefore, it appeared that the Saudi analysts provided a deeper understanding of the national setting of Saudi Arabia, especially in the respect of understanding social, cultural and religious aspects on national security implications.

To summarise, this study presented an analysis of Saudi Arabia’s national security by considering all of the domestic and external security dimensions that were deemed to be of relevance. Consequently, a large base of literature was considered, this involved a general review of national security and international relations with a particular focus
on Saudi Arabia’s security. The identified studies were validated by adapting two of Buzan’s (1991) security analysis frameworks which focus on: the five security sectors and regional security analysis. As a result, various issues and concerns for multiple levels of national security in Saudi Arabia were identified. The researcher also identified all of the dynamics and aspects associated with understanding Saudi national security by assessing the relevant states, components, players and issue that influence the implementation of national security in Saudi Arabia.

### 8.2 Addressing Research Objectives and Hypotheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research objective</th>
<th>Addressed in:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. To examine the dynamics of Saudi security and policymaking.</td>
<td>It was addressed in the following three parts:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1) In Chapter 3, by explaining and conceptualising the meaning of national security in Saudi Arabia, through identifying the Saudi state’s nature and institutions, the main players, and the state’s ends and means.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) In Chapter 4, by identifying the state security factors as part of Buzan’s framework of security, this included the state’s political, social, economic, military and environmental threats/factors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) In Chapter 5, by exploring the state’s threats based on Buzan’s regional security and security complex context that includes the external threats which affect state security within its regional power. This could lead the state to security complexities via the GCC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. To identify factors that may limit or affect the effectiveness of Saudi Arabia’s security and policymaking.</td>
<td>Addressed in Chapter 6, through the interviews, which identified the state’s threats as the main obstacles (developed in Chapters 4 and 5 and confirmed via the semi-structured interviews in the first part of Chapter 6). In addition, some further points were suggested by the participants – these were discussed in Chapter 6.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. To identify the threats, challenges, and dynamics affecting Saudi Arabia’s security and policymaking.</td>
<td>Addressed in Chapters 4, 5 and 7, through the identification of internal and external threats and challenges – these were re-confirmed and re-examined by the interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To discuss and assess measures to improve the overall effectiveness of Saudi Arabia’s security policymaking.</td>
<td>Addressed in Chapter 6 and 7, based on the findings from the interviews.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 8.1: Research objectives*
Research Hypotheses | Accepted/rejected
---|---
H1: Saudi Arabia will maintain and advance its role as the leader in the Gulf region, and the Muslim world, by improving its domestic and foreign national policies. | Based on the interviews discussed in detail in Chapter 6, this hypothesis is accepted.
H2: Religious and social issues play a central role in policymaking and security in Saudi Arabia. | An analysis of the collected data and literature approve that this hypothesis is accepted.
H3: Oil procurement and distribution is viewed as the most important issue in Saudi Arabia’s security policymaking. | An analysis of the collected data and literature approve that this hypothesis is accepted.
H4: Foreign (Western) involvement in Saudi policymaking is seen as one of the major obstacles in reforming and improving Saudi Arabia’s security policy and regional security. | An analysis of the collected data and literature approve that this hypothesis is accepted.

Table 8.2: Research hypotheses

8.3 Major Contributions of the Study

8.3.1 Theoretical Contributions

One of the main purposes of this thesis was to not engage in proposing an alternative theoretical approach equal to realism, but to instead add to the existing literature by applying some of Buzan’s security frameworks to the Saudi state. Buzan’s frameworks is considered to be one of his greatest contributions to the theory of IR as it has provided a more complete understanding of the complexities of security whereby these concepts have and can be applied to current issues or states. The adopted framework incorporates the theoretical underpinning of different components of security, including the factors involved in the dynamics of national, regional and international security as well as their interaction with different internal and external elements.

