Feeling at Peace

Emotions in Saudi Arabia`s relations to Iran

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Abstract

Emotions in theories of international relations have gained prominence the past years, but this is still an underdeveloped and neglected contribution in understanding relations between states. Daniel Shapiro (2010) has developed a theory in the cross section of international relations and cognitive theory. His Relational Identity Theory highlights important implications of emotional concerns that a group experiences towards another group. The rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran has gained prominence the past years, and have far-reaching implications for the region. The Saudi relation to Iran therefore serves as a useful and interesting case for investigating how one can apply the relational identity theory to better understand a case. This thesis investigates how the study of emotions in international relations can help us understand Saudi relations to Iran between 2011 and 2014 in a new way beyond traditional theories of international relations. It examines the official Saudi discourse on Iran to illuminate the type of emotional concerns that are embedded in the discourse, and what preconditions and possible changes for Saudi foreign policy this entails. The relational identity theory explains that the implications of these emotional concerns frame the regional environment in such a way that the Saudi political elite is facing strong incentives to disregard cooperation and prospects of mutual gains with Iran. Based on the official discourse and the practical application of the theory, the Saudi elite is rather drawn in a direction of polarization, isolation, a greater acceptance of violence and a greater likelihood of misinterpretations when it comes to dealing with Iran. This case study shows in a very concrete how the relational identity theory can be applied, and what additional information can be gained from such a study.

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Introduction

International relations have traditionally been a field of study dominated by rationalist accounts of how power, interests and values shape foreign policy and relations between states. Emotions as a factor have largely been left out of the analysis either because it is not thought to have any influence or because the concept is too vague and elusive to be subjected to any scientific, rigorous analysis. Contrary to these assumptions emotions do however play a major part in shaping the space for foreign policy and motivating specific choices by state elites in the international arena. So far, this field remains under-theorized (Bleiker and Hutchison, 2014a:490), but steps have been taken by several researchers the past years to stake out new paths in the cross-section of psychology and international relations. One such newly developed theory address intergroup conflict management, and shows how emotional concerns determine preconditions for a group`s behaviour vis-à-vis another group. This theory is called *Relational Identity Theory* and puts a new focus on important elements that contribute to managing conflicts in a more effective and fundamental way.

This thesis is therefore devoted to studying emotions in international relations. Theories of emotions provide important input to studies of conflict, and I will use the relational identity theory to investigate the preconditions for actions an potential for change in a tense relationship between two groups. One such relationship is the contemporary relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and as will be explained later, this is a case that suits the theory`s area of application well. My research question is thus: *How can the study of emotions in international relations help understand Saudi relations to Iran between 2011 and 2014? What preconditions and possible changes for Saudi behaviour do this entail?*

This thesis will show how the relational identity theory can be applied to a case, and thus use the theory in a way that has not been done before. I will focus on the bilateral relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran, but view it exclusively from the Saudi perspective. I will therefore not go into the Iranian perspective. This does not impinge upon the principles of the relational identity theory, because the relevant emotional

concerns are manifested within one group, although they are constructed in relations to another group. Even though I investigate the bilateral relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran situations involving other regional and international actors will also be taken into considerations. This is in order to illustrate how the bilateral relationship is expressed by Saudi decision makers and to frame the relationship the same way the Saudi perspective frames it.

A central question to ask before embarking on the research itself is why this is relevant at all. Traditional theories of power balancing is often used to explain regional rivalry such as the one between Saudi Arabia and Iran, so why do we need additional explanations bringing emotions into the picture? A central aspect of this is that emotions highlight other dynamics than pure rationalist or structuralism theories do. By focusing on emotions we detect other mechanisms that help us understand more specific elements of the relationship between groups and more about the space for action they operate within. To view disputant parties as rational actors may even be an impediment to conflict management (Shapiro, 2010:635), because it overlooks emotional dynamics that fundamentally affect their attitude towards each other. When managing a conflict it is not only important to look at *what* issues are at stake, but also *who* you are dealing with. The study of emotions in international relations is a growing field, but empirical studies remain scarce. The theory of relational identity for example, has to my knowledge never been used on a case study. This does not mean that the theory lacks empirical substance, but that the empirical backing it is built on relates to observations from experiments. It is about time the theory is applied to observations from real life international relations as well.

Why then is it suitable to focus on Saudi Arabia and Iran to do such an analysis? This case is not chosen at random, but is selected based on the frames of the relationship, previous studies of the relationship and personal interest. Some have described the Middle East as "one of the most war-prone regions globally" (Stein, 2009:208) and the "epicentre of conflict, both old and new" (Korany, 2009:62). In this context the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran is described as one of the most heated friction points in the region (Zambelis, 2014:4). This may not seem like the most significant conflict in the region, given the lack of direct military confrontation between the two countries, but the closer you look at their relationship the more you

realize how closely linked it is to other conflicts in the region which are highly violent. Such a tension in the relationship makes the relational identity theory applicable to this case. There has not been a lack of studies talking about the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran the recent decades. Some have written on the historical development of their relationship (Badeeb, 1993; Badeeb, 2006), some have highlighted the role of the US in their relationship (Cooper, 2011), while others have looked at their responses to the Arab Spring (Gause, 2011; Kamrava, 2012; Al-Rasheed, 2011), the role of sectarianism (Gause, 2014) or the role of identity construction (Al Toraifi, 2012). These studies make a good basis for showing how the relational identity theory offers additional insights that are lost in other theoretical approaches. The study of emotions goes deeper into the mechanisms of *how* identities are constructed and *why* the same structural conditions can result in different relationships. Balance of power theory and identity theories are not at all irrelevant, but emotional dynamics offer a more fine-tuned analysis of the preconditions for specific types of behaviour. This type of analysis of the Saudi relationship to Iran is yet to be made. Lastly, as will be highlighted later in the section on methods, complete objectivity is not realistic in social life. Research is part of this social life, and an acknowledgement of the limits of objectivity increases the openness and verifiability of studies. Even though there are several other cases that match the criteria for relevant frames and previous studies, Saudi Arabia was ultimately chosen over these because of my own personal interest in and background from the Middle East and Gulf region.

This thesis will focus on the period from 2011 until 2014 because this is a period where the regional situation in the Middle East changed a lot. The uprisings starting in Tunisia in December 2010 spread around the region with impressive strength, and because it changed domestic political structures in some countries it also changed regional relations. These uprisings diminished the position of the traditionally powerful regimes in Cairo and Damascus, and this together with the demise of Baghdad since the American invasion in 2003 left the stage open for Riyadh to gain more regional power (Ryan, 2012). The turn of attention by Damascus and Cairo from their regional position to domestic unrest also presented Tehran with a greater opportunity to influence politics and opinion in the region. Syria and Egypt have traditionally been trendsetters in the region, and their turn of attention inward created

larger space for other actors to resume a leading regional position. Although these changes presented opportunities they also presented challenges. The Arab uprisings deepened the division between Sunnis and Shi`as (Ryan, 2012) and the dynamics of the cold war between Sunni dominated Saudi Arabia and Shi`a dominated Iran was amplified. Thus the rivalry was brought to a head in the period from 2011 until 2014. The thesis stops with the end of 2014 simply to include as much recent data as possible without having to change the analysis every other week because of new statements. Because of pragmatic reasons it would not have been feasible to conduct an analysis based on data from the start of 2015 and onwards.

Even though the thesis looks at Saudi relations to Iran, the regional setting will also be given a place in the analysis. As explained, this is to better represent the frames that Riyadh places on their relations to Tehran. A spokesperson from the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA, 2015) revealed some of Riyadh`s perspective on Iran when he said that Iran`s influence in the region means that "the region is almost boiling". Gause (2014:1) portrayed their relationship as a "contest of influence [that] plays out in the domestic political systems of the region`s weak states". The implications of the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran are thus reaching far beyond their own domestic boarders. This thesis captures this regional focus by referring to events, policies and views of situations in Syria, Yemen, Iraq and the Gulf in general.

As stated I will use the relational identity theory to see how it can be applied to a case study. This theory focuses on two specific emotional concerns, and how they affect the preconditions for conflict management. These concerns are the perceived autonomy of Riyadh and the perceived affiliation they have to Tehran. The level of these two elements constructs the space for Saudi foreign policy on issues relating to Iran. To investigate these emotional concerns I will use discourse analysis supplemented by personal interviews. The discourse I will focus on is the official discourse of the Saudi political elite. This portrays the official view on Iran, and reveals the emotional concerns in the dominating Saudi discourse. Since the emotional concerns I investigate are collective they are manifested through speech. I do not intend to get inside the head of the decision makers to view their personal emotional concerns, but to view the collective emotional concerns of the elite as a

group. Discourse analysis is therefore a good way to access the elite`s expression of their concerns, and therefore also accessing the process of making the emotions manifested in the group as a collective. The interviews I have conducted will function as a supplement to the discourse analysis to elaborate, support or challenge the findings from the discourse. The last step of the thesis deviates from the discourse methodology, and use hypothetical examples and personal evaluation to apply the recommendations of the relational identity theory to the case. This part of the theory cannot be investigated through discourse analysis, and I have therefore chosen not to let the methodology limit the thesis, but go beyond the framework of discourse analysis, to test the application of the theory in full.

Outline of the thesis
This thesis will first of all present the theoretical framework of emotions in international relations. Since this builds on a social psychology constructivist worldview space is given to clarify constructivism as a basis. I will then move on to explain why and how emotions matter in international relations. The relational identity theory is then explained, with special emphasis on how autonomy and affiliation shape the frames of behaviour. I will also give a short overview of the overall purpose of the thesis, in light of the theoretical introduction, and how this analysis adds value to the research field. The methodological framework of discourse analysis is then outlined, with a view to the possibilities and limitations this framework has. The operationalization of the further analysis is then presented. After this a short background of Saudi politics and their relations to Iran is given, followed by a summary of other research on Saudi Arabia and Iran. The subsequent analysis is divided into four steps, following the example of Milliken`s (1999) discussion on practical use of discourse analysis. The first step will outline the official Saudi discourse on Iran, while the second step will show how autonomy and affiliation are portrayed in the discourse. The third step makes active use of the relational identity theory`s arguments and explains what implications this has for Saudi behaviour towards Iran and the frames of Saudi regional foreign policy. The fourth step briefly discusses ways that the perceived autonomy and affiliation can improve, using theoretical arguments from relational identity theory. The conclusion will then summarise the findings and explain the main value of the analysis.

Theory

Social psychology constructivism

This thesis rests on a social psychology constructivist foundation. This means that the basic assumption about the social world is that it is constituted by the perceptions of the actors in it. Beliefs, identities and perceptions frame our understanding of the world and therefor also our behaviour (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001:393; Hopf, 2002:5). In international relations the constructivist view of the world poses an alternative to the more traditional theories of neorealism and neoliberalism, which places a greater emphasis on objective attributes of material factors. In a neorealist view the world and the actors in it are shaped by external structures such as military power, geographical attributes and relative deterrence capabilities. Systemic constructivists, like Alexander Wendt, also focuses on structures, but the approach in this thesis do not share this systemic focus. Such a focus on the system is often unable to explain in a systematic way why similar historical and cultural backgrounds can result in contradictory foreign policies (Wæver, 2002:22). Social psychology constructivism on the other hand does not denote such factors as insignificant, but rather moves the level of analysis from these material factors to the cognitive dynamics giving meaning to the factors. In this way a social psychology looks at the intersubjective formation of reality rather than just the effect of the material elements in that reality.

Senge et. al (1994) explains the formation of reality by illustrating how mental models are used to make inferences. The "ladder of inference" shows how actors attain knowledge about the world and how this knowledge translates into actions through six separate steps.

First of all, actors start out with observations of the world, and subjectively select which observations they will focus on. They then make subjective assumptions about the observation based
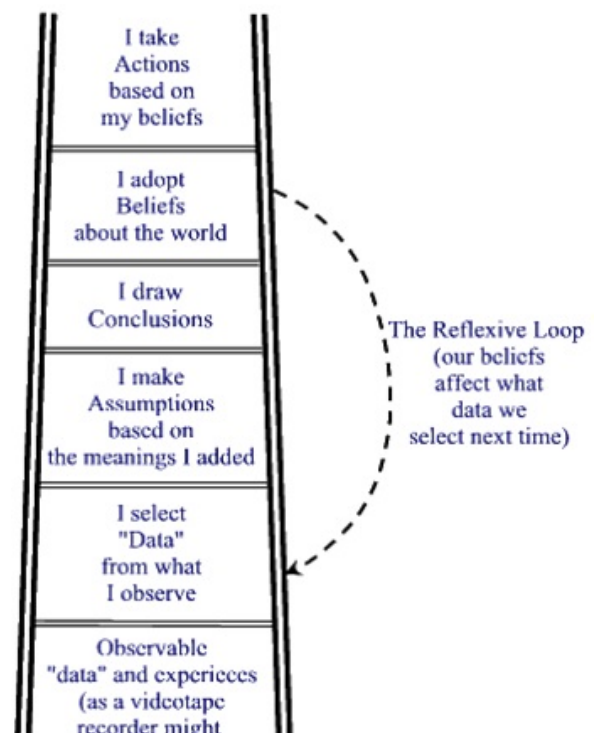

Figure 1, Ladder of inference, Senge et. al (1994)

on the meaning they add to it. Next they draw conclusions about the observation based on the previous interpretation. They then use those conclusions to adopt beliefs about the world, and lastly they act based on those beliefs. In addition, the beliefs they produce affect the subsequent selection of observations. In this way the construction of worldviews and insertion of meaning follows a circular mechanism, where the first steps in making an inference is influenced by previous beliefs and conclusions about the world. Thus, the ultimate form of power is not the ability to coerce or deter another actor by using or threatening to use material means, but to persuade and influence the beliefs and perceptions of that actor (Fjærtoft, 2011). A factor is thereby only significant in the way and to the extent that relevant actors perceive it to be.

Emotions in international relations

In order to conduct a solid analysis of inter-group emotions in international conflict management, there is a need for a more comprehensive analytical framework. First of all attention will be given to why emotions have a place in international relations and what emotions really are. There are several problems with using emotions as an analytical concept, and the link between individual emotions and group emotions will be explained. Next, there will be a presentation of some elements of social psychology that helps understand how emotions relate to behaviour, and last but not least Shapiro`s theory on relational identity concerns will be explained. These elements do not give an exhaustive picture of emotions in international relations, but they will provide an adequate framework for analysing emotions in conflict management.

Why emotions?

