# NDCA Saudi Alliance DA

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#### Saudi arms sales and relations are high now – Trump just approved a massive deal.

**Lee & George 5/24** (Matthew Lee is an AP Diplomatic Writer, Susannah George is an intelligence reporter for AP, “ Trump cites Iran to bypass Congress on Saudi arms sales”, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/congress/senator-trump-says-will-use-loophole-to-sell-arms-to-saudis/2019/05/24/84ebfe7c-7e46-11e9-b1f3-b233fe5811ef\_story.html?utm\_term=.30a5378f6aca)

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration on Friday invoked a rarely used provision in federal law to bypass congressional review of arms sales to Saudi Arabia, citing threats the kingdom faces from Iran. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo notified Congress of the decision to use an emergency loophole in the Arms Export Control Act to move ahead with sales of $7 billion in precision guided munitions, other bombs and ammunition and aircraft maintenance support to Saudi Arabia, along with the United Arab Emirates and Jordan, without lawmakers’ approval. In his notification, Pompeo said he had made the determination “that an emergency exists which requires the immediate sale” of the weapons “in order to deter further the malign influence of the government of Iran throughout the Middle East region.” He said the transfers “must occur as quickly as possible in order to deter further Iranian adventurism in the Gulf and throughout the Middle East.” Pompeo’s move follows President Donald Trump’s announcement that the U.S. plans to send 1,500 additional troops to the Middle East as part of a build-up in response to an unspecified threat from Iran. It also comes as the administration has actively courted close ties with Saudi Arabia over congressional objections, notably following the killing of Jamal Khashoggi , a U.S.-based columnist for The Washington Post, by Saudi agents in October. Khashoggi’s slaying, coupled with increasing concerns about civilian casualties resulting from a Saudi-led coalition’s military operation against Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen, prompted lawmakers to block about $2 billion in arms sales to the kingdom for more than a year. Last month, Trump vetoed legislation that would have ended U.S. military assistance for the Saudi-led war in Yemen.

#### Commitment to the alliance now is key – it’s more fragile than ever.

Allan 6/22 [Elizabeth Allan, 6-22-2019, "The Yemen Resolution and the Historical U.S.-Saudi Security Relationship," Lawfare, https://www.lawfareblog.com/yemen-resolution-and-historical-us-saudi-security-relationship]

Congress’s specific objections to the U.S.-Saudi security relationship reflect contemporary concerns over the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. Beyond Yemen, however, several structural factors complicate traditional pillars of the U.S.-Saudi security alliance, including concerns that Saudi Arabia’s actions are undermining regional security, growing scrutiny of Saudi Arabia’s internal politics (for example, its human rights track record), and the U.S.’s increased capacity to produce domestic oil (although Saudi Arabia remains important to global energy markets). Those in support of continuing the relationship emphasize that, although the Saudi-U.S. partnership is far from perfect, it has strategic benefits, particularly in counterterrorism, opposition to Iran, and maintenance of regional stability against a more chaotic alternative.

Ultimately, congressional supporters and skeptics must cooperate with the executive branch to change U.S. security strategy, and the Trump administration has consistently indicated that it has no intention of turning away from the U.S.-Saudi alliance. As long as this remains administration policy, Congress may use various legislative tools to chip away at U.S. security support for the kingdom—but there is unlikely to be a fundamental realignment in the U.S.-Saudi security relationship.

#### Arms sales are key to US-Saudi relations.

**Omar & Juneau 17** (Omar Mohamed, Program Officer at Public Service, graduated from the University of Ottawa, Thomas Juneau is an assistant professor at the University of Ottawa’s Graduate School of Public and International Affairs. From 2003 to 2014, he was an analyst with Canada’s Department of National Defence. “The Special Partnership: Considering U.S.-Saudi Relations Through the Alliance”, <https://ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/36607/1/OMAR%2C%20Mohammed%2020175.pdf>, p. 41-43)

Arms transfers between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia represent a major component of the security partnership. U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia touch on both the economic and security dimensions of the bilateral partnership. Alliance politics literature highlights that partners whose strategic interest revolve around the areas of defence and security are more likely to have enduring relationships. To help secure U.S. defence assurances, Saudi Arabia has pursued complex and lucrative arms deals, which have cemented long-term commitment to the security partnership. For the United States, arms transfers to Saudi Arabia help shore up Saudi Arabia’s defensive capabilities, while providing a reliable market for defence exports.

The Joint Security Cooperation Commission signed between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia in 1972, helped set a long-term framework for arms transfers between the two partners. As early as 1975, the value of U.S. arms sale had risen to an annual $5 billion, as contracts with Saudi operated as an economic stimulus for the domestic U.S. arms industry. The growing security ties between the two partners allowed the U.S. arms industry to provide new jobs, increase production and reduce per-unit costs for domestic arms supply deals for the U.S. military.109 As Bronson notes this trend made the Saudi market indispensable for the U.S. arms industry, further raising the cost associated with alliance abandonment.

 The U.S. has been Saudi Arabia’s number 1 arms supplier for the duration of their diplomatic relationship. Between 1950 and 2004 the U.S. delivered over $67.1 billion worth of arms to Saudi Arabia under various agreements. 110 This figure has continued to grow, as a growing Iranian threat to U.S. and Saudi strategic interests has prompted an expansion of defence capability in the region. From 2011 up till 2016, Saudi Arabia was the top destination for U.S. arms exports overall, acquiring 9.7% of total U.S. arms exports worldwide.111 This figure includes the biggest military sale in U.S. history reached with Saudi Arabia in December 2011, for over $60 billion worth of airpower technology to modernize the Saudi Arabian Royal Air Force. 112 This deal included 84 new F-15 U.S. jet fighters, 70 refurbished F-15 jets, 70 Apache and 36 AH-6M helicopters.113 The U.S. and Saudi Arabia have also reached a successive number of deals intended to strengthen Saudi Arabia’s missile and maritime capabilities. In September 2014, the Obama Administration submitted for a $22 billion dollar sale for Congressional approval that would equip Saudi Arabia with Mission Surface Combatant Ships and M1A2 tanks.114 Although Saudi Arabia also purchases a substantial amount of weapons from U.S. allies such as France, the U.K., and Canada, the U.S. remains its leading arms supplier (see Figure 4).

#### The Saudi alliance is key to contain Iranian aggression – ending sales emboldens Iran and destabilizes the region.

Heinrichs 18 [Rebeccah L. Heinrichs, senior fellow at Hudson Institute where she specializes in nuclear deterrence and missile defense, adjunct professor at the Institute of World Politics, M.A. in National Security and Strategic Studies from the U.S. Naval War College, 3-20-2018, "Why Breaking With Saudi Arabia Over Khashoggi Would Hurt America," Hudson Institute, https://www.hudson.org/research/14636-why-breaking-with-saudi-arabia-over-khashoggi-would-hurt-america]

Consider that the United States’ strategic partnership with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has arguably never been more productive. The young prince bin Salman has committed to helping the Muslim nation that contains both Mecca and Medina move towards a more just society and has already implemented modest but meaningful reforms. Moreover, he has aided in Saudi’s recent softening of its stance towards Israel, stating that he believes the Jewish people have a “right to their own land.”

None of this should be overstated, and hopefulness for the young prince to make good on his commitments should be tempered. But if the prince can be encouraged to make reforms incrementally and with greater prudence and consistency, it could portend positive developments not only for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, but also for the larger Muslim world.

Saudi Arabia is famously the largest customer of American foreign military sales. Unfortunately, this relationship is frequently disparaged as based on greed and nothing more. No doubt American companies and therefore plenty of Americans benefit directly from selling expensive military equipment and weapons to other nations. But the primary reason that the United States invests so heavily in Saudi Arabia is because of its strategic importance.

Saudi Arabia is a crucial counterweight to the Islamic Republic of Iran. Iran is a sworn enemy of the United States and Israel. It is responsible for the deaths of hundreds of American soldiers in Iraq, and for maiming countless other American warfighters in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Iran regime oppresses its own people and fails to invest in its own economy, because it has prioritized funding Bashar al Assad’s brutal civil war in Syria, enabling him to repeatedly use chemical weapons on his own people.

Iran is a constant destabilizing force, seeking to undermine the governments of sovereign nations like Iraq and Yemen. Although Saudi rightly receives flak for its atrocious (and in many cases, avoidable) civilian casualties in Yemen, that war only exists because Iran is funding and arming the Houthi rebels. It is a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia, in which Iran is the aggressor and Saudi is the defender. Last, and certainly not least, Iran continues to fund and export terrorism in the Middle East and Europe.

It is not too strong to say Saudi Arabia is our most important strategic partner in mitigating and rolling back Iran’s power and malign activities. While true that the United States is becoming energy independent, it is still inextricably tied to the global market and our Asian allies remain reliant on Golf petroleum. The stability and diversification of the energy market is a critical factor in matters of war and peace. Iran has repeatedly brandished its ability to affect the energy market by, for example, threatening to close the Strait of Hormuz.

Saudi Arabia leads the Gulf coalition in maritime security to keep critical shipping lanes open. And should the United States and allies like Saudi Arabia lose control of the security of those shipping lanes, countries like Iran and its increasingly bold partners — large nuclear powers China and Russia — would be greatly empowered to more effectively blackmail and coerce the United States and our allies.

Every government of every sovereign nation is primarily responsible for the care of its own people. The United States government must weigh all of the above in order to determine what is the just thing to do for its own citizens first, and also what effect its actions will have on its allies, and even the impact on humanity in general.

Damaging the U.S.-Saudi alliance will not decrease human suffering, and will not increase justice or peace and stability for Americans or for our allies. Heavy sanctions on the Saudi government, ending arms sales and military cooperation with Saudi, or demanding the House of Saud remove bin Salman would play right into the hands of America’s enemies. Doing the moral thing does not require the United States to advantage those who seek to harm us.

#### Iran-fueled instability causes great power war — multiple scenarios for escalation.

DiChristopher 18 (Tom DiChristopher is an award-winning multimedia journalist who covers energy for CNBC.com. He previously coordinated online coverage of broadcast guests for a number of CNBC's Business Day programs. “Iran-Israel strikes show risk of Middle East war is growing after US exit from nuclear deal,” 5/10/18. <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/05/10/risk-of-war-in-the-middle-east-grows-after-us-exit-from-nuclear-deal.html>)

Middle East watchers warn that Trump's decision to abandon the nuclear deal emboldens Israel and Saudi Arabia to take a more aggressive stance against Iranian forces and proxies in the region. They say it also marginalizes Iran's political moderates like President Hassan Rouhani and emboldens the nation's hard-line conservatives and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, an elite military organization loyal to the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. "US withdrawal from the JCPOA could shift the balance of power among the Iranian leadership from those who want to keep the deal operational to hardline elements more willing to risk escalation by strengthening support for regional proxies, and who favour economic self-sufficiency and opposed President Rouhani's push for greater engagement with the West," ratings agency Fitch said Thursday, referring to the deal by its official name, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The long-standing fear is that open military conflict among the Middle East's dominant players will devolve into a regionwide conflict that drags global powers like the United States and Russia into war. It could also choke off oil supplies from the world's largest energy export hub. The Israeli-Iranian exchange on Thursday is only the latest flare up in Syria's seven-year war that has drawn in Russia, the United States, Kurdish fighters and Turkey. The delicate balance of alliances and competing interests now risks tipping past the point of no return, according to Helima Croft, global head of commodity strategy at RBC Capital Markets. "I very much worry that the antagonists seem to believe that this can be a managed and contained military escalation but military planners thought the same thing in 1914," she wrote to CNBC. On Thursday, the White House condemned the Iranian strikes and defended Israel's counterattack, calling it an act of self-defense. It said Iran's Revolutionary Guard "bears full responsibility for the consequences of its reckless actions." Beyond Syria, Iran is backing Lebanon's political and militant group Hezbollah, a U.S.-designated terrorist organization and avowed enemy of Israel on the Jewish state's border. The Iranians exercise significant influence over militias in Iraq, and Tehran is widely believed to be arming Houthi rebels in their fight against rivals in Yemen and a Saudi-led coalition that includes the United States. To be sure, while the nuclear deal limited Iran's program, President Barack Obama's hopes that the accord would pave the way for improved relations proved overly optimistic. Iran has only ramped up its role in foreign conflicts since the deal took effect in 2016. Now, in the wake of Trump's decision, an "angry Iran is loose in the region," risk consultancy Eurasia Group said in a research note laying out the potential consequences of the U.S. exit. "In Yemen, Iran will likely encourage its Houthi allies to more aggressively fire missiles at Saudi infrastructure and, more importantly, transfer sophisticated systems to improve missile accuracy," Eurasia Group analysts forecast. "The risk of the deaths of Saudi citizens increases, as does the risk of a tough and escalatory Saudi response." However, it's the Syrian conflict where Eurasia Group sees the highest risk of volatility. "As we expected, Israel has ratcheted up airstrikes against Iranian targets, seeking to thwart the establishment of Revolutionary Guard bases throughout Syria," its analysts said. The heightened political risks could also inflame other tensions tied to Iran that have roiled the Arabian Peninsula, Fitch warned. It notes that a blockade by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates on Qatar is largely due to the tiny Gulf nation's ties to Iran. It points out that Oman has been accused of allowing Iran to funnel weapons through its country to neighboring Yemen, and that Bahrain pointed the finger at Tehran-linked terrorism for a domestic oil pipeline attack. Closely followed trader Art Cashin said geopolitical concerns in the Middle East are now eclipsing those over North Korea, whose leader will meet with Trump on June 12 after talks with South Korea that have begun to defuse a nuclear crisis. "I would keep an eye on the Middle East a good deal more than North Korea," he told CNBC's "Squawk on the Street" on Thursday. "I get the feeling as you watch what's going on in North Korea that the Chinese are very involved in making sure that this thing comes off, so if there's going to be a concern, it's going to be the Middle East," said Cashin, director of floor operations at the New York Stock Exchange for UBS.

## Uniqueness Extensions

### UQ – Sales High

#### Arms sales high now

Hennigan 18 (W.J. Hennigan covers the Pentagon and national security issues in Washington, D.C. He has reported from more than two dozen countries across five continents, covering war, counter-terrorism, and the lives of U.S. service members “What Makes the U.S.-Saudi Relationship So Special? Weapons, Oil and 'An Army of Lobbyists'”, http://time.com/5428669/saudi-arabia-military-relationship/)

It’s a cold financial calculation: Saudi money for U.S.-made weaponry results in American jobs. This is President Donald Trump’s rationale in dismissing calls in Congress to halt future arms sales to Saudi Arabia following the mysterious disappearance of Jamal Khashoggi, the Saudi journalist and American resident. “I don’t like the concept of stopping an investment of $110 billion into the United States,” Trump said last week. “All they’re going to do is say, ‘That’s OK. We don’t have to buy it from Boeing. We don’t have to buy it from Lockheed. We don’t have to buy it from Raytheon and all these great companies. We’ll buy it from Russia. We’ll buy it from China,” he said. The 75-year alliance between the two nations has been built on a simple arrangement: American demand for Saudi oil and Saudi demand for American firepower. It is a relationship that is not easily unwound as a bipartisan group of U.S. Senators found out earlier this year when they moved to cut off military assistance to the Saudis in their war against Houthi rebels in Yemen. The United Nations has said that more half of the more than 10,000 people who have been killed in the three-year old war are civilians, and the lives of millions are potentially at risk from famine. The U.S. government has provided intelligence, munitions and midair refueling to Saudi warplanes since operations kicked off in 2015. Attempts by American lawmakers to stop that aid have thus far failed. Saudi Arabia has spent at least $5.8 million on lobbying Congress this year, according to data compiled by the Center for Responsive Politics, a government watchdog. But recently filed documents detailing expenses and reimbursements put the actual number closer to $9 million, said Lydia Dennett, investigator with the Project on Government Oversight. “The Kingdom has a veritable army of lobbyists and PR firms working to promote their interests in a wide variety of ways,” she said. The Foreign Influence Transparency Initiative, a left-leaning think tank in Washington, recently compiled records filed under Foreign Agents Registration Act that show in 2017 Saudi lobbyists contacted over 200 members of Congress, including every Senator. The data also found the Saudi agents contacted officials in the State Department, which oversees foreign military sales, nearly 100 times. The Saudi-U.S. relationship is peerless when it comes to arms sales. The kingdom buys more American weapons than any other nation. Saudi Arabia accounted for nearly one-fifth of American of all weapons exports over the past five years, according to a recent report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. The Pentagon has a team of U.S. service members based out of the capital Riyadh wholly dedicated the “management and administration of Saudi Arabian Foreign Military Sales.” It serves as a direct pipeline to move weapons from U.S. arms manufacturers into the arms of the Saudi military. The U.S. military’s Joint Advisory Division works alongside commanders in each branch of the Saudi military to help fill their weapons needs. Once the Saudis commit to what they want — tanks, attack helicopters, missiles, ships, laser-guided bombs — the arms packages must be OK’d by the U.S. Defense and State Departments, and approved by Congress. The arrangement falls under the U.S. Military Training Mission to Saudi Arabia, which is led by a two-star American general. The mission is primarily designed to bolster Saudi Arabia against arch-rival Iran in order to assert power and influence in the Middle East. “We have other very good allies in the Middle East, but if you look at Saudi Arabia: They’re an ally and they’re a tremendous purchaser of not only military equipment, but other things,” Trump said Wednesday in the Oval Office. It was the President’s latest attempt to trumpet $400 billion in business deals that his administration signed in May 2017 during a two-day visit to Saudi Arabia. The eye-popping figure includes $110 billion in military sales, which analysts point out is misleading because it represented letters of interest and not firmed-up contracts. Saudi Arabia has thus far only committed to purchase $14.5 billion-worth of equipment since the announcement was made 17 months ago. The Administration says the Saudis are currently pursuing more than $114 billion in military hardware.

### UQ – Alliance Strong

#### Saudi relations are high now – co-op in multiple areas

**VOA 18** (Voice of America is a U.S. government-funded international multimedia agency which serves as the United States federal government's official institution for non-military, external broadcasting. “U.S.-Saudi Relations Are Strong”, March 26th, https://editorials.voa.gov/a/us-saudi-relations-strong/4316930.html)

Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman was recently warmly welcomed at the White House. President Donald Trump called Saudi Arabia “a great friend” of the United States, and predicted ties between the two countries will grow. Mr. Trump praised Saudi Arabia’s investments in the U.S., including its purchases of arms and military equipment which has contributed to the creation of 40,000 American jobs. A readout by the White House of the meeting between the two leaders said they “discussed joint efforts to finalize new commercial deals that would support more than 120,000 American jobs and contribute to the success of Saudi Arabia’s economic reform agenda.” That agenda includes a plan to wean Saudi Arabia off its long-time dependence on oil and to diversify by developing non-oil sectors. Toward that end, during his visit to the United States, Crown Prince Salman is meeting with business leaders to investigate opportunities in half a dozen U.S. cities. Crown Prince Salman is attempting reform in Saudi Arabia’s social and cultural arena as well: under his direction, the ban on women driving has been lifted; women will be allowed to open their own businesses without the consent of their husband or a male relative; the powers of the religious police have been curtailed; and movie theaters will be opened again. In addition, Crown Prince Salman says he is determined to promote a moderate form of Islam in an effort to defeat Islamist extremism. Under his leadership, the Kingdom is revamping its educational curriculum to ensure that extremist ideology is removed. The White House noted that in the meeting between the two men, ISIS, Iran and Yemen were also discussed: “The Crown Prince thanked the President for American leadership in defeating ISIS and countering Iran’s destructive actions across the Middle East.” The two talked about the threat to the region posed by the Houthis, aided by Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. And they spoke of the need for additional steps to address the humanitarian situation in Yemen, as well as for a political resolution to the conflict. “We work closely with our Saudi partners to counter the threatening behavior of dangerous actors in the region,” Acting Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy Heather Nauert noted, adding, “We look forward to further strengthening the U.S.-Saudi relationship and advancing our common security and economic priorities.”

#### Relations high now – MBS visit proves cooperation is thriving

Almdaoi 18 [Ali Almdaoi, 4-6-2018, "Saudi-US relations are strong and strategic," Saudi Gazette, http://saudigazette.com.sa/article/532072/Opinion/Voices/Saudi-US-relations-are-strong-and-strategic]

The recent visit of Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman, deputy premier and minister of defense, to Washington was not the first of its kind. It was preceded by his historic visit to the United States when he was Deputy Crown Prince.

This visit to Washington aimed to strengthen mutual strategic relations and raise the level of military, economic, security and political consultations and co-operation between Washington and Riyadh. The relationship between the two countries has been deeply rooted for over 80 years when diplomatic relations were initiated in 1933, followed by the establishment of the first Saudi diplomatic mission in Washington in 1944 and the first US embassy in Jeddah 1944, which moved to Riyadh in 1984.

On the political and security level, the US administration is aware of the importance of the Kingdom’s leading role in the Arab and Muslim world in supporting peace, fighting terrorism and strengthening stability through cooperation with Washington. This is also through the coordination between Riyadh and Washington with regard to the issues facing the Middle East region, which faces difficulty due to the Iranian regime that supports terrorist militias and Houthi terrorist groups that are attempting to destabilize the region. This cooperation is also aimed at terminating Daesh (the self-proclaimed IS) in Iraq and Syria.

The visit of the Crown Prince also aimed to address important issues related to regional security and to strengthen the level of mutual cooperation between Riyadh and Washington to face urgent international security issues all over the world.

Economically, the visit underlined mutual objectives and resulted in the signing of investment agreements between Riyadh and Washington in the fields of defense, trade, energy and petrochemicals valued at $280 billion. The visit also focused on strengthening the partnership between the two countries so that the Kingdom becomes a major partner in achieving those economic goals. Contracts with big US companies are considered the best proof of the seriousness and importance of these objectives, part of which are directed at strengthening the foundation of the Kingdom’s modern infrastructure as part of Saudi Vision 2030.

As for the military, the visit aimed to raise the level of cooperation for military and security coordination to eliminate and eradicate the sources of terrorism and realize regional and international stability.

Culturally, Saudi-US relations have witnessed a boom as the number of Saudi students studying in the US as part of the King Abdullah Scholarship Program has reached more than 125,000 over the 50 US states.

In summary, Saudi Arabia and the United States have mutual cooperation in all fields and a mutual vision regarding international issues. The relationship between the two countries is deeply anchored in serving mutual interests and facing international challenges that require coordinated responses as these two countries prove their political and economic strength in the world.