An understanding of Saudi security is an important subject of study, especially as little research has been conducted into Saudi security. As Saudi Arabia represents one of the major nations in the region, it is a major player in the region’s security. Saudi
Arabia holds huge economic, religious and political statuses which makes its security, within the context of regional security, inherently tied to the matter of international security. The lack of studies into Saudi Arabia’s national security from internal sources encouraged the researcher to investigate its national security, firstly from a Western point of view, by reviewing the relevant literature and then re-presenting and re-examining this in accordance with the Saudi perspective through the use of semi-structured interviews. Consequently, the researcher obtained different perspectives and a detailed understanding of the extent of the similarities and differences in the understanding of Saudi Arabia’s national security from the internal (Saudi) and external (Western) perspectives. This study aimed to explore the threats, motivations, dynamics and weakness of Saudi national security firstly by conducting a secondary literature analysis of the relevant studies which had been predominantly conducted by external and Western scholars who had investigated regional security and, to an extent, Saudi Arabia national security. These literature items were then re-examined and re-confirmed through the researcher’s utilisation of semi-structured interviews in order to obtain more detailed, and possibly more relevant, Saudi viewpoints. Interestingly, this helped to provide a greater understanding of Saudi Arabia’s national security, from different angles and points of view, which helped the researcher to address the research questions posed in this study and to not dismiss any aspects of Saudi national security. However, the researcher also showed the extent to which there were differences and discrepancies in the understanding of the nation’s security in terms of opinions from the Western/foreign political analysts and the views of the local Saudi analysts. Furthermore, the researcher indicated the real extent to which the local point of view of Saudi national security is understood by Western analysts.
8.3.2 Practical Contributions

The findings from this study can be applied and are of relevance to various sectors, states, organisations and policymakers. To illustrate, this study provided a key analysis of Saudi Arabia’s security by providing a detailed understanding of the nation’s security, based on the various factors that affect the state including the: political, societal, economical, military and environmental aspects, as well as a consideration of the state’s regional security within the context of the international security environment. This study has therefore provided a conceptualisation of the meaning of national security that reflects the specific and unique criteria that the Saudi state imposes.

It is worth noting that the researcher’s family role and connections with many Saudi politicians, journalist, and academics involved with the Saudi politics and policy-making has provided the researcher with the privilege of meeting many of these personalities which has helped and enhanced the researcher in conducting his research.

8.4 Limitations of the Study

As with all research, this thesis is not without its limitations with regards to the resources, research strategy and data collection. However, this research was structured in a manner so as to consider the aspects of all of these limitations so as to reduce them when considering the research objective and aim. Although this study analysed participant views of Saudi security, the researcher was also faced with limitations as a result of a short timeframe and limited resources. As a result, other sources of information, for other aspects of security measures, were not investigated via the
resources or the interviews, including: opinions from the tribal leaders, public opinions or opinions from foreign experts and analysts.

This study mainly focused on interviews with the relevant people that were involved and acquainted in Saudi security (from the internal perspective), this included officials from the Saudi Arabian government (as representatives of the Saudi view). These officials were selected from different government sectors based on their connections or role in improving Saudi Arabia’s position in the Gulf region. In addition, other relevant people were interviewed, including political scholars and journalists who had a knowledge and involvement of Gulf security and affairs. Thus, it would also have been interesting to include other external resources in the form of interviews to obtain further knowledge of how external people view Saudi security.

Another limitation of the research is that the analysis of the Saudi relationship was not extended to include further states that may have an effect on Saudi Arabia’s international strategy. This study therefore focused on the regional states and the external powers that are involved in regional security, as suggested by Buzan. Hence, it would be interesting to include some of the other states that are not directly involved in the region, such as Japan and Malaysia, as they may still have an effect on Saudi security.

Another limitation of the study is that only a singular research strategy and validation approach was used. To illustrate, only semi-structured interviews were used to extract the qualitative data. It would therefore be useful to have employed another approach to understand Saudi security and to identify ways in which security could be improved. The other methods could include: questionnaires, surveys and/or focus
groups with identified professionals in order to further validate the findings on Saudi security.

8.5 Future Research Directions

On the basis of the earlier analyses, the researcher recommends that future research could utilise the proposed concept, of Saudi Arabia’s National Security, as a starting point for their study of security in Saudi Arabia (based on Buzan’s suggestions). In addition, security students could utilise a similar conceptualising method to gain a deeper understanding of the state that they intend to study, this however would depend on the specific criteria that the state under study possesses. If all studies of security use the same constructs, a new approach would then be formed which could be consistently applied to different regions and countries. Hence, it is recommended that further application of the proposed concept, in an international context, could form the basis of security research analysis in general and specifically in the Middle Eastern countries.