"Emotions play a central role in world politics, but so far remain under-theorized by international relations scholars" (Bleiker & Hutchison, 2014a:490). Many scholars would oppose this statement, not because they think emotions have been theorized adequately, but because they do not see emotions as a central part of world politics. The controversy surrounding emotions is related to the traditional divide between rationality and feelings (Bleiker & Hutchison, 2014b:494). These have been thought of as separate processes, where emotions distort rational thinking and prevent the best alternative from being chosen (Bleiker & Hutchison, 2014b:495). Drawing on the other hand on neuropsychology studies the division between cognition and emotion is

wiped away (Mattern, 2014:590). Emotion and cognition cannot be separated in the brain. The distinction between the two is conceptual not causal (Mercer, 2014:521), and is in essence an artificial construct (Mattern, 2014:591 – 592). If we look at traditional theories of international relations none of them argue that cognition and rational thinking is separated from actions and behaviour. In one of the most dominating models in international relations, rational choice theory, the act of thinking is the essence of decision-making, because the actors are expected to evaluate their options and the possible outcomes. If cognition is accepted as an independent force in policy-making so should emotions be.

On the other hand there are already plenty of examples of emotions in theories of international relations, although they are not explicitly recognized. In fact "few realms are more infused with emotions" (Bleiker & Hutchison, 2014b:494). The constitutive concept of international politics is anarchy, and its effects are based on fear. Hobbes` analysis of the "state of nature" was built on emotions of fear and mistrust, and Wilson`s 14-point program was built on emotions of empathy and trust. Security is thus more about trust than power (Fjærtoft, 2011). Even today we see elements of shame or judgement in international politics aimed at influencing the practice of states that break with common norms. Adler-Nissen (2014) points to this in her article about how states cope with stigma and how emotions related to reputation form the international order. Emotion is an element that influences behaviour, and is therefore also an area of power struggle. Power can shape both what we perceive as legitimate emotions and what sort of action an emotion should be translated into (Bleiker & Hutchison, 2014b:508). In this way emotions are both exogenous factors exerting influence on policy-decisions and endogenous factors receiving influence from policy-decisions. Emotions are both embodied in and produced by politics (Crawford, 2014:537). The study of politics naturally entails the study of power, and the study of social power should not disregard the role of emotions. By overlooking emotions a central element of world politics is left out of the analysis, and the relevant question is therefore "not whether emotion matters, but which emotions matter, for which behaviour, and through which cognitive processes" (Mattern, 2014:591).

What emotions?

There is a multitude of definitions of emotions. Some definitions emphasize the internal attributes because emotions are being felt within a body, while others emphasize the external attributes because emotions connect individuals and collectives through social processes (Bleiker & Hutchison, 2014b:501). Another possible definition of emotions is that they are experiences of personal significance, which is "typically experienced in association with a distinct type of physical feeling, thought, physiology, and action tendency" (Fisher & Shapiro, 2005:209). Mercer (2014:516) defines social emotions as "a feeling that has intrinsic importance to an actor in some relationship with an entity", while Crawford (2014:537) tries to specify emotions as "subjective experiences that also have psychological, intersubjective and cultural components". In this thesis the term *emotion* is used in line with Mercers notion of social emotion. Since the focus of the thesis is on groups, all emotions experienced at this level are social (Mercer, 2014:517). Feelings can be non-social too, in the sense that we can feel fear of great heights or pain from a broken bone, but these are not as determinative for social behaviour as the relational emotions.

When analysing emotions on a group-level there is an evident problem. A central element of an emotion is that *individuals* experience it, so how can this experience translate into collective forces? Mattern (2014:590) calls this the level-of-analysis problem, and tries to explain a solution by saying that emotions exist between people and are institutionalized in world politics. This explanation offers little more insight than showing that emotions exist between people and that's why there are emotions in groups. Critics of the independent aspect of social emotions point to the bodily manifestation of emotions and point out that since groups do not have a body they cannot have emotions (Bleiker & Hutchison, 2014b:501). Crawford (2014:544) even states that "it would be imprecise and perhaps even dangerous to argue that a group feels something or even believes something." Despite this the social constructivist assumptions about formation of meaning in the world help to explain how emotions matter beyond the neurophysics. Emotions are interpreted and do not prescribe any given behaviour in themselves. If someone feels angry it is not universally established how one should deal with this anger. The process of interpreting and reacting to emotions is highly influenced by the social and cultural environment you are a part of. "How we feel in response to particular political events depends on how society

suggests we should feel" (Bleiker & Hutchison, 2014b:504). The dominating trends in a group affects the evaluation of different emotions on a personal level, and even though a group cannot feel anything the same way a person can, a person can still feel something on behalf of a group (Mercer, 2014:515). In this way the dominating emotional trends among the members of a group can be experienced as the groups own emotions. This is not to say that the group has grown a body that experience endorphins or oxytocin, but that there is a collective understanding of a common experience among the members of the group. Group emotion as such is not an objectively definable phenomenon, but can only be understood and accessed through the subjective perceptions of the members of the group. Still, this is not a revolutionary new approach in international relations. Ideational structures such as norms, laws or principles are not dependent on a group brain, even though thinking is required in order to make sense of the phenomena. In the same way, a group body is not required in order to make sense of group emotions (Mercer, 2014:521).

Identity and emotions
Because of this social aspect of group emotions, the experience of such emotions is closely tied to identity. Members of the group feel something as part of the group, not only on behalf of the group (Reus-Smith, 2014:569), and "identification depends on a feeling of attachment" (Mercer, 2014:522). Emotions can often promote certain group identities and strengthen loyalty. When confronted with emotions such as shame or fear members of a group tend to rationalize and justify the origin of these emotions (Crawford, 2014). When group members feel threatened by an external factor, this strengthens the loyalty to the group. Likewise when the group members feel threatened they may also develop hostility towards other groups.

Even though people often relate to several identities (Reus-Smith, 2014:570), there can still be a common sense of belonging to one group. This does not mean that the group is monolithic, but even though the members are diverse the dominant emotional trend can be institutionalized (Crawford, 2014:547). These emotional trends contribute to structuring the way knowledge is perceived, and it sets a standard for framing different problems and offers a standardized solution to them (Crawford, 2014:547 – 548). These structures shape the relations within as well as between groups in a fundamental way (Mercer, 2014:530). Who we are, is to a large degree

determined by what we feel (Mercer, 2014:522), and Descartes` old saying "I think therefor I am" can be modified into "I feel therefore I am". In this sense emotions are tied to identity and a sense of group belonging, and are a vital part of a person`s sense of self.

Underdeveloped field of theory

Emotions have an elusive nature and are often shunned by analysts because of the difficulties of defining emotions and actually observing their effect (Bleiker & Hutchison, 2014b:494). The role of emotions in world politics started gaining momentum in the 1970`s, but "it is only over the last decade that emotions have come to be seen as significant" (Bleiker & Hutchison, 2014b:507). The theoretical elaboration and debate on this approach is still sporadic and incomplete. The dominant approach within international relations is still the rational actor model[1], where objective evaluation based on factual information is the ultimate mode of decision-making (Bleiker & Hutchison, 2014b:494). But the world is not comprised of stable objective rational people, and systems and procedures may malfunction because of irrationality (Fjærtoft, 2011). Political decision-makers tend in fact to rationalize after a decision has been made rather than behave as a rational actor before (Ibid.). Emotions are therefore central pieces to the puzzle to understand both seemingly irrational behaviour and how certain actions are legitimized and even normalized.

Emotions and behaviour

The second most prominent problem facing scholars who study emotions in international relations is the causal process problem (Mattern, 2014:590). The link between emotions and action is to some extent circular, and cannot be observed in a direct manner. In one way, emotions shape the social framework of interaction and create standards for how individuals ought to feel and react in a certain situation (Bleiker & Hutchison, 2014b:508). This argument connects feelings to behaviour through the social framing and norms that are manifested in society. Another argument links emotional experiences to cognitive processes. As explained previously

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[1] See Allison (1969) on political decision-making and the Cuban Missile Crisis.
[2] Silence can send a strong message that the issue at stake or the relevant actor is not worth even mentioning. Such a neglect of addressing a person or an issue is also a form of communication.
[3] See Appendix 1 for a list of Shapiro`s observations.

(see the section "Why emotions") neuroscience has shown that thinking and feeling are not separate processes, and the implication is that decision-making also entails emotions as well as cognition. Fierke (2014) builds on this last line of argument when she elaborates how emotions relate to intent, which in turn originates behaviour. She argues that emotions create intent, and that actions reveal those intents. Crawford (2014) examines emotions of anger and empathy in greater detail, and links these emotions to certain behavioural modes. Anger manifests itself in more risk-taking behaviour, while empathy is essential for the attainment of peace and justice. Low levels of empathy will for example promote low levels of positive interaction and social isolation (Crawford, 2014:542). Her analysis lies at a group level, and she thereby shows how group emotions manifest themselves in certain political behaviours.

This nevertheless raises the question of what came first, the emotion or the action. Because emotions are in themselves reactions to interactions and the behaviour of others (Crawford, 2014:544), the tracing of the decision-making process becomes tautological. This is reflected in Deutsch`s crude law of social relations, where "the characteristic processes and effects elicited by a given type of social relationship also tend to elicit that type of social relationship" (Deutsch, 1973:365). Put bluntly, social relationships follow the pattern of self-fulfilling prophecies, where the expectations and perceptions of a relationship produce that exact relationship. Tautologies are therefore embedded in the nature of social science. Even though this is not ideal for analytical purposes, an acknowledgement of this will bring us closer to the elements we study.

Relational Identity Theory

Drawing on psychology and negotiations theory, Shapiro develops a more specific model for analysing emotions and political behaviour in groups. He introduces the relational identity theory, which is "a complementary model for understanding the emotional dimensions of conflict management" (Shapiro, 2010:636). Shapiro builds on the same social psychology constructivism outlined in this thesis, and starts with the assumption that the social world is constructed through cognitive processes. In order to understand the social world we need to explore these cognitive processes, and

as the previous theoretical discussion has shown, emotions are important factors in such cognition. The foundation of Shapiro`s model rests on a series of experiments (a total of almost a hundred), where Shapiro has tested the formation of group loyalty when certain attributes of the group are threatened. The participants in the experiment are first of all divided into groups and told to define some core characteristics that will be common for all the group members. They are then told that the world is facing an apocalyptic threat, which can only be prevented if all the participants join one of the groups and take on their attributes. In all the experiments but a handful of times, the world exploded (Shapiro, 2010:635). This exercise "evokes emotional dynamics that are intrinsic to real-world conflicts" (Shapiro, 2010:636) and offer interesting insights into the effects of emotional states in inter-group relations.

In the construction of the relational identity theory Shapiro actively makes use of the theoretical assumptions of emotions in international relations. The observations he makes are of individual actors, but the inferences he draws relates to groups. This builds on the assumption of the participants having a collective understanding of the dominant trends in the group, and the participants feeling like the group itself. Shapiro draws on the perception of these collective emotions to see how tense interaction between groups affects collective emotions within the group and behaviour between the groups. As such he puts focus on emotional development at a group level, making his theory relevant for international relations. He also compliments theoretical arguments of how emotions affect perceptions and decision-making, by observing the individual manifestation and collective expression of group emotions. Thus, the relational identity theory takes theories of emotions in international relation one step further, by empirically observing how changes in certain group emotions facilitate specific types of group reactions.

Relational Identity Concerns
The Relational Identity Theory is to some degree a further development of arguments made in Fisher and Shapiro`s book *Beyond Reason. Using Emotions as you Negotiate* (2005). This book presents five *core concerns*, which are emotional experiences that are important to consider when managing conflicts. It is explained that the contentment with these core concerns give rise to certain emotions, which in turn result in certain modes of behaviour. Instead of dealing with emotions directly Fisher

and Shapiro suggest that we address the core concern and thereby the origin of the emotion. The five concerns are *appreciation*, *affiliation*, *autonomy*, *status* and *role* (Fisher & Shapiro, 2005:17). Appreciation fosters positive emotions and is valued by every person (Fisher & Shapiro, 2005:39). It can be encouraged by showing the other party that you understand their point of view, finding merit in what they think, and communicate your own understanding (Fisher & Shapiro, 2005:28). Affiliation is the subjective sense of connectedness we feel between others and us (Fisher & Shapiro, 2005:54). By finding links with one another, treating each other as colleagues, and having joint activities we build affiliation and encourage feelings of confidence and trust. Autonomy is the freedom a group has to influence and make decisions about issues that concerns them, without anyone else interfering (Fisher & Shapiro, 2005:54; Shapiro, 2010:636). By limiting our own or others` autonomy the space for exploring creative options disappears, and people may feel ignored or overruled if they do not take part in decisions that affect them. Status refers to the position we have vis-à-vis others. "If our status is demeaned, we may feel embarrassed, ashamed, or frustrated, and we may act unwisely" (Fisher & Shapiro, 2005:95). A role is a position linked to a specific set of expectations for behaviour and characteristics. If we chose an unfulfilling role or feel like our role is not acknowledged, we may feel unengaged or trivialized (Fisher & Shapiro, 2005:204).

All of these five factors capture a "human want of personal significance, usually arising within a relationship" (Fisher & Shapiro, 2005:209), and the potential for improving relationships by addressing these concerns are great. The concerns are *core* because they address how people want and expect to be treated (Fisher & Shapiro, 2005:211). These concerns are closely linked to emotional responses and offer "a powerful framework to deal with emotions without getting overwhelmed by them" (Fisher & Shapiro, 2005:15). The theorization of these factors has a distinct personal focus, which Shapiro modifies when he presents the relational identity theory later on. In the relational identity theory the emphasis is not placed on what individuals experience in isolation from the group they identify with, but rather how the general tendency in the group evolves.

A relational identity is a group`s perception of the relationship it has with another group (Shapiro, 2010:636). This perception builds on only two of the five core

concerns according to Shapiro, i.e. affiliation and autonomy. These two concerns are the only two that are both relationally constructed and internally manifested. Autonomy and affiliation cannot be experienced without the presence of another group, but the comprehension of these concerns is not dependent on including the perception of the other group. The content of the concerns affiliation and autonomy in this manner is not necessarily something the parties agree on, but is defined by the way one of the parties sees that concern. Affiliation and autonomy for two groups, A and B, may therefore have two different forms, "the relationship AB seen from A`s perspective and the relationship BA seen from B`s perspective" (Norbert, 1978:126). When assessing group A`s emotions it is not necessary to deal with how group B defines the relationship. This does not make the perceptions that group A holds more or less true.

When assessing the other three core concerns (status, role and appreciation), one immediately has to look at both group A *and* group B`s perception of the relationship. Status is defined vis-à-vis the position of another group, while role is created in the common expectations that both group A and group B have. You cannot play a role fully without getting recognition for it. Appreciation is in itself a verb that requires an actor performing the action, and group A`s perception of appreciation cannot be evaluated without a reference to what group B does. This differs from autonomy and affiliation, which can be assessed without any direct reference to another actor, but is independently manifested in the internal cognition of group A. In order to access information about these core concerns we only need access to the perceptions of one group, and this makes these two concerns more applicable when analysing group emotions within one group in international relations. This does not mean that the other three core concerns are irrelevant, but only that they are less useful when analysing internal emotions by one actor. In sum, autonomy and affiliation provides the best framework for understanding group emotions in international relations as an internally manifested but relationally created phenomena.

Relational Identity Concerns and Behaviour
As noted, group emotions is not just interesting in themselves, but are relevant for understanding preconditions for behaviour. Shapiro elaborates on this in his Relational Identity Theory as well. Affiliation and autonomy both affect problem

solving and cooperation. In explicit, when the feeling of affiliation increase, the willingness to work together also rises (Fisher & Shapiro, 2005:54). This is supported by Crawford, which explains that closeness "is related to empathic concern and a

Figure 2
The Relationship Between Autonomy and Affiliation, Emotional Reaction, and Action Tendency
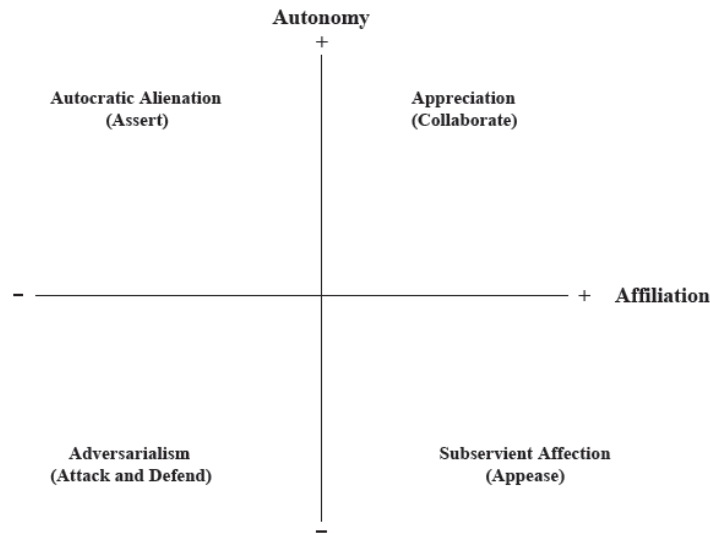
predictor of helping behaviour" (Crawford, 2014:541). Likewise, when the feeling of autonomy rises so does the cooperative behaviour and the prospects for mutual gains (Shapiro, 2010:637). This is illustrated in figure 2 where the combined level of affiliation and autonomy is linked to a corresponding behavioural mode.

Here we see how emotions arising from affiliation and autonomy frame the different types of behaviour. This may be because of the constructed legitimization of these behavioural modes (as Bleiker & Hutchison argue), or because the emotion in itself affects decision-making as much as rational thinking does (as Fierke argues). The link between affiliation or autonomy and behavioural mode is nevertheless not related to the objective closeness to and freedom from another group, but relates to the subjective perception of that closeness and freedom.

After examining the emotions stemming from autonomy and affiliation in the experiments, Shapiro generated a hypothesis called the *tribal effect*. This generally explains the "tendency for a tribe`s relational identity to become rigid", thereby increasing the likelihood of polarization and violence (Shapiro, 2010:636). A *tribe* is

the term Shapiro uses on a group where the members strongly identify with each other. The members will see themselves as "(a) *like-kinded*, (b) *kinlike* in their relational connection, and (c) *emotionally invested* in their group`s enhancement" (Shapiro, 2010:637). This means that the group members see themselves as sharing a common identity, where all are of the same stock, and are willing and sometimes required to promote the group`s interests above their own individual interests. This sort of group is socially constructed and is not a given by gender or ethnicity, but is bound together by the socially constructed perceptions of its members (Shapiro, 2010:638). This type of group relations also facilitates a strong expression of common emotions, and is ideal for examining group emotions.

When a tribe of this kind, hereby called a group, experience a disrespect of its autonomy or affiliation a sense of animosity develops. The group will then experience a more rigid relational identity vis-à-vis the other group, meaning that their perception of the relationship becomes frozen and unmovable. The group often closes off from creative problem solving, learning and external influences, and misinterpretations or hostility towards joint gains increase. In this way members of the group experience a psychological burden when the group`s autonomy and affiliation is low. The theory also points out that measures to build affiliation and respecting autonomy will encourage cooperation and more positive relations. The third and fourth step of the analysis will explain the arguments for preconditions for political actions and recommendations for change in more detail.

The purpose of the thesis
This thesis aims at exploring the Relational Identity Theory further, and matching empirical observations with insight on how autonomy and affiliation plays a role in the expression of group emotions and the preconditions for group behaviour. This thesis will, in explicit, apply the relational identity theory to examine the collective expression of emotions that frames the environment that political decisions are made within. The arguments made by Shapiro will show how these frames encourage or discourage certain types of behaviour, and how these frames can be changed. The empirical investigation is purely linked to the official Saudi discourse, while the interpretation of the observations lay out certain implications for political decision-

making. The final step of applying the theory to the case moves away from focusing on the empirical observations of the discourse, and seeks to discuss hypothetical implications of the potential for change that the theory outlines. The application of the theory is therefore not limited by the scope of the methodological framework, but the theory is rather applied in full, with both it`s explanatory and it`s proscriptive elements.

Theories of international relations have not yet included emotions into a coherent analytical framework, but emotional dimensions are still critical for understanding the foundation for sustainable, long-term positive relations (Shapiro, 2010:643). The global security realm depends in part on addressing emotional concerns and mitigating a rigidification of group loyalties, so that mutually beneficial outcomes can be attained. "Emotions are not a causally separate sphere: the challenge for theory lies in integrating an understanding of emotions into our analysis of reasoning processes, identity, identification, contestation, and cooperation" (Crawford, 2014:553 – 554).

Added Value

So, why is it useful to look at emotions in international relations in this way instead of just keeping to classical structuralism theories? When analysing the relationship between two actors on the international arena it seems like the outcome of the analysis is the same no matter which approach you take. This can be illustrated with some hypothetical examples. Lets say that a basic assumption is that if two actors are significantly different, but have to relate to one another, they tend to have a tense relationship. According to a power balancing theory, two countries that have different interests based on different resources and geopolitical position, but operate within the same region tend to balance each other's power in order to gain the most influence in the region. According to identity-based theories, two countries that have different identities, but operate within the same region also tend to compete over influence. Theories of emotions in international relations assume that a country that has certain negative emotional concerns in relation to another country, but operates within the same region again tends to be antagonistic in that relationship. Why should we then bother to investigate ambiguous internal emotions when a power balancing theory or

theories of identities yield the same result in a more easily observable and more replicable way?

First of all, it is not a priori given that the result of each approach is the same. The only way to know that is by conducting different analysis by using the different frameworks. Secondly, emotions highlight different mechanisms than power balancing or identity theories do, and even though these emotional mechanisms may have the same outcome as the other theories predict they still highlight new ways to understand interaction and new ways to deal with interaction. Thirdly, and maybe most importantly, the analysis of group emotions provide a set of preconditions for a more specific mode of behaviour. As showed by Figure 2 certain emotional configurations are not only preconditions for conflictual behaviour, but also generate adversarial opinions. By using emotions to access identities and group dynamics in a more accurate way we gain knowledge about how identities are constructed and why the same structural conditions or the same identity incongruence result in different behaviour. Even though Saudi Arabia and the US have differing interests regarding oil and a Saudi nuclear defence, and have fundamentally different perceptions of their national identity, they do not consider each other as enemies. Saudi Arabia and Iran on the other hand share more interests of keeping the region peaceful, are more similar in their Muslim identity, but still engage in competitive behaviour and rhetoric. Balance of power theory and identity theories are not at all irrelevant in this regard, but emotional dynamics offer a more fine-tuned analysis of the preconditions for specific mechanisms in adversarial behaviour.

Methods

Case study

"Without theory there is nothing but description, and without methodology there is no transformation of theory into analysis" (Hansen, 2006:1). When doing a scientific study the choice of method "should be guided by which data best answers our question" (King, Keohane & Verba, 1994:68). This thesis has a qualitative research design, and investigates one case in order to get a close in-depth knowledge of the mechanisms in that case, and thus utilise the full potential of the theory. A case is in itself a "spatially and temporally delimited phenomenon observed at a single point in time or over some period of time" (Gerring, 2007:211). I will look at Saudi Arabian official perceptions of Iran, and how the emotional concerns in their relationship set specific frames for Saudi regional policies. This is naturally limited in space, and I have limited the temporal frame to focus on the four-year period from 2011 until 2014.

A case study is by definition "the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is – at least in part – to shed light on a larger class of cases" (Gerring, 2007:20). A case study is highly appropriate in this project because it captures more of the complexity of social behaviour, it eases the investigation of implications in a theory, and it encourages new findings and "light bulb moments". When investigating group emotions it is important to get as close as possible to the subjects we study, and in order to fully explore the specific preconditions for action it is good to get an in-depth knowledge of the case. In essence, this approach is better at gaining a high internal validity.

Discourse analysis

In view of the theoretical framework of the thesis and the aim of the research question, namely to apply the relational identity theory in a way that has not been done before, the empirical investigations will follow the guidelines of discourse analysis. A discourse is "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault in Neumann, 2001:17), and is a system for structuring and giving meaning to practices and statements. This system appears as more or less normal, and

delimits what can and cannot be said (Wæver, 2002:29). The analysis of these systems/discourses thus focuses on the preconditions for actions and behaviour (Neumann, 2001:38), and uncovers how statements confirm and constitute social practices (Neumann, 2001:83). The focus in discourse analysis is thus not to uncover the true perceptions and inner beliefs of individual persons, but to uncover which codes are used to justify and explain situations in public when actors` relate to each other (Wæver, 2002:26 – 27).

This is linked to social constructivism where meaning is created by the perceptions and interpretations of social actors. A large part of discourse theory originated from a linguistic field of study, but the emphasis in this thesis implies that it is the link to social constructivism that makes discourse analysis an appropriate method. The aim of the thesis is not to discuss questions of philosophy of science, but rather to use discourse theory as a practical method for accessing data on group emotions. I will therefore not spend time elaborating on epistemological and ontological issues of debate, but rather present elements of the method that are usable for the empirical work of the thesis.

Discourse analysis rests on three main assumptions. The first assumption relates to the construction of a social reality, and is common for both discourse analysis and social constructivism. Sensory perceptions are not immediate, but needs to be selected (Neumann, 2001:30). This selection in turn is not direct, but is mediated by our preconditions and models of representation (Neumann, 2001:31). Everyone needs models in order to grasp the world, and the representations we use to understand the world are the attributes of things and phenomena as they *appear* to us (Neumann, 2001:33). Between the world and us there is a layer of interpretation, made meaningful through language and categories (Ibid.). Discourse analysis focuses on these representations, not the things or phenomena in themselves. This worldview is familiar from Senge et. al.`s ladder of inference (see the section on social constructivism). The implication for empirical research is that the researcher can focus on the subjective representations and perceptions of the discourse, because they are the elements that matter the most for behaviour. The elements that discourse analysis seeks to say something about are epistemological (Neumann, 2001:179). It

seeks to reveal how knowledge is produced through language and interpretation, and how that knowledge frames behaviour (Neumann, 2001:178 – 179).

Discourse analysis rests on two other main theoretical assumptions. If these assumptions do not hold, the point of studying discourses disappears. First of all, ideas and perspectives need to be displayed in a meaningful way through texts (Neumann, 2001:18). Text as a concept is not only written material, but also everything that can be studied *as* texts (Neumann, 2001:23). This includes social actions such as conversations, speeches, propaganda or the use of symbols. In this way discourse analysis attains access to the collective perceptions of the actors participating in the discourse, through text, and can study the social world on its own terms, through text. Discourses establish rules for statements, and those rules "cannot be observed independently of the statements" (Wæver, 2002:29 – 30). This thesis is based on texts such as public statements, public speeches and interviews in the media.

Secondly, language needs to have an independent meaning for social behaviour. This means that communication and expressions participate in the social construction of worldviews and representations. "Language is social and political" by constructing identities and differences and inserting these with meaning (Hansen, 2006:15). Discourses are not only a product of a structure of meaning, but actively contribute to that structure and reinforce the categories we live by. Language is the only way to construct a collective meaning and to make oneself comprehendible to a larger public, when considering `things` (Hansen, 2006:16). This is not to say that discourses never challenge an established structure of meaning, but they are core elements in the maintenance of a broader collective system of interpretation. Without this common social aspect meaning and representations would be purely individual evaluations. Even though there are diverse and sometimes opposing discourses in a given community, their existence adds an independent collective dimension to life.

Discourse and power
Power is an embedded element in discourse analysis. Each discourse has some structures influencing the actors participating in the discourse, and those structures often shape the interests, identity and perceptions of the actors. Power in this sense is not about coercing the actions of any actor, but rather to persuade and freeze meaning

by constantly repeating specific representations (Neumann, 2001:143). Foucault (presented in Neumann, 2001:168) highlights that this type of power does not need to be known by the actors, and that things appear to be normal because of the power of the discourse supporting those interpretations. A certain way of framing determines how a case is built, what types of arguments are made and which references are made. In this sense discourse analysis often aims at revealing that things could be different (Neumann, 2001:115). This is taken into account in this thesis, and is included as a fourth and final step of the analysis.

Discourse and materiality
Some critics argue that discourse analysis depreciates the role of material factors. The focus of this method is put on perceptions and ideational factors, but this is not to say that there are no material factors. To focus on representations of reality does not exclude the existence of a material reality with hard facts. An observable reality still forms the foundation of observations made by the actors, and we still have to take the materiality of the discourse as a given point of departure (Neumann, 2001:86; Hansen, 2006:20) The object of observation in discourse analysis, namely language, only consists of metaphors that *re-present* reality (Neumann, 2001:45). Since social communities and individual identities are constituted through language, they exist in essence as metaphors and representations. When studying the social world it seems appropriate to take these representations into consideration, and the neglect of studying material elements in their own appearance do not devaluate the inferences made from subjective social perceptions. The following analysis in this thesis focuses exclusively on subjective perceptions, and do not include evaluations of material elements in and of themselves.

In addition to this, discourses are linked to materiality via the manifestation of dominating representations. When a discourse dominates an area it tends to be manifested and institutionalized through physical structures. This can be research institutions, political parties or organisations that embody and promote the ideas and values in the dominating discourse.

Discourse and emotions

Emotions are the central point of focus in this thesis and discourse analysis does not leave this element untouched. As noted discourses constitute a common reference point for members of a community, and it shapes the identities and perceptions of the members. The stronger those shared identities and perceptions are, the more they share common emotions (Bleiker & Hutchison, 2014b:500). Discourses thus provide a platform for converging personal emotions and forming a collective emotional reference. This is illustrated in Relational Identity Theory, where the tribes effect is often accompanied by "a narrative of righteousness and victimization" in order to legitimize the rigidity of group loyalty (Shapiro, 2010:639). Discourses also provide an arena for expressing emotions in political or communicative terms. Emotions are not expressed in any other ways than through communication, be that speech, body language or even silence[2], and texts thus provide a good opportunity for studying emotions (Fierke, 2014:565). This is also the process through which emotions become political. "The countless stories that societies tell about themselves and others" constitute a significant part of political and collective behaviour, and these narratives are infused with emotions (Bleiker & Hutchison, 2014b:506). Expression is thus central in understanding and investigating emotions and it "codifies the legacies and connotations of emotion through narratives" (Ling, 2014:582).

Discourse and identity

As stated several times now, discourses constitute identities. Identities are both a product of and a precondition for discourses (Hansen, 2006:20). A discourse may tell you how to feel, how not to feel, how to react and where you belong. Identities are in themselves relational, meaning that groups identify themselves in relation to other groups. A conversation about *the others* is therefor always a conversation about who *we* are as well (Neumann, 2001:125). Political identity is particularly discursive and symbolic through its inherently collective manifestation. The study of identities in politics should therefor take such conversations into consideration, at the same time as studies of discourse should always be mindful of the political identities that are being formed and constituted through that discourse. Politics in itself may also become a task of telling people who they are, through creating and re-presenting an acting

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[2] Silence can send a strong message that the issue at stake or the relevant actor is not worth even mentioning. Such a neglect of addressing a person or an issue is also a form of communication.

collective Self (Neumann, 2001:123). Issues of identity, politics and communication are therefore intimately embedded in discourses about groups. This will be taken into consideration in the first step of the analysis in this thesis, where the construction of Iran`s identity is detected in the official Saudi discourse.

Discourse and foreign policy

One of the goals of discourse analysis according to Hansen is to show that interpretations "are dependent upon a particular discursive framing of the issue in question, and that this framing has political effects" (Hansen, 2006:20). Foreign policy in particular can, simply put, be explained as a model where decision makers try to establish a stable link between identity and policy (Hansen, 2006:26). This link explains and justifies the policy chosen, and discourses can thus provide a way of conveying how the policy resonates with the nation`s self-image (Hansen, 2006:18; Wæver, 2002:27). Debates and disagreements within foreign policy are precisely about defining what is objectively at stake and how it matters for the nations' self-image. Wæver even goes so far as to say that an analysis of the discourse on a nation`s identity can explain, and to a certain point predict, foreign policies (Wæver, 2002:20). It is nevertheless not a simple one-to-one relationship between policy and identity. Discourses and identities do not define exact policies, but they structure the frames within which concrete policy decisions are being made. Saudi Arabia`s relations to Iran is a good example of this. In this sense, discourses provide a certain optic for viewing different policy options, and provide frames for how an adequate foreign policy should be formulated (Hansen, 2006:5). The analysis in this thesis will therefore highlight the frames for Saudi foreign policy, and mechanisms pulling in specific directions. This is not to be confused with a prediction of exact policy decisions, but rather uncovers the constraints and justifications that lie within the structure that the discourse creates.

Discourse and change

When having a theory that is founded on social constructivism an inherent element is that things can change. Meaning is in itself not a stable given, because it does not exist outside the consciousness of people. Meaning lies in the interpretation of relations between different phenomena. Since the interpretations of such relations fluctuate, meaning fluctuates (Neumann, 2001:60). The arena for manifesting a

discourse, namely language, is also not a stable constant (Hansen, 2006:18). That is not to say that the social world is in total relativity. Social practices and narratives exist in terms of their stability and continuity, and discourses are often self-perpetuating because of their own regularities (Neumann, 2001:133). Dominating discourses want to construct themselves as stable, because this adds legitimacy and weight to the content of the discourse (Hansen, 2006:18). Discourses sanction behaviour in a way that promotes actions that are in line with "the normal" and reject practices that break with the regular (Neumann, 2001:133). Even though change is possible it is not easy. Nietzsche (presented in Neumann, 2001:40) said that the only things needed for change to occur are new names, assessments and probabilities. This captures a good point in that efforts to change a discourse needs an alternative to replace it with, but the process of gaining momentum for that change can be long and unfriendly. As a researcher it is at least possible to show that things can be different, and expose the mechanisms upholding the current dominating discourse (Neumann, 2001:115).

Advantages and Challenges

The first and most obvious advantage of using discourse analysis is the fit with the research question. Emotions are expressed through communication, and discourses are infused with emotions. The approach of this thesis to emotions as a social phenomenon is not to study the brain or somehow get inside the mind of the actors, but rather to study emotions where they are expressed. The empirical object of study is thus expressed emotions through language. When discourses are examined with the aim of detecting emotions we get to see the world as the referent object sees it. The researcher in discourse analysis actively seeks to attain the perspective of a discourse, and this forms the basis of evaluating emotional influences in the relational identity theory. Secondly, discourse analysis allows for a close examination of communication, meaning that mechanisms and hypothesis can be evaluated and further developed. This hinges on a strong internal validity, where a closeness to and knowledge of the case in question is crucial. Thirdly, this method opens up for a lot of sources to be examined. The amount of texts relating to a discourse can be huge, and the relevance of such an amount of sources strengthens the internal validity.

There are nevertheless important limitations in discourse analysis that matters for the inferences one can make. First of all, the prospects of generalization are slim. Discourses are shaped by the historical and cultural circumstances, and any universally valid theoretical assumptions cannot be confirmed by an in-depth analysis like discourse analysis. This is a detrimental disadvantage if the aim is to test a theory in order to show its general significance. That is not the aim of this thesis, and the conclusions will be limited to showing how the theory can be applied in this specific case and what additional mechanisms the theory highlights that is not captured by other structuralism or identity-based theories. Secondly, this method can only be used to say something about the discourse, and unfortunately it does not fully cover all the aspects of the relational identity theory. The theory also contains an aspect of prescription and outline how change may come about. This can certainly be discussed in relation to discourses, but the empirical observations I make based on the frames I have chosen for the discourse, do not give any empirical data to base this discussion on. This signifies a mismatch between the method and theory, and I have chosen to not let the thesis be limited by this. The application of the prescriptive element of the theory to the case is therefore not based on the discourse, but is a purely hypothetical discussion informed by literature on the circumstances and context of Saudi Arabia. This makes the fourth step in the analysis somewhat different from the previous steps, but I consider the insight from discourse analysis on the first steps to be of such useful value, that discourse analysis is a suitable method to structure the main parts of the thesis.

Thirdly, the basic assumptions of discourse analysis also challenge the researcher`s ability to attain and display knowledge. The researcher is not exempt from the social world, and she too participates in a structure of meaning and knowledge. This may influence the way she conducts research and the way she interprets findings. If these assumptions of the social world are accepted, no researcher can escape these constraints. The task of the researcher should then not be to strive for universal timeless objectivity, but rather to make clear the foundation of the interpretations and inferences. When transparency is ensured in this way people may disagree with the findings, but still know where it comes from. To acknowledge these predispositions and biases within the researcher places the research in the social world, instead of claiming to be above the influences of every other social aspect.

Delimiting the discourse

In this thesis I will focus on the Saudi Arabian discourse on Iran, more specifically the discourse relating to regional politics and Iran. The scope is limited to the Saudi perspective because it is the emotional concerns in the Saudi discourse and the Saudi predisposition that is being explored. Even though Iran is sure to have another impression of itself and probably another impression of their relationship to Saudi Arabia, it is the Saudi perspective that frames Saudi behaviour. The relevant thing to look at is thus how Iran is represented by Saudi Arabia and how the Iranian actions are described.

To be clear, the emotions that are detected in this analysis are the emotions that are implied in the discourse, not the internal emotional concerns that Saudi decision makers have. This deviates from Shapiro`s theory to a certain extent, but shows a flaw in Shapiro`s original theory rather than sloppy research in this thesis. Shapiro does focus on groups, but he explains and argues for the internal dynamic and cognitive process that group members go through. There is an inherent methodological problem with this focus. It is not possible to gain access to actors` internal evaluations. As researchers we can only evaluate the uttered expression of group members, not their true internal experiences. As such, I have chosen to examine the collective expression that ultimately structures and frames the reality that Saudi decision makers operate within, namely the official Saudi discourse. The findings from examining this discourse are not to be equated with the actual internal attributes of the Saudi political elite, but the findings portray the emotional concerns *in the discourse.* As part of the dominating discourse, these emotional concerns frame the political environment that Saudi decision makers operate within. The implications of these emotional concerns are then explained by using Shapiro`s theory of Relational Identity Concerns. This *theoretical* interpretation of *empirical* observations creates a bridge from the expressed emotional concerns in the discourse, to the frames that structure the political decision-making. Individuals are ultimately the ones that make decisions and take action, but they must relate to the collective framing that is manifested in the discourse. This thesis therefore expands the original Relational Identity Theory in order to make it empirically examinable, thereby avoiding Shapiro`s methodological problem.

Operationalization
Actors
Thus far, I have talked about Saudi Arabia and its emotions as if it was a unitary actor. That is not the case, and I realize that there exist multiple differing feelings towards Iran within Saudi Arabia. My definition of Saudi Arabia as an actor will focus on groups, in line with Shapiro`s emphasis on tribes. I will therefore not seek to uncover the perceptions of all Saudi Arabians, but the ones that are included in the ruling elite as a group. This entails the central decision-makers in Saudi foreign policy, which is the King, his advisors and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs represented by the foreign minister. This group can make use of the state apparatus when choosing actions in foreign policy, and is thus the most relevant group in terms of international and regional relations. Given that Saudi Arabian politics follow such a strict hierarchy it is the ruling elite that shape the decisions made in foreign policy, and the constraints from domestic debate is not as strong as they are in more open democracies.

Preconditions for Action
The implications to be considered are related to Shapiro`s linking of autonomy and affiliation to emotional reaction and action tendency (see Figure 2). I will use his theory to deduct preconditions for specific actions and reaction based on the emotional perceptions I detect in the discourse. I will not empirically analyse the actual decision-making and modes of action in this relationship, but rather point to the *preconditions* for specific actions. Given the type of emotional perception I detect, my findings will specify the predisposition of Saudi Arabia to certain types of actions, according to the relational identity theory. I do not claim that this theory is objectively more important than other theories of international relations, but simply point to a lacking degree of investigation and application of this theory. The primary value of this thesis is to show how this theory can be applied to a specific case and which additional mechanisms it highlights that does not appear from more traditional theoretical approaches. This will add insight on what type of balancing or rivalry behaviour Saudi Arabia is inclined to engage in, and not only predicting balancing and rivalry as realist theories do. The regional events I will focus on are the issues that appear in the official Saudi discourse, and include the civil war in Syria, unrest in Yemen and Iraq, nuclear negotiations between Iran and the leading world powers, and

Iranian involvement in other Gulf countries. Saudi Arabia and Iran are both involved in those issues and affected by them. They therefore have to consider each other in the decisions they make regarding these situations, and their behaviour also reflects the relationship they have to each other. Towards the end of the thesis I will also apply the section of the theory that argues for change in emotional concerns. I will evaluate the room for altering the emotional concerns as they are expressed in the discourse, and what kind of behaviour that would facilitate. This part of the thesis is not based on empirical observations, but discusses theoretical arguments applied to this case. I thus utilize the potential in discourse analysis for critical evaluation of the dominating discourse.

Approach

There are several ways to conduct a discourse analysis and there is no general agreement in international relations on what the best approach is (Milliken, 1999:226). Neumann (2001) suggests a four-step approach, where you first identify the discourse of interests, secondly determine which representations are dominating, thirdly detect the discourse`s tiers, and fourthly define the discourse`s material manifestation. Milliken (1999) presents another approach, with much of the same elements, but divided into three steps. The first step according to Milliken should be to study the discourse as a system of significance (Milliken, 1999:229), meaning that the researcher should gather information about the constitutive elements of the discourse. The second step is to discuss and argue for the productivity of the discourse, meaning the way in which the discourse produce and reproduce perceptions and behaviour (Milliken, 1999:229). The third step is to address how practices become intelligible and legitimized, and highlight that there are other ways to interpret reality that challenge the dominating representations (Milliken, 1999:230).

This thesis is built on Milliken`s three steps and use them as a framework for structuring the analysis and discussion. Since this is not a study for only portraying the discourse, but to uncover the relational identity concerns in that discourse the first step of the analysis is divided into two subsections. In explicit the analysis will *first* of all establish the basic discourse on Iranian identity as portrayed by the Saudi political elite. The *second* step will look into how the relational identity concerns are reflected within this official discourse. *Thirdly* the degree of autonomy and affiliation will be

interpreted through Shapiro`s analytical framework, in order to identify the preconditions for actions that the discourse sets. *Fourthly*, Milliken`s last step will be incorporated by evaluating alternative representations and how a change in the preconditions for actions can occur. This last step is purely theoretical, and rests on the arguments laid out in the Relational Identity Theory.

Mindful of my own predispositions and biases as a research taking part in the social world, both the choice of structure and the theory that I use as a starting point is made with an assumption that Shapiro, Milliken and Hansen`s (see the section below) research is reliable. This is not an objective assumption that anyone would reach at any point of time, but is based on a tradition of trust in the thoroughness of the work of other researchers. To stand on the shoulders of giants is difficult without a trust in the strength or height of the "giants". This assumption of reliability is perhaps the most basic predisposition I build my research on.

Establishing the basic discourse
In order to establish a basic discourse on identity it is important to know what to look for, and how to evaluate the data. Lene Hansen (2006) writes about the Western discourse on "the Balkans" in the 1990`s, and she presents thorough arguments for the theoretical and methodological basis of her analysis. She elaborates on discourse analysis in itself, and introduces her own categories to structure the analysis. The Saudi elite`s discourse on Iranian identity is about defining Iran, and Hansen`s presentation of three core concepts is useful here. Hansen identifies the Western discourse on the Balkan identity based on the degree of *Otherness*, the attributed *changeability* and the *responsibility* of the West. These are the constitutive elements of the discourse, and I will use these categories when identifying the official Saudi discourse on Iran.

Figure 3: Establishing a basic discourse on identity
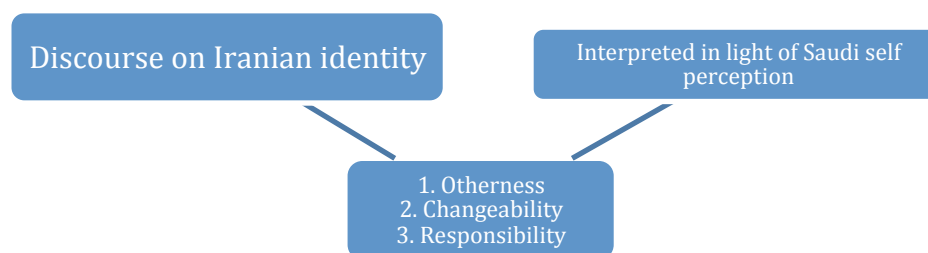
The Otherness of Iran is both the contrasts to the Self of the Saudi elite, and the general attributions assigned to Iran. In order to make sense of how to interpret the representations of Iran I will make continuous references to the Saudi self-image. The changeability of Iran is determined from their portrayed ability to learn, ability to progress, solving problems and the degree of repeating their own actions. The responsibility of Iran is also an important part of the basic discourse, and it will be detected by asking who is to blame for the issues at hand, who have the responsibility to react to them, and whether Iranian actions (and their effects) are intended or random.

When going through the data material I have divided the statements on Iran according to these three predefined categories. I have then looked at the main themes of the statements within these categories, and inductively defined some subcategories of statements to create an overall picture of the dominating trends in the discourse. The subcategories of Otherness are the *general attributions* of Iran and the *contrast to the Saudi Self* that is described. The subcategories of changeability are Iran`s *ability to learn, ability to progress* and Iran`s *repetition of its own actions*. The subcategories of responsibility are a view of *who is to blame*, who has *the responsibility to act*, and whether or not the effects are portrayed as *intended or not.*

How are relational identity concerns reflected in the discourse?
In step two of the analysis I will look at how the relational identity concerns, autonomy and affiliation, are reflected in the basic discourse laid out in step one. This requires a close knowledge of autonomy and affiliation. Shapiro`s Relational Identity

Theory is built on the many experiments he conducted where group identification was tested. He outlines 18 observations that led him to define autonomy and affiliation as the relevant core concerns (see Appendix 1). Based on these observations I have created four subcategories of autonomy and four subcategories of affiliation that can be investigated in the established discourse. In this step I therefore use the narrative from step one to portray the level of autonomy and affiliation in the official discourse.

	Subcategory	Based on observation nr[3]
Autonomy	Independence between issue and the other actor	2c, 2i
	Ability to act	1e, 1i
	Room to be heard	1f, 1g, 2a, 2d, 2g
	Respect	2d, 2f
Affiliation	Empathy	1b, 1d, 2b, 2f
	Similar core identity	1h, 2c
	Creativity	1i
	Inclusion	2c, 2e

Table 1: Categories of autonomy and affiliation

In relation to autonomy, the independence of Saudi actions is essential. The actions are independent if there are few ties between the action or the issue acted upon and the relevant parties. This means that Saudi decisions on vaccination is highly independent from Iran, while issues concerning oil prices are more dependent. The ability to act and the room for being heard by the parties is also important in establishing the autonomy. This shows the degree of influence Saudi Arabia has. Lastly, the degree of respect that Saudi Arabia believes Iran shows also impinges upon the Saudi autonomy.

In relation to affiliation, one basic element is the degree of empathy towards Iran. High empathy entails that Riyadh validate Iran`s arguments and motives, and include Iranian concerns in their own calculations in a favourable way. Another important element is the similarity of the core characteristics of the identity of Saudi Arabia and Iran. If Riyadh views Tehran to hold much of the same values or traits as themselves, Riyadh is more likely to have a closer affiliation to Tehran. The degree of creativity shown by the leaders can also affect the degree of affiliation by transcending

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[3] See Appendix 1 for a list of Shapiro`s observations.

differences and evoking new categories of commonality. Lastly, the degree of inclusion in the decision-making process can either increase or decrease the perceived affiliation. When actors perceive that they are facing a shared problem, and they have to work together to solve it, this increase affiliation. As actors perceive a shared problem and work together towards a solution, this increases affiliation

These categories are derived from observations in Shapiro`s experiments, and they are unfortunately not equally detectable in the official Saudi discourse. There are for example difficulties in detecting the Saudi ability to act and the room to be heard. These aspects of the Saudi autonomy cannot be fully investigated only by looking at the official discourse, but could entail the evaluation of alternative discourses or material facts as well. This is outside the scope of my methodological framework, and shows a shortcoming of pairing an analysis of the official discourse with research on emotional concerns. There are nevertheless some elements in the discourse that highlight the perception of the Saudi ability to act and their room for being heard. The following analysis will point to what the official discourse do in fact show about these categories, but keeping in mind that the categories are not fully illuminated by this. The insight that the official discourse provides for the other categories is nevertheless considered to be very valuable, and the official discourse is in total still a suitable focus for this purpose. This evaluation is based on an assumption that the number of other observations of autonomy and affiliation makes the findings strong enough to make inferences about the relationship. This again relates to my own cognitive bias as a researcher taking part in an academic tradition where higher number of observations is considered to yield good enough indications, even though some aspects remains clouded.

Sources
The study is based on a combination of in depth textual analysis and semi-structured interviews. The textual analysis is based on 37[4] interviews and statements from the Saudi government, most of them from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). These have been taken from the archives of the Ministry`s webpage, web archives of the American embassy in Riyadh and some interviews with government officials in the

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[4] Far more documents were reviewed, but 37 of them proved to be useful in this context.

Saudi newspaper *Arab News*. I have included all relevant documents from the Ministry`s webpage dated between 2011 and 2014, and have supplemented this with searching after official statements and interviews with the King, Crown Prince and foreign minister containing the word "Iran", "foreign", "Syria", "Yemen" or "Iraq", in *Arab News* and the American embassy`s web archive.

These are all statements transcribed in English, and therefore carry with them a risk of being different from Arabic sources. English sources have the disposition of being used by the elite for propaganda with the purpose of constructing a self-image for the international stage. As such, the elite may use the English statements to shape the international perception of them. This would not be a problem if all the sources were in Arabic. This is however not a serious problem that challenge the conclusions of this thesis. The trend in the discourse still sets the frames that Saudi decision makers operate under. The decision makers must relate to the discourse and situate themselves within its structure, regardless of how genuine and representative of individual internal emotions it is. In an attempt to balance a misunderstanding of sources I have used personal interviews to control for the trends I find in the data material. The interviewees all have a close knowledge of Saudi community and politics. It has also been useful in this regard that I stayed in Saudi Arabia for two months to do research, and I conducted several casual conversations with Arabic speaking diplomats, researchers and others (Saudis and foreigners), to test whether the trends I detect is in line with these peoples` perception of the discourse.

During my stay in Saudi Arabia I got seven useful interviews on the record. Four of them were with foreign diplomats working in Riyadh, two were with researchers and one was with a spokesperson from the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The diplomats will be referred to as diplomat A, diplomat B, diplomat C and diplomat D in order to protect their anonymity. They were all diplomats from Western countries, and their perspectives and insights are probably coloured by this background. Even though they all have close knowledge of the official Saudi discourse and have participated in talks with the Saudi elite behind closed doors, I have regarded the information they have provided as their informed perspective, not the objective truth. Informal conversations with Saudis indicated that interviews with Saudi diplomats

would have given other responds, and I expect the same is true if interviews were conducted with other Arab or Asian diplomats.

The two researchers I interviewed did not need any anonymity, and is therefore referred to by name. Dr. Christian Koch made it clear that he was speaking on behalf of the Gulf Research Center, and the center is therefore listed as the reference. Both the Gulf Research Center and the other researcher I interviewed, Dr. Saeed Badeeb, have a history of defending Saudi policy and have been following Saudi foreign policy for decades. I therefore assume that they have close knowledge of the Saudi political sphere, and that they have an interest in portraying the Saudi regime in a favourable way. Since the Saudi regime is such a closed hierarchy it has not been realistic to get interviews with central decision-makers, so any contacts I got with expertise on Saudi foreign policy and especially security policy have been welcomed. These contacts have been sampled at random, following a snowball method, where one contact has put me in touch with other contacts and so on. This form of getting in touch with people is the "common way of business" in Saudi Arabia.

The interviews have all been semi-structured, following some thematic issues such as regional security, the role of Iranian president Rouhani, and the role of Iran in Syria and Yemen (see the interview guide in Appendix 2). The interviews have been open for in-depth explanations of any potential additional information or insight that the respondents considers relevant. The interviews gave a good impression of Saudi concerns in the region, but some of the questions I asked did not yield directly relevant responds. Questions about the security agreement between Tehran and Riyadh in 2001 and questions about the role of the Iranian president Rouhani did not prove to be directly relevant for the analysis. In hindsight, the questions could have focused more directly on the interviewees recollection of the official Saudi discourse, or focused on the interviewees impression of Riyadh`s empathy with or respect for Iran. Because the interviews were conducted simultaneously with the gathering and processing of the data material it was nevertheless difficult to let the data material guide the questionnaire from the beginning.

Background

State building

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is geographically the largest country in the Gulf region, and it stretches out across 2.149 million square kilometres (Mabon, 2013:80). It has a relatively small population of about 28.7 million, where 5 million of those are expatriates (Mabon, 2013:6). The country was unified in 1932 but only after conquests done by Ibn Saud and his family and tribal allies (Mabon, 2013:81). The Al-Saud family entered into an alliance with both tribal leaders (Brynen et.al, 2012:177) and the elites of the Islamic branch Wahhabism (Brynen et.al, 2012:82). The unification of tribes was an important precondition for controlling the territory, given the large military capacity of the tribes (Mabon, 2013:149). The political map of the territory was very fragmented before 1932, and Ibn Saud used marriage as a strategy for forging bonds between his own family and the tribes (Mabon, 2013:81). He actively made use of the Islamic right to marry four women and the right to divorce, in combination with co-opting tribal leaders (Mabon, 2013:147 – 148). A web of strong centralized political and military control, based on tribal loyalties therefore developed.

The formation of the Saudi state also provides the most large-scale example of a structure founded on an alliance with the religious elites (Brynen et.al, 2012:198). The alliance with the Wahhabi elite was built on an agreement that the Al-Saud family would protect the Wahhabi elite against idolatry and unbelief, while the Wahhabi elite would continue to support Ibn Saud and his state building project (Mabon, 2013:86). The linking of Saudi rule to Wahhabism gave the regime religious legitimacy, and the Saudi national identity is today closely linked to a strict Wahhabi interpretation of Islam and the Kingdom`s role as host for the holy places Mecca and Medina. The international responsibility of Saudi Arabia as hosts of Mecca and Medina does however run opposed to the domestic alliance with Wahhabism to a certain extent. Wahhabism does not acknowledge Shi`as as Muslims, but the holy Mosques are still kept open to Shi`as and all forms of Sunnis. The regime in Riyadh therefore runs a fine line of balancing between a strict, exclusionary interpretation of Islam at home, while elevating its status as an including Muslim leader abroad. A clear religious identity is thus fundamental for Saudi Arabia both in its domestic and foreign policy.

Political structure

The Saudi political system is built on paternalistic and clientelistic mechanisms (Hertog, 2009:73). Ibn Saud became king of the unified state, and the monarchical rule has remained stable until today. The political system follows a strict hierarchy where the royal family controls the state and represses political opposition to the point of non-existence. There are large numbers of people working within the state, mostly in order to build loyalty and client relations to the regime. The state has thus been the "dominant channel of social mobility" and "the main or only vehicle to improve one`s life for most Saudis" (Hertog, 2009:76 – 77). This capacity of the regime is fuelled by oil rents from the international market. Given the strict hierarchical system in the Kingdom, the ultimate decision-making power lies with the King. In matters of foreign policy the Crown Prince, Deputy Crown Prince, Foreign Minister and Head of General Intelligence is also influential (Gulf Research Center, 2015). This means that the consultative bodies surrounding the King, like the Council of Ministers and the *Majlis as-Shura*[5] do not contain independent power to question or control the decisions. Five interviews[6] I had confirmed that there is in essence 2-5 people in the royal family ultimately making decisions in foreign policy. The five interviewees all agree that the King, Crown Prince and the Foreign Minister have the highest degree of power in this. Even though these figures may seem absolute in their power, they do have to consider domestic power balancing and alliances between social groups, religious groups and fractions within the royal family.[7]

There are no political parties in Saudi Arabia, but that does not mean there are no ways to express political opinion. There are critical voices in the public realm from time to time, and sometimes there are even political demonstrations to put focus on grievances and social rights. Some groups in the Eastern province began in 2011 to demonstrate for increased Shi`a rights and to end the discrimination of Shi`a Muslims. In an attempt to curd the protests King Abdullah offered a great amount of money to increase domestic welfare, in addition to using security forces to clamp down the protests in a strict manner. These protests were centred on Shi`as in the Kingdom, and

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[5] One of the King`s consultative bodies. This assembly is appointed by the King.
[6] Diplomat A, diplomat C, diplomat D, Gulf Research Council (GRC), and Dr Saeed Badeeb.
[7] The King, Crown Prince and foreign minister have all been changed since January 2015. This is a remarkable alteration, given that Saudi Arabia is built on conservative continuity.

gave a clear signal to the regime that they have to consider Shi`as as a group to appease to keep a calm domestic environment.

Another source of potential political instability is the structure of the monarchical rule. The line of succession is not vertical, where the crown is passed down to the oldest son. Rather, the succession is horizontal, meaning that the rule goes from brother to brother. There is therefore a possibility that the different branches in the royal family, which now comprises of about 7000 people, will try to impose their lineage as a basis for vertical succession (Lacroix, 2011:58). When former King Abdullah died in January 2015 the throne was handed over to then Crown Prince Salman. Before he died Abdullah instated Muqrin as Deputy Crown prince, and the most powerful struggles over more immediate access to the throne thereby seemed to be curtailed. King Salman has nevertheless not kept Muqrin as next in line for the throne, but announced his nephew Mohammed bin Nayef as Crown Prince and his son Mohammed bin Salman as deputy Crown Prince in April 2015. Mohammed bin Nayef is the first in line for the throne that is not a son of former king Abdulaziz, and this marks a shift from one generation to another. In addition to creating the new post of Deputy Crown Prince, King Abdullah also established a Allegiance Council to give senior princes the capacity to choose who the future crown prince will be (Mabon, 2013:82). This council, together with the establishment of the Deputy Crown Prince position, and the appointment of the first grandson of Abdulaziz in line for the throne, gives the impression of an enduring stability of the monarchical rule. The replacement of former Crown Prince Muqrin and the appointment of Mohammed bin Salman as a successor to the throne nevertheless imply some turbulence in the ranks. The foreign minister Prince Saud al-Faisal was the world`s longest serving foreign minister, with 40 years in the position, but was also replaced in April 2015. What power struggles lies behind the closed doors of the palace and what changes may happen in the future is left to speculations. This thesis will not speculate in how the new leading figures will conduct foreign policy in the future, but keep focus on the period 2011 until 2014.

Foreign relations
The US has been a major power in the Gulf for decades. Saudi Arabia is no exception to the American influence in the region, but rather a focal point for American

presence. Their alliance has lasted for decades, and while the US has secured an access to oil, the Saudis largely rely on US military equipment, training and guarantee of external security (Aarts & Duijne, 2009:276). The withdrawal of American forces from Iraq, lacking American will to engage in Syria and waning American dependence on foreign oil facilitates a development where the US is decreasing its role in the Middle East. This poses a challenge to the regime in Riyadh who could end up losing an important strategic and military ally.

Traditionally there has been three main powers in the Gulf, namely Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran. They have all had ambitious foreign policy aims, and have thus had to take account of one another in their foreign policy strategies (Gause, 2009:273). Other countries in the Gulf do not have aspirations or resources to gain regional influence in the same way. Qatar has nevertheless used its monetary, diplomatic and media-related resources to challenge Saudi hegemony in the region from time to time. The other monarchies in the Gulf, and Qatar`s co-members in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates and Oman, are all under heavy influence from Saudi Arabia. Yemen remains outside the council, and because of the fragile state structures and on-going violent insurgency it has been termed "Saudi Arabia`s soft underbelly" (Zambelis, 2014:6).

Relations to Iran

The relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran is among the most heated friction points in the Middle East (Zambelis, 2014:4). The rivalry between the two countries consisted in essence of two main parts, namely an ideological competition and a geopolitical competition (cf Mabon, 2013). The ideological competition concerns in part a history of suspicion between Arabs and Persians (Mabon, 2013:42 – 43), but mostly revolves around frictions between Sunni and Shi`a Muslims. The Saudi unification process and current national identity build to a large degree on the royal family being a moral leader of the Muslim world. This is ultimately what gives the Al Saud family importance both domestically and internationally. Iran directly undermine that authority by seeking to achieve leadership of or influence over Shi`a Muslims (Gallarotti, Elfalily & Tayyeb, 2012:17). This competition appears as a zero-

sum game, where one actor cannot achieve any gains without the other one loosing (Mabon, 2013:44).

The geopolitical element of the competition has a similar dynamic. This area is more concerned with the actual power and influence the countries have in the region. Given the Iranian and Saudi aspirations for political hegemony in the region they are natural competitors (Posen, 2006:254). The Iranian attainment of nuclear weapons would change the regional balance of power, and Saudi Arabia will perceive it as an existential threat (Mabon, 2013:61). In addition the two countries have diametrically different perceptions of the presence of global powers in the region. Saudi Arabia depends on the US for its own external security, while Iran wants to exclude outsiders from the region, and provides its own security. Thus, the US is perceived by Tehran as a military threat, while Riyadh perceives American presence as a precondition for security (Mabon, 2013:59). In this way the geopolitical competition can also be seen as a zero-sum game.

History of relations to Iran
"The Iranian revolution changed the Gulf status quo enormously" (Gause, 2010:244). The new Shiite regime in Iran represented a direct threat to Saudi legitimacy, in terms of challenging the religious legitimacy and the monarchical foundation of the Saudi state (Gause, 2009:280). The new Iranian political leaders together with the religious leader Ayatollah Khomeini advocated strong sentiments against monarchies, strongly criticised Western interference in the region, and claimed Islamic leadership and supremacy in the region (Mabon, 2013:50). These elements challenged both the geopolitical position of Saudi Arabia and the internal stability of the Kingdom, given that the Iranian leadership directly approached Shi`a minorities in the Gulf countries, trying to export the revolution. The competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran culminated in the late 1980`s. In 1987 the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca saw great clashes between pilgrims and Saudi security forces, killing 450 pilgrims. Many of those killed were Iranian citizens, and the Saudi government accused most of them of being revolutionary guards from Iran, suicide actors and agitators trying to spread the revolution (Mabon, 2013:52). Riyadh cut off diplomatic bonds with Tehran in 1988 (Amiri & Samsu, 2011:246), and during the Hajj in 1989 there were two explosions linked to persons with Iranian background (Mabon, 2013:52).

During the 1990`s the relationship started to move in another direction. There emerged a détente between them (Rich, 2012:473), largely due to the efforts of Iranian president Rafsanjani and his successor Khatami, to build confidence between the two countries (Amari & Samsu, 2011:247). Rafsanjani reduced the foreign aid to Shi`a groups and reduced the public criticism of the Saudi royal family, and the diplomatic bonds were restored in 1991 (Amari & Samsu, 2011:246 – 247). A highpoint was reached in 2001 when the two countries signed a bilateral agreement on security cooperation (Amiri & Samsu, 2011:246). This agreement never materialized, and when Ahmadinejad acceded to presidential office in Iran in 2005, hostile rhetoric resumed.

The war in Lebanon and sectarian tensions in Iraq served as arenas for proxy battle between Saudi Arabia-led and Iran-led blocks, and talks about a new Arab Cold War emerged (Ryan, 2012).[8] Several regional developments in addition to the war in Lebanon in 2006 have facilitated the revival of this rivalry, such as the Iranian Spring in 2009, Iranian nuclearization, the Arab Spring (Rich, 2012:474) and the decline of Damascus, Cairo and Baghdad as great regional powers (Ryan, 2012). As such Saudi Arabia and Iran are actors on the same stage, using several regional arenas to compete over power and influence. The rise in sectarian tensions in Iraq after the US invasion in 2003 was accompanied by Saudi support for Sunnis and Iranian support for Shi`as (Mabon, 2013:68). The civil war in Syria has also become a hotspot for foreign involvement, and Iran has stood by their ally, the Syrian regime, giving Saudi Arabia an opportunity to limit both Iranian and Syrian power by supporting the some of the rebel groups (Mabon, 2013:67). These dynamics have also been apparent in Yemen and Bahrain since 2011. The extent and depth of Saudi and Iranian involvement is nevertheless difficult to prove exactly, but their rhetoric and available channels of influence strongly support the assumption that they are involved.

Other research on Saudi Arabia and Iran
Many researchers have studied Saudi Arabia or Iran as separate cases, but the literature regarding the regional aspect of their relationship is limited. Many

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[8] This term allude back to Kerr`s (1977) analysis of the competition between Egypt and Syria in the 1960`s, and now denoted the cool relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

researchers look at the role of the US in the Gulf, the role of oil, and how those affect security (Bronson 2006; Clark, 2005; Cooper, 2011). There are nevertheless some scholars who have devoted attention to the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and these studies portray two main approaches to their relationship, namely a realist and an identity-based approach. Among the realist approaches we find Chubin and Tripp (2004) who are concerned with the structural factors constraining the relationship, and points to geopolitical differences as an explanation for differing regional interests. Lotfian (2002:110) is also advocating this approach when saying that a "major cause of tension is the regional arms race", making references to the classical realist security dilemma. In this line of reasoning, a dilemma occurs when two actors are concerned for their own security and therefore want to arm themselves. The arming of one constitutes a threat to the security of the other, and the first actor is thus prompted to get even more arms, resulting in an arms race reducing the security for both actors. This is exemplified by several analyses of the prospects of a nuclear-armed Iran. Some predict that Saudi Arabia will seek to attain nuclear weapons if Iran attains them, and that the Saudis will look to Pakistan for assistance (Gause, 2010:248; Rich, 2012:480; Riedel, 2010:373 – 374). Another example of using the security dilemma to analyse the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran is the notion of involvement in Iraq. When Iran increases its presence in Iraq, Saudi Arabia increases its presence in Iraq, which in turn increases the overall sectarian violence, resulting in a proxy war (Mabon, 2013:184). The driving mechanism of decision-making in this approach is an interest in balancing the power of aspiring regional hegemons, and Saudi Arabia thus seeks to counter every move Iran makes to increase its regional power.

Gregory Gause elaborates on this argument in his analysis of Saudi foreign policy. He stipulates that the right frame for understanding Saudi foreign policy is to use "the regional balance of power battle between Riyadh and Tehran" (Gause, 2011). This does not only mean that the Saudi royal family will oppose Tehran, but that they will also counter balance the allies of Iran, for example the Syrian regime. Gause (2010:9) approaches this argument somewhat differently in his book *The International Relations of the Persian Gulf* where he explains that states react to external threats to internal stability, not primarily to external changes in power balance. In this view, Saudi Arabia is primarily concerned with regime security and the domestic effect of

external powers, not regional balancing per see (Gause, 2010:1). The link between external powers and domestic stability is manifested by transnational identities and the way these identities are utilised by foreign actors to gain influence (Gause, 2010:10). He thus acknowledges that identities and ideas matter when framing our understanding of the material, but that the material resources at the same time enables the manifestation of ideas.

This creates a bridge over to the second dominating trend in explaining the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran, namely by pointing to identities. Barnett (1998) looks at this element in his book *Dialogues in Arab Politics*, and shows that symbols and perceptions among state leaders are more important than power politics in the Middle East. The self-perception of state leaders forms the basis of their interests, and they often use symbolic gestures to frame events and convey their message. In Barnett`s view this can result in a "symbolic security dilemma" where leaders counter each other`s moves by making other symbolic moves, leading to a spiralling of rivalry perceptions (Barnett, 1998). Al Toraifi (2012) has written extensively on the role of state identity in the foreign policy decisions of Saudi Arabia and Iran from 1997 until 2009. He argues that the changes in policy and attitudes in the Saudi-Iranian relationship in this period is caused by a change in Iran`s state identity. Mabon (2013) address another way of explaining the relevance of identities. He seeks to unveil what he calls the identity incongruence within and between the countries, and how this affects their relationship. The move from internal dynamics to external decision is linked by the "incongruence dilemma", where an external security dilemma between Saudi Arabia and Iran influences an internal security dilemma between Riyadh and the domestic Shi`a minority (Mabon, 2013:10).

Even though both these approaches seem to yield valuable insight into foreign policy-making in Saudi Arabia and Iran, neither one of them address the fundamental emotional concerns that lie behind the decisions. This approach explores the deeper mechanisms of decision-making, which are yet to be uncovered, and can add important information on how to deal with this competitive relationship in a constructive and peaceful way.

Step 1, The Saudi official discourse on Iran

The analysis starts by drawing a picture of the overall Saudi discourse on Iran. It focuses on the view of the Saudi political elite, and is based on official statements from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs supplemented by interviews. This outline of the discourse is structured around Lene Hansen`s (2006) categories for portraying a discourse on "The Other", namely the degree of *otherness*, the *changeability* and the *responsibility* of the other group. The investigation of these categories follow Hansen`s own definitions, my own understanding of what it means to be different, able to change and responsible, and informed by the view of people living and working in Saudi Arabia that I got to know while I was in Riyadh. In this way I have tried to modify my own biases towards a Western, Norwegian understanding of the categories, to be more sensitive towards the Saudi structure of social meaning that the discourse operates within. This outline of the official discourse will serve as a foundation for detecting emotional concerns in the second step of the analysis.

Iran is an important power in the Gulf and wider Middle East, and Saudi Arabia is mindful of Iranian political activity. The rivalry between the two countries has important implications for the conflicts in the region, especially in the states where government structures are weak. Going through the data material it is striking that none of the statements or speeches from the former Saudi foreign minister Prince Saud al Faisal[9], has Iran as the main topic. Iran is nevertheless mentioned repeatedly in relation to other cases, or as an additional element to the original agenda. This may indicate reluctance by formal Saudi bodies to relate directly and exclusively to Iran. By talking about Iran in connection with other issues, they construct Iran as an actor that has a supporting role in the region, not playing a leading role in and of itself. Iran is most often talked about in connection to the Syrian crisis, but is also cast in the situation in Yemen, Iraq and other Gulf States. The exception from portraying Iran as a side actor is related to the negotiations between the permanent members of the Security Council[10] plus Germany (P5 + 1) and Iran over the Iranian nuclear program.

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[9] Prince Saud al Faisal was the foreign minister throughout the period in focus., and was replaced by currest foreign minister Adel Al Jubeir on 29th April 2015. This was after Prince Saud had served as foreign minister for 40 years.
[10] USA, UK, France, Russia and China.

On the other hand, while Iran is most often viewed as a supporting role in regional politics, former foreign minister Prince Saud al Faisal links Iran to many of the developments in the region. In this way, Prince Saud portrays Iran as an active player that has a hand in several important situations. Iran is thus not side lined as a state with minor influence, but is relevant for the Saudi perception of the regional situation in many areas.

Otherness:

There are a lot of references in the discourse to what characteristics and traits Iran has. The following section will first show that Iran is portrayed as different from Saudi Arabia in the official discourse, and point to some elements of differences that do not appear in the discourse. The next section explains the few common traits between Iran and Saudi Arabia that appear in the discourse, and will also mention some common traits that one might expect to be part of the discourse, but that are not mentioned. Lastly attention will be given to the more general attributes of Iran in the official discourse that do not relate specifically to the Saudi self-image.

Differences

The most frequent references to Iran by Saudi foreign policy decision-makers highlight how Iran is different from the Saudi identity. In March 2011 Prince Saud told the press that "we don`t have demonstrations like those in Iran" (Prince Saud, 110309)[11], pointing to Iran as an unstable country. This refers back to demonstrations that Iran experienced in 2009, where popular protests challenged the political leadership. Prince Saud further explained that "reform and advice cannot be made through demonstrations and means that raise sedition and cause disunity" (Prince Saud, 110309), showing that unity and compliance are central values for the Saudi leadership. By referring to demonstrations in Iran earlier in his speech, Prince Saud created a contrast between the unstable Iran and the united Saudi Arabia.

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[11] The references to data material in the analysis will use a different style than the standard Harvard style used elsewhere in the text. The references will specify who made the statement and when. The six numbers following the name indicates year-month-day the statement was made or published. For example 110309 means the statement was made 9th March 2011. This is in order to make the text more readable and straightforward without drowning in the multiple references made.

Another basic distinction between Iran and Saudi Arabia that become apparent in the official Saudi discourse is how Iran deals with sovereignty. Prince Saud has several times underlined how important sovereignty is for Saudi Arabia. He has made clear "the Kingdom`s absolute rejection of any interference in its internal affairs" (Prince Saud, 110309), that they value "mutual respect regarding sovereignty and independence" (Prince Saud, 120401), and that the "unity of the state and its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity" is vital for peace (Prince Saud, 140911). This creates a sharp contrast to Iran`s "continued interference into the internal affairs" of GCC countries (Prince Saud, 120611), the Iranian "attempt to interfere in the countries of the region by all means" (Prince Saud, 130106), and Iran`s "military and political interference in the regional state" (Prince Saud, 141014b). In total, a main point of critique from Saudi officials towards Iran is the meddling in internal affairs of other Middle Eastern countries. It is clear that in the official Saudi view, Iran is not respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other states.

This attribute is criticized in even harsher terms in relation to a dispute between Iran and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) over some islands, and recently also in relation to the Syrian crisis. The Saudi discourse on these two conflicts expresses the view of Iran as an occupier. Since 1971 Iran has claimed control of the islands Abu Musa, Lesser Tunbs and Greater Tunbs in the Strait of Hormuz (Al Toraifi, 2012:11). In 1992 Iranian forces took full control over Abu Musa, and UAE never gave up their claim for that island. This has remained a point of critique in the Saudi view of Iran ever since, and Prince Saud has said that Iran is occupying this island (Prince Saud, 120625; Prince Saud, 120928). In Syria Prince Saud has said that in addition to fighting the regime the rebels are also "fighting a foreign occupier" (Prince Saud, 130701) and that "Syria can only be described now as a an occupied country" (Prince Saud, 130525b). The former foreign minister has several times bashed Iran for its interference in Syria[12], and although the "foreign occupier" is sometimes not

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[12] See for example Prince Saud, 130302; Prince Saud, 130304; Prince Saud, 130525b; Prince Saud, 130625a; Prince Saud, 130625b; Prince Saud, 130902; KSA mission to the UN 140211; KSA official statement, 141014a, Prince Saud in Arab News, 141014b.

mentioned by name, it clearly alludes to Iran.[13] In 2013 and 2014 Saudi officials stepped up their portrayal of Iran being an occupier, and said straight out that Syria is occupied because of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard (Prince Saud, 130902, KSA mission to the UN 140211), and more generally that "the Iranians are actually an occupying force in Syria now" (Prince Saud, 141014b). This portrays Iran not only as an actor that interferes but one that actively takes control over foreign territory.

In addition to this Iran has recently been described as a problem in and of itself. Prince Saud hinted to this in 2012 when he said that he "hope[s] that they [the Iranians] would change and become part of the solution" (Prince Saud, 121205a), implying that they are now part of the problem. The former Saudi foreign minister did not hold back however in October 2014 when he said that "Iran was always part of the security problem in the region and never part of the solution" (Prince Saud, 141014a) and that Iran is still "part of the problem" (Prince Saud, 141014b).

Based on these descriptions of Iran Saudi officials have added that Iran violates international principles and norms. The Iranian "invasion" of Syria for example "breaks every international law, protocol and principle" (Prince Saud, 130625a), while Iranian espionage against the Kingdom also "violates international norms" (Prince Saud, 130526). This again stands in sharp contrast to the Saudi self-image as acting "in accordance with the framework and resolutions of international legitimacy, with full respect for the principles of human rights and international humanitarian law" (Prince Saud, 120928). By constructing Iran as an actor that disregards international norms, Prince Saud transfers the concerns for Iranian actions from a bilateral and regional level, to being an issue for the entire international community.

Elements of Otherness outside the discourse
Two elements of differences between Saudi Arabian and Iranian identity that didn`t appear in the official discourse, but that is a large part of other analyses, is the sectarian and ethnic division between the countries. Saudi Arabia adheres to a Sunni

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[13] Saudi Arabia has also criticised Russian aid to the Assad regime, but has not pointed to the presence of Russian people in Syria. Iran is on the other hand, accused of sending military personnel (Prince Saud in Arab News, 141014b) and being present in Syria with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and through its proxy Hezbollah (Prince Saud, 130625a; Prince Saud, 130902).

tradition of Islam, while Iran follows a Shi`a tradition, and many point to this as an important factor for their relationship.[14] As Diplomat C put it, the notion of being a Muslim leader "is always on their [Riyadh`s] mind". Diplomat A mentioned nevertheless, that Riyadh would never say that this affects their foreign policy. In addition, some scholars have highlighted the differences of Arab and Persian ethnicity, and that the historical relationship between the two groups shapes the way Riyadh relates to Tehran.[15] These two elements do not however appear in the official discourse on Iran. The Gulf Research Center (GRC) was very clear on the point that Riyadh does not promote sectarian tensions in their foreign policy (The Gulf Research Center, 2015).

This does not mean that sectarian and ethnic divisions are irrelevant factors in the relationship, but that they are not part of the official discourse, and thus do not limit the space for manoeuvring according to the discourse. Divisions between Sunni and Shi`a, or Arabs and Persians may well be factors that influence the actions of Saudi Arabia and may well influence the way Riyadh talks about Iran. They are not however, directly observable in the official discourse. Since this thesis is looking at the expressed concerns of the discourse, sectarianism and ethnicity does not enter into the picture. These factors can still motivate action, but the analysis of these factors would entail a whole other study requiring a different approach than the official Saudi discourse provides. This being said, it is an interesting observation in itself that sectarianism and ethnicity are not parts of the official discourse.

Common traits
Iran is nevertheless not constructed as a completely different *Other* without any common attributes with the Saudi self-image. Through the official Saudi discourse one commonality between Iran and Saudi Arabia appears. Iran is at times described as "a neighbouring country" (Prince Saud, 130525b), and even a neighbour that the Saudi government has relations to, will negotiate with and will talk to (Prince Saud, 140514). In relation to the nuclear talks between Iran and the P5+1, Prince Saud has

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[14] This was underlined as a central concern for Riyadh in interviews with Diplomat A, Diplomat B and Diplomat D. See also Gause, 2014, Gallarotti, Elfalily & Tayyeb, 2012.
[15] See for example Mabon, 2013.

several times talked about Iran and other countries in the region, to point to their common right to peaceful use of nuclear energy.[16]

Elements of Common Traits outside the discourse

One commonality that I expected to find traces of in the discourse was the Muslim character of the national identity of the two countries. Islam plays a major role in both Iran`s and Saudi Arabia`s self-image, even though they adhere to different directions of Islam. Saudi Arabia has clearly stated the importance of "Islamic principles and values", "the Holy Quran and the teachings of the Prophet" (Prince Saud, 110309), and the "blessings from God" (Former Crown Prince Salman, 150106). There has nevertheless been no reference to this common ground throughout the official discourse on Iran from 2011 until 2014, and it is clearly not an aspect that Riyadh wants to highlight. This can be explained by internal tensions within Saudi Arabia, between the regime and the Wahhabi opposition. Wahhabi forces in the Saudi society is always a concern for the decision makers, given the way the regime relies on alliances with and support from conservative factions. Wahhabism does not acknowledge Shi`as as real Muslims at all, but at the same time the Saudi regime accepts between 50 000 and 100 000 Shi`a pilgrims every year. If the official discourse would bring up the role of Shi`as and their affiliation to Sunnis this would stir up great domestic differences of opinion, and would ultimately challenge the power base of the regime. As will be shown in the fourth step of the analysis, this deprives Saudi Arabia of one aspect that could have increased affiliation to Iran in the official discourse.

General attributes

In addition to these direct or indirect comparisons with the Saudi self-image there appear a number of other general attributes of Iran in the Saudi official discourse. First, Iran is not viewed as an actor with serious intensions. Rather, Iran is portrayed as not being serious. This is closely linked to the nuclear talks, and Prince Saud al Faisal has called on Iran to "conduct serious negotiations" in order to "remove all doubts about its nuclear program" (Prince Saud, 120312). There has been a pressing "necessity of Iran responding to serious international efforts" (Prince Saud, 130525),

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[16] See Prince Saud, 120625; Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Abdulaziz, 120928; KSA official statement, 131125

and a need for Iran to "take strategic steps in the near future to show a sincere wish to cooperate with the world community more than before" (KSA official statement, 141014a). This implies that Iran has never been quite serious about cooperating and negotiating with the international community. The Gulf Research Center highlights this when explaining that Saudi Arabia is eager to engage with Iran, as long as it is "seen as being serious and responsible" (Gulf Research Center, 2015). The scepticism towards Iran`s seriousness is also supported by Prince Saud`s statements saying that "Iran does not respond to the efforts of the Group [P5+1] to resolve the crisis" (Prince Saud, 130106), and that Saudi Arabia is disappointed over "Iran`s failure to respond to these efforts" and "its attempts to evade them" (Prince Saud, 120625).

In addition to not being serious, Iran is also constructed as an actor that is not to be trusted.[17] This is also closely linked to the nuclear talks. The situation is seen as a crisis because of the doubts about the Iranian nuclear program, meaning that Iran is not honest about their intentions. A solution to this problem would have to remove "any regional and international uncertainty" (Prince Saud, 130525) and "alleviate all doubts concerning the program and guarantee that Iran will use nuclear power only for peaceful purposes" (Prince Saud, 130304). It is therefore not enough to trust that Iran will only use its nuclear program for peaceful purposes, but there needs to be an additional control mechanism. Saudi official statements have consistently pointed to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as the appropriate authority for ensuring such control.[18] Diplomat A explains that Riyadh fear that a nuclear deal will make the US lose focus on the danger that Iran poses in the region, and forget that Iran is not to be trusted. In May 2013 Prince Saud was especially clear on the point that Iran could not be trusted, when he said that "the statements of Iranian officials and their actions were contradictory" (Prince Saud, 130526). The Gulf Research Center[19] points to some hesitancy on the side of Saudi Arabia in their bilateral relations to Iran, because they "want to see Rouhani`s nice words translated into

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[17] This is confirmed through interviews with Dr. Saeed Badeeb, Diplomat A, Diplomat C, and the Gulf Research Center (2015). Dr. Saeed Badeeb also turned the perspective around and said that the problem is ultimately that Iran is not to be trusted because Iran does not trust anybody.
[18] See Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Abdulaziz, 120928; Prince Saud, 130213; Prince Saud, 130304; Prince Saud 140416
[19] Bearing in mind that this research centre is established by and under the leadership of dr. Abdulaziz Sager, which has a very clear critical opinion on Iran.

concrete actions" (Gulf Research Center, 2015). In essence, Iran "preach what they do not practice, and practice what they do not say" (Prince Saud, 130526).

Another attribute that appears in the official discourse on Iran is that Iran wants to promote conflict and fighting. Tehran wants conflict and actively seeks to spread it in the region. An official spokesperson from the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) said that Iran is aiming at blackmailing states, not just getting influence (MoFA, 2015). In relation to the nuclear issue Iran is conducting a "policy of escalation" (Prince Saud, 120312). In the Gulf region, Iran is accused of "taking advantage of the situation to instigate sedition" (Prince Saud, 121224). In relation to Syria, Prince Saud said that it is "very unfortunate that Iran is using such a threatening tone" (Prince Saud, 130525b). Even when it comes to the internal affairs of Saudi Arabia, Iran has a "hostile attitude" (Prince Saud, 130526). Riyadh has also pointed out that Iran has "forces fighting in Syria, Yemen, Iraq and other places" (Prince Saud, 141014a) and that Iran is providing "support for terrorist groups" (Prince Saud, 141014b). Dr. Saeed Badeeb (2015) also supported this view by saying that Iran wants a bad relationship with Riyadh, and that they seek to surround the kingdom in the region. In this view Iran does not seek peace and security, but rather want to create conflict and chaos.

This leads to the next point that appears from the discourse, namely that Iran succeeds in their aims for creating conflict. Iran is in itself portrayed as a threat. The nuclear issue is described as "one of the most important challenges that threaten international peace and security in general, and the security and stability in the Gulf in particular" (Prince Saud, 120928). Iran is in itself the threat in this regard, because Riyadh views the nuclear issue as arising from Iran`s lacking trustworthiness. Prince Saud makes this clear when he named the nuclear crisis the "Iranian challenge which constitutes a clear threat" (Prince Saud, 121114). The view of Iran as a real threat is also obvious in the Saudi view of the Syrian conflict. In March 2013 Prince Saud said that "there are some states that continue to aid and abet the slaughter of the Syrian people" (Prince Saud, 130302). Even if he didn`t mention Iran by name, this was a clear kick to Iran after already having established a view of Iran as aiding the Assad regime. In June 2013 Prince Saud was more clear spoken and said that the most dangerous development in Syria "is the involvement of foreign forces, foremost of which is the

motions of Hezbollah and others with support from Iran`s national guard in the mass murder of Syrians" (Prince Saud, 130625a). He further said that Syria is "facing genocide by the government and an invasion from outside the government", referring to Iran (Prince Saud, 130625b). In this way, Iran constitutes a threat to the Syrian people as well as to the regional security situation.

Even though it is not a big element in the Saudi official discourse on Iran, there are examples of Iran being portrayed as stupid. It would be a very harsh line to say out straight, but the former foreign minister has implied it. "Common sense say that in times of trouble, people should be little more prudent and tone things down, and not add fuel to the fire" (Prince Saud, 130525b). This was said after expressing concern over Iran`s threatening tone in Syria, and Prince Saud thus creates a contrast between Iranian actions on the one side and "common sense" on the other. In another statement Prince Saud said that "I don`t think Iran has a solution" regarding the Syrian crisis (Prince Saud, 121205b). This implies that Iran is not sensible and does not think ahead. In essence, this supports the previously explained notion that Iran is more interested in creating chaos than fixing it.

All of the general attributes deducted from the discourse has up until now been viewed in negative terms. There do however appear some neutral characteristics of Iran in the discourse as well. As noted before, Iran does seem to violate international norms, but it does at the same time have rights in the international arena. This appears in connection with the nuclear negotiations, where Riyadh reaffirms "the right of Iran and the countries of the region for the utilization of nuclear power for peaceful purposes" (Prince Saud, 120625). This has been reiterated several times[20] and also underlines Saudi Arabia`s commitment to international norms and Iran`s inclusion in the region.

Even though Iran is to a large extent viewed in negative terms, Riyadh still recognise that it is an important actor in the region, with a weight that cannot be ignored. "Iran is also a large, important country, and Iran`s attitude has its weight" and "its position

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[20] Prince Saud, 120625; Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Abdulaziz, 120928; KSA official statement, 131125

will have an impact" (Prince Saud, 121205a). Prince Saud has also stated that "the two countries [Saudi Arabia and Iran] are influential in the region" (Prince Saud, 140514) and that regional security "requires an Iran at peace and happy with itself" (Prince Saud, 100215). In this way, Iran should be taken into account as an important regional actor.[21]

Summary
In total, the picture of Iranian identity that arise from the official Saudi discourse on Iran, has several elements, but is mostly comprised of negative descriptions and contrasts to the Saudi self-image. While the Kingdom values unity and coherence, Iran is unstable. While the Kingdom strongly believes in the respect of sovereignty, Iran disregards it. Iran is interfering in the internal affairs of other countries in the region, and in some cases it even occupies another state`s territory. Iran also violates international norms and principles, and it is in itself a problem for the region. This stands in sharp contrast to the Saudi self-image of respecting and valuing international norms, and the Saudi commitments to solving regional issues peacefully. Even though central differences in sectarian and ethnic affiliation do not appear in the discourse, the other elements outlined creates an image of Iran as diametrically different from Saudi Arabia. The official Saudi discourse does to a certain extent acknowledge that Iran is part of the region and that it is a neighbouring country, but Riyadh does not highlight other commonalities such as both of them being Muslim.

Among the other more general characteristics that are ascribed to Iran is a sense that Iran cannot be taken seriously and should not be trusted. Not only does Iran want to create conflict and chaos, but it also succeeds in promoting it. Iran thus poses a threat to the region. Iran is not portrayed a sensible actor, but still has international rights in line with the rest of the countries in the region. Ultimately, Iran is seen as an important regional actor that should be reckoned with. In total, these findings create a substantial basis for evaluating the autonomy and affiliation that appears in the official discourse. As will be shown in step two of the analysis, most of the

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[21] This point in the official Saudi view of Iran is confirmed through interviews with the Gulf Research Center (2015), Diplomat A, Diplomat C and Diplomat D. Diplomat A also adds that Riyadh pretend that they don`t take Tehran very seriously, but that they in fact do.

characteristics defining Iran in the discourse underline a weak autonomy and low affiliation on behalf of Saudi Arabia.

Changeability:

Another aspect of the Saudi perception of Iranian identity is the ability of Iran to change or adapt. This is the second element Hansen (2013) points to when establishing the official discourse on "The Other". This section will show that Iran is portrayed as having a continuous behaviour, which fails to respond to progress. It will also be shown that the Saudi discourse advocates a hope that Iran has the ability to progress in the future.

The first element that becomes apparent in the discourse is Iran`s tendency to continue its destructive actions. Prince Saud for example says that the Kingdom "rejects Iran`s continued interference into the internal affairs of member countries [in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)]" (Prince Saud, 120625), and that "based on experience, Iran was always a part of the security problem in the region" (Prince Saud, 141014a).

Although the continuation of Iranian behaviour in itself is just a small part of the picture of Iran, the Iranian failure to respond to progress forms a larger part of the discourse. This relates mostly to the nuclear negotiations, and Riyadh has repeatedly stated their disappointment in Iran`s failure to respond to the efforts of the P5+1 group to solve the crisis diplomatically.[22] This constitutes a tendency for Iran to evade attempts at progress and questions their will and ability to move forward and develop.

There is not much focus on ways that Iran has changed or adjusted its policy over the four-year period from the beginning of 2011 until the end of 2014. If this is because Iranian policy has not changed or because Riyadh does not want to acknowledge the change is not relevant here. The relevant thing is how Iran is constructed in the official discourse in Saudi Arabia. If this discourse does not mention actual change that much, it makes up for it by mentioning the Saudi *hope* for change in Iranian

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[22] Prince Saud, 120625; Prince Saud, 130106; Prince Saud, 130213

policy. In March 2012, Prince Saud expressed a "hope that Iran would end its policy of escalation" (Prince Saud, 120312). This emphasises both that Iran is continuing its destructive policy, and that there is a potential for change if Iran only seize the opportunity. Further Prince Saud underlines that "our hope is that Iran become part of the effort to make the region as safe and as prosperous as possible" (Prince Saud, 140514) and a hope that Iran would "work towards establishing strong relations with its neighbours, instead of escalating things with a threatening tone" (Prince Saud, 130525b).

Riyadh has also expressed hope of future progress and cooperation in specific areas of the region too, for example that they "hope that Iran plays a positive role in supporting Iraq`s territorial integrity and stability" (Prince Saud, 120114). Concerning Iran`s role in Syria Prince Saud expressed his hopes that Iran "would change and become part of the solution" (Prince Saud, 121205a), while in relation to the nuclear negotiations Prince Saud hopes that "Iran joins the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and GCC states to make the Middle East free from nuclear weapons" (Prince Saud, 120114). All these expressions of hope does not place any particular faith in the actual ability of Iran to progress, but it leaves room open for Iran to choose these actions without struggling to fit such moves into the official Saudi discourse on Iran. In essence, these expressions in the discourse make it easier for Iran to change rather than continue its current policy.

In sum, Iran is portrayed as a stagnant actor that continues a number of destructive policies, and fails to respond to efforts by international and regional actors to progress and improve the situation. At the same time Iran still has the potential to change if it so wishes. These elements highlight both a perception that Iran lacks respect for Saudi Arabia, and Riyadh`s lacking ability to be creative to invent new categories of commonality to cooperate from. Step two of the analysis will elaborate on what this says about the autonomy and affiliation of Saudi Arabia in the discourse.

Responsibility:

The third element of establishing the basic discourse on identity that Hansen (2006) brings up is the placement of responsibility. This appears as a central part of the

official Saudi discourse on Iran as well. The responsibility that Riyadh places on Iran can be divided into three separate, yet related dimensions. First of all, Iran is responsible for some destructive consequences of their actions. Secondly, Iran is responsible for not having done enough in the past to promote peace. Thirdly, Iran has the responsibility to take action in the future to promote peace.

Destructive consequences

Iranian policies attempt "to interfere in the countries of the region by all means and stir up unrest and problems in them" (Prince Saud, 130106). Prince Saud has also criticised Iran`s efforts to interfere, saying that it is "destabilizing the Middle East, undermining peace efforts, and scuttling attempts to root out terror groups" (Prince Saud, 141014b). These statements clearly point to negative consequences of Iranian actions. Prince Saud has also been more specific when placing the responsibility for destructive situations on Iran. The nuclear issue is for example said to be "one of the most important challenges that threaten international peace and security in general, and the security and stability of the Gulf in particular" (Prince Saud, 120928), and this issue arises from uncertain intentions of Tehran`s use of its nuclear program. There is also an "environmental danger of the Iranian program on the Gulf States, in addition to its threat to security and peace of the region and the world" (Prince Saud, 130106).

A major focus in the official Saudi discourse is also how Iran is responsible for the crisis and atrocities in Syria. "They [the Iranians] are killing the Syrian people. They are spilling Syrian blood" (Prince Saud, 141014b). The presence of Iran is portrayed as "an occupying force in Syria" (Prince Saud, 141014b), and this occupation "adds an even deadlier element" to the crisis (Prince Saud, 130625a). There are numerous references to the way in which Iranian support to Assad and his regime "enable it to murder more and more of its people" (Prince Saud, 130304).[23] The discourse thus portrays Iran as being partly to blame for the bloodshed in Syria.[24] This does not remove any responsibility from Assad and his regime, and Riyadh does not hold back in criticising their actions. Still, the linking of Assad`s "killing machine" (Prince Saud, 130306) and "genocidal war against its own people" (Prince Saud, 130701) to

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[23] For more references, see Prince Saud, 130605; Prince Saud, 130625b; KSA mission to the UN, 140211; Prince Saud 140310.

[24] Part of the blame is also put on Russia and their support of the Assad regime.

Iran`s policy also transfers some responsibility of the atrocities to Iran. As an official spokesperson of the foreign ministry said, Iran plays a destructive role in the entire region, and because of this "the region is almost boiling" (MoFA, 2015).

Past efforts to promote peace
Another complaint from Riyadh against Tehran is that Iranian decision makers have not done enough to promote peace in the past. In essence, Iran is the one responsible for the failure of previous efforts to resolve conflicts in the region. Generally speaking, the peace and security of the region "cannot be achieved through the pursuit to possess deadly weapons through exercising an approach of hegemony and intervention in the internal affairs of countries in the region" (Prince Saud, 120928). This points to two of the elements that Riyadh has been criticising Iran for, namely the ambiguous intentions of Iranian nuclear capacity, and Iran`s involvement in the internal affairs of other countries. In addition, Prince Saud said that Iran`s blunt tone "complicates things and increase the chances that mistakes would be made by either side" (Prince Saud, 130525b), and that Iran`s interference in other states` internal affairs "has created a huge mess" (Prince Saud, 141014b). Iran`s blunt tone and interference thus appears as reasons for the continuation of conflict and problems, and Iran holds responsibility for this.

Concerning the dispute between Iran and UAE over the islands in the Strait of Hormuz, the Kingdom expressed concern over "the threats and escalatory steps undertaken by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in these islands" (Prince Saud, 120928) and has defined the situation as an Iranian occupation of Emirati islands (Prince Saud, 120625). Nothing points to a degree of blame at the Emirati account, but rather portrays Iran as the sole aggressor and reason for the continuation of the dispute. Off course, Riyadh`s account of the nuclear negotiations and the Syrian crisis also points to Iranian failure to promote peace and provide a solution to the problems. As mentioned, Prince Saud has several times criticised that Iran "fails to respond to the efforts of the 5+1 Group" (Prince Saud, 130106). Regarding Iranian responsibility in the continuation of the Syrian crisis, it is clear that Riyadh does not view Iran`s previous actions as constructive. "As for Iran, whether it wants to be part of the solution or part of the problem in Syria, we don`t think that

anyone looking at Iran`s policy would be able to say that it wants to be part of the solution" (Prince Saud, 121205a).

Future efforts to promote peace
Despite all of this responsibility placed on Iran`s shoulders for previous instigation of conflict and prevention of solutions, this does not automatically mean that Iran has a responsibility to take future steps to establish peace and security. The official discourse in Saudi Arabia is a bit divided regarding this. In one way, a lot of responsibility for taking future steps towards peace is placed on Iran, but at the same time other actors are also highlighted as central to the establishment of future peace.

In relation to the nuclear negotiations, Riyadh clearly says that Iran is the one that has to become serious in its efforts "in order to put an end to this crisis" (Prince Saud, 120928) and to remove regional and international suspicions.[25] There are also several steps Iran can take to defuse the crisis in Syria. "If Iran wants to be part of the solution, it has to pull out its forces from Syria. The same applies elsewhere, whether in Yemen or Iraq" (Prince Saud, 141014b). Prince Saud has also demanded "the immediate withdrawal of all foreign forces and armed elements of the Syrian territories, including the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Forces" (Prince Saud, 140123) and pressed for an international demand for "the withdrawal of foreign occupying forces from Syria" (Prince Saud, 130701). This illustrates Iran`s responsibility to take action to promote future peace.[26]

At the same time, Riyadh does not see Iran as the only relevant actor for promoting future peace. Riyadh also takes a large degree of responsibility on itself, not in order to change past behaviour that promoted conflict, but out of the Kingdom`s "desire for spreading peace in the international community" (Vice foreign minister Abdulaziz bin Abdullah, 120905). In August 2014 Prince Saud and the Iranian deputy foreign minister, Hossein Amir Abdolahian, even agreed to "join forces in the fight against terrorist groups that have threatened the region`s security and stability" (Arab News, 140827). What this joining of forces means is hard to say as this coordination between

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[25] See Prince Saud, 120312; Prince Saud, 130130; Arab News, 130306; Prince Saud, 130525;
[26] This is also underlined by an official spokesperson in the foreign ministry saying that "Iran has to be stopped" (MoFA, 2015).

Saudi Arabia and Iran never came up again in the official discourse during the remainder of the year.

Other actors that Riyadh assigns responsibility for the regional security situation also includes the Assad regime, the United Nations Security Council, the Yemeni government, the Yemeni people and the Iraqi government. In Yemen, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) brokered a peace agreement in 2011 called the GCC initiative, and since that, Riyadh has expressed its support for the Yemeni government and called upon the Yemeni people to respond to the efforts of the government to establish stability.[27] The reference to foreign interference and Iranian meddling in Yemen appeared as part of the official discourse only after the Houthi takeover of Sanaa in September 2014.[28] Saudi Arabia has also placed responsibility for regional security in part on the Iraqi government, saying that "there is a great responsibility on the Iraqis themselves" (Prince Saud, 130130). Riyadh has also promised to provide "the government and the new president [Haider al-Abadi] with the help they need to move forward" (Prince Saud, 140905).

In relation to Syria, the picture is a bit more complicated, with several actors involved. The Kingdom has criticised Assad and his regime harshly[29] but has never placed any hope in the change of behaviour of the regime. In September 2013 Prince Saud said that the regime "exceeds all red limits and lines" (Prince Saud, 130902), and the only solution in the Saudi view involves a removal of Assad and his accomplices. This does not only imply a solution to the conflict in Syria, but will also solve the problem of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).[30] Early on, the Kingdom did however highlight the role of the UN Security Council, by saying that it "holds morally responsible the international parties that disrupt the international move" in Syria. This alluded to the Chinese and Russian veto for an approval for

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[27] See for example Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Abdulaziz, 120928; and Prince Saud, 121205a

[28] See for example Prince Saud, 141015. This is confirmed through an interview with Diplomat D.

[29] See Prince Saud, 120218; Prince Saud 120401; Prince Saud 120625; Prince Saud 121114; Prince Saud 121205a; Prince Saud 130130; Prince Saud, 130302; Prince Saud, 130306; Prince Saud, 130525a, Prince Saud, 130701; KSA mission to the UN, 140211; Prince Saud 140924, Prince Saud 141014b.

[30] Riyadh has since the summer 2014 linked Assad and his regime to the rise of ISIL. See Prince Saud, 140924. This point was also raised by the Gulf Research Center (2015).

intervention from the Security Council. Later Prince Saud pointed to the Security Council`s "responsibility to take a firm stand that preserves Syria`s security" (Prince Saud, 130213) and called upon "the international community to shoulder its responsibilities" in Syria (Prince Saud, 130902).

Summary
In total, this shows that the official Saudi discourse frames Iran as being responsible for the negative consequences of Iranian actions. Iran is also responsible for not having done enough to promote peace in the past, either by not taking steps needed to end a conflict or even by taking steps that actively promotes conflicts. The responsibility of establishing regional peace and stability is divided between several actors, but Iran has a clear influence on the future attainment of peace. Iran`s responsibility in creating regional stability should nevertheless not be overstated. As the official Saudi discourse highlights several other actors that influence future projections, Iran is not the only one that needs to react to the regional situation. These elements in the discourse says something about Riyadh`s ability to act in issues of importance to them, and also sheds light on Riyadh`s perception of being heard in issues that involve both the countries. As step two of the analysis will show, this contributes to lowering the autonomy of Saudi Arabia as portrayed in the discourse.

Summary: Who is Iran?
The previous section has outlined the official Saudi discourse on Iran and its place in regional events. The characteristics of Iran in the discourse are many, but there is an overwhelmingly predominance of portraying Iran as different from Saudi Arabia. This difference is most often viewed in negative terms, contrasting the good intentions and goals of Saudi Arabia. Iran is viewed as an unstable country that interferes in the internal affairs of its neighbours, and sometimes occupies their territory. Iran is in itself a problem to the region and violates international norms and principles. Still, Riyadh acknowledges that Iran is part of the region and is a neighbour that they have to relate to. The discourse also has several descriptions of Iran that do not relate directly or indirectly to Saudi Arabia`s own self-image. Iran is for exampled portrayed as not being serious and an actor that cannot be trusted. Moreover, Iran wants to create conflict and pose a concrete threat to regional and international security, and Iran is not a smart actor that conforms to common sense. Iran does however have

international rights in line with the rest of the regional countries, and is in itself an important and great player that has weight and influence in the region.

When it comes to Iran`s ability to change and develop, the discourse highlights Iran`s continuation of its destructive policies. Iran fails to respond to efforts to progress and solve conflicts in the region, but Riyadh hopes that Tehran will change this trend and contribute to creating a safer more stable region. The official discourse also constructs Iran as being responsible for several direct or indirect consequences of its actions that have created negative effects in the region. At the same time, Tehran is responsible for not doing enough to promote peace in past efforts, and Iran partly has a responsibility for contributing to establishing peace in the future. This responsibility is nevertheless shared with several other actors, including Saudi Arabia.

Step 2, Relational identity concerns

The second step in this analysis evaluates which collective emotional concerns vis-à-vis Iran are portrayed in the official discourse outlined in step one. It explains how the expressed statements indicate emotions in the discourse, and what level of autonomy and affiliation can be derived from the discourse. Relational identity concerns largely shape the space for actions that is perceived as desirable. Emotions are no more separate from decision-making than thinking is, and collective group emotions are no exception. Affiliation and autonomy sets a frame for interaction, and this frame infers costs or rewards for certain actions. This is not to say that a specific level of autonomy or affiliation necessitates a certain behavioural respond, but that actions that break with the preconditions of the emotional concerns include an emotional cost that impinges on the group`s self-esteem. This is the section where I get to start the application of the relational identity theory and show how the theory can be used to shed light on a specific case. As explained in the section on relational identity theory, Shapiro (2010) argues that conflict management is influenced by emotions, and that these emotions follow from interaction between groups. Shapiro came to this conclusion based on several real life experiments, and the two core concerns he discovered as the most important ones were autonomy and affiliation