### UQ – AT: Obama Thumper

#### Trump repaired harm to the relationship caused during the Obama administration by trashing the Iran deal

**Al-Rasheed 17** (MADAWI AL-RASHEED is Visiting Professor at the Middle East Centre, London School of Economics. “Trump and Saudi Arabia Rethinking the Relationship with Riyadh”, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/saudi-arabia/2017-03-16/trump-and-saudi-arabia)

Since U.S. President Donald Trump took office, he has yet to put forward a clear foreign policy framework for U.S.-Saudi relations. Instead, observers must wade through a bog of ad hoc comments. This month, Trump made his view clear that Washington should not offer free protection to Gulf states. He has also said that Gulf states “have nothing but money” and that he intends to make them pay for future “safe zones” in Syria. At the same time, Trump has expressed his desire to improve relations with Gulf states in general in order to tackle Iran’s “destabilizing regional activities.” For their part, and notwithstanding Trump’s harsher comments, the Saudis see in the new president an opportunity to enhance their relationship with the United States and repair the rift created by former U.S. President Barack Obama’s championing of the Iran nuclear agreement. They rejoiced, for example, when Trump described Iran as the world’s foremost state sponsor of terrorism and questioned the rationale behind the nuclear deal. If Trump undermines the nuclear agreement and continues to maintain and even expand sanctions against Iran, the Saudis will welcome it. Such moves would assure Riyadh that Saudi Arabia remains at the center of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.

#### Ties were still close during the Obama Administration

**Gause 16** (F. Gregory Gause, III is the John H. Lindsey ’44 Chair, Professor of International Affairs and Head of the International Affairs Department at the Bush School of Government and Public Service, Texas A&M University. “The Future of U.S.-Saudi Relations”, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2016-06-13/future-us-saudi-relations>)

To these critics’ dismay, however, both countries continue to work together closely. Obama, for all his public misgivings, went to Riyadh in April to attend the Gulf Cooperation Council summit, where he reiterated his commitment to the security of Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states. Washington continues to sell vast quantities of arms to Riyadh. The Saudis, for their part, have held their noses and publicly endorsed the Iran nuclear deal. And intelligence sharing continues apace. While such cooperation may cause critics to gnash their teeth, it serves both countries well. The United States has a crucial interest in maintaining a clear-eyed but close relationship with Saudi Arabia. As political authority collapses throughout the Middle East, Washington needs a good working relationship with one of the few countries that can govern its territory and exert some influence in those areas where real governance no longer exists. Although their strategic visions may diverge, the two countries still share many goals. Both see ISIS and al Qaeda as direct threats. Neither wants Iran to dominate the region. Both want to avoid any disruption to the vast energy supplies that flow through the Persian Gulf. And both would like to see a negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. More still unites Washington and Riyadh than divides them.

### AT: Alliance Inevit – General

#### The link is massive – cutting off arms transfers sends a strong signal of non-support and overrides other areas of co-op – even announcing the plan triggers the link immediately.

**Spindel 19** (5-14, Jen Spindel is an Assistant Professor of International Security in the Department of International and Area Studies at the University of Oklahoma, “THE CASE FOR SUSPENDING AMERICAN ARMS SALES TO SAUDI ARABIA”, https://warontherocks.com/2019/05/the-case-for-suspending-american-arms-sales-to-saudi-arabia/)

Because arms transfers (and denials) are powerful signals, they can have an effect even before a transfer is actually completed. This suggests that even the announcement of an embargo against Saudi Arabia could have an effect. Take, for example, Taiwan’s recent request for a fleet of new fighter jets. As reports mounted that Trump had given “tacit approval” to a deal for F-16 jets, China’s protests increased. The United States has not sold advanced fighter jets to Taiwan since 1992, partially out of fear of angering China, which views Taiwan as a renegade province. Even if the deal for F-16s is formally approved, Taiwan is unlikely to see the jets until at least 2021, and the balance of power between China and Taiwan would not change. As one researcher observed, the sale would be a “huge shock” for Beijing, “But it would be more of a political shock than a military shock. It would be, ‘Oh, the U.S. doesn’t care how we feel.’ It would be more of a symbolic or emotional issue.” Yet China’s immediate, negative reaction to even the announcement of a potential deal shows how powerful arms transfer signals can be. If this same logic is applied to an arms embargo against Saudi Arabia, an arms embargo would signal that Saudi Arabia does not have the support of the United States. This signal would be an important first step in changing Saudi behavior because it would override other statements and actions the United States has sent that indicate support. And Trump has given Saudi Arabia a number of positive signals: He called Saudi Arabia a “great ally” and dismissed reports that that the Saudi government was involved in the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. He has expressed interested in selling nuclear power plants and technology to Saudi Arabia. And he has repeatedly claimed that he has made a $110 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia (he hasn’t). With these clear signals of support, why should Saudi Arabia alter its behavior based on resolutions that come out of the House or Senate, which are likely to be vetoed by Trump, anyway? An arms embargo would be a clear and unambiguous signal that the United States disproves of Saudi actions in Yemen.

### AT: Alliance Inevit – Oil

#### US oil isn’t dependent on Saudi Arabia – innovation and production

**Borroz and Meighan 17** (Nicholas Borroz is a Washington-based strategic intelligence consultant who provides guidance on managing international investment risk, Meighan received his master’s degree in international relations and economics from the Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies and his bachelor’s degree in international affairs and economics from Lafayette College. “Saudi Arabia's Failed Oil War”, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/saudi-arabia/2017-03-13/saudi-arabias-failed-oil-war>)

Saudi King Salman’s ongoing visit to Asia, through which he hopes to attract Japanese and Chinese investment in Saudi Arabia, is another indication of how committed the country is to reforming its economy. This trip, along with a host of fiscal modifications at home and the impending initial public offering (IPO) of Saudi Aramco, the country’s national petroleum and natural gas company, underscore the Kingdom’s recognition of its need to escape dependence on oil—a realization that has come as a result of failed policies from 2014 to 2016 that forced Riyadh to accept the fact that its days of dominating oil markets are over. Saudi Arabia’s strategy during the production war was to let the spigots flow in the hopes that doing so would undermine two other producers: Iran and the United States. Iran had always enjoyed a latent ability to wrest market control from Saudi Arabia, but crippling international sanctions prevented it from doing so. After the nuclear deal, though, the threat to the Kingdom increased. At the same time, the U.S. oil industry presented a new challenge. By 2015, after a decade of technological innovations, including the use of wireless seismological testing and the automating of various oilrig functions, it had claimed the mantle of global production leader from Saudi Arabia. In the face of eroding market share, Riyadh refused to cut oil production. It instead opted to increase output in 2016—setting new records for its production levels—to keep global supply high and prices down. In so doing, Riyadh wagered that it could survive depressed prices with its over half a trillion dollars in foreign exchange reserves, while its U.S. and Iranian competitors would in turn face so much financial pressure that they would bow out of the running. This was a marked divergence from past Saudi strategy, which typically favored cutting production to regulate supply and keep prices elevated. The Kingdom’s production war was costly. The resultant oil price slump hurt Saudi finances; between 2014 and 2016, Saudi reserves fell from $746 billion to $536 billion—a pace that would have completely emptied the Kingdom’s coffers in half a decade. The drop in oil revenues, combined with the costs of a war in Yemen and a generous system of subsidies and low taxes, resulted in an unsustainable situation. So it surprised no one when Riyadh declared a cease-fire to its oil war last year, agreeing with other OPEC members to cut production. Saudi overproduction might have been worth it if it had knocked out Iran or the United States, but instead, Saudi Arabia was the main victim. Given how severe the sanctions on Iran had been, Iran was bound to benefit from any oil exports, no matter how low oil prices became. And despite the toll of low prices on U.S. shale oil producers, those producers continued to have a competitive advantage because of their state-of-the-art extraction technology. If anything, the pressure of low prices pushed U.S. producers to focus even more intently on cost-cutting, automation, and increasing overall efficiency to lower the breakeven price. U.S. producers are far ahead of their peers in much of the world, Saudi Arabia included. This is because for some time, U.S. experts have been developing new technologies so that U.S. producers can get more oil out of their operations abroad. Those experts have now turned their technologies inward. The U.S. has become one of the epicenters of technological innovation in horizontal drilling and fracturing. This is why Saudi Aramco has established a research center in Houston to explore the usage of unconventional oil and gas production. Saudi Arabia is, of course, not so lucky. Its growth is slowing and its ratio of debt to economic output is increasing. For these reasons, Saudi Arabia’s cost of borrowing is rising; Fitch, Standard & Poors, and Moody’s all lowered the country’s credit rating in 2016. As a result of its financial difficulties, Saudi Arabia has since sought to shore up its economy in various ways. One unprecedented measure is the public listing of five percent of Saudi Aramco—which will occur next year and will likely be the biggest IPO in history. On his trip to Asia, Salman is seeking to attract investors for the IPO, and the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing is vying to host the event. Hong Kong, given its connection to Chinese markets, would serve as a bridge between Saudi Aramco and the deep pockets of mainland Chinese investors. Fiscal reforms at home are equally unprecedented. They include increasing excise taxes and visa fees for expats, cutting subsidies to water and energy products, and reducing the number of public works projects in the transport, housing, and health-care sectors. And perhaps most fantastically of all, Saudi Arabia has a plan to switch from the 354-day Islamic lunar calendar to the 365-day Western Gregorian calendar, allowing the government to squeeze 11 more work days out of employees without increasing annual salaries. Even before oil prices took a dive, Saudi Arabia had already been aware that in the not-so-distant future, it would need to get its financial house in order and diversify economically. That is why it had pushed to develop new non-oil sectors, such as renewable energy and even dairy farming. Until recently, it was moving at a decidedly lackadaisical pace, but what the oil war showed is that slow change is no longer an option.

#### Domestic oil production is rising – importance of foreign oil decreasing

**Koenig 19** (2-12, Associated Press airline reporter, “US expects record domestic oil production in 2019, 2020”, <https://www.apnews.com/936ae99a85e7490697ec962d17108d5d>)

The United States expects domestic oil production to reach new heights this year and next, and that prices — for both crude and gasoline — will be lower than they were in 2018. Government forecasters are sticking to their forecast that the United States — already the world’s biggest oil producer — will become a net exporter of crude and petroleum products in 2020. The U.S. Energy Information Administration said Tuesday that it expects the United States to pump 12.4 million barrels of crude a day in 2019 and 13.2 million barrels a day in 2020. The January average was 12 million barrels a day, up 90,000 from December. Most of the increase is expected to come from the Permian Basin in Texas and New Mexico, where production has been booming for several years as operators use hydraulic fracturing and other techniques to squeeze more oil and gas from shale formations. “The U.S. energy industry continues to transform itself,” said Linda Capuano, administrator of the agency, which is part of the Energy Department. The agency expects U.S. benchmark crude to average $54.79 a barrel this year and $58 next year, down from $65 in 2018. It expects internationally traded oil to average $61 a barrel this year and $62 next year, down from $71 in 2018. The 2020 price forecast is $3 a barrel lower than the agency had previously predicted. Capuano said strong growth in oil production worldwide would push prices lower. That should produce nationwide average gasoline prices of $2.47 a gallon this year and $2.56 next year, down from $2.73 in 2018, according to the agency’s short-term energy outlook. Oil prices tumbled in the last three months of 2018 on forecasts that global economic growth will weaken and hurt demand at the same time that production is surging in the U.S. Concern about oversupply led OPEC and allies including Russia to agree in December to limit output during the first half of 2019. On Tuesday, OPEC reported that its member nations sharply reduced production in January. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries — which accounts for about one-third of global supply — said January output fell nearly 800,000 barrels a day compared with December, to 30.8 million barrels a day. Nearly half the OPEC cuts were borne by cartel leader Saudi Arabia, followed by the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. Production in Iran, which the Trump administration targeted for renewed sanctions on oil exports, was little changed from December. Russia’s supply edged lower by 90,000 barrels a day in January, to less than 11.6 million barrels a day, according to the OPEC report. Russia’s production has been running at post-Soviet records. Oil prices rose more than 1 percent on Tuesday. With rising production in the Permian Basin, the Energy Information Administration estimates that U.S. net imports of crude and petroleum products fell from 3.8 million barrels a day in 2017 to 2.4 million barrels a day in 2018. The agency forecast that net imports will decline to about 900,000 barrels a day this year, then turn into a net export of about 300,000 barrels a day in 2020, including 1.1 million barrels a day in the fourth quarter of 2020. The price of natural gas, an important fuel in power generation and home heating, is expected to rise 4 percent through 2020.

## Link Extensions

### Link – Alliance

#### Arms deals key to Saudi relations – empirics prove it strengthens the alliance

**Diamond and Cohen 17** (Jeremy Diamond is a CNN White House Reporter based in Washington, D.C., where he covers the White House and the Trump administration, Zachary Cohen is a breaking news reporter for CNN Politics, where he focuses on the national security beat in Washington and reports on the Pentagon, US State Department, White House, intelligence community and Capitol Hill. “Trump signs Kushner-negotiated $100B Saudi arms deal”, https://www.cnn.com/2017/05/19/politics/jared-kushner-saudi-arms-deal-lockheed-martin/index.html)

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (CNN)President Donald Trump signed a nearly $110 billion defense deal with Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud on Saturday, signaling the United States' renewed commitment to its alliance with the Gulf kingdom and desire to bolster its counterterrorism partnership. The deal was finalized in part thanks to the direct involvement of Jared Kushner, the President's son-in-law and senior adviser. He shocked a high-level Saudi delegation earlier this month when he personally called Lockheed Martin CEO Marillyn Hewson and asked if she would cut the price of a sophisticated missile detection system, according to a source with knowledge of the call. Pressured to finalize a massive $100-plus billion arms deal in the two weeks leading up to Trump's trip to Saudi Arabia, Kushner hoped to maneuver a discount on Lockheed's Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system during the Saudis' visit to the White House on May 1 -- a request that Hewson said she would look into at the time. The New York Times first reported the exchange between Kushner and Hewson. On Saturday, near the end of Trump's first day in the kingdom, the two leaders inked a deal greenlighting a $109 billion defense deal, which Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said was a component of $350 billion in economic and defense investments between the two countries over the next 10 years. Lockheed's Hewson was on hand Saturday in the cavernous Riyadh ballroom where Trump and Salman made the deal official. The company was "proud to be part of this historic announcement that will strengthen the relationship between" the US and Saudi Arabia," Hewson said. The sales authorized under the deal would bolster Saudi Arabia's security, provide an economic boon to both countries and "strengthen the cause of peace in the region," she added. The deal was a welcome sign for Saudi Arabia, which had grown nervous about the strength of its alliance with the US as President Barack Obama signed the nuclear deal with Iran and signaled a potential rapprochement with the Persian nation, which is fiercely at odds with Saudi Arabia. Trump, by contrast, has castigated Iran as a destabilizing power and criticized the nuclear deal, instead seeking to bolster partnerships with Sunni Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia -- which Trump demonstrated by making his first foreign trip as president here. In a statement, a White House official called the defense deal "a significant expansion of the over seven-decade long security relationship between" the US and Saudi Arabia. "This package of defense equipment and services support the long-term security of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region in the face of Iranian threats while also bolstering the Kingdom's ability to contribute to counterterrorism operations across the region, reducing the burden on the US military to conduct those operations," the White House official said. Ultimately, the two sides were able to reach an agreement on a weapons package that amounts to nearly $110 billion in tanks, fighter jets, combat ships and the THAAD missile defense system, according to the White House. What Trump should not do when he meets Saudis It is unclear how much the Saudis will be paying for THAAD, but Trump called it a "billion-dollar system" last month when the US deployed the advanced missile defense radar to South Korea. While calling the head of a major defense company and simply asking for a lower price is widely considered an unorthodox negotiation tactic, Kushner's hands-on approach has drawn comparisons to when then-President-elect Trump criticized the stealthy F-35 fighter jet for being too expensive, and Hewson gave her "personal commitment" to cut the cost of the program in February. And the details of how the call took place also provide a window into Kushner's role during negotiations with the Saudis and the range of his influence on matters of foreign policy as a whole. During last year's presidential campaign and later during the transition, Kushner was identified by Trump's team as the principal point of contact for foreign governments looking to either congratulate the new US leader or begin diplomatic talks. The 36-year-old commercial real estate magnate started building a relationship with members of the Saudi royal family shortly after the election, a source told CNN, and was on hand when Trump hosted the deputy crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, in March. Issues of foreign diplomacy evolved into an interagency effort once the administration began, according to a source, and Kushner's role in negotiating the arms deal was just one part of an larger effort that included the State Department, Department of Defense and National Security Council. Trump's Secretary of Everything: Jared Kushner But the scope of Kushner's influence on matters of foreign policy have remained in the spotlight through the early months of Trump's presidency. CNN reported last month that multiple White House and administration officials said Kushner had eclipsed nearly all of Trump's West Wing and Cabinet advisers in terms of influence and established himself as the key envoy for those outside the administration. White House press secretary Sean Spicer said at the time that Kushner was working jointly with the State Department to manage the administration's foreign affairs. "He's continuing to work with them and facilitate an outcome. But he brings a perspective to this, and began doing that during the transition. But again, it's not a binary choice where he's doing this at the expense of somebody else."

### Link – Perception

#### Saudi Arabia perceives arms deals as an important symbolic commitment to the US-Saudi alliance

**Blanchard 18** (Christopher M. Blanchard, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs, “Saudi Arabia: Background and U.S. Relations”, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33533.pdf>, p. 20-21)

Saudi Arabia’s armed forces have relied on U.S. arms sales, training, and service support for decades. Congress has broadly supported U.S. arms sales to the kingdom, while seeking to maintain Israel’s qualitative military edge (QME) over potential Arab adversaries and expressing concern about the merits or terms of individual sales cases in some instances. Some Members of Congress have at times expressed concern about the potential for U.S. arms sales to contribute to or help drive arms races in the Gulf region and broader Middle East and about Saudi use of U.S. origin weaponry in Yemen. At present, congressional majorities appear to back continued sales to U.S. partners in the Gulf region, including Saudi Arabia, as a means of improving interoperability, reducing the need for U.S. deployments, deterring Iran, and supporting U.S. industry. The United States Military Training Mission (USMTM) in Saudi Arabia and the Saudi Arabian National Guard Modernization Program (PM-SANG) oversee U.S. defense cooperation with the kingdom and have been active under special bilateral agreements and funded by Saudi purchases since the 1950s and 1970s, respectively. Saudi military and national-guard forces have, until recently, been under the leadership of two different members of the royal family, and it is unclear what if any effect recent leadership changes may have on patterns of U.S. weapons acquisition and training among these forces. 62 Since 2009, a series of high-value U.S. proposed arms sales to Saudi Arabia have been announced, including the 2010 announcement that the Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) would reconstitute and expand its main fighter forces with advanced U.S. F-15 aircraft (see Table B-1.) In May 2017, President Trump signaled a continuation and deepening of bilateral defense cooperation, announcing completed and proposed defense sales during his visit to Riyadh with a potential value of more than $110 billion (textbox). The sales include cases that the Obama Administration had proposed and notified to Congress, cases developed under the Obama Administration on which Congress had been preliminarily consulted, and new sales that remain under development. Ongoing and proposed sale cases are set to considerably improve Saudi military capabilities, and leaders in both countries appear to view them as symbolic commitments to cooperation during a period of regional turmoil and leadership change.

#### Arms sale key to relations – it’s what the alliance is built on.

Hennigan 18 (W.J. Hennigan covers the Pentagon and national security issues in Washington, D.C. He has reported from more than two dozen countries across five continents, covering war, counter-terrorism, and the lives of U.S. service members “What Makes the U.S.-Saudi Relationship So Special? Weapons, Oil and 'An Army of Lobbyists'”, http://time.com/5428669/saudi-arabia-military-relationship/)

The 75-year alliance between the two nations has been built on a simple arrangement: American demand for Saudi oil and Saudi demand for American firepower. It is a relationship that is not easily unwound as a bipartisan group of U.S. Senators found out earlier this year when they moved to cut off military assistance to the Saudis in their war against Houthi rebels in Yemen. The United Nations has said that more half of the more than 10,000 people who have been killed in the three-year old war are civilians, and the lives of millions are potentially at risk from famine. The U.S. government has provided intelligence, munitions and midair refueling to Saudi warplanes since operations kicked off in 2015. Attempts by American lawmakers to stop that aid have thus far failed. Saudi Arabia has spent at least $5.8 million on lobbying Congress this year, according to data compiled by the Center for Responsive Politics, a government watchdog. But recently filed documents detailing expenses and reimbursements put the actual number closer to $9 million, said Lydia Dennett, investigator with the Project on Government Oversight. “The Kingdom has a veritable army of lobbyists and PR firms working to promote their interests in a wide variety of ways,” she said. The Foreign Influence Transparency Initiative, a left-leaning think tank in Washington, recently compiled records filed under Foreign Agents Registration Act that show in 2017 Saudi lobbyists contacted over 200 members of Congress, including every Senator. The data also found the Saudi agents contacted officials in the State Department, which oversees foreign military sales, nearly 100 times. The Saudi-U.S. relationship is peerless when it comes to arms sales. The kingdom buys more American weapons than any other nation. Saudi Arabia accounted for nearly one-fifth of American of all weapons exports over the past five years, according to a recent report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. The Pentagon has a team of U.S. service members based out of the capital Riyadh wholly dedicated the “management and administration of Saudi Arabian Foreign Military Sales.” It serves as a direct pipeline to move weapons from U.S. arms manufacturers into the arms of the Saudi military. The U.S. military’s Joint Advisory Division works alongside commanders in each branch of the Saudi military to help fill their weapons needs. Once the Saudis commit to what they want — tanks, attack helicopters, missiles, ships, laser-guided bombs — the arms packages must be OK’d by the U.S. Defense and State Departments, and approved by Congress. The arrangement falls under the U.S. Military Training Mission to Saudi Arabia, which is led by a two-star American general. The mission is primarily designed to bolster Saudi Arabia against arch-rival Iran in order to assert power and influence in the Middle East.

#### Arms sales prevent collapse of the alliance – causes Russia/China fill in and Saudi prolif

Enercom 19 (“Why the U.S. and Saudi Arabia Are Destined to Diverge,” 3-15-19 https://www.oilandgas360.com/why-the-u-s-and-saudi-arabia-are-destined-to-diverge/, ME)

The new normal of relations with the United States will present a difficult adjustment for most regional powers like Saudi Arabia. Absent an emerging need, Riyadh may find itself filling a lesser role in the grand U.S. strategy than it has for nearly a century. Saudi Arabia’s increasing economic interconnectivity with China and Russia may also mean that soon, for the first time since that initial meeting between FDR and King Abdulaziz, the kingdom may find itself dropping down the list of U.S. strategic partners. Even if Saudi importance in the eyes of the United States declines, their relationship would not necessarily reach a breaking point, but it would certainly become more volatile. Status as a less important partner would mean that the amount of political capital a U.S. president would be willing to invest in Saudi Arabia will decline, both domestically and internationally. But perhaps the biggest consequence for Saudi Arabia over the next two decades will be the likely inevitability that Tehran and Washington will one day reach some form of understanding. A strategic reversal on Iran would make sense for the United States on several levels as the global picture changes. For one, Iran would be more inclined to cooperate with the United States and India in South and Central Asia, particularly as Pakistan and China’s cooperation on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor deepens. In the short term, progress on the U.S.-Iran relationship is likely to be minimal, but significant generational shifts in both countries will bring to power additional political leaders whose views are not as colored by the immediate events surrounding the Islamic Revolution and subsequent U.S.-Iran hostage crisis. U.S. detente with Iran would allow Tehran to consolidate the regional gains it has made in places like Iraq, meaning that the competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia for regional hegemony would likely increase. The potential decline of the U.S. role as a security guarantor will continue to force Riyadh to diversify its relationship with the other power poles in the global system. This is already happening in the area of weapons sales. Saudi Arabia is trying to build an indigenous defense industry, and while the United States is reluctant to include the technology transfer rights that would accelerate that process in its arms deals with the kingdom, China and Russia are more than willing to do so. That said, there are significant limitations to how far and how quickly Saudi Arabia can diversify away from U.S. weapons suppliers. Nevertheless, a Saudi turn toward U.S. rivals will certainly alienate Washington, as happened with a drone factory that China built in Saudi Arabia to serve the local market. Another key area to monitor will be how Saudi Arabia moves forward with its nuclear energy ambitions. It has been negotiating with the United States, China, Russia and others over the construction of nuclear power plants in the country. But the kingdom has demanded that much of the fuel enrichment and reprocessing cycle remain under its control, an idea that has not sat well with Washington over concerns that it could allow Riyadh to develop nuclear weapons. But if the United States is unwilling to budge on its position, Saudi leaders will certainly consider a deal with China or Russia, which may not adhere to the same standards. The kingdom’s human rights record is also likely to increase the distance between Saudi Arabia and the West. The outcry against the Saudi war in Yemen and Khashoggi has been growing in the U.S. Congress. But no real change in Saudi behavior can be expected as long as oil prices remain low and the kingdom continues to struggle to implement long-term economic reform under Saudi Vision 2030. That means that as the U.S. need for a close relationship with Saudi Arabia declines, Washington’s responses to such issues are likely to become increasingly harsh.

### Link – Yemen

#### Saudi Arabia considers its Yemen campaign a cornerstone of its foreign policy and status as a regional power

MAY DARWICH in 2018

• Durham University, UK, The Saudi Intervention in Yemen: Struggling for Status,¶ Insight Turkey¶ Vol.20/Na2/ 2018, pp. 125-141

Operation Decisive Storm, the Sau-di-led intervention in Yemen that began in March 2015, constituted a break with this decades-long peaceful coexistence. Although Saudi Arabia had spent substantial resources on military procurement and training over the last two decades-especially after the 1991 Gulf War2- never before had the Saudi Kingdom, or any of the Gulf States, ¶ so proactively and aggressively deployed their military forces or engaged in a large, offensive mission such as the operation in Yemen. The intervention in Yemen has unveiled a new era in Saudi foreign policy and appears likely to overshadow Gulf politics for years to come. This paper attempts to explain the abrupt aggressiveness in Saudi policies toward Yemen while situating it in a more comprehensive understanding of the Kingdom’s foreign policy in the region as an emerging regional power fighting for status.¶ Saudi Arabia’s motivation in the Yemen offensive arguably reflects a Kingdom that is starting to rely on its own resources in fighting for and asserting its status as a leading power in the region. Scholars, commentaries in the Arab media, and government officials have often characterized the war in Yemen as part of a larger struggle between Saudi Arabia and Iran over influence in the Middle East. From this perspective, the war is a reaction to the influence of Iran’s expansion in the Arabian Peninsula through its alleged proxy, the rebel Houthi movement.3 A proxy war with Iran, along the Sunni-Shia divide, became a central trope in Saudi state-owned media. Meanwhile, other scholars and commentaries focused on personalities at the expense of more structural factors. In particular, the ascendancy of King Salman al-Saud to power in January 2015, and the parallel rise of his ambitious son, Prince Mohammed bin Salman to the position of Minister of Defense, are often considered to be the origin of this intervention.1 Many scholars have explored the evolution in the decision-making process in the Saudi Kingdom that followed the passing of King Abdullah, and attributed the Yemen war to the centralization of decision-making power in the office of the crown prince.5 Despite the importance of individual decision makers, however, preparations for the operation in Yemen began in response to the Houthi takeover of Sanaa in September 2014, an event which preceded Salman’s reign by several months.6¶ This paper offers an alternative explanation for the Saudi intervention in Yemen and argues that this aggression is driven by a non-material need: the Kingdom’s will for status. In the post-2011 order, the Saudi Kingdom has fought for its status as a regional power at both the regional and international levels. In this context, the Saudi leadership responded to the regime change in Yemen with a violent intervention in order to assert and confirm its status as a leading power in the region. The paper starts with an overview of the Yemen crisis while outlining the current developments in the war. The second section explores the drivers of the Saudi intervention in Yemen; it argues that this aggressive strategy can be considered as status-seeking behavior, and it contextualizes this explanation within the International Relations literature. The last section presents an assessment of the overall performance of Saudi forces in the war and, further, draws out the implications of the intervention on the Yemen crisis and its ramifications for the evolving role of the Saudi Kingdom in the Middle East.

#### Saudi Arabia sees Yemen intervention as vital to its status as a regional power

MAY DARWICH in 2018

• Durham University, UK, The Saudi Intervention in Yemen: Struggling for Status,¶ Insight Turkey¶ Vol.20/Na2/ 2018, pp. 125-141

In contrast to predominant realist explanations of war, some scholars argue that symbolic, non-material motives -status in particular- are crucial in explaining states’ recourse to armed strategies, including military interventions. Lebow provides one of the strongest arguments in this vein, stating that, “honor and prestige [are] even more important than wealth and security.”32 He further argues that symbolic dimensions have been the driving motives for 62 percent of wars since 1648.33 These symbolic factors can better explain ¶ momentous shifts in foreign policy decisions than conventional readings that emphasize strategic calculations. Max Weber argues that states accumulate military power to acquire power prestige (machtprestige), defined as “the glory of power over other communities.”” Morgenthau defines prestige as “the reputation for power,” claiming that a state can go to war to “impress other nations with the power [its) own nation actually possesses, or with the power it believes, or wants the other nations to believe, it possesses."\*5¶ Along these lines, this paper argues that the al-Saud’s decision to go to war in Yemen in 2015 finds its origins in a struggle to assert the Kingdom’s status as a regional power in the Middle East. Status in international relations is a standing or rank in a community. Status also denotes identity, such as “status of a major power,” or “status as a regional power.”” Actors, operating in a social system, acquire an identity that includes a definition of who they are and where they stand in relations to others. Status has an intersubjective nature; as actors develop a narrative of their self and their rank within the community, they expect others to share a similar belief about their status. In this sense, actors are in constant negotiation for status within their surrounding social structure.¶ Status concerns often emerge when states develop a certain expectation about how much status they deserve, and particularly when they are accorded a lower status than their expectation. As status usually confers influence, actors can perceive such a mismatch as a threat to their material ambitions. When status concerns are triggered, states attempt to shift their position in a hierarchy. In the case of a failure to change the current hierarchy, states resort to conflict and violence.17 The initiation of a violent military conflict is usually considered to be a status-altering’ event, designed to compel the international community to change its beliefs about the actor’s standing in the hierarchy.¶ For decades, the Saudi Kingdom has relied on its religious status as the ’Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques’ and on its oil wealth to promote its pan-Islamic identity narrative and its regional status as the leader of the Sunni and Muslim worlds.3\* The post-2011 order has provided the Kingdom with the opportunity to actively assert its status as a regional power able to shape outcomes in its neighborhood. No other Arab country is capable of achieving the status of a dominant or sole regional leadership; Egypt has become focused on its domestic problems and Syria has fallen into a civil war.

### AT: Leverage Turns

#### Stopping sales won’t improve Saudi behavior – embargoes never change policy and they would shift to new sellers.

Rounds 19 [Ray Rounds, 4-16-2019, "The Case Against Arms Embargos, Even for Saudi Arabia," War on the Rocks, https://warontherocks.com/2019/04/the-case-against-arms-embargos-even-for-saudi-arabia/]

In sum, more restrictive arms sales, delivery suspensions, or outright embargos are unlikely to succeed in policy coercion. While arms transfers provide an avenue of influence, embargos often lead to diversification, not desired policy changes. Additionally, fears of technology transfer and direct offsets creating a competitor out of every client are generally unfounded in the high-end market in which the United States generally deals. Finally, while the large domestic market provides the United States the luxury of sacrificing financial gains for political influence, sometimes economics do matter, particularly when it comes to saving a production line for future flexibility.

These conclusions should therefore inform U.S. policy on Saudi Arabia. The intent here is not to argue the moral or ethical responsibility of U.S. leaders in responding to Saudi Arabia’s execution of journalists or tactics in the war in Yemen. It is natural to see the horror wrought in Yemen and want to take any actions necessary to stop it. However, I ultimately argue against a Saudi embargo. This is not because, as the president has argued, it might cost a few billion dollars and some hundreds of defense industry jobs. As others have pointed out, the economic impact of Saudi arms purchases on the U.S. defense industry is relatively small. Rather, embargoing Saudi Arabia is unlikely to fundamentally alter Saudi policies, but likely to further damage U.S. ties with Riyadh.

In the near-term, Saudi Arabia can substitute other weapons, such as the Eurofighter and Tornado, and “dumb bombs” instead of U.S.-built “smart weapons.” The Saudis can also rely more heavily on their Emirati and Egyptian partners using non-U.S. produced arms. In the medium to long term, such an embargo is likely to push the Kingdom to greater arms diversification. If history is any guide, the United States will eventually lift any potential arms embargo with little change in Saudi behavior, but only after having provided an opportunity for adversary states such as Russia and China to gain a strategic foothold in Riyadh.

Some might counter that it would be extremely difficult and costly, in both time and money, for the Saudis to significantly diversify their arms acquisitions away from the United States. This is absolutely the case. However, costly does not mean impossible. Less wealthy states have already done it. Egypt is one example above; but others such as Venezuela and even tiny Kuwait — frustrated at years of U.S. approval delays — have significantly diversified their arms acquisitions. In other words, with the money and options available to Saudi Arabia, and few other producers showing a stomach for a full embargo, it is not unreasonable to believe that the Saudis might significantly diversify their arms acquisitions over time in response to a U.S. embargo. Thus, while a U.S. embargo might be morally compelling and emotionally satisfying, it is unlikely to create meaningful change for those most at risk or be strategically beneficial to the United States. In the absence of a compelling, evidence-based case that an arms embargo on Saudi Arabia might produce desired changes in behavior, policymakers should look elsewhere for solutions to their Saudi problems.

### AT: Alliance Resilient

#### The alliance is stable but not resilient – rise of nationalism and China’s influence mean that the risk of fracturing is higher than ever if Trump stops assuaging Riyadh.

Hannah 19 [John Hannah, senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, focusing on U.S. strategy. During the presidency of George W. Bush, he served for eight years on the staff of Vice President Cheney, including as the vice president's national security advisor, 3-27-2019, "Trump Should Salvage U.S.-Saudi Relations," Foreign Policy, https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/03/27/trump-should-salvage-u-s-saudi-relations/]

The U.S.-Saudi relationship is in real trouble. And things could get worse—even much worse.

Bipartisan majorities in Congress have already made clear their desire to punish Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for a long series of transgressions, including the kingdom’s role in Yemen’s catastrophic civil war and the murder of dissident U.S.-based journalist Jamal Khashoggi. These efforts will only intensify as the 2020 U.S. presidential election cycle ramps up. For the ever-expanding list of Democratic aspirants, the temptation to outdo each other in attacking President Donald Trump’s close links to the kingdom’s leadership will be nearly irresistible. It’s a truism of U.S. politics that there’s no downside to Saudi bashing. That’s doubly true today, with the controversial Mohammed bin Salman at the helm, and with talk of the use of bone saws on journalists, the detention and torture of U.S. citizens, and the abuse of women’s rights activists dominating the headlines. Even if Congress falls short of getting any new anti-Saudi legislation past the president’s veto, the constant drip, month after month, of hearings, bills, and public criticism targeting the kingdom risks doing serious long-term damage to the two countries’ strategic relationship.

It’s true that there’s a lot of ruin in U.S.-Saudi ties. The relationship has endured oil boycotts, the 9/11 attacks (15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudi nationals), and more than 70 years of constant clashing of cultures and values. The national interests that have bound Washington and Riyadh together through the decades, despite their deep differences, remain formidable. But real changes are now afoot in the underlying dynamics of the relationship. They should at minimum give pause to anyone who blithely assumes that there’s no amount of public derision that the United States could heap on the kingdom that might put the broader U.S.-Saudi partnership at risk, and the Trump administration should take notice.

One such change is the rapid rise of Saudi nationalism—especially among the country’s large youth population. As part of his reform agenda for transforming the kingdom, Mohammed bin Salman has consciously sought to build a new sense of identity among Saudis, grounded in nationalism rather than Wahhabism, the fundamentalist religious sect that served as an ideological gateway for terrorist groups such as al Qaeda and the Islamic State. While largely a positive development, the nationalist tide could have a double edge, as I learned on an Atlantic Council trip to Riyadh in February.

It was striking how many researchers, activists, and government officials in Riyadh seemed defensive, resentful, and even angry when asked about the United States. “We’re getting sick and tired of having our country reduced to its worst mistakes,” one woman said, referring to the Khashoggi tragedy. Another said, “Thanks to the crown prince, the lives of millions of women are being positively transformed in ways that our mothers couldn’t even dream of. If the United States can’t appreciate the historical importance of what’s happening here, and chooses to focus only on our faults and trying to change our leadership, then you’re hurting our cause—and I’ll oppose you.” Whether justified or not, the sense of hurt, of being misunderstood and unfairly attacked, even humiliated, appeared genuine. It’s not hard to see how that kind of raw populist emotion, sufficiently stoked, could result in overreaction, miscalculation, and counterproductive policies. At a minimum, it’s a new variable in the equation that U.S. policymakers, in both the administration and Congress, should be taking into account as they calculate how best to pressure the kingdom to change its most problematic behaviors.

Perhaps an even more important change, one that amplifies the potential risks of a possible nationalist backlash, is the emergence of great-power competitors with the United States, especially China. It’s still the case that Saudis overwhelmingly prefer Washington to remain their dominant global partner. If nothing else, they know that if the worst were to happen, and war with Iran came, neither Russia nor China would lift a finger to save the house of Saud. The U.S. military still would—probably. But that “probably” is itself a growing problem, one which has been getting worse over the past decade as two successive U.S. presidents of both major parties have increasingly signaled their determination to do less, not more, in the Middle East to guarantee the security of partner states. Inevitably, as the perception of U.S. retrenchment deepens, the Saudis are hedging their bets and developing new geostrategic options.

Today, China is Saudi Arabia’s largest trading partner. It’s among the biggest customers for Saudi oil—while the U.S. shale boom increasingly poses the greatest threat to Riyadh’s economic prosperity. Thanks in no small part to decades of intellectual-property theft on a world-historical scale, Chinese technology, including military, intelligence, and cyber systems, as well as critical emerging sectors such as artificial intelligence, is increasingly closing the gap with the best U.S. high-tech offerings. And Beijing, like Moscow, is perfectly prepared to sell its most advanced capabilities to Riyadh with no strings attached. No complaints about the kingdom’s human rights record. No mentions of Khashoggi. No threats to withdraw support as punishment for the war in Yemen. As was painfully obvious during Mohammed bin Salman’s recent values-free trip to China in February, in an increasingly ideological age of great-power competition that pits Western-style liberal democracy against Beijing’s model of authoritarian capitalism, it’s no secret in which camp the house of Saud feels most at home.

The only point being that the decades-old assumptions that have governed the U.S.-Saudi relationship, while largely still valid, may be on increasingly shaky ground. Before the Senate passed a resolution earlier this month to end all U.S. support for the Saudi war in Yemen, Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut confidently reassured his colleagues, “The Saudis won’t go somewhere else.” The suggestion that they might turn to another great power for weapons, he claimed, “is belied by how this alliance has worked for years and the complication of the Saudis turning around and choosing to go to another partner.” While I’d still bet that Murphy is more right than wrong on this issue, if only due to the immediacy of the Iranian threat for Riyadh, I increasingly lack his sense of certitude. Saudi Arabia, U.S. foreign policy, and the global balance of power are all now in flux in ways that are quite unprecedented.

Even 30 years ago, the Saudis were capable of some nasty surprises, such as purchasing intermediate-range ballistic missiles from China capable of striking Israel. And just a couple of months ago, credible reports emerged that the Saudis have built a facility for producing and testing solid-fuel ballistic missiles west of Riyadh—one with features that bear striking similarities to comparable facilities in China. The danger that as Saudi doubts about the United States’ reliability grow, so too will their efforts to hedge by looking for weapons and support (in Murphy’s words) “somewhere else,” including to hostile great-power rivals of the United States, is probably greater than it’s ever been in the history of the countries’ relationship. The recent decision to introduce Chinese-language instruction at all stages of the Saudi educational system was no accident.

To its credit, the Trump administration has been prepared to expend significant political capital, including among congressional Republicans, to try and insulate the U.S.-Saudi partnership from the withering (and in too many cases, irresponsible) attacks from both Capitol Hill and the media. But that virtue has been a vice as well. Too often, the administration’s defense of the strategic relationship has appeared as unduly solicitous of Mohammed bin Salman’s sensitivities, unnecessarily dismissive or even contemptuous of Congress’ legitimate concerns, and insufficiently attentive to Saudi actions that have genuinely threatened both U.S. interests and values.

## Impact Extensions

### Ext Alliance k- Stops Iran

#### Saudi alliance ensures stability by countering Iranian expansion

Seligman 18 (Lara, pentagon correspondent, "Facing Sharp Rebuke on Saudi Ties, U.S. Points to Growing Iran Threat", 11/29/18, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/11/29/facing-sharp-rebuke-on-saudi-ties-u-s-points-to-growing-iran-threat/>)

Facing mounting pressure to end all U.S. involvement in the Saudi-led war on Iran-backed forces in Yemen, the U.S. government on Thursday attempted a deflection, touting new evidence to argue that Iran is shipping weapons to militants in Yemen and Afghanistan.

In a press conference on Thursday, Brian Hook, the special representative for Iran and senior policy advisor to the secretary of state, unveiled what he said are pieces of Iranian weaponry discovered in Yemen and Afghanistan. United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley first revealed evidence of Iran’s weapons proliferation in December 2017. But the inventory has expanded, Hook said, reflecting an increase in Iran’s support of the Houthi rebels in Yemen and other militant groups.

“The Iranian threat is growing, and we are accumulating risk of escalation in the region if we fail to act,” Hook said. “This is a function of Iran’s relentless commitment to put more weapons into the hands of even more of its proxies regardless of the suffering.”

If Iran is indeed shipping weapons across the Middle East, it would be a violation of U.N. resolutions.

The presentation, the second since December, is both part of the administration’s broader effort to rally support for its campaign to isolate Tehran and a way to push back against congressional criticism of its continued support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen, which has become the world’s worst humanitarian crisis. It appeared designed to showcase the key role Saudi Arabia can play in helping the United States fend off Iran’s malign influence and maintain stability in the Middle East.

The timing, however, is suspect. The presentation comes just a day after a large bipartisan majority in the Senate voted to advance a resolution demanding an end to U.S. support for the Saudi-led coalition in the Yemen conflict. The 63-37 vote margin reflected broad concerns about the U.S. role in the war and growing anger among lawmakers over the Trump administration’s continued support for the Saudi government following the murder of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

Hook used the new evidence to urge the international community to ramp up pressure on Iran and to be careful about de-escalating the conflict in Yemen. He pointed to Lebanon as an example of how Iran has cemented its influence through arms sales and warned against the “Lebanization” of Yemen.

As the United States and U.N. work toward achieving an end to the violence, the allies must be careful not to “affirm Iran’s role as a political actor in Yemen,” Hook stressed. Iran could use that newfound influence to further threaten the stability of the region, he warned. U.S. officials and advocacy groups have long worried that Iran-backed Houthis could pose a threat to international shipping through the vital maritime choke point of Bab el-Mandeb, between Yemen and the Horn of Africa.

“Just imagine what Yemen would look like in the future with a entrenched and enduring Iranian presence,” Hook said. “We already know how this movie ends, and we cannot watch a new version of Lebanese Hezbollah slowly emerge in the Arabian Peninsula.”

Iran has denied supplying the Houthis with weaponry.

During the presentation, Hook unveiled a Sayyad-2 surface-to-air missile, one of two systems interdicted by the Saudi government in Yemen in early 2018. Iran intended to deliver the missiles to the Houthis, Hook said. He pointed to Farsi markings on the side of the missile as evidence that it was designed and manufactured in Iran.

Hook also unveiled anti-tank guided missiles, including a new type of missile that was seized in Yemen.

Also on display during the presentation were Fajr rockets recovered by the Afghan army in Helmand, Afghanistan, near Kandahar airfield. Iran has been supplying weapons to the Taliban since 2007, Hook said.

In addition, Hook displayed debris from a new Iranian unmanned aerial system, the Shaheed-123, recovered by coalition forces in Afghanistan after it crashed and separately interdicted in Yemen early this year. Finally, he pointed to several new small arms such as sniper rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, and assorted assault rifles and hand grenades, provided to the United States by Bahrain.

#### Saudi alliance counters Iranian aggression

Doran and Badran 18 (Michael, senior fellow @ Hudson Institute. Tony, research fellow @ FDD, "Trump Is Crude. But He’s Right About Saudi Arabia.", 11/21/18, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/21/opinion/trump-saudi-arabia-khashoggi.html>)

There’s not much Republicans and Democrats agree on nowadays, but President Trump’s expression of support for Saudi Arabia on Tuesday in the wake of the Jamal Khashoggi killing managed to unite them. Democratic and Republican leaders declared that the president’s statement was dishonest, morally blinkered and strategically obtuse.

True, Mr. Trump’s sidestepping of reports that the C.I.A. believes that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman ordered the killing as “Maybe he did and maybe he didn’t!” was jarring. But every president since Harry Truman has aligned with unsavory Middle Eastern rulers in the service of national interests. The difference here is that Mr. Trump seemed unapologetic about this state of affairs with only a passing nod to the affront to our values that Mr. Khashoggi’s murder represents.

That’s nothing to cheer. But it is vitally important to evaluate the policy on its merits more than its mode of expression. And the truth is that on the big strategic questions, Mr. Trump is cleareyed and right.

Let’s start with the question of honesty. Critics focused on Mr. Trump’s claim that “we may never know all of the facts surrounding” Mr. Khashoggi’s death, highlighting the contradiction between this energetic uncertainty and the reported assessment of the C.I.A.

Presidents, however, routinely advance useful fictions.

President Barack Obama, for example, helped sell his nuclear agreement with Iran by claiming that Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, had issued a fatwa against the development of nuclear weapons. No bipartisan clutch of senators insisted that Mr. Obama’s claims clashed with the views of intelligence analysts, who possessed hard evidence of a nuclear weapons program.

The true test of whether a presidential fiction is acceptable is whether the strategy it serves is sound.

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In Mr. Obama’s case, the answer was no, because his policy did not actually stop Iran’s nuclear program. It only delayed it, and, in the meantime, strengthened Iran without moderating Tehran’s fundamental anti-Americanism. But Mr. Trump understands the centrality of Riyadh in the effort to counter a rising Iran and he is rightly unwilling to allow the murder of Mr. Khashoggi to imperil that strategy.

Mr. Trump’s critics counter with the claim that he is emboldening evil. Samantha Power, former ambassador to the United Nations, cited autocrats like Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of Egypt and Vladimir Putin of Russia, in addition to Prince Mohammed, in saying that “Trump’s siding with the meanest and nastiest out there” will “leave the world even nastier.” His statement, she said, “is a green light for would-be murderers in countries that have things Trump thinks we need.”

Notably absent from Ms. Power’s list of evildoers, however, are Iran and its proxies. The omission is telling. As part of its pivot toward Iran and away from the Sunni states and Israel, the Obama administration turned a blind eye to the slaughter in Syria that Moscow, Tehran and its proxies unleashed, and, thanks to the nuclear deal, delivered countless billions to the Iranian war machine.

Editors’ Picks

The Widows of the Plaza Hotel

The Revered Crocodiles of This Island Nation Have Suddenly Started Killing People

The Age of the Internet ‘Wife Guy’

His critics would say that Mr. Trump is now similarly emboldening a reckless Saudi regime.

This is a false analogy. The Saudis are not the moral equivalents of Iranians and the Russians. The kingdom has sheltered comfortably for over 75 years under the American security umbrella, which the United States happily extended not least because the Saudis and their oil have played a pivotal role in American economic strategies. Mr. Trump’s statement acknowledged that the Saudis are assisting him with stabilizing global oil prices as he seeks to quash Iranian oil sales.

Whatever Prince Mohammed’s faults may be, he actively supports the American regional order that the Iranians openly seek to destroy.

Mr. Trump’s critics are asking us to believe that the priority for stabilizing the Middle East today is distancing the United States from one of its oldest allies and instead working to achieve a balance of power between Riyadh and Tehran. The Saudis, they claim, need us far more than we need them.

This is a dangerous assumption that is not born out by experience. In recent years all of America’s allies, from Mr. Sisi in Egypt to Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey to Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel, have begun spending as much time in Moscow as in Washington. Why would we think the Saudis might not also seek protection from Russia if they are shunned by America?

#### Arms sales to Saudi Arabia are key to prevent hardliner takeover and contain Iran

Hanson 18 (Jim, President of Security Studies Group and served in US Army Special Forces “The US-Saudi relationship must be preserved – our national interest demands it,” October 16, https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/the-us-saudi-relationship-must-be-preserved-our-national-interest-demands-it, ME)

The concerted efforts now underway to derail the improved relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia established by the Trump administration are unhelpful at best and dangerous to America’s national and economic security at worst. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is a reformer trying to modernize his country. The steps he has taken so far are unprecedented. Letting that progress fall victim to mistakes by his government and attacks from opponents would be a massive mistake. The death of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi – a critic of the Saudi government, who has not been heard from since he entered the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul two weeks ago – was a tragedy. If the facts show the government of Saudi Arabia was responsible for his death it should be held accountable. But the death of Khashoggi does not outweigh U.S. strategic concerns, which require that we maintain good relations with the Saudi government. We must react accordingly – not as a favor to the Saudis, but in our own national interest. In the Middle East we must keep our eyes on the biggest threat in the region – the dangerous and virulently anti-American government of Iran, which poses a military danger to its neighbors and our ally Israel. We must work with and strengthen the burgeoning coalition of our Arab allies to counter the Iranian threat. And the Saudis play a vital role in that Arab coalition. The Washington Post is understandably upset and angry about the death of its columnist. Editorial Page Editor Fred Hiatt said that reports of Khashoggi’s killing, if true, represent “a monstrous and unfathomable act.” Consequently, the Post has taken a lead role in promoting the call for U.S. action against the Saudi government – action that would harm us as well as the Saudis in three areas: military cooperation; keeping oil flowing from Saudi fields; and providing jobs for U.S. workers who produce arms and other exports purchased by the kingdom. The Post said in a wrongheaded editorial published Monday night: “The reality is that Saudi Arabia, which, as Mr. Trump himself has pointed out, would not survive without U.S. security support, has everything to lose from a break in relations, while the United States no longer needs the kingdom as much as it once did.” The Post fails to point out that the U.S. has as much to benefit from a good relationship with the Saudis as they do. If U.S. action results in the fall of the current leadership of the kingdom, we will see a return to power of the Saudi hardliners who supported terrorism and oppression. That is in nobody’s interest. Apart from the death of Khashoggi, a major complaint by many against the Saudis is their ongoing fight against the Iranian proxy fighters in Yemen – a group called the Houthis. But the Saudi fight against the Houthis is vital to prevent Iran from shutting down both major sea lanes for the export of oil from the region. The Iranians already sit perched on the Straits of Hormuz and threaten regularly to stop oil traffic there. If the Iranians can consolidate their position in Yemen via the Houthis, they will then have the Bab al Mandeb Strait in their sights as well. The Iranians have already attacked Saudi vessels and that will happen more often if the Houthis are allowed to win the civil war in Yemen. Iran fostered the Yemen civil war and should bear the blame for any humanitarian crisis happening there. The Iranians are supplying arms – including missiles – to the Houthis and have joined the Houthis in firing those missiles into Saudi Arabia. The famine and other shortages in Yemen can be ended as soon as Iran wishes. Saudi Arabia has been the largest supplier of food to Yemen for the past 30 years and will continue to do so. But we cannot stop the fight against Iranian proxies who can kill massive numbers of people in the region and threaten vital U.S. interests, including the free flow of shipping. I can already hear critics of my view saying the Saudis are paying me or the think tank I head, the Security Studies Group, to support their government. But in fact, the Security Studies Group has never taken a dime of foreign money and the Saudis are not paying me either. We as a group support the opportunity a modern Saudi Arabia presents to its people, the Middle East and to the United States. I personally have not seen a better chance to change the dynamic in the region during my lifetime. The Trump administration and Congress should resist calls to stop arms sales to Saudi Arabia and even worse to stop supporting the crown prince – calls like those made by Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., on “Fox & Friends” Monday. Destroying our relationship with the Saudis would result in far more deaths and suffering in the region than keeping our relationship strong. And such a move would be a great gift to the mullahs who rule Iran and lead their people in chants of “Death to America” and boast of their plans to wipe Israel off the map. If America acts against Saudi Arabia with such extreme measures that we topple the government we would gain nothing but a return to failed policies and extremism of Saudi Arabia’s recent past. We would lose a golden opportunity to move the kingdom forward into modernity. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who met with Saudi leaders Tuesday, presumably had a frank discussion with Mohammed bin Salman and other Saudi high-ranking officials about the death of Khashoggi and some of the other issues dividing our nations. Pompeo, President Trump and other U.S. officials have an obligation to give the Saudis an unmistakable message that if the Saudi government was responsible for killing Khashoggi that was an unacceptable action, as would be other such killings in the future. But rather than turning our backs on the Saudi government we must work to push the country to make further reforms, institute a greater respect for human rights and the rule of law, and continue to defend against Iranian aggression. The U.S., the people of Saudi Arabia and the entire Middle East will be better off if we work with the Saudis instead of turning against them.

### DA Turns Case

#### Cutting off support to Saudi Arabia undermines Yemeni peace efforts and fuels Iran-backed aggression

Posey and Phillips 18 (Madyson Hutchinson, former research & administrative assistant. James, Senior Fellow @ Heritage, "Ending U.S. Military Support for Saudi Arabia in Yemen Would Trigger Dangerous Consequences", 12/6/18, <https://www.heritage.org/middle-east/commentary/ending-us-military-support-saudi-arabia-yemen-would-trigger-dangerous>)

In a new resolution, a bipartisan group of senators is calling for the United States to end its involvement—specifically its support of Saudi Arabia—in the Yemen conflict.

On Wednesday, the Senate voted 63-37 to pass a procedural measure that will clear the way for a floor debate on the issue next week.

The push comes largely in response to the recent murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

The Trump administration has banned 21 Saudi suspects in that murder from entering the U.S., imposed sanctions on 17 Saudi officials, and expressed its willingness to take further action if warranted by ongoing investigations. Many senators seek to do more to punish the Saudis, even if it means sacrificing the interests of the Yemeni government and making a negotiated settlement of the conflict more difficult.

The killing of Khashoggi was certainly abhorrent, but ending U.S. support for the multinational coalition in Yemen is not the proper solution. It risks dangerously conflating two separate issues and would inevitably trigger unintended consequences that would undermine U.S. national security interests in the region.

Senators must remember that Saudi Arabia is not the only belligerent in Yemen. A cutoff of U.S. support would also hurt the elected and internationally recognized government of Yemen, which was ousted by Iran-backed Houthi rebels in 2015 in a bloody coup that violated a U.N.-brokered ceasefire.

Withdrawing U.S. support would also harm the interests of other U.S. allies fighting in Yemen, including the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

The war in Yemen is complex. Those who rush to blame Saudi Arabia entirely for the suffering of the Yemeni people ignore the war crimes and heavy-handed treatment meted out by the Houthis to their opponents and the ruthless role that Iran plays in supporting the Houthi Ansar Allah (“Supporters of Allah”) movement, a Shia Islamist extremist group.

The Saudis are rightly criticized for not doing more to prevent civilian casualties as they target Ansar Allah positions. But the Houthis should not be given a free pass for deliberately targeting civilian targets in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates with increasingly sophisticated Iranian ballistic missiles.

Ansar Allah also deserves criticism for its violent role in destabilizing Yemen and creating the conditions that led to the current humanitarian disaster. Ansar Allah regularly attacks the Saudi border, launches missiles strikes into Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and diverts international medical and food aid to favor its own supporters and sell on the black market.

Ansar Allah also has targeted U.S. Navy vessels, those of allied nations, and civilian shipping in the Red Sea with Iranian-supplied missiles, gunboat attacks, and boat bombs. Undermining the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen risks exacerbating this threat to international shipping and giving Iran the opportunity to threaten oil shipments through the Bab al-Mandab Strait, just as it has threatened to do in the Strait of Hormuz.

Those who advocate withdrawing support for Saudi Arabia apparently believe that they can somehow end the current conflict in Yemen through a one-sided strategy that penalizes allies and boosts Ansar Allah, a group that chants “Death to America” and looks more like Hezbollah, Iran’s Lebanese proxy group, every day.

Never mind that Saudi Arabia is supporting the internationally recognized government of Yemen in this effort. Never mind that leaving Ansar Allah to run amuck will not bring an end to the humanitarian suffering, but only prolong it.

The U.S. currently extends only limited support to Saudi Arabia in Yemen centered on intelligence and information sharing. There are no U.S. troops involved in combat operations, except for occasional commando raids and air strikes against Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, a Sunni terrorist group that continues to target the U.S. homeland, as well as Saudi Arabia, France, and other countries.

The Trump administration already has stopped the aerial refueling of Saudi warplanes involved in the Yemen conflict and called for a negotiated settlement. But the United States cannot afford to abandon its allies and hope for the best. Undermining the Yemeni government and the Saudi-led coalition would make an acceptable political settlement impossible.

The Yemeni government and Saudi Arabia will continue to fight this war with or without U.S. support. Those who would connect two unrelated issues, condemn Saudi involvement, and ignore Iran’s hostile role inside Yemen will only do more harm to innocent Yemeni civilians and empower Iran and its Yemeni proxies.

#### Abandoning Saudi Arabia in Yemen green lights Iranian destabilization through the Houthis

Phillips 19 (James, Senior Fellow for Middle East affairs @ Heritage, "Trump’s Veto of Yemen War Resolution Protects U.S. Security Interests", 4/18/19, <https://www.heritage.org/middle-east/commentary/trumps-veto-yemen-war-resolution-protects-us-security-interests>)

A Blunt Instrument That Rewards Iran

Trump’s veto is also strongly justified on policy grounds. The Yemen war resolution from Congress is a blunt instrument that could have inflicted severe collateral damage on a range of U.S. national interests in the Middle East.

It would have resulted in abandoning allies that are fighting in Yemen to defend themselves and to restore the internationally recognized government of Yemen, which was ousted by Iran-backed Houthi rebels in 2015 in a bloody coup that violated a U.N.-brokered ceasefire.

The Trump administration has already stopped the aerial refueling of Saudi warplanes involved in the Yemen conflict and called for a negotiated settlement. But the United States cannot afford to desert its allies and hope for the best. Undermining the Yemeni government and the Saudi-led coalition would make U.N.-brokered efforts to reach an acceptable political settlement much more difficult.

It is no secret that many in Congress saw the vote as a means of punishing the Saudi government for its involvement in the death of Jamal Khashoggi last October. But the measure would have punished not just Saudi Arabia, but also the government of Yemen, and other countries fighting against the Houthis in the Saudi-led coalition: the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Senegal, and Sudan.

An end to U.S. support would also benefit Iran, the Houthis’ chief source of support. Iran has sought to transform the Houthi Ansar Allah movement into the “Hezbollah of Yemen”—a permanent threat to regional stability and security that directly conflicts with U.S. interests.

Iran has illegally transferred sophisticated ballistic missiles, drones, and remote-controlled boat bombs to the Houthis, who have used them to target cities, airports, and other civilian targets in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Given the potential consequences of the U.S. abandoning its allies, it’s no wonder the Pentagon and State Department strongly pushed for continued support for the Saudi-led coalition.

Congress lacks the votes to override Trump’s veto, so his policy will stand. The House approved the measure earlier this month by a vote of 247-175, and the Senate voted last month to approve it 54-46.

Nonetheless, the Trump administration must remain on guard against the same damaging restrictions being repackaged in future legislation.

### Impact – Laundry List

#### The Saudi alliance is key to regional stability – coop deters Iran, maintains energy security, and stabilizes Yemen – stopping arms sales turns the case.

Cordesman 18 [Anthony Cordesman, chair in strategy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, 3-21-2018, "Saudi Arabia is a critical American security partner in the Middle East," TheHill, https://thehill.com/opinion/international/379542-saudi-arabia-is-a-critical-american-security-partner-in-the-middle-east]

Somewhere along the line, we seem to have forgotten that our strategy in the Middle East is dependent on Saudi Arabia as our most important single security partner. Israel’s security is certainly a key American concern, but it does not play an active role in most of America’s ongoing military engagements in the region, in dealing with Iran, or in a direct fight against violent extremist movements like ISIS and Al Qaeda.

Saudi Arabia’s role as a strategic partner has also been enhanced by the fact that Egypt and Algeria are focused on their own internal stability and their roles in the region have sharply diminished, and Iraq and Syria both must deal with major instability problems and are at war. Our European allies have declining power projection capabilities, and Turkey’s role in the region is increasingly problematic.

It is certainly true that Saudi Arabia needs the United States as much or more than the United States needs Saudi Arabia. Saudi military forces are steadily improving, but it is the U.S. presence in the region that create a balance of forces that firmly deters Iran and has helped Saudi Arabia defeat its own terrorist threats from groups like Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. U.S. arms shipments, advisory efforts and exercises also play a critical role in improving Saudi forces.

But the United States needs Saudi Arabia as well. Saudi Arabia is now the most critical single security partner in ensuring the stable flow of petroleum out of the Gulf region. While the United States is largely eliminating its need for direct petroleum imports, it is steadily increasing its dependence on the health and growth of the global economy and imports from Asian states like China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, which are critically dependent on Gulf petroleum exports. The end result is that U.S. strategic interests in the region continue to increase in spite of the steady cut in U.S. direct oil imports.

This is why focusing on more U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia and Saudi investment in the United States, ignoring the growing role Saudi Arabia has played in fight terrorism since 2003, down playing the need to cooperate in checking Iran, and treating the war in Yemen as is if Saudi Arabia does not face real threats is not the way the United States should deal with Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman’s visit to the White House.

Saudi Arabia’s reform and economic development plans are critical to its stability and the region’s security. The kingdom needs U.S. encouragement and an understanding that Saudi Arabia cannot implement these plans effectively without outside support. The burden sharing argument has become absurd. Saudi Arabia cannot be treated as a source of ready money every time the United States has a need.

It is already spending more than 10 percent of its economy on security, which is three times the economic burden security places on the United States. This spending is too high given the kingdom’s other needs, and the United States should be focusing on better ways to make its security partnerships with Saudi Arabia, as well as the other Gulf states and Jordan more efficient and less costly, not simply on spending more.

At the same time, Iran is all too real a threat. Effective joint action in dealing with Iran’s nuclear programs, its ballistic and cruise missile programs, its asymmetric threats to Gulf shipping, and expending military influence in the region are all critical common U.S. and Saudi priorities.

The United States also badly needs to find some common approach to dealing with Iraq and Syria that will move both towards recovery and lasting stability, limit Iranian and Russian influence as much as possible, and help stabilize relations with Turkey. There are no easy options in either case, but Saudi Arabia is the key potential Arab partner any such efforts.

The United States, especially members of Congress, needs to remember that we have had at least as many military problems in fighting the Iraq and Syria wars as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have faced in fighting in Yemen. Cutting U.S. arms shipments to Saudi Arabia may do little more that lead the Saudis to ignore the systems that the United States has helped set up to limit targeting of civilians and using unguided and more damaging air munitions. It raises a whole new round of questions about the U.S commitment to its partners in the region.

We need to forge a common solution in Yemen, not a decoupling that leaves Saudi Arabia exposed. This would fail in both military and human rights terms, and leaves both the United States and Saudi Arabia with no options for dealing with the Houthi or Iran, seeking ways to end the war, dealing with Al Qaida or the other terrorist movements in Yemen, and without any means to help Yemen back to some form of stability and development.

These challenges are also are reasons why the United States should do as much as possible to persuade Mohammed Bin Salman to end the divisions that have led Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to split with Qatar, and to rising tensions with Oman. More unity between the southern Gulf states in dealing with Iran and terrorism can do far more to help the United states than more arms sales. Finally, more interoperability, common facilities and cooperation are key to countering Iran.

We need to take this visit seriously, and stop focusing on pomp and deals. The United States is highly unlikely to find a better Saudi leader for reform and change in Saudi Arabia during the next decade, or one more committed to improving Saudi security in ways that serve the common interests of both the United States and Saudi Arabia.

### Impact – Middle East

#### U.S.-Saudi Alliance prevents Middle East War and global terrorism

Pompeo 18 (Mike, Secretary of State, “The U.S.-Saudi Partnership Is Vital,” November 28, https://blogs.state.gov/stories/2018/11/28/en/us-saudi-partnership-vital, ME)

The Trump administration’s effort to rebuild the U.S.-Saudi Arabia partnership isn’t popular in the salons of Washington, where politicians of both parties have long used the kingdom’s human-rights record to call for the alliance’s downgrading. The October murder of Saudi national Jamal Khashoggi in Turkey has heightened the Capitol Hill caterwauling and media pile-on. But degrading U.S.-Saudi ties would be a grave mistake for the national security of the U.S. and its allies. The kingdom is a powerful force for stability in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia is working to secure Iraq’s fragile democracy and keep Baghdad tethered to the West’s interests, not Tehran’s. Riyadh is helping manage the flood of refugees fleeing Syria’s civil war by working with host countries, cooperating closely with Egypt, and establishing stronger ties with Israel. Saudi Arabia has also contributed millions of dollars to the U.S.-led effort to fight Islamic State and other terrorist organizations. Saudi oil production and economic stability are keys to regional prosperity and global energy security. Is it any coincidence that the people using the Khashoggi murder as a cudgel against President Trump’s Saudi Arabia policy are the same people who supported Barack Obama’s rapprochement with Iran -- a regime that has killed thousands world-wide, including hundreds of Americans, and brutalizes its own people? Where was this echo chamber, where were these avatars of human rights, when Mr. Obama gave the mullahs pallets of cash to carry out their work as the world’s largest state sponsor of terrorism? Saudi Arabia, like the U.S. -- and unlike these critics -- recognizes the immense threat the Islamic Republic of Iran poses to the world. Modern-day Iran is, in Henry Kissinger’s term, a cause, not a nation. Its objectives are to spread the Islamic revolution from Tehran to Damascus, to destroy Israel, and to subjugate anyone who refuses to submit, starting with the Iranian people. An emboldened Iran would spread even more death and destruction in the Middle East, spark a regional nuclear-arms race, threaten trade routes, and foment terrorism around the world. One of Mohammed bin Salman’s first acts as Saudi crown prince was an effort to root out Iran’s destabilizing influence in Yemen, where the Tehran-backed Houthi rebels seized power in 2015. Tehran is establishing a Hezbollah-like entity on the Arabian Peninsula: a militant group with political power that can hold Saudi population centers hostage, as Hezbollah’s missiles in southern Lebanon threaten Israel. The Houthis have occupied Saudi territory, seized a major port, and, with Iranian help, improved their ballistic-missile targeting so that they can shoot at Riyadh’s international airport, through which tens of thousands of Americans travel. Meanwhile, Tehran has shown no genuine interest in a diplomatic solution to the Yemen conflict. The Trump administration has taken many steps to mitigate Yemen’s suffering from war, disease and famine. We have exerted effort to improve Saudi targeting to minimize civilian casualties, and we have galvanized humanitarian assistance through our own generous example. The U.S. is pleased to announce it is providing nearly $131 million in additional food assistance for Yemen, bringing total humanitarian aid to more than $697 million over the past 14 months. The funds are being provided to the World Food Program and other organizations working to feed the Yemeni people. Without U.S. efforts, the death toll in Yemen would be far higher. There would be no honest broker to manage disagreements between Saudi Arabia and its Gulf coalition partners, whose forces are essential to the war effort. Iran has no interest in easing Yemeni suffering; the mullahs don’t even care for ordinary Iranians. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has invested billions to relieve suffering in Yemen. Iran has invested zero. Yemen is also an important front in the war on terror, and has remained so across presidential administrations of both parties. The group now known as Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) launched its first major attack on Americans in October 2000, when its operatives bombed the USS Cole while the destroyer was berthed in Yemen’s Aden harbor. The attack left 17 sailors dead and 39 wounded. AQAP has since attempted multiple attacks on the U.S. homeland and allied interests, from Nigerian terrorist Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab’s attempted bombing of Northwest Airlines Flight 253, en route from Amsterdam to Detroit on Christmas 2009, to the 2015 massacre at Charlie Hebdo’s offices in Paris. ISIS also maintains a presence in Yemen, from which it seeks to attack the U.S. and our allies. Abandoning or downgrading the U.S.-Saudi alliance would also do nothing to push Riyadh in a better direction at home. Much work remains to be done to guarantee the freedoms for which America and President Trump always stand. Yet the crown prince has moved the country in a reformist direction, from allowing women to drive and attend sporting events, to curbing the religious police and calling for a return to moderate Islam. The U.S. doesn’t condone the Khashoggi killing, which is fundamentally inconsistent with American values -- something I have told the Saudi leadership privately as well as publicly. President Trump has taken action in response. Twenty-one Saudi suspects in the murder have been deemed ineligible to enter the U.S. and had any visas revoked. On November 15, the administration imposed sanctions on 17 Saudis under Executive Order 13818, which builds on the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act. We’ve worked to strengthen support for this response, and several countries, including France and Germany, have followed suit. The Trump administration will consider further punitive measures if more facts about Khashoggi’s murder come to light. Critics of the U.S.-Saudi alliance would do well to revisit Jeane Kirkpatrick’s seminal 1979 essay, “Dictatorships and Double Standards,” which analyzed the Carter administration’s failure to distinguish between autocrats friendly to U.S. interests and those who are implacably opposed. Mr. Carter’s ideological predilections had blinded him to U.S. national security interests and inhibited him, to borrow a phrase, from putting America first. “Liberal idealism,” Kirkpatrick observed, “need not be identical with masochism, and need not be incompatible with the defense of freedom and the national interest.” What a timely reminder for critics of President Trump’s pragmatic -- and correct -- approach to the U.S.-Saudi relationship today.

### Impact – AT: Iran Rational

#### Iran isn’t outclassed – they can match Saudi with asymmetric tactics and escalation would be guaranteed.

Ostovar 18 [Afshon Ostovar, Assistant Professor of National Security Affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School, May 7, 2018, "The First Saudi-Iranian War Will Be an Even Fight," Foreign Policy, https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/05/07/the-first-saudi-iranian-war-will-be-an-even-fight/]

What happens when the Saudi military's massive budget meets Iran's mastery of asymmetric warfare? Here's a preview.

Since 2011, first in Syria and then in Yemen, proxy forces of Iran and Saudi Arabi have been in constant, brutal competition. Both sides seem to have concluded that a direct war isn’t in their interest, with neither having ever directly attacked the other. But there has always been a risk of escalation — and that risk will heighten dramatically on Tuesday if President Donald Trump withdraws from the Iran nuclear deal, as seems likely. That could lead to an increase in military provocations by Iran in the region, and embolden any Saudi response.

It’s far easier to assess the likelihood of direct conflict between Tehran and Riyadh, however, than to predict a winner. The outcome of the first Saudi-Iranian war would ultimately depend on the shape it ended up taking.

The two countries differ markedly in the size and capabilities of their forces. Iran has the larger military, with two forces — the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Artesh regular military — composed of complementary air, naval, and land branches. The Artesh has an estimated 350,000 active-duty soldiers and controls most of Iran’s more sophisticated conventional capabilities, especially in the air and maritime domains. By comparison, the IRGC, with an estimated force of 125,000, has maintained a focus on asymmetric warfare but also oversees Iran’s growing unmanned aerial vehicle fleet and strategic ballistic missile programs. Additionally, through its special forces division, known as the Quds Force, the IRGC commands Iran’s foreign military operations and relations with client allies, such as in Syria and Iraq.

Since the 1980s, intermittent sanctions and political pressure from the United States have severely degraded Iran’s ability to procure military technology and weapons from other countries, which has made some of its military capabilities relatively outmoded and weak. Iran’s defense spending (around $12.3 billion in 2016) is modest compared with Saudi Arabia’s as one of the top defense budgets in the world ($63.7 billion in 2016 and $69.4 billion in 2017), and its defense technology generally falls well below that of other regional states. Iran’s air forces fly dated platforms, such as F-5 and F-14 Tomcat variants, which have been updated domestically from aircraft inherited from the pre-revolution Pahlavi state, but struggle with intermittent inoperability. Similarly, Iran’s mechanized armor is mostly a hodgepodge of pre-1979 U.S. stock (such as the M60A1) and older Soviet tanks (such as the T-72S) procured from Russia during the 1990s.

Unable to update its military capabilities, Iran has instead invested in other areas, especially ballistic missiles, to provide a competitive edge with its neighbors. Its ground-to-ground ballistic missile variants, such as the Zolfaghar (435-mile range) and Shahab-3 (994-mile range), could potentially target strategic infrastructure and population centers well within Saudi territory. Those ranges and the large stockpile Iran has amassed have made ballistic missiles Iran’s core strategic deterrent. Iran showcased that capability in June 2017 when it fired six Zolfaghar missiles at Islamic State-held territory near the Syrian city of Deir Ezzor, some 435 miles from the launch points in western Iran. Beyond that hard deterrent, the IRGC’s investments have concentrated on developing less expensive platforms that can challenge adversaries through asymmetrical tactics. Foremost in this regard is the IRGC Navy’s large fleet of fast attack crafts, which includes various types of small speed boats that can be armed with 107 mm rockets, heavy machine guns, and anti-ship cruise missiles, or loaded with explosives and used in kamikaze-style strikes. These boats, along with its large stockpile of naval mines, are the IRGC’s primary offensive tool against maritime adversaries in the maritime domain.

The Saudi military is smaller but better armed. Saudi Arabia’s primary military land, air, naval, and missile forces fall under the command of its Ministry of Defense. Combined with auxiliary forces in the Saudi Arabian National Guard, Royal Guard, and the Ministry of Interior’s border defense force, the Saudi military is estimated to have around 250,000 active-duty personnel. Its chief strengths lie in airpower and air defense. The Royal Saudi Air Force possesses several squadrons of F-15C/D Eagle and F-15 Strike Eagle fighters, along with three squadrons of Tornado multirole aircraft, and 72 Eurofighter Typhoon attack aircraft. The Royal Saudi Air Defense Forces have similarly impressive capabilities, focused mainly on U.S.-supplied Patriot missile batteries concentrated around critical infrastructure, military bases, and population centers. Saudi Arabia also has a small but perhaps growing stockpile of ballistic missiles. Its Strategic Missile Force is believed to possess dozens of aging liquid-fueled Chinese DF-3 medium-range missiles (2,485- to 3,100-mile range) and possibly some solid-fueled DF-21 medium-range missiles (1,050-mile range) as well.

Of course, capabilities are one thing, effectiveness on the battlefield another. Experience matters and can help a military identify its weaknesses and develop strengths. Both countries have had recent experience in combat, albeit in different ways and to different extents.

Much of Iran’s military know-how was developed during the nearly eight-year Iran-Iraq War, where it fought against a technologically superior adversary with far greater international backing. If the Iran-Iraq War taught Iran’s armed forces how to survive and make limited gains through asymmetrical tactics, the post-2011 experience of the IRGC and its client allies (such as Lebanese Hezbollah and various Iraqi militias) in the Syrian, Iraqi, and Yemeni conflicts has helped it develop further in terms of command and control, integrated operations, and ground offenses. Although Iran and its clients have been inseparable from the ground successes in both Syria and Iraq, those advances have been paved by foreign air power (by the United States in Iraq and Russia in Syria). Without the support of such air power, it is doubtful that Iranian-led forces would have made any serious gains against Syria’s rebels or the Islamic State. Further, they have relied on artillery bombardments, which essentially flattened the adversarial-held population centers before they were retaken.

The Saudis have comparatively less combat experience. In 1991, Saudi and Kuwaiti forces struggled to defeat an Iraqi tank column that had occupied the Saudi town of Khafji. They ultimately prevailed with U.S. support, but the battle exposed the inexperience of the Saudi military. In a precursor to the current conflict in Yemen, Saudi forces intervened across the southern border in 2009 in support of the Yemeni government’s war against the Houthis. The Saudi campaign, which included Jordanian and perhaps Moroccan troops, lasted only a few months and concentrated on the bombing of Houthi positions near the border. Despite retaking some strategic high ground along the border, the aerial campaign had only a small impact on the overall ground war. That limited track record clearly did not prepare the Saudis for the current war in Yemen. But the longer the current war continues, the more experience the Saudi military will gain.

Thus, as crude as it might be to think of the ongoing Yemeni conflict as military practice for the Saudis, given the brutal toll it has had on civilians, that is precisely what it has been. Without dismissing Saudi’s legitimate national security concerns about Yemen, or minimizing the extensive suffering the war has caused, the conflict has offered an opportunity for the Saudis (and the Emiratis) to test their air and land capabilities in combat and to work on integrated joint operations.

Still, the campaign has only had limited success. Although the Saudi-led coalition was effective early on in pushing pro-Houthi forces out of positions in the south, it has struggled to make advancements in the north. This is especially true regarding the capital, Sanaa, where Saudi Arabia’s extensive bombing campaign hasn’t led to corresponding gains on the ground. There have also been serious questions posed about Saudi Arabia’s targeting ability and its capabilities in intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, particularly in the face of the severe civilian toll the bombing campaign in Sanaa has had.

Given their respective capabilities and recent experiences in combat, both countries have strengths and weaknesses, but neither has a clear advantage over the other. Saudi airpower would enable it to maintain dominance in the skies in any conflict with Iran. It could likely strike Iran’s critical infrastructure and military bases along the coast with air-to-ground missiles, if not penetrate Iranian territory more deeply. Iran, for its part, would likely be able to achieve primacy in the maritime domain, especially in the Persian Gulf, where its fast attack craft, diesel submarines, and mine-laying vessels could be used to target Saudi shipping, naval ships, and ports. Iran could also strike Saudi strategic infrastructure and population centers with ballistic missiles. Although Saudi Arabia’s Patriot missile defense systems would likely reduce the effectiveness of such strikes, it is unlikely that those defenses could prevent all strikes from landing, especially were Iran to fire missiles in salvos.

If a Saudi-Iran conflict were to occur in a vacuum, the war would not be about territory or regime change by force. Neither side can take the fight across the Persian Gulf, much less seize and hold strategic areas in adversarial territory. The conflict would be about inflicting damage to both punish the other side and compel it to cease hostile behavior. While the Saudis — with their superior air power, access to foreign military technology, and far greater wealth — might be better situated to endure such a conflict, if not impose greater costs on the Iranians, the Islamic Republic has less to lose and has shown an ability to withstand years of warfare against greater powers.

However, it is unlikely that such a conflict would involve only those two parties and not grow to involve other states. Iran lacks state allies (except for Syria, of course, which is hardly a state now), but it does have a robust, transnational alliance with nonstate clients in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. Groups such as Lebanese Hezbollah or Asaib Ahl al-Haq in Iraq would almost certainly support Iran in such a conflict, including by targeting Saudi nationals in their own countries, but they couldn’t attack Saudi territory militarily with any degree of effectiveness.

Saudi Arabia, however, has a strong alliance with Arab states (especially the United Arab Emirates and Jordan) and with the United States. Were such a conflict to occur, it is difficult to imagine that the United States would not become involved in one way or another in support of the Saudis. Although Iran could certainly raise the costs of American involvement by targeting U.S. naval vessels in the Persian Gulf directly or by targeting U.S. forces and nationals in other countries by proxy, Iran would have to balance such actions with the risk of drawing the United States into a more extensive war.

Thus, the possible involvement of the United States would be the x-factor in any potential conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Even if the two states are quite evenly matched, the military power that the United States could bring to bear would heavily tilt a conflict in Saudi Arabia’s favor. In other words, it would be incredibly risky for Iran to court escalation with Saudi Arabia. Such a conflict likely wouldn’t involve just Saudi Arabia, and Iran does not possess the capabilities to outlast a coalition military effort against it.

# Affirmative Answers

## Uniqueness Answers

### No UQ – Alliance Weak

#### Saudi’s turning away now – Asia pivot and anti-Saudi sentiment in the US kill relations

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While trade is not zero-sum, the Saudi government sees efforts to promote trade in the Asia-Pacific region as further proof of the U.S. government’s decreasing reliance on the Middle East and North Africa. The Obama administration demonstrated very little effort to bolster the economy of states in the region, with most of the focus on either emergency aid or military weapons sales. These short-term trade relations dolittle to formulate the long-term reassurance that would assuage the Saudis into believing that America is in for the long haul. Part of this is undoubtedly due to the instability that has rocked the region due to the Arab spring, but nevertheless the lack of U.S. overtures to improve the economic situation has been disconcerting. Compounding the feelings of a Saudi-U.S. split is the souring mood inside the United States due to accusations of terror support. A 60 Minutes special detailing twenty eight pages of formerly classified speculative material from the congressional 9/11 report created an internet firestorm with conspiracy theorists arguing that the pages would have a “smoking gun” linking the Saudi government directly with the hijackers.104 While the information did not reveal anything spectacular, the Saudi government temporarily threatened to sell off hundreds of billions of dollars in U.S. assets in retaliation, creating unnecessary economic uncertainty.105 A result of the increased suspicion towards the Saudi government is the push by U.S. lawmakers to make it legal for private citizens to sue the Saudi government. Private citizens whose family members died in the 9/11 terrorist attacks pushed lawmakers, notably Senator Charles Schumer of New York, to allow them to seek legal retribution against what they called a “state sponsor of terrorism”.106 The bill passed the senate, but was vetoed by President Obama due to concerns that it would both damage cooperation with Saudi Arabia on issues of counter terrorism as well as open American citizens to similar forms of legal retribution for actions by the U.S. government.107 Despite the insistence of the administration and the intelligence community, the U.S. senate voted in a historic 97-1 vote to overturn the veto and pass the bill.108 The Saudi government takes the combination of the pivot to Asia and the growing anti-Saudi clamor as a serious sign of the decreasing value of the U.S.-Saudi partnership. This will result in less cooperation with American military officials, less avenues for American military hardware, and less opportunity to establish special trade relationships with the United States. The Saudis recognize that they cannot afford to keep their eggs in one basket, and the lessons of the Arab spring have taught them that U.S. backing is liable to rapidly disappear if political situations shift. The Saudi government is using this as the further impetuous to restructure the economy through Vision 2030, making them more independent and capable absent American backing. While they will still maintain some security cooperation and commercial ties with the United States, they will move beyond the bilateral relationship by relying on themselves in addition to developing relationships with rising powers like India and China.

#### A turn away from arms sales to the Middle East is inevitable – the market is shifting towards Russia, Europe, and China

**Weisgerber 19** (Marcus Weisgerber is the global business editor for Defense One, where he writes about the intersection of business and national security. “Pentagon’s Focus On China and Russia Expected to Alter US Arms Sales”, https://www.defenseone.com/business/2019/04/pentagons-focus-china-and-russia-expected-alter-us-arms-sales/156079/)

As the U.S. military shifts its focus to Russia and China, American arms exports are expected to make a similar shift to allies in Europe and Asia, experts say. Arms export data already shows a shift away from the Middle East, where Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE have been scooping up American weapons. “I would imagine that this year and next we would see an uptick in sales to Asia, but it hasn’t shown up yet,” William Hartung, director of the Arms Security Project at the Center for International Policy, said Thursday. The total value of arms-export deals approved by the Trump administration declined from $82.2 billion in 2017 to $78.8 billion last year, according to a new report by Hartung and Christina Arabia, director of the Security Assistance Monitor. Also declining from 2017 to 2018: the share of deals with countries in the Middle East and Northern Africa, two regions of intense focus in the past two decades of counterinsurgency- dominated wars. “Deals with countries in the Middle East and North Africa dropped from 36.6% to 21.9%,” the report states. “And offers to East Asia and the Pacific dropped from 23.6% to 14.3%.” Meanwhile, the share of deals approved for countries in Europe and Eurasia nearly doubled from 29.5 percent in 2017 to 55 percent last year. “Europe was actually the biggest recipient of new offers in 2018, outpacing the Middle East,” Hartung said. “Some of that may be related to concerns about Russia, although the biggest deal was the $10 billion for Italy to produce F-35s, which is a program that’s been going on for many years.” He pointed to Slovakia’s purchase of American F-16 fighter jets; Arabia noted the Polish and Romanian orders of U.S.-made missile defense systems. A number of European nations are currently considering buying Lockheed Martin F-16 or Boeing F/A-18 warplanes. So why are arms sales down in the Middle East? “Part of it is just saturation of the market,” Hartung said. Another key may be the Pentagon’s year-old National Defense Strategy, which prioritizes preparation for great power competition with Russia and China. Just months after arriving in the White House, Trump announced a $110 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia that includes warships, helicopters, tanks, bombs and missiles. “These things take a long time to work through the system and a country is not going to buy fighter planes every year, they’re going to do it periodically,” Hartung said. Lawmakers have also voiced opposition to selling bombs and missiles to Saudi Arabia and UAE because of civilian deaths in Yemen. The murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi has also prompted an outcry against Saudi Arabia. “So much has been sold year after year, after year, it strikes me as perhaps a bit of a pause and not necessarily an indicator of things to come,” Hartung said. Halfway through fiscal year 2019, the $23 billion arms sales approved by the State Department are lagging behind the pace of the past three years, Roman Schweizer, an analyst with Cowen and Company, wrote in an April 3 note to investors. “While the Trump administration has made foreign military sales a priority, there could be other Trump foreign and economic policies working against U.S. sales,” Schweizer said. “We have previously expressed concern that President Trump’s comments about NATO, France and Germany could encourage those countries to spend more but within their own domestic defense economies rather than on U.S. hardware.” The government shutdown in December and January may also have partially caused the slowdown

### UQ Thumper – Obama

#### Obama administration policy hurt relations – disproves the link

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The relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia has come under unprecedented strains in recent years. U.S. President Barack Obama has openly questioned Riyadh’s value as an ally, accusing it of provoking sectarian conflict in the region. According to The Atlantic’s Jeffrey Goldberg, when Malcolm Turnbull, Australia’s prime minister, asked Obama whether he saw the Saudis as friends, the president responded, “It’s complicated.” Many Americans continue to believe that the Saudi government was involved in the September 11, 2001, attacks, although the 9/11 Commission found no evidence of institutional or senior-level Saudi support. The Senate has even passed a bill that would allow Americans to sue the Saudi government in U.S. courts for its alleged support of terrorism. The Saudis have been equally intemperate in their recent comments. The kingdom’s officials have threatened to sell off hundreds of billions of dollars of U.S. assets if Congress passes the bill, even though such a move would hurt Saudi Arabia much more than it would the United States. And they have made little effort to hide their contempt for Obama, whom they see as too willing to jettison old friends in order to cozy up to enemies. Prince Turki al-Faisal—the most outspoken senior member of the ruling family and a former head of Saudi foreign intelligence and former ambassador to the United States—has accused Obama of “throw[ing Saudi Arabia] a curve ball” because he has “pivoted to Iran.” The prince went on to say that the Saudis would “continue to hold the American people as [an] ally”—but implied that they no longer view the American president as one. Several pillars of the two countries’ relationship, built after World War II, have started to fracture. The Cold War, which once united the unlikely allies against the Soviets, has long since ended. With Saddam Hussein’s downfall in Iraq, the threat of an overt military attack on Saudi Arabia or its smaller Gulf neighbors has faded. And the upsurge in domestic U.S. oil production has revived dreams of American energy independence. As the foundations of the relationship have weakened, its American critics have grown bolder. They point out that Wahhabism, the ultraconservative form of Islam that Saudi Arabia promotes, directly contradicts American values and that Saudi Arabia stands near the bottom of any world ranking on democracy, religious freedom, human rights, and women’s rights. They argue that the Saudi regime, an absolute monarchy in a democratic age, is so anachronistic that it will not survive much longer. And they emphasize the fact that the Saudis share few priorities with the United States in the Middle East. As Washington is attempting to develop a new relationship with Tehran, the Saudis continue to fear Iranian encirclement; they refuse to concentrate their resources on the fight against the Islamic State (also known as ISIS and al Qaeda and have instead demanded that the United States support their parochial military adventures in Yemen and elsewhere.

### Alliance Inevitable – Investment

#### Mutual investment ensures the relationship is strong – outweighs political disputes

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Recent activity underscores that the U.S. and Saudi Arabia have deepened investment ties in spite of periods of political disagreement. While Saudi Arabia has not traditionally been a major recipient of global foreign direct investment (FDI) flows, it has sought to attract greater investment as part of its economic diversification plans. 93 The U.S. has traditionally ranked among the highest foreign investors in Saudi Arabia, with recently registered increases as it moves to liberalize its economy.94 The latest available trade data shows U.S. FDI in Saudi Arabia was $9.7 billion in 2012, marking a 17.5 percent increase from total U.S. FDI in 2011.95 Saudi Arabia’s 2016 decision to make its $560 billion stock market available to foreign investors is expected to attract further interest from major institutions that meet its $5 billion dollar asset benchmark. 96 Saudi Arabia has also lobbied for large-scale U.S. investment in its mining, education, healthcare, and infrastructure sectors in bilateral meetings with U.S. counterparts. 97 Saudi Arabia’s investment in the U.S. has also displayed marked increases in recent years. As of 2016, Saudi Arabia was thought to possess up to $760 billion in U.S. treasury holdings ranking it among the highest holders of U.S. debt in the world.98 While exact data on Saudi FDI in the U.S. is not publicly available, recent financial activity shows that it remains committed to closely linking its economic future to the U.S. economy. In 2012, ARAMCO acquired the U.S’s largest oil refinery in Port Arthur, Texas for $10 billion and has expressed interest in a similar bid for an oil refinery located in Houston, Texas.99 In the non-oil sector, Saudi Arabia’s Public Investment Fund made a record $3.5 billion investment in the Silicon Valley-based ride-sharing company Uber. The investment fund will likely continue to target U.S. investments, as it seeks to grow its portfolio as part of Saudi Arabia’s economic diversification plans.100Saudi officials have also indicated that they prefer to list the planned public offering of ARAMCO shares at the New York Stock Exchange, in what is expected to be a record-breaking flotation.101 Most recently, Saudi Arabia announced plans to invest up to $200 billion in U.S. infrastructure, energy, industry, and technology initiatives following a meeting with new U.S. President Donald Trump.

### Alliance Inevitable – Oil

#### Oil investment ensures the alliance remains steadfast – creates incentives for both countries to keep relations high

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Examining the U.S.-Saudi trade relationship can highlight the costs that each partner faces in an alliance security dilemma. For the U.S., a withdrawal from the partnership would have to consider the cost of having less influence on a significant source of U.S. oil imports and the most important actor in the international oil market. Although the rise of U.S. shale oil production has placed it into competition with Saudi Arabia, both partners continue to have an interest in moderately stable oil markets. While Saudi Arabia has attempted to counter shale production through initiating oil price decreases, it must balance this desire against a need to attract investment from U.S. capital markets.63 Maintaining the optimistic outlook of U.S. capital markets for the future of the oil industry has become essential for Saudi Arabia, as it plans to place its national oil company ARAMCO in an initial stock market public offering. 64 Similarly, large Saudi investment in the U.S. economy, including through treasury holdings, means a mutual interest in long-term economic viability continues to be calculated in an alliance security dilemma. A closer analysis of the shared trade and commercial interests in the U.S.-Saudi partnership will paint a better picture of those costs. Saudi Arabia’s vast oil resources primarily characterize U.S.-Saudi trade relations, with over $20.9 billion in exports on annual basis.65While Saudi Arabia is not the U.S.’s primary source of crude oil imports, the latter’s oil industry has been crucial in both the discovery and development of Saudi Arabia’s oil industry. The importance of global oil flows to U.S. strategic interest has meant that Saudi Arabia, as the owner of the world’s largest oil reserves, has remained a U.S. foreign policy priority. As significantly, U.S.-Saudi historic dealings in the oil industry have helped both direct and inform the nature of relations between the two states. The first link between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia was established by an oil concession awarded to Standard Oil of California (SOCAL) in 1933, by Saudi Arabia’s founding monarch King Abdel Aziz66 . While diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia were established shortly following SOCAL’s engagement in 1933, they took off in earnest following the discovery of massive oil reserves by a consortium of American oil companies which would become the Arab American Oil Company (ARAMCO) and Saudi Arabia’s sole national oil producer67 .The Second World War underscored the significance of hydrocarbons to the global economy through their role in fuelling the war effort. Consequently, Saudi Arabia’s possession of the world’s largest oil reserves greatly raised its profile in U.S. foreign policy. In particular, Saudi Arabia’s vast oil resources were considered a key element of the U.S.’s post-war strategy to reconstruct Europe and Japan68. While the U.S. only imported 8 percent of its oil from Saudi Arabia in 1948, Western Europe was almost entirely dependent on Saudi imports in the same time period69 . This strategy helped spur a massive increase of Saudi oil production between 1944 and 1960 from 21,000 barrels per day to 548,000 barrels per day70 . As Saudi Arabia settled in to its role as one of the world’s largest oil producers, its influence in the global economy also increased. Its production and capacity allowed it to play an outsized role on both supply and price in international energy markets. As part of its close relations with the U.S., an informal understanding was developed for Saudi Arabia to keep oil prices fair and oil supplies steady and accessible for consumers around the world71. In exchange for Saudi Arabia’s cooperation on price and production rates, the U.S. helped develop its production capacity and domestic development at large. While the U.S. imported moderate supplies of Saudi oil to meet domestic demand, its interest in keeping international prices low would affect its imports from all partners. Successive Saudi oil embargos in the mid-70s created knock-off effects for U.S. consumers, with scarce supply coinciding with skyrocketing prices at home72 . Althoughthe Saudi oil embargo was resolved diplomatically, the focus of U.S. policymakers was re-directed towards the importance of stable oil prices and supply for the U.S.’s global outlook. In a mid-1970s discussion between U.S. Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger and Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger the potential for military options were explored if escalating oil prices were not controlled73 . The U.S. continues to prioritize the flow of Saudi oil to the international market, viewing it as crucial to the stability of the global economy. Since Saudi Arabia formed the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in the early 1970’s, it has attempted to increase its control and management of oil markets by often cooperating on setting prices and adjusting supply74 Saudi Arabia’s cooperation with other major oil exporting countries through OPEC, has sometimes run counter to U.S. interests in opportune moments such as the 1975 oil embargo. Nonetheless, it has generally prioritized cooperation with the United States on oil prices and supply that can be favourable to both partners. For instance, despite the imposition of an Arab League-wide oil embargo in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia cooperated on secret oil supplies for U.S. naval forces stationed around the Persian Gulf75 . More recently, U.S.-Saudi cooperation on the energy market has been challenged by developments in American domestic oil production. The early 2000’s coincided with steady increases in global oil prices, which had reverberations on the U.S. economy. In 2007, following a new peak in prices, U.S. President George W. Bush raised the issue with his Saudi counterpart King Abdullah urging him for cooperation that can restrain the global market76. Incidentally, record oil prices helped spur investment in U.S. shale oil production, helping to increase its energy independence while leading to a global supply glut. In response to losses in global market share to U.S. shale producers, Saudi Arabia resisted calls to reduce oil production to stabilize prices. Sharp falls in price coincided with global surplus in oil supply, which forced U.S. shale producers to cut production by 75 percent since September 201477 . However in 2016, U.S. shale production experienced a revival, with new innovations helping to make shale production lucrative at lower oil prices. Data from the Energy Information Administration (EIA) shows the revival in shale oil production has raised U.S. oil production to a record 9 million barrels per day.78 These developments have placed the U.S. and Saudi Arabia into closer competition in the oil market than in years past. However, despite conflicting desires for global market share, both partners share an interest in moderately stable oil prices. In November 2016, OPEC members led by Saudi Arabia and non-OPEC member Russia agreed to a collective supply cut to address global supply gluts in the oil market.79 Global oil prices increased in response to the deal, incentivizing greater U.S. shale production. In February 2017, Saudi Arabia was reported to have communicated to U.S. oil firms that they should not assume OPEC would continue supply cuts to offset increased shale production.80 This announcement indicates a balance Saudi Arabia has attempted to reach between pricing-out shale producers and maintaining oil revenues that meet domestic needs. Additionally, U.S. oil services companies play a major role in Saudi Arabia’s domestic oil production. The relationship was first established when U.S. oil services firm Baker Hughes provided drilling equipment for Saudi Arabia’s first oil producing well in 1938.81 Although Saudi Arabia nationalized the American percentage of ARAMCO’s concession, American oil services companies continue to be awarded downstream oil production contracts. In 2013 Houston-based oil services firms Schlumberger and Halliburton, increased their stake in Saudi Arabia by increasing personnel and project loads in the country82 . Both companies identified Saudi Arabia’s unique spare capacity to produce far more oil than required, as an attractive feature that attracts investment from oil services firms targeting long-term growth.83 The U.S.-Saudi economic relationship has also developed interdependencies created by the windfall of Saudi Arabia’s oil revenues. U.S.-Saudi financial ties were first expanded in the aftermath of the 1973 oil crisis. Saudi Arabia’s decision to engage in a boycott of U.S. oil exports, alongside its OPEC counterparts pushed global oil prices to record highs. A combination of high demand and scarce supply, courtesy of the oil boycott, had large repercussions for the U.S. economy. On the other hand, the rise in oil price also resulted in financial windfalls for Saudi Arabia at the expense of fracturing its U.S. ties. Mutually shared security threats posed by the Soviet Union and radical Arab nationalism, helped inform a desire to construct closer economic ties84. In 1974, in the immediate aftermath of the OPEC boycott, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia signed multiple agreements that established a Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation and a Joint Security Cooperation Commission.85 The two commissions set the ground for a framework that amounted to huge amounts of Saudi investment in the U.S. economy, both through capital investment and a large expansion in defence ties. In 1974, the same year the dual commissions were signed, an estimated $5 billion of a total $26 billion in Saudi Arabia’s oil revenue was spent in the United States.86 Saudi crude oil remains the largest determinant factor on the annual value of Saudi exports to the United States as its largest good for export. In recent years the value of Saudi exports to the United States has decreased, as a result of declines in global oil prices and increases in U.S. domestic oil production. In 2015, Saudi exports to the United States were valued at $22 billion, displaying a decline compared to a high of $54.8 billion in exports in 200887 . On the other hand, U.S. exports to Saudi Arabia have displayed annual increases, with a value of $19 billion of U.S. exports to Saudi Arabia in 2015, compared to $9 Billion worth of U.S. exports in 200988. This increase is reflective of amarked increase in Saudi defence spending, correlated to its coalition war effort in Yemen first declared in 201589

#### Oil co-op solves perceptions of abandonment

**Omar and Juneau 17** (Omar Mohamed, Program Officer at Public Service, graduated from the University of Ottawa, Thomas Juneau is an assistant professor at the University of Ottawa’s Graduate School of Public and International Affairs. From 2003 to 2014, he was an analyst with Canada’s Department of National Defence, “The Special Partnership: Considering U.S.-Saudi Relations Through the Alliance”, <https://ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/36607/1/OMAR%2C%20Mohammed%2020175.pdf>, p. 24-25)

3.4 Economic Dependency and Abandonment The economic aspect of the U.S.-Saudi relationships also weighs on the prospect of alliance abandonment. The U.S. has become increasingly self-reliant for its oil consumption needs, as net imports of crude oil from foreign countries equated to only 24% of domestic oil consumption in 2015.55 While Saudi Arabia is the US’s second highest source of crude oil imports, the 1 million barrels per day it supplies amounts to 5% of daily U.S. oil consumption.56 Nonetheless, the U.S. continues to view the free flow of Saudi oil to international markets as essential to the U.S’s long-term interests. As Saudi Arabia possesses the world’s largest oil reserves, with an estimated 1/5th of proven world reserves, its ability to export has a major influence on the global oil market. Steep production cuts by policy or through military means, can destabilize oil prices worldwide creating knock-off effects throughout the global economy. Similarly, the loss of access to Saudi oil exports would adversely impact states important to U.S. interests, including the European Union, which imports 7% of its total oil exports from Saudi Arabia.57Moreover, Saudi Arabia is a major investor in the U.S. economy with cash flows from oil revenues directed towards many American sectors and enterprises58. An economically weakened Saudi Arabia would also adversely impact U.S. arms producers, as the top foreign importer of U.S. arms. The economic interdependencies that have been established throughout the U.S-Saudi partnership have helped decrease the prospect of ally abandonment, by exacting a financial cost for both partners.

## Link/Internals Answers

### No Link – Alliance Stable

#### No link – the alliance is resilient

Hunter 19 (Ripley, “The Case for U.S. Disengagement in Yemen,” 5-6-19 https://chargedaffairs.org/the-case-for-u-s-disengagement-in-yemen/, ME)

The decades-long relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia is deeply rooted in the countries’ many shared interests and regional goals. From containing and balancing Iranian power, to counterterrorism efforts, to the protection of shipping lanes in the Strait of Hormuz, Saudi Arabia remains a valuable strategic ally of the United States. Nonetheless, the nature of the relationship has evolved in the past decade. As the world’s top energy producer, the United States is no longer as dependent on Saudi control of the oil market as it once was. In contrast, Saudi Arabia is heavily dependent on U.S. arms imports and support, especially in the conduct of its military intervention in Yemen. With little domestic arms production to speak of and no other comparable benefactor to turn to, the United States retains significant political leverage over the Saudis. In Yemen, the United States can and should to exercise this leverage to end U.S. involvement in the conflict by suspending arms sales to the Saudis and scaling back intelligence cooperation not related to counterterrorism efforts. While a decisive military victory on part of the Saudi-led forces was already unlikely, the removal of U.S. support will end any lingering hope for a clear-cut win in Riyadh. Likewise, the reduction in the coalition’s military capacity should not be enough to dramatically turn the tide in favor of Houthi forces either. With careful U.S. diplomacy, the ensuing reality of a prolonged stalemate will help work to increase incentives for both sides to honor a ceasefire and continue stalled U.N.-mediated peace talks in Geneva. The risk of serious fallout between the United States and Saudi Arabia is low, as are the risks for economic repercussions on the United States. Newfound energy independence and a strong economy insulate the United States from any Saudi retaliation in the oil markets or the effects of shelved arms deals. The interests that bind the two countries together are too salient, and Saudi standing in the international community too diminished in the wake of the Khashoggi Affair, such that a major rupture in the alliance is highly unlikely.

### Link Turn – Cooperation- Generic

#### Link turn – US arms sales reduce a state’s propensity to cooperate with the US and poisons relations – empirical analysis proves arms sales have zero positive impact on co-op

**Sullivan et. al 11** (Patricia L. Sullivan is an associate professor in the Department of Public Policy and the Curriculum in Peace, War, and Defense at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a 2015-2017 Andrew Carnegie Fellow. “US Military Aid and Recipient State Cooperation”, <http://plsullivan.web.unc.edu/files/2011/09/Sullivan_FPA_Military-Aid-Cooperation.pdf>, p. 289-291)

We test seven hypotheses associated with three different theoretical models and find mixed results. There is little evidence in favor of the Arms for Influence model: there is an inverse relationship between absolute levels of US military aid and recipient state cooperation, and there is no relationship at all between recipient state dependence on US aid and recipient state behavior. Thus, while the Lonely Superpower hypothesis was on the right track by predicting an unorthodox relationship between aid and cooperation, it did not perform as well as some of the Reverse Leverage hypotheses when it came to explaining exactly what form such unorthodoxy would take. In several ways, the Reverse Leverage model was quite accurate: (i) states receiving military aid from the United States exhibit lower levels of cooperation than states that do not receive military aid, (ii) in the population of all states, higher levels of military aid appear to produce more defiant behavior, and (iii) the United States does not punish defiance with reductions in aid or reward greater cooperation with increases in military aid. Together, these results suggest that US military assistance is allocated for reasons that are largely independent of overall recipient state behavior toward the United States. The Reverse Leverage model contends that military aid is delivered to states that the United States depends on for security reasons. Realizing their leverage over Washington, states that receive high amounts of aid are actually more able to engage in uncooperative behavior than are states that the United States does not depend so heavily upon. We attempted to test for the effects of an aid recipient’s ‘‘security value’’ directly by comparing US allies to nonallies. Consistent with the Reverse Leverage model, we find that states with a defensive alliance with the United States are more likely to receive US military aid but less likely to respond to aid by increasing their cooperation with American preferences. Of course, there are limitations in our data and research design. We focus on a 15-year period (1990–2004) because the events data that play a crucial role in our analysis are only available for these years. However, it would be helpful to examine a longer time span in order to fully account for the long-term behavioral changes that states might make in response to US military aid. Another limitation has to do with the specific bargain is reached between the United States and the recipient of military aid. Many studies use vote congruence between a state and the United States in the United Nations General Assembly as a measure of compliance. But U.N. votes may not capture the influence of military aid because Washington can deliver assistance in return for cooperation on a matter completely unrelated to the issues that come up for a vote in the UN during a particular year. We attempt to deal with this drawback by looking at a broad measure of cooperation. In fact, we use a dependent variable that ostensibly measures all cooperation and conflict with the United States that recipient states engage in during any given year. However, this broad approach suffers from the opposite of the problem associated with UN voting. It is possible that the specific kind of recipient state cooperation that the United States sought to achieve through the delivery of military aid was in fact present, but hidden among the ‘‘noise’’ of all the other foreign policy behavior the recipient state engaged in that year. Despite its limitations, our study offers a novel approach to the foreign aid and influence puzzle. And our results uncover interesting relationships that deserve greater theoretical and empirical attention in future research. Clearly, the relationship between US military aid and recipient state cooperation is far from straightforward. The bulk of our evidence pens a cautionary tale for policymakers; although military assistance may achieve the specific goals for which it was allocated, it appears to generate less cooperative behavior from recipient states overall. US military aid levels may be more indicative of American dependence on recipient states than of US influence over client states. Contrary to the vast majority of the existing literature on foreign aid, our results suggest military aid is neither a carrot nor a stick; US assistance is given to countries that the United States depends on for some foreign policy ‘‘good’’ and the United States will continue to provide such aid as long as that ‘‘good’’ is valued in Washington. With this knowledge, recipient state behavior is actually likely to be increasingly uncooperative as levels of American dependency (and subsequent aid packages) increase.

### Link Turn – Yemen

#### Ending arms sales key to a broad arms embargo on Saudi Arabia – but prevents them from seeking Chinese or Russian supplies

Spindel 19 (Jennifer, Assistant Professor of International Security at University of Oklahoma & Associate Director of the Cyber Governance and Policy Center, “The Case for Suspending American Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia,” 5-14-19, https://warontherocks.com/2019/05/the-case-for-suspending-american-arms-sales-to-saudi-arabia/, ME)

According to the 2019 Military Balance, most of Saudi Arabia’s equipment is American or French in origin, such as the M1A2 Abrams and AMX-30 tanks, Apache and Dauphin helicopters, and F-15C/D fighter jets. Saudi Arabia has some equipment manufactured wholly or in part in Germany, such as the Eurofighter Typhoon and the Tornado ground attack craft, but these weapons are a small portion of its complete arsenal. A U.S. embargo would send an important signal to the allies who also supply Saudi Arabia, allowing them to explain participation in the embargo to their own domestic constituencies. This is especially important for countries like France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, that need to export arms to keep their own production lines running. While the research shows that sustaining an arms embargo is often the most difficult step, embargoes can restrain sending states’ arms exports. Even if a U.S. embargo won’t have a direct effect on Saudi Arabia on its own, an embargo is important for building coalitions for a more expansive embargo that could affect Saudi behavior. Beyond signaling, we know U.S. arms sales often end up in the wrong hands, and have been used in Yemen. The Saudi-led war in Yemen has led to starvation conditions, caused thousands of civilian casualties, and has led to the displacement of millions of people. The United Nations estimates that 80 percent of Yemen’s population – 24 million people – require some form of humanitarian or protection assistance, and that the severity of the situation is increasing. Would an arms embargo create meaningful change in Yemen? An initial effect of an embargo is that Saudi Arabia would have to work harder to access war materiel. As Jonathan Caverley noted, more than 60 percent of Saudi Arabia’s arms delivered in the past five years came from the United States. Even if this percentage decreases over time, it will be costly for Saudi Arabia to transition to a primarily Russian- or Chinese-supplied military. Though Saudi Arabia might be willing to pay this cost, it would still have to pay, and take the time to transition to its new weapons systems. This would represent a brief break in hostilities that could facilitate the delivery of aid and assistance in Yemen. The United States could, in theory, impose stricter end-user controls on Saudi Arabia. This would have the advantage of keeping Saudi Arabia within the world of U.S. weapons systems, and might prevent it from diversifying its suppliers, which would ultimately weaken any leverage the United States might have. Longer-term, it would not be to America’s advantage if Saudi Arabia takes a lesson from Turkey, and starts courting Russia as a new arms supplier. It is difficult to enforce end-user controls, since, once a weapon is transferred, the recipient can use it however it wishes. It might also be the case that Saudi Arabia would object to stricter end-user controls, and would seek new suppliers as a result. An arms embargo will not be a panacea. But not doing something sets a problematic precedent, and allows the difficulty of coordinating an arms embargo outweigh the potential benefits of one. An embargo is unlikely to have an immediate effect on Saudi behavior, because an embargo would be a political signal, rather than a blunt instrument of coercion. It will take time for a multilateral embargo to emerge and be put into place, and the United States should work with its allies to help support their ability to participate in the embargo. Not acting, however, would continue to implicitly endorse Saudi behavior, and would make it more difficult for U.S. allies to believe that future threats of an embargo are credible.

## US- Saudi Alliance Bad

### Regional Stability

#### Alliance crushes U.S. Cred and causes Middle East instability – eliminating arms sales is key to rebalancing the region

Lang 19 (Johannes, “Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the Failure of America’s Middle East Policy,” 3-6-19, https://harvardpolitics.com/columns-old/iran-saudi-arabia-and-the-failure-of-americas-middle-east-policy/, ME)

The American national security establishment has been applying double standards to its relationships with Iran and Saudi Arabia. Presidents from Reagan to Trump have denounced Iran as the world’s number one sponsor of terrorism. However, almost all of the 61 groups on the State Department’s terrorist watchlist are funded by the Saudi government, private Saudi donors, or both. While it has fought groups affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood like ISIS and Al-Qaeda, the kingdom has escalated the Syrian civil war by funneling money to extremist organizations like Ahrar Al-Sham and the Al-Nusra Front. Contrary to its image as an anchor of stability, Saudi Arabia, in truth, bears much of the responsibility for the recent uptick in violence and instability in the region. To reinstate embattled Yemeni president Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi against the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels, bin Salman has conducted massive airstrikes on Yemeni territory, indiscriminately targeting schools, hospitals, religious buildings, and civilian infrastructure. The violence has placed 14 million Yemenis at risk of starvation in what the United Nations warns could become “the worst famine in the world in 100 years.” Still, the United States has supported the crown prince’s bloody war with both intelligence and weapons, culminating in a $110 billion arms deal at the 2017 Riyadh Summit. Only a month after the meeting that saw Trump merrily swaying along to a traditional sword dance, the Saudis, emboldened by U.S. support, spearheaded a blockade of oil-rich Qatar in blatant violation of international law. The American Threat According to Trump, however, it is Iran, and not Saudi Arabia, that is sowing “chaos, death, and destruction.” This assessment ignores the importance of fundamental security considerations in shaping states’ behavior. Iran’s foreign policy is guided by fear of the “American devil.” In 1953, the CIA ended Iran’s short flirtation with democracy by deposing the country’s first freely elected prime minister. When George W. Bush, after including Iran in his infamous “axis of evil,” invaded neighboring Iraq in 2003, Iranian elites worried their country would be next. Feeling vulnerable, Iran even privately proposed a “grand bargain” including negotiations on Iran’s nuclear program and its support for Hezbollah and Hamas. “We don’t talk to evil,” replied Vice President Cheney on behalf of the Bush administration’s emboldened neoconservative wing. Fearing American strategic encirclement, Iran has since doubled down on its deterrence strategy and pushed ahead with its nuclear weapons program. Due to its proximity to U.S.-allied Israel, Hezbollah plays a central role in this deterrence strategy, with Syria connecting Iran to its Lebanese proxy fighters. As Saudi Arabia and the United States began to throw their support behind the Syrian opposition, Iran fought back to defend the Assad regime, its most important ally in the region. Two Shaky Pillars There is no good reason, idealistic or realistic, for the divergence in U.S. foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia and Iran. The shale revolution has significantly reduced U.S. dependence on oil imports. Within only eight months in 2014, Saudi oil exports to the United States halved. Today, Washington has no reason to continue its commitment to an alliance that destroys America’s international credibility as a supporter of human rights. In an ideal world, the United States would not have to interact with regimes like Saudi Arabia’s or Iran’s. However, in order to defend its interests in the Middle East, America should engage with both without antagonizing either. From 1969 to 1979, the United States pursued a “two-pillar strategy” in the Middle East, relying on both Iran and Saudi Arabia to uphold order throughout the Middle East. Today, America should return to a similar balancing strategy. Without an American blank check, the Saudis will likely think twice before invading and bullying their neighboring countries and arming radical terrorists. At the same time, assuaging Iran’s fears about drastic American intervention might allow Iran to shift away from its continued reliance upon Hezbollah, Assad, and Shia militias in Iraq. By forcing Iran and Saudi Arabia to the negotiation table, Trump could bring an end to conflicts in Yemen and Syria and the Qatar blockade. Such a rebalancing would no doubt present the most significant change in America’s Middle East policy since 1979. However, given the civil war in Syria, the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, sectarian infighting in Iraq, the terrorist activity of ISIS and Al-Qaeda affiliates, and persistent anti-Americanism throughout the region, it is high time for a change. A new, more balanced foreign policy would be both more fair and more effective in pursuing American interests in the region.

### Iran

#### Alliance escalates Saudi/Iran proxy wars and causes miscalc

Bazzi 17 (Mohamad, Professor of Journalism at NYU “How Trump Is Inflaming the Middle East’s Proxy Wars,” June 9, https://www.thenation.com/article/the-trump-administration-could-provoke-yet-another-mideast-war/, ME)

Aside from his virtually unqualified rhetorical support for Saudi Arabia, Trump announced a package of weapons sales to the kingdom that will total nearly $110 billion over 10 years. Trump and his top aides—especially his son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner, who took a lead role in negotiating parts of the agreement—were quick to claim credit for a massive arms deal that would boost the US economy. But many of the weapons that the Saudis want to buy—including dozens of advanced F-15 fighter jets, Apache attack helicopters, Patriot missile-defense systems, thousands of bombs and other munitions, and hundreds of armored vehicles—were already approved by the Obama administration. From 2009 to 2016, Obama authorized a record $115 billion in military sales to Saudi Arabia, far more than any previous administration. (Of that total, US and Saudi officials inked formal deals worth about $58 billion, and Washington delivered $14 billion worth of weaponry from 2009 to 2015.) With such a large influx of US weapons and Trump’s uncritical support, the emboldened Saudi leadership now sees itself as perfectly aligned with Washington against Iran—and even against a longtime US ally like Qatar, which, in the Saudi view, has been too cozy with Iran. Iran and Saudi Arabia have been fighting a cold war since the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran—and their struggle has only intensified over the past decade. While the conflict is partly rooted in the Sunni-Shiite schism within Islam, it is mainly a struggle for political dominance of the Middle East between Shiite-led Iran and Sunni-led Saudi Arabia. This series of proxy battles—in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, and Bahrain—has shaped the Middle East since the Bush administration invaded Iraq in 2003. The House of Saud rests its legitimacy—and its claim of leadership over the wider Muslim world—on the fact that the kingdom is the home of Islam’s two holiest cities, Mecca and Medina, where the religion was founded. Like his predecessors, King Salman has adopted the title of “Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques,” a reminder of his rule over Islam’s most sacred shrines. This gives the Sauds great convening power in the Muslim world. Because the Saudi regime controls access to the annual hajj—the pilgrimage to Mecca that every pious Muslim must perform at least once in a lifetime—Salman was able to call so many Muslim leaders to Saudi Arabia for Trump’s speech on relatively short notice. These leaders want to stay in the king’s good graces, both to maintain access to hajj visas for their citizens and also because the Sauds dole out money to favored allies. The Sauds, and the Wahhabi clerics who support them, construe political legitimacy on the Islamic concept that Muslims owe obedience to their ruler, as long as he can properly apply Islamic law. This view does not tolerate public dissent or demands for reform. The Sauds also want to associate Islam with its original Arab identity, even though Arabs have been a minority within the religion for centuries. Far more Muslims now live in Asia than in the Arab world—and states like Indonesia and Malaysia offer a more tolerant conception of the faith than the Saudis. While the Saud dynasty views itself as the rightful leader of the Muslim world, Iran has challenged that leadership for decades. Iran’s 1979 Islamic Revolution brought to power a group of clerics led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who vowed to export his rebellion throughout the Muslim world—starting with Saudi Arabia and other Sunni Arab states. Although Saudi Arabia has a Sunni majority, its rulers fear Iran’s potential influence over a sizable and sometimes restive Shiite minority, which is concentrated in the Eastern Province, where most of the kingdom’s oil reserves lie. When Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein invaded Iran in 1980, Saudi Arabia and other Sunni Arab states provided money and support, hoping that Saddam would weaken Iran and force Khomeini and the clerics out of power. (The United States and most Western powers also supported Iraq, selling it weapons and providing intelligence support.) But the Iran-Iraq War dragged on for eight years, killing about 1 million people and crippling both countries. The Saudi-Iranian rivalry continued throughout the 1980s, easing slightly in the 1990s after Saddam invaded neighboring Kuwait and threatened to march into Saudi Arabia. Washington sent half a million troops to the kingdom, using it as a base from which to drive the Iraqis out of Kuwait in 1991. The Saudi-Iranian relationship thawed for nearly decade. But after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the traditional centers of power in the Arab world—Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf states—became more nervous about Iran’s growing influence: its nuclear ambitions, its sway over the fledgling Iraqi government, its support for Islamist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, and its alliance with Assad’s regime in Syria. The conflict with Iran intensified after the Arab uprisings of 2011 when the House of Saud tried to choke off revolutionary momentum in the region. Saudi leaders tended to view all Shiite politicians and factions in the Muslim world as agents of Iran—and they attached an Iranian connection, whether real or imagined, to virtually any regional security issue. After the wave of popular protests forced out dictators in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and eventually Yemen, the Sauds were worried about the revolts spreading to the kingdom. Aside from their anger toward Iran, the Sauds were also enraged by Qatar’s support for the revolutions in Tunisia, Libya, and especially Egypt, where Qatar became a primary backer of the Muslim Brotherhood, which in 2012 won the first free elections in Egypt’s modern history. (Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates later backed an Egyptian military coup, in July 2013, against the government of President Mohamed Morsi, a Brotherhood leader.) The Sauds were already irritated at Qatar for pursuing an independent foreign policy and trying to increase its influence after the regional turmoil unleashed by the US invasion of Iraq. And, like other Arab monarchs and autocrats, the Sauds disdained Qatar’s Al Jazeera satellite network, which was critical of the monarchies and supported the uprisings in 2011. The House of Saud became especially nervous when the Arab revolutions spread to Bahrain, a Shiite-majority country ruled by a Sunni monarchy only 16 miles from Saudi Arabia’s heavily Shiite Eastern Province. The Sauds accused Iran of supporting the Bahrain uprising and in March 2011 sent more than 1,000 troops to help crush the pro-democracy movement there. Saudi Arabia also steered the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council, which was created in 1981 partly to counter Iran, to begin discussions on offering membership to Jordan and Morocco. The two non-Gulf, non-oil-producing Sunni monarchies were invited to join in April 2014, although the process has since stalled. It’s all part of the Saudi-led effort to build a stronger bulwark against Iran. In January 2015, King Abdullah died, after 20 years in power, and was succeeded by his brother Salman, the 79-year-old crown prince who had served as the longtime governor of Riyadh. Instead of relying on US military intervention and battling Iran through proxies and checkbook diplomacy, as his predecessor had done, the new king and his advisers quickly pursued a more aggressive foreign policy: He launched a war against Houthi rebels in Yemen after only two months in power. Salman also appointed his then-29-year-old son as defense minister (and deputy crown prince, making him second-in-line to the throne, after Crown Prince Mohammed bin Nayef) to oversee the Yemen campaign. Yemen, which is rapidly becoming one of the bloodier arenas in the Saudi-Iranian proxy war, is a complex conflict with a shifting set of alliances. The Saudis and their Sunni Arab partners want to restore Yemeni President Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi, a Sunni, to power. The Houthis, who belong to a sect of Shiite Islam called Zaydis, are allied with former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, a longtime dictator who was ousted from power after the Arab uprisings spread to Yemen. Once a Saudi client, Saleh was replaced by Hadi in 2012 under a deal brokered by Riyadh. The Houthis are also allies of Iran, but while the Saudis are quick to label them as Iranian proxies, it’s unclear how much support they actually receive from Tehran. (By comparison, Iran is far more heavily invested in Syria, where it has sent billions of dollars in aid and thousands of troops and Shiite volunteers to fight alongside Assad’s regime.) After two years, Saudi Arabia is bogged down in the Yemen conflict, which by some estimates costs up to $200 million a day. Despite intensive air strikes and a naval blockade, the Saudis and their allies still have not been able to dislodge the Houthis from Yemen’s capital, Sanaa. But the House of Saud—and especially Mohammed bin Salman, the brash 31-year-old deputy crown prince, who has amassed tremendous power under his father’s reign—is reluctant to abandon the war. In the regional proxy conflict, the Saudis view a peace deal with the Houthis as a victory for Iran. Since he took office, Trump has changed his position on many foreign-policy questions. But he’s been consistent on one topic: He and his advisers consider Iran the greatest threat to US interests in the Middle East, and the world’s biggest state sponsor of terrorism. And Trump has surrounded himself with senior officials who view Iran in the same light, including Defense Secretary James Mattis and National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster. Both men commanded US troops in Iraq, and both fought Iranian proxies. Trump’s confrontation with Iran began in his early days in office. On January 29, Iran tested a medium-range ballistic missile—a trial that Iranian officials insisted did not violate a United Nations Security Council resolution that calls on Tehran to refrain from testing weapons that can carry nuclear warheads. But Trump and his advisers jumped on the episode to show that they will take a more aggressive approach. On February 1, Trump’s then–National Security Adviser Michael Flynn declared, “As of today, we are officially putting Iran on notice.” Two days later, the administration imposed new sanctions on 25 people and entities involved in developing Iran’s missile program or helping to support groups that Washington has designated as terrorist organizations. Hours before imposing the sanctions, Trump fired off a series of provocative tweets, including one that warned: “Iran is playing with fire—they don’t appreciate how ‘kind’ President Obama was to them. Not me!” These comments set the framework for the pro-Saudi tilt in US policy and aggressive posture toward Iran. But despite Trump’s tough rhetoric, his administration needs Iran’s cooperation in the military campaign against ISIS, in both Syria and Iraq. Facing ground offensives by local forces backed by US air strikes, the group has suffered significant defeats over the past year, especially in Iraq. ISIS is on the verge of being completely expelled from the northern city of Mosul by Iraqi forces. And in Syria, US-allied rebels have besieged the eastern city of Raqqa, the capital of ISIS’s self-proclaimed caliphate. Iran has a vested interest in fighting ISIS, especially because of the danger it poses to Tehran’s allies in Iraq. After the US invasion ousted Saddam Hussein from power, the Bush administration helped install a Shiite government for the first time in Iraq’s modern history. As US troops got bogged down in fighting an insurgency and containing a civil war, Iran extended its influence over all of Iraq’s major Shiite factions. (Iran helped prolong the civil war by arming and training numerous Shiite militias that targeted American troops and Iraq’s Sunni community.) For the Iranian regime, Iraq provides strategic depth against Saudi Arabia and other Sunni Arab states. Tehran also wants to ensure that Iraq does not pose an existential threat to Iranian interests, as Saddam did when he invaded Iran in 1980. After ISIS militants captured large swaths of northern Iraq in June 2014, including Mosul, Iran helped train and equip tens of thousands of volunteers who joined largely Shiite militias that worked alongside the Iraqi security forces. With a weakened Iraqi military, the militias proved crucial in stopping the Sunni jihadists’ initial advance in 2014. Today, some Iraqi military units work closely with US commanders, especially in the campaign to oust ISIS from Mosul. But Iran still exerts influence over the Popular Mobilization Units, the coalition of militias that is now under the Iraqi government’s control. On April 18, the State Department certified to Congress that Iran was complying with its obligations under the 2015 nuclear agreement. But the next day, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson lashed out at Tehran in a hastily organized press conference, claiming that the nuclear deal “fails to achieve the objective of a non-nuclear Iran.” He then listed Iran’s destabilizing activities in the Middle East and the threat they pose to US interests. He said Trump’s National Security Council would conduct a 90-day review of the nuclear deal, after which it could decide to back away from the agreement or to impose new sanctions on Iran. “The Trump administration has no intention of passing the buck to a future administration on Iran,” Tillerson said. “The evidence is clear. Iran’s provocative actions threaten the United States, the region, and the world.” These threats foreshadowed Trump’s speech in Riyadh—and the administration’s decision to explicitly take Saudi Arabia’s side in an unpredictable and destructive proxy war with Iran. The newly emboldened Saudi leadership has shown—with its war in Yemen and, more recently, its campaign to isolate Qatar—that it can miscalculate and overreach. Without a US administration willing to restrain Saudi ambitions, the proxy war will get worse.

#### Maintaining the alliance bolsters Iranian hegemony and destabilizes the Middle East

Miller 18 (Aaron and Richard, former Middle East analyst at the State Department and adviser in Republican and Democratic administrations, is a vice president and director of the Middle East program at the Woodrow Wilson Center and Sokolsky Senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace “The U.S.-Saudi relationship is worth preserving — but not under the current terms,” October 25, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2018/10/25/the-u-s-saudi-relationship-is-worth-preserving-but-not-under-the-current-terms/?utm\_term=.19352c12e965, ME)

The de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia has left a trail of failed and feckless policies abroad with which the Trump administration is now linked: the kidnapping of the Lebanese prime minister, the prosecution of a disastrous war in Yemen that has become the world’s greatest humanitarian disaster, and an ill-conceived boycott of Qatar that has made it more difficult to form a united Gulf state front against Iran and, like the war in Yemen, has only enhanced Iranian influence. At home, under the cover of several important social and economic reforms (including the decision to allow women to drive and a crackdown on the religious police) MBS has shown a darker and ruthless side — brooking no dissent; arresting journalists, civil society bloggers and women activists from the driving campaign; and imprisoning and bilking wealthy Saudis in the “shaikhdown” at the Ritz-Carlton. The killing of Khashoggi reflects the culmination of a pattern of destructive MBS policies that the Trump administration has either ignored, enabled or supported through acquiescence or silence. Worse still, the president and his son-in-law Jared Kushner’s approach to Saudi Arabia has been based on magical thinking. Far from being a catalyst in containing Iran or taking a lead role in Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking, MBS’s policies in Qatar and Yemen have enlarged Tehran’s room to maneuver. King Salman had to walk back his son’s enthusiastic support for the president’s peace plan. The administration might very well get some Saudi help to dampen upward pressure on oil prices when new U.S. sanctions on Iran remove oil from the market, but this will surely benefit Saudi Arabia and is anchored in Saudi Arabia’s own national interest. The challenge isn’t just punishing Saudi Arabia for killing a journalist. The Saudis have been undermining U.S. interests, too. We need to take steps to rebalance what has become a one-sided, dysfunctional relationship. The administration should start by freezing senior-level contacts with the kingdom, beginning with MBS, for a period of time to send an unmistakable signal that it is losing confidence in the crown prince. Washington should also suspend support for the Saudi air campaign in Yemen — a misadventure that is seen as MBS’s war — and press Riyadh to show greater flexibility toward a U.N.-brokered political solution. There is also no reason that the United States should not speak out against MBS’s repressive policies at home, which over time could accelerate instability in Saudi Arabia. And if it’s proved that MBS was involved in Khashoggi’s murder, additional steps such as freezing assets, travel bans and suspension of arms sales should be considered. This is a critical inflection point in U.S.-Saudi relations. MBS could conceivably rule Saudi Arabia for 50 years. The United States has a strong stake in supporting a wise, prudent and reform-minded leader; it most certainly doesn’t have an interest in being used and abused by a reckless authoritarian who seems bent on repressing his own citizens, killing his opponents, destabilizing the region and undermining American interests and values in the process.

### No Link – AT: Shift

#### A shift to another country would be extremely difficult – much of Saudi Arabia’s military only works with American tech.

**Emmons 19** (4-14 Alex Emmons is a reporter covering national security, foreign affairs, human rights, and politics. Prior to joining The Intercept, he worked for Amnesty International and the American Civil Liberties Union on their campaigns against targeted killing, mass surveillance, and Guantánamo Bay. “SECRET REPORT REVEALS SAUDI INCOMPETENCE AND WIDESPREAD USE OF U.S. WEAPONS IN YEMEN”, <https://theintercept.com/2019/04/15/saudi-weapons-yemen-us-france/>)

SINCE THE BRUTAL murder of Saudi dissident and Washington Post contributor Jamal Khashoggi last October, Congress has increasingly pressured the Trump administration to stop backing the Saudi Arabia-led coalition fighting in Yemen and halt U.S. arms sales to Riyadh. In response, President Donald Trump has repeatedly said that if the U.S. does not sell weapons to the Saudis, they will turn to U.S. adversaries to supply their arsenals. “I don’t like the concept of stopping an investment of $110 billion into the United States,” Trump told reporters in October, referring to a collection of intent letters signed with the Saudis in the early months of his presidency. “You know what they are going to do? They’re going to take that money and spend it in Russia or China or someplace else.” But a highly classified document produced by the French Directorate of Military Intelligence shows that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are overwhelmingly dependent on Western-produced weapon systems to wage their devastating war in Yemen. Many of the systems listed are only compatible with munitions, spare parts, and communications systems produced in NATO countries, meaning that the Saudis and UAE would have to replace large portions of their arsenals to continue with Russian or Chinese weapons. “You can’t just swap out the missiles that are used in U.S. planes for suddenly using Chinese and Russian missiles,” said Rachel Stohl, managing director of the Conventional Defense Program at the Stimson Center in Washington, D.C. “It takes decades to build your air force. It’s not something you do in one fell swoop.”

## Impact Answers

### No Impact – Alliance Fails

#### The alliance fails – empirics go aff – reject their alarmist impact evidence

DePetris 18 (Daniel, fellow at Defense Priorities, a nonpartisan foreign-policy organization focused on promoting security, stability and peace “Three Ways to Rethink the U.S.-Saudi Arabian Alliance,” December 6, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/three-ways-rethink-us-saudi-arabian-alliance-38052, ME)

With Riyadh’s culpability in the murder increasingly apparent, there is another mysterious question that deserves an answer: why does President Donald Trump continue to refer to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a strategic ally of the United States? Addressing reporters on November 17 en route to California, Trump called the Saudis “a great ally” in the Middle East and a “truly spectacular ally in terms of jobs and economic development.” Nothing could be further from reality. Saudi Arabia is not an ally the United States can depend on, nor has it proven to be an especially helpful security partner either. Saudi Arabia, rather, is a nation with its own unique set of national interests, some of which align with America but many of which do not. The sooner the Trump administration sees the U.S.-Saudi relationship for what it is—and equally important, what it is not—the sooner Washington can undertake the strategic reassessment that is urgently required and long past due. For decades, the American people have been sold by their leaders the idea that U.S.-Saudi ties being indispensable to the security of the U.S. homeland and a vital facet of promoting peace in the Middle East. With a few notable exceptions—Harvard University Professor Stephen Walt and former U.S. Ambassador to Riyadh Chas Freeman among them—the foreign policy intelligentsia and commentariat have eagerly served as the messenger of this hypothesis. U.S. administrations across the political divide have reflexively viewed the Saudis as integral to containing Iranian power in the Middle East, stabilizing energy prices during gluts in the energy market, and providing America with instrumental information on terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. Most of these arguments, however, are hyped, exaggerated, and inaccurate. Riyadh’s behavior is as clear an indication as any that, far from being the amazing ally the foreign policy establishment frequently claims, the Kingdom is at best a nettlesome, half-hearted partner on very specific issues of common interest. Concerning stabilizing the oil market, the Saudis have a mixed record. Riyadh’s motivation in maintaining stability in the market has nothing to do with being a good friend to America and everything to do with Riyadh’s economic interest. A country that depends on oil returns to pad its budget, build up its foreign exchange reserves, and finance its national subsidies on everything from gasoline and food to housing can’t afford a long period of low profits. If prices rise too high over an extended period, the Kingdom will increase crude exports to preserve market share and assure that overseas buyers don’t switch suppliers. The Saudis do so not as a favor to the American consumer but rather as a necessity their bottom-line. Moreover, the Kingdom’s role as a force multiplier for the United States is also vastly overstated. The facts belie the idea of Riyadh as a stabilizing force in the Middle East. Since Mohammed bin Salman was named Defense Minister in 2015 and ascended to second-in-line to the throne in 2017, Saudi Arabia has been as destabilizing to the region’s security and politics as its Iranian archenemy. In fact, Saudi foreign policy under the reign of Crown Prince Mohammed has been an unending series of humanitarian debacles punctuated by strategic recklessness. For instance, Riyadh’s three and a half year air campaign in Yemen has failed in its primary military objective of pushing the Houthis out of the Yemeni capital and back into the northern highlands. Instead, Saudi (and Emirati) bombing has transformed Yemen into hell on earth, where small children die of disease and starvation every day, weddings are turned into funerals, food is enormously expensive, and the country’s economy is insolvent. The Saudi-led political isolation and economic blockade of Qatar, meant to force Doha to sever relations with Iran, has only solidified ties between both. The kidnapping and forced resignation of the Lebanese prime minister earlier in the year—later taken back upon his release under French pressure—was an international embarrassment, giving further proof to MbS’s highly impulsive decision-making. Finally, there is now the state-sanctioned murder of a permanent American resident and journalist, apparently on the orders of the Crown Prince. This has exposed the Saudi government’s true nature to the world: that of an authoritarian system run by fear of dissent, self-interest, and paranoia. Amidst all of these developments, Washington can no longer drag its feet or offer more explanations to excuse the Kingdom’s poor judgment. A bipartisan majority in the U.S. Senate is finally coming around to that judgment, having voted last week to move forward with a bill that would remove U.S. military forces from Yemen’s civil war. The vote in the Senate came several weeks after the Trump administration’s recent decision to terminate mid-air refueling support to Saudi jets in Yemen, is a long overdue but welcome change of course. But U.S. policy would benefit from a hard-nosed, uncensored reappraisal of the entire decades-old U.S.-Saudi relationship. First, President Trump must stop posing as the unofficial spokesperson to Crown Prince Mohammed, a man who has done more damage to the Kingdom’s international reputation than the fifteen Saudi nationals who executed the 9/11 terrorist attacks on America. While cutting diplomatic, intelligence, and trade ties with Riyadh would certainly be a mistake, so would continuing to cast MbS as a reformer in an otherwise dark region. Second, the administration must put its relationship with Riyadh in a more accurate context. Preserving conditional ties with the Saudis may be prudent, but viewing U.S.-Saudi relations as too big to fail is a gross misreading of the situation. Tying American power and prestige to the hip of Saudi Arabia severely diminishes America’s diplomatic flexibility. Additionally, viewing Riyadh in such a light gifts Saudi Arabia with far more leverage than it is entitled to. That leverage opens up Washington to military interventions in the region—like the civil war in Yemen—that the United States has no national security justification participating in. Third, President Trump must view the Kingdom for what it is rather than what he wishes it to be. It’s not an ally on the same threshold as the United Kingdom, France, Canada, or Australia, and it shouldn’t be given the distinction of being one. Bluntly put, Saudi Arabia is a country like most of its neighbors: despotic and highly repressive to all forms of dissent, but one the United States may have to collaborate within certain instances. If there is any good that can come out of Mohammed bin Salman’s disastrous reign as Saudi Arabia’s de facto ruler, it’s that the Crown Prince’s bungling and extremely poor judgment will shock U.S. lawmakers and policymakers into reality. The sooner Washington recalibrates its relationship with the Kingdom, the better off America—and the region—will be.

#### The alliance doesn’t solve – it dramatically increases “risk by association”

Metz 19 (Steven, “It’s Time for America to Downgrade Its Alliance With Saudi Arabia,” 3-22-19 https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/27680/it-s-time-for-america-to-downgrade-its-alliance-with-saudi-arabia, ME)

For many decades, shared fears of common enemies—from the Soviets to the Iranians, Saddam Hussein and extremist movements like al-Qaida and the Islamic State—pushed America and Saudi Arabia into an uneasy embrace. But today that calculus is no longer enough to sustain their alliance. For the United States, the strategic costs of the Saudi relationship have come to outweigh the benefits, as the tensions and unnaturalness of the partnership make it increasingly intolerable. The U.S. relationship with Saudi Arabia can be traced back to the 1930s, when the kingdom first began producing petroleum. By the 1970s, Saudi Arabia was an integral part of a broad American effort to prevent Soviet domination of the Middle East and protect Western access to Gulf oil. The Iranian revolution in 1979 broadened the definition of regional stability for both the United States and Saudi Arabia, adding fear of revolution from within Gulf nations to the external threat from the Soviet Union. After the end of the Cold War, Washington and Riyadh simply shifted their focus to Iran and to Saddam Hussein in Iraq—both opponents of the Saudi-led and American-backed regional order. Along the way, the U.S.-Saudi relationship became primarily a military one, with the United States providing training, logistics and intelligence support, and the Saudis buying significant amounts of American military equipment, thus making the U.S. military and defense industry staunch backers of the partnership. Ironically, the rise of violent, transnational Islamist extremism, led first by al-Qaida and later by the Islamic State, both solidified the U.S.-Saudi relationship and amplified its fissures. While Riyadh never intended to create revolutionary movements like al-Qaida and the Islamic State, its aggressive efforts to spread its deeply conservative Wahhabist strain of Islam inadvertently set the stage for extremist ideologues like Osama bin Laden. Unlike the Soviet or Iranian threats, violent Islamist extremism emerged from within Saudi Arabia, as demonstrated by the fact that most of the 9/11 hijackers and many of the foreign fighters in the Iraqi insurgency were Saudis. In reality, though, the U.S.-Saudi relationship was always fragile. Unlike the natural partnerships between the United States and fellow democracies, the ties between Washington and Riyadh were a marriage of convenience that discomforted both sides. The only glue was the idea that the “enemy of my enemy is my friend.” America’s connection with Saudi Arabia hasn’t been with a nation or its people, but with the ruling House of Saud. This brings risk by association. After all, the roots of Iran’s vehement anti-Americanism arose from Washington’s support for the repressive regime of the Shah. While the House of Saud has been more successful at staving off internal dissent than the Shah was—at least so far—there is a chance that its ossification, corruption and repression will bring it down. If so, whatever new regime emerges is likely to be stridently anti-American, if the rhetoric of Wahhabist preachers in Saudi Arabia is any indication. U.S. strategy in the Middle East, then, is no more resilient than the House of Saud. And that’s a frightening position to be in. The risks by association have increased in recent years as Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has gained power in the Saudi royal court. He has reportedly pushed repression of dissent to new, more violent levels, authorizing the surveillance, kidnapping, detention and torture of the regime’s critics, most notoriously journalist Jamal Khashoggi, who was killed in the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul. Despite grumblings from Congress, the Trump administration continues its embrace of the crown prince, who has especially close ties with Jared Kushner, President Donald Trump’s son-in-law and White House adviser. Saudi Arabia’s increasingly assertive and heavy-handed policy toward its neighbors also puts the United States in a difficult position. Ongoing friction between Saudi Arabia and Qatar threatens to destroy the regional Gulf Cooperation Council, which the United States has long supported. Riyadh continues a military campaign against Iranian-backed Houthis in neighboring Yemen that has created and sustained a horrific humanitarian crisis in the Arab world’s poorest country. Congress is likely to pass a resolution calling for an end to U.S. support for the war in Yemen, but as a Washington Post editorial this week put it, “The resolution is subject to a presidential veto that is unlikely to be overridden. The administration shows no sign of retreating from its fervent embrace of the Saudi regime, despite its reckless and destructive adventurism.” At this point, the Trump administration remains wedded to old notions underpinning the U.S.-Saudi alliance. The administration’s approach to the Gulf seems to be oriented around two goals: generating American arms sales and doing anything that harms, weakens or vexes Iran. Trump has not offered an overarching vision of a better, more secure Gulf region beyond declarations about defeating the Islamic State and “rolling back” Iranian influence. While administration officials like Secretary of State Mike Pompeo say that they have raised U.S. concerns about domestic repression and regional strategy with the Saudis, there is little indication that this is having any effect. Clearly, its partnership with the United States no longer moderates Saudi Arabia’s behavior, with a young crown prince pursuing a reckless agenda. The costs and long-term risks of the U.S. partnership with Saudi Arabia now outweigh the benefits. “Saudi Arabia isn’t our ally, and Saudi Arabia under Mohammed bin Salman is a regional menace and a liability,” Daniel Larison wrote recently in The American Conservative. “The sooner that the U.S. cuts off its reckless client, the better it will be for U.S. national interests.” In the broadest sense, America’s global network of security partnerships is a legacy of the Cold War and its immediate aftermath. Now decades old, it needs a redesign. The United States must move beyond the notion that the “enemy of my enemy is my friend” and emphasize natural security partnerships based on shared values, perspectives and priorities, which are particularly pressing in the Middle East. As Daniel DePetris of Defense Priorities put it, “The time has come for the United States to undergo a strategic re-evaluation of its relationship with Riyadh.”

#### **The alliance fails and encourages regional aggression and terrorism.**

Al-Rasheed 17 [Madawi Al-Rasheed is a visiting professor at the Middle East Centre at the London School of Economics and former research fellow at the Open Society Foundation, IQ2US Debates, 8-1-2017, "The Special U.S.-Saudi Relationship Has Outlived Its Usefulness," https://www.intelligencesquaredus.org/debates/special-us-saudi-relationship-has-outlived-its-usefulness]

I will argue that the U.S.-Saudi relationship has indeed outlived its usefulness. In support of the motion I will cover the domestic and regional considerations, and my partner, Ambassador Mark Lagon, will cover the subsequently the international and global aspects of the bilateral relationship. Before I get started I'd like to make an important point. The domestic consideration that I will consider today cannot be discussed in isolation as some would have it, internal matters of for Saudi Arabia are not really for the country itself. We live in a global world and so many things are interconnected from terrorism to oil. We can't isolate the domestic from the international; however, we have a very good division of labor between the two of us and I will cover the first part of this debate and it deals with internal dynamics.

So, one thing to remember is that whatever happens inside Saudi Arabia does not stay within the borders of Saudi Arabia and has implication for the U.S. and also for that matter the whole world. The U.S.-Saudi relationship was dubbed from the very beginning as a special relationship. From the moment American President Roosevelt met King ibn Saud, the founder of Saudi Arabia on the 14th of February 1945. At the core of this relationship were two issues. First, oil and second one is security. The special relationship meant that the U.S. offered Saudi Arabia uncritical, unequivocal, and unconditional support for more than seven decades.

We will argue that this is no longer in the U.S.'s best national interest. Let me just explain how this relationship developed. In the 1960s, Saudi Arabia was a very useful ally during the cold war. Its oil wealth, its strategic location -- and believe it or not, its conservative Islamic tradition -- all helped to defend against, and ultimately defeat, nationalism and communism, not only in the Arab world, but also in the Muslim world in general. This special relationship meant that Saudi Arabia became important for the U.S., and even more so, after 1979. So, why 1979?

Remember, in 1979, the main ally of the U.S., the Shah of Iran, was toppled. And we get to the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. And at that moment, U.S.-Iranian relations became extremely difficult and hostile. And in fact, they have never been resolved until the present day. It is still a troubled relationship. So, the U.S. decided to put all its baskets in the -- all its eggs, sorry -- in the Saudi basket. And therefore, this relationship became even more special. And we leave that moment to come to Afghanistan in the 1980s. And here, the U.S.-Saudi alliance became extremely important. And also, Saudi Arabia used its conservative Islam in order to start what is regarded today as the menace -- and the menace is the global jihadi movement that brewed in the caves of Afghanistan.

But then it spread across the globe, and I do not need to remind you of the details. Today, this special relationship has become counterproductive. Unconditional U.S. support for this absolute monarchy is now against U.S. national interests. The absolute monarchy of Saudi Arabia has become difficult to sustain. First, this regime oppresses its own people, marginalizes women, discriminates against religious minorities, spreads lethal conservative religious ideology, interferes in domestic affairs of its neighbors, and aspires to become a hawkish regional superpower.

This doesn't help U.S. interests, but actually harms them. Unconditional U.S. support legitimizes the regime and authoritarianism, and makes the U.S. vulnerable to accusations of double standards -- supporting dictatorship in one country while promoting human rights and democracy in other countries. More than that -- since 9/11, many Americans have asked legitimate questions. Given that 15 out of 19 hijackers were Saudis, Americans began to ask, "Are Saudis our friends or foe?" This was a legitimate question, given that Saudi Arabia spawned more than three-quarters of the terrorists who perpetrated the most horrific acts against America in modern history.

#### **Alliance isn’t key to stability – war’s unlikely anyway.**

Lagon 17 [Mark P. Lagon is a Centennial Fellow and Distinguished Senior Scholar in the Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, IQ2US Debates, 8-1-2017, "The Special U.S.-Saudi Relationship Has Outlived Its Usefulness," https://www.intelligencesquaredus.org/debates/special-us-saudi-relationship-has-outlived-its-usefulness]

But for a number of reasons, the United States can remain an important military guarantor of stability and access to oil in the region without having an utterly unconditional relationship with Saudi Arabia. The likelihood of overthrow of the regime is not great. Our counterparts here in the debate will probably argue that it's a fairly stable regime. And there isn't reason to think that there's going to be major war teen the regional powers or even a bad actor like Iran wanting to cut off the oil supply entirely. Second argument: Unconditional backing undercuts U.S. global credibility. This is a government, for instance, that stones, lashes, beheads people. It's executed over 150 people each of the last two years without due process. And internationally, the Saudis have engaged in harming civilians terribly in their escapades in Yemen, killing some 6,000 people in Yemen in the initial months of intervening to try and change the government to be more to its liking there.

### No Impact – Iran Aggression

#### No Iran expansion – aggression is rhetoric for the public—no capabilities or motive

Shahram Chubin 14, nonresident senior associate in the Carnegie Nuclear Policy Program, former director of studies at the Geneva Centre for Security Studies, 3/31/14, Is Iran a Military Threat?, Survival: Global Politics and Strategy, Volume 56 Issue 2,http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00396338.2014.901733#tabModule)

Even in 2012, the year in which a flurry of threats and warnings suggested that an attack should be expected, Israeli journalist Zvi Bar'el noted that Tehran's focus was on domestic politics.29 Deterring a major attack, whatever its likelihood, is less difficult than deterring a limited (conventional) attack. In the case of a major assault, the attacker can expect a significant response, which may act as a deterrent. But in the case of a lesser attack, the intended target must seek to promise a major response if its threat is to have any value as a deterrent. In doing so, they have taken seriously Sun Tzu's admonition to defeat the enemy's strategy, and Carl von Clausewitz's advice to target the opponent's ‘centre of gravity’. Washington's strategy is one of strategic coercion, threatening military action to achieve Iran's nuclear disarmament. The American centre of gravity, or weak point, is political support for a war, especially another prolonged conflict.30¶ To deflect US pressure, Iran has sought to raise the stakes and underline the risks of an attack, depicting such action as leading to a prolonged conflict with unpredictable repercussions for uncertain results. Iranian leaders have stressed the certainty of a retaliatory response, differentiating Iran from Iraq, Libya and Syria. They have stated that they do not distinguish between a limited strike and any other form of attack: ‘any action against the Islamic Republic of Iran at any time, regardless of who the perpetrator is, will be interpreted … as an action against the existence of the Islamic Republic’, said Shamkhani in 2003.31 He later reiterated this, stating that Iran would respond to military action with ‘all our force’ and that the retaliation would be ‘unlimited by time and space’.32¶ Iran's attempts to deter an attack have led to threats to: prolong any war, giving the aggressor no assurance of a rapid conclusion; widen hostilities by attacking US bases in the region and the local states hosting those bases, such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia; interrupt oil traffic in the Persian Gulf, with the implied threat to the global economy; and expand hostilities to include targets outside of the Middle East. Such threats have been consistent, and underscored by frequent military exercises. Even in the most extreme statements directed at Israel, warning of devastating responses that might destroy the state, Iranian policymakers have consistently stressed that such action would occur in retaliation for an attack and not as part of an offensive strategy.33¶ Carrying out these threats would be problematic. Targeting US forces would be inviting escalation in which Iran does not possess dominance. Targeting US allies, such as Saudi Arabia, with missiles would not be as simple as is implied, nor would stopping the oil flow in the Persian Gulf be quite as easy as it may appear.34 Secondly, such action may be counterproductive; consider the prolonged suspension of oil shipments on which Iran is dependent for revenue. Similarly, threatening neighbours who facilitate a US strike is very different to attacking them and risking their more or less permanent enmity. As it may be unwise to carry out threats intended to deter an attack, there is bound to be an element of bluff in any such warnings.35¶ Tehran's most attractive options, should its deterrent threats fail, are mainly political: expulsion of International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors, withdrawal from the Non-Proliferation Treaty and continuation of its portrayal of Iran as a victim. The most likely Iranian military response would be to treat an attack as sponsored by Israel and to retaliate through Hizbullah or Hamas by loosing a barrage of rockets into Israeli territory.36 Tehran has shown a willingness to counter US and Israeli threats by standing up to them, and fashioning its military doctrine accordingly, but it has displayed no inclination to challenge those states directly or provide a pretext for military action.

#### Iran is rational and defensive

Foust and Gold3-14 12Foust is a fellow at the American Security Project specializing in asymmetric operations. Gold is a defense and security policy analyst and intern at the American Security Project. He is pursuing a master’s degree at American University in international relations and U.S. foreign policy.Gen. Dempsey is right about Iran By Joshua Foust and Bryan Gold, American Security Project - 03/14/12 12:00 AM ET http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/foreign-policy/215833-gen-dempsey-is-right-about-iran

Last month, Gen. Martin Dempsey, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated that he believed two things: it is not prudent to attack Iran at this point and he believes Iran is a rational actor that is weighing options and calculating decisions. Since then, Dempsey has been the subject of increasing criticism, and Monday, MSNBC’s Joe Scarborough implied Dempsey was unfit for command because his views on Iran were “disqualifying of a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.” These accusations are both unfair and untrue. Gen. Dempsey is right: Iran is a rational actor, and as such, they are making decisions on what they believe are the best options for their country. All of Iran’s foreign policy decisions have fit within the rational framework of improving their national defense and increasing regional influence. It is clear that Supreme Leader Khamenei believes that the goal for United States’ sanctions against Iran is not the removal of the nuclear program but the destruction of the regime itself. Because of this belief, and the perceived dangers that the United States presents to Iran, Iran maintains strong relationships with Hezbollah and Syria, continues to improve its indigenous nuclear program, and retains potent asymmetrical warfare capabilities. Iran’s strategic environment sets the framework for its foreign policy. Since its modern founding as an Islamic Republic in 1979, Iran has been living in a dangerous neighborhood. It is currently within striking distance by American forces in Afghanistan, the Persian Gulf, Bahrain, and until recently, Iraq. It lives within an F-15 flight of Saudi Arabia and its U.S.-equipped military, and Israel, which has shown its willingness to strike at other countries when it feels threatened. Its military is underfunded and ill-equipped. Its economy, shattered by years of sanctions, is on the verge of collapse. And some in the United States and Israel, have been trumpeting the dangers emanating from Iran and the possibility of military strikes. It is no wonder then that Iran has decided to develop its nuclear program and ally itself with nefarious terrorist groups and bloodthirsty dictators. Iran’s alliance with non-state actors like Hezbollah, and dictators like Bashar al-Assad in Syria reflects not an irrational mindset, but Iran’s inability to project military power beyond its borders. In order to counter the United States’ overwhelming conventional military power, Iran maintains strong relationships with irregular forces and unsavory characters, giving it a retaliatory option for striking back if attacked. These efforts can be seen as low-cost means for Iran to project both power and influence in the region. Similarly, Iran’s reliance on the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps’ shadowy Quds Force demonstrates Iran’s focus on countering US power with irregular warfare. Iran’s nuclear program can also been seen to serve as a safety mechanism to discourage invasion or attack. Even though, as intelligence sources demonstrate, the government has not yet made a decision to create a weapon, many in Iran could suggest a country with nuclear weapons is less vulnerable attack than a country without nuclear weapons. It has looked carefully at the fall of the Qaddafi regime in Libya, which gave up its nuclear “program”. Iran understands that to deter an attack on its soil and ensure the survival of the regime it must be strong, and there is no stronger a deterrent than a nuclear weapon. Gen. Dempsey’s critics are wrong, Iran is not a radical, messianic, suicidal, and irrational rouge state, but one that realizes the danger of its strategic environment and is attempting, through its nuclear program and connections with non-state actors, to defend itself against overwhelming conventional force. They believe, rightly or wrongly, the United States is not trying to remove its nuclear program, but to remove the regime. And to protect itself, Iran could see, rationally speaking, the value of a nuclear program that is capable of producing a nuclear weapon as deterrence. Dempsey understands this, and it is his duty to convey his understanding to the president and the American people. Many in the United States are unable to see that the rationality behind their strategic moves is self-interest, just like any other rational actor in the world. Iran is making logical decisions according to its worldview, not ours. When you look at the situation through their eyes, their decisions are perfectly rational. When we understand this, we can create real opportunities to effect the changes we want.

#### No war--Iran knows it won’t win

 Yevgeny Satanovsky, President of the Institute for Middle Eastern Studies 8/16/10 Israeli-Palestinian tensions – prelude to the war against Iran http://en.rian.ru/analysis/20100816/160222712.html

Recently Iran has been waging a proxy war against Israel, using the Arabs as its intermediaries. The two most recent military campaigns attest to this: the second Lebanese war and the Cast Lead operation in Gaza. These were actually Iranian-Israeli wars. Iran always tries to wage its wars on foreign soil and with minimal losses for itself. It doesn’t care that Arab fighters were killed in these hostilities – the important thing is that no Iranian lives were lost. Today Iran is also at war with Egypt and Saudi Arabia. And in this case Israel is just a pretext for rallying behind Ayatollah Khamenei, who has proclaimed himself the main challenger to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, whose recent re-election caused turmoil in the Islamic Republic. But Iran will never take on Saudi Arabia or Egypt in a one-to-one fight.

### No Impact – Middle East War

#### Middle Eastern countries have incentives to not escalate instability

Maloney and Takeyh 7 [Susan Maloney and Ray Takeyh, 6/28/2007. Senior fellow for Middle East Policy at the Saban Center for Middle East Studies at the Brookings Institution and senior fellow for Middle East Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. “Why the Iraq War Won’t Engulf the Mideast,” International Herald Tribune, [http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2007/0628iraq\_maloney.aspx].//](http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2007/0628iraq_maloney.aspx%5D.//)

Yet, the Saudis, Iranians, Jordanians, Syrians, and others are very unlikely to go to war either to protect their own sect or ethnic group or to prevent one country from gaining the upper hand in Iraq. The reasons are fairly straightforward. First, Middle Eastern leaders, like politicians everywhere, are primarily interested in one thing: self-preservation. Committing forces to Iraq is an inherently risky proposition, which, if the conflict went badly, could threaten domestic political stability. Moreover, most Arab armies are geared toward regime protection rather than projecting power and thus have little capability for sending troops to Iraq. Second, there is cause for concern about the so-called blowback scenario in which jihadis returning from Iraq destabilize their home countries, plunging the region into conflict. Middle Eastern leaders are preparing for this possibility. Unlike in the 1990s, when Arab fighters in the Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union returned to Algeria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia and became a source of instability, Arab security services are being vigilant about who is coming in and going from their countries. In the last month, the Saudi government has arrested approximately 200 people suspected of ties with militants. Riyadh is also building a 700 kilometer wall along part of its frontier with Iraq in order to keep militants out of the kingdom. Finally, there is no precedent for Arab leaders to commit forces to conflicts in which they are not directly involved. The Iraqis and the Saudis did send small contingents to fight the Israelis in 1948 and 1967, but they were either ineffective or never made it. In the 1970s and 1980s, Arab countries other than Syria, which had a compelling interest in establishing its hegemony over Lebanon, never committed forces either to protect the Lebanese from the Israelis or from other Lebanese. The civil war in Lebanon was regarded as someone else's fight. Indeed, this is the way many leaders view the current situation in Iraq. To Cairo, Amman and Riyadh, the situation in Iraq is worrisome, but in the end it is an Iraqi and American fight. As far as Iranian mullahs are concerned, they have long preferred to press their interests through proxies as opposed to direct engagement. At a time when Tehran has access and influence over powerful Shiite militias, a massive cross-border incursion is both unlikely and unnecessary. So Iraqis will remain locked in a sectarian and ethnic struggle that outside powers may abet, but will remain within the borders of Iraq. The Middle East is a region both prone and accustomed to civil wars. But given its experience with ambiguous conflicts, the region has also developed an intuitive ability to contain its civil strife and prevent local conflicts from enveloping the entire Middle East.

#### No Middle Eastern conflict escalation – empirics prove

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No matter what the outcome in Iraq, the region is not likely to devolve into chaos. Although it might seem counter-intuitive, by most traditional meas- ures the Middle East is very stable. Continuous, uninterrupted governance is the norm, not the exception; most Middle East regimes have been in power for decades. Its monarchies, from Morocco to Jordan to every Gulf state, have generally been in power since these countries gained independence. In Egypt Hosni Mubarak has ruled for almost three decades, and Muammar Gadhafi in Libya for almost four. The region’s autocrats have been more likely to die quiet, natural deaths than meet the hangman or post-coup firing squads. Saddam’s rather unpredictable regime, which attacked its neighbours twice, was one of the few exceptions to this pattern of stability, and he met an end unusual for the modern Middle East. Its regimes have survived potentially destabilising shocks before, and they would be likely to do so again. The region actually experiences very little cross-border warfare, and even less since the end of the Cold War. Saddam again provided an exception, as did the Israelis, with their adventures in Lebanon. Israel fought four wars with neighbouring states in the first 25 years of its existence, but none in the 34 years since. Vicious civil wars that once engulfed Lebanon and Algeria have gone quiet, and its ethnic conflicts do not make the region particularly unique. The biggest risk of an American withdrawal is intensified civil war in Iraq rather than regional conflagration. Iraq’s neighbours will likely not prove eager to fight each other to determine who gets to be the next country to spend itself into penury propping up an unpopular puppet regime next door. As much as the Saudis and Iranians may threaten to intervene on behalf of their co- religionists, they have shown no eagerness to replace the counter-insurgency role that American troops play today. If the United States, with its remarkable military and unlimited resources, could not bring about its desired solutions in Iraq, why would any other country think it could do so?17 Common interest, not the presence of the US military, provides the ultimate foundation for stability. All ruling regimes in the Middle East share a common (and understandable) fear of instability. It is the interest of every actor – the Iraqis, their neighbours and the rest of the world – to see a stable, functioning government emerge in Iraq. If the United States were to withdraw, increased regional cooperation to address that common interest is far more likely than outright warfare. Even a Turkish invasion of the north is hardly inevitable. Withdrawal from Iraq would, after all, hardly rob the United States of all its tools with which to influence events. Washington and the rest of NATO still wield significant influence over Ankara; a cross-border invasion would almost certainly doom Turkey’s prospects of entering the European Union. It is puzzling why anyone would think that no incentive structure could be devised to convince Turkey not to attack its neighbour. Should such an assault prove undeterrable, it is not clear that intervention would be in the strategic interest of the United States. One of the worst sug- gestions that occasionally surfaces in the withdrawal debate is that the United States should ‘redeploy’ troops to Kurdistan in northern Iraq, in order to ‘deter’ Turkey and reward its Kurdish allies.18 Such a move would allow a continuation of what amounts to state-sponsored terrorism, and risk embroiling the United States in yet another local, intractable conflict. The removal of de facto US pro- tection would presumably encourage the Kurds to act more responsibly toward their more powerful neighbours, and may well prove to be good for stability. Clearly, elements in Kurdistan actively support Kurdistan Workers’ Party ter- rorists in Turkey, but that would change if they faced the possibility of paying a price for their behaviour. A regional descent into the whirlwind following a US withdrawal cannot be ruled out; using that logic, neither can benevolent transitions to democracy. Just because a scenario is imaginable does not make it likely. In fact, most of the chaotic outcomes pessimists predict require unprecedented breaks with the past. Since the United States has historically overestimated the threats it faces, there is every reason to believe that it is doing so again.