The sustaining of unyielding security and security policies is a desirable goal for most states around the world. Consequently, there are several directions in which future research could be developed. Firstly, as policies and security as a whole are continually changing in response to national and international events, future researchers must be able to recognise the changes that are evolving in response to changes in the political climate.
Appendix A: Letter to Participants

Dear Sir/Madam

Please help us to conduct research for Bradford University, Peace Studies Department, Doctoral Research Programme. Your cooperation is critical to the success of this study. Your responses will be treated with the strictest of confidence, analysed anonymously and not passed on to any third parties. You are not required to identify your name or organisation you are associated with, if you do not wish to do so. The study title is:

Saudi Arabian security policies in the Gulf region

The main purpose of this study is to examine the current role of Saudi Arabia in the security of the Gulf region, along with the threats and challenges the area is facing at the moment. This will be done by highlighting Saudi Arabia's relations with other Gulf states and its relationship with some major states in the international arena, as well as by considering most of the Saudi efforts in place to ensure the security and stability of the region.

Please allow me to use voice recording, this will help in analysing the interview and put it in data later. If you give me the permission, I will ensure that the recorded replies will remain confidential – only available to the interviewer – and that all the interview information will be confidential and anonymous. The audio recording will be used to analyse the audio data only and will not be passed to any third parties.

Participation in this research is voluntary and you can withdraw from the interview at any time. The interview should take around 30 minutes. The results of this research may be of benefit to you in the future. If you wish to receive an Executive Summary of the results, please complete the form on the next page. Your input is essential for the accuracy of the results, and we are very grateful to you for agreeing to give your valuable time to support this study.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely

Mahmoud Nasif

Doctoral Researcher
**Demographic Information**

- I am (please tick):
  - [ ] An educator
  - [ ] Politician
  - [ ] Policymaker
  - [ ] Other (please specify)------

- I have been actively/ indirectly involved with Saudi (please tick):
  - [ ] Local politics
  - [ ] Regional
  - [ ] International
  - [ ] Other (please specify) ------

- I have been involved in this area for -------- years (please specify a number).

- Our SBU (or firm) has ------------ employees (please specify a number).

**Executive Summary**: Please provide your name and address or enclose your business card if you would like to receive an Executive Summary of the research.

Name: -------------------------------- Address: -----------------------------------------------

Postcode: ------------------- Email (for an electronic copy):-------------------------------

**Questions**: If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me:

M. Nasif: Flat – 56H, Byron Halls, Byron Street, Bradford, BD3 0AR : Email: M.Nasif@student.bradford.ac.uk

Any suggestions:
Comments: Please add any further comments:

*** Thank you very much for taking the time to help us with our research ***
## Appendix B: Interview Questions

### Part I: Assessing external dynamics of national security (external dimensions of national security).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Prompts/Instructions</th>
<th>Variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>How do you evaluate the current situation in the Gulf area? What are the main threats to Saudi and Gulf security?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment of the security situation, Assessment of the security threats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Do you think that the current Iranian policies pose a threat to the region and Saudi Arabia?</td>
<td>If the answer is just a brief ‘yes’ or ‘no’, ask why to explain.</td>
<td>Assessing the Iranian threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Do you consider the Iranian nuclear programme is a serious threat to the region? Why?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessing Iran’s nuclear programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Do you believe that the current situation in Iraq presents a serious challenge to Saudi Arabia and the region?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessing the situation in Iraq and its impact on the region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Do you think that Iran is interfering in Iraq’s internal politics? If so, what sort of challenge does that pose on Saudi security?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessing Iran’s involvement in Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Do you think that instability in Yemen poses a serious threat?</td>
<td>If the answer is just a brief ‘yes’ or ‘no’, ask why to explain.</td>
<td>Assessing Yemen security effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Do you believe that terrorism still remains a threat in Saudi Arabia? What about globally?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessing terrorism threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Do you think that oil has caused challenges to Saudi Arabian security and policymaking? Do not you think that oil is responsible for many of the current challenges in the region, including the US involvements in the 1991 Gulf War and the following consequences of their presence in the aftermath of the war?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessing oil role in security and policy dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Prompts/Instructions</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>What are the main economic threats? Does 1) unemployment, 2) administrative corruption, 3) poverty, 4) economic dependence on oil, form the main economic threats to Saudi security and internal policy? Do they pose a threat to security and policymaking?</td>
<td>Ask why?</td>
<td>Assessing economic threats effect on security and policymaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>What are the main social threats? Does the social division and rapid changes including social conflicts between conservatives and liberalists form a social threat? Does it affect the policymaking process and Saudi national security? Do Shi’a demands and loyalties form a social threat? Does it affect the policymaking process and Saudi national security? Does the rising internal demands and social media spread form a social threat? Does it affect the policymaking process and Saudi national security? Does the state internal social/cultural/religious nature affect the state political system and international politics? To what extent does it affect Saudi Arabian policymaking?</td>
<td>If the answer is yes, ask Why?</td>
<td>Assessing social threats effects on policymaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>What are the military threats that Saudi Arabia faces? How do you evaluate the effectiveness of the Saudi security forces both the military or other state security forces and to which extent is it fulfilling its role?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessing military threats effects on policymaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>What are the main environmental threats? Does desertification; depletion of underground water resources; the lack of perennial rivers or permanent water bodies that has prompted the development of extensive seawater desalination facilities; or coastal pollution from oil spills, form the main environmental threats? To which extent does it affect Saudi Arabian policymaking?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessing environmental threats effects on policymaking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Part III: Saudi relations and diplomacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Prompts/Instructions</th>
<th>Variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>How do you assess the Saudi-US relations? Do you believe that Saudi/US relation was affected after 9/11? In which direction is this relationship heading?</td>
<td>Relations with America after 9/11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>How would you evaluate the Saudi relations with the countries of the European Union?</td>
<td>Saudi/EU relations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>How do you see Saudi Arabia’s relations with China?</td>
<td>Relations with China</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>How do you consider Saudi Arabia’s relations with India?</td>
<td>Relations with India</td>
<td>Relations with India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>How would you describe the relationship with the Gulf States?</td>
<td>Saudi GCC relation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>How do you perceive Saudi Arabia’s relations with Iran?</td>
<td>Saudi/Iranian relations</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>How would you describe the Saudi relation with Iraq?</td>
<td>Saudi/Iraqi relations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>How would you describe Saudi relation with Turkey?</td>
<td>Saudi/Turkish relations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Part IV: Current Saudi policy at the local and global level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Prompts/Instructions</th>
<th>Variable</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Do you think that Saudi Arabia is fulfilling its role towards the Gulf region’s security? (Whether in regard to the Iranian threat, or other regional challenges.) To what extent do you think that the Saudi’s policy is aimed to eliminate most of the challenges in the region?</td>
<td>Evaluation of current policy in the Gulf region</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>How do you see the Kingdom’s policy at the global level?</td>
<td>Is it excellent, good, how needs more</td>
<td>Evaluation of international politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>How do you see the internal policy of the Kingdom? Is it aimed to face internal challenges?</td>
<td>Evaluation of local policies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>How do you view the Kingdom’s position either locally or regionally in the wake of the so-called Arab Spring?</td>
<td>Policy evaluation after the revolutions in the Arab world</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Prompts/Instructions</td>
<td>Variable</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>It is often argued that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has done nothing with regard to regional security. What do you think?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation of current policy in the Gulf region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>It is also often argued that Saudi Arabia is not doing enough with regard to its international policies. What do you think? Why?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation of international politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>It is also often argued that Saudi Arabia is not doing enough with regard to its domestic policies. What do you think? Why?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation of domestic politics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part V: The Future of the Kingdom in terms of political and security

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Prompts/Instructions</th>
<th>Variable</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>In your opinion, what should be done to improve the Kingdom or to make its role in the Gulf region more effective? What about globally?</td>
<td>The future of the Kingdom at the international level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>What can be done internally in order to enrich domestic security and policymaking?</td>
<td>The future of the Kingdom internally</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Do you think that the challenges facing the GCC countries, including Saudi Arabia will be solved in the near future (Iran, Iraq, Yemen), and how?</td>
<td>Regional threats future</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>How do you see the future of terrorism in Saudi Arabia and globally?</td>
<td>The future of terrorism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>What is your assessment to the future of the US presence in the Gulf area? What consequences would it hold?</td>
<td>The future of the US presence in the Gulf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Do you think that Saudi Arabia is able to adopt a greater role with respect to regional security?</td>
<td>Saudi regional role future</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>How can the Kingdom adopt a greater role? And can Saudi Arabia do it alone (without GCC countries or Western help?)</td>
<td>Saudi regional role future</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Do internal policies in Saudi Arabia affect regional or international policymaking?</td>
<td>Saudi domestic policies connections with regional and international policymaking</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td>Do you want to add anything else?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thank you very much for your precious time. This was very useful.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Name of the guest:

2. Job title and experience:

3. Time and date of interview:

4. Length of time:

5. Location:

Note of any non-verbal reactions, such interruptions, irritation of the interview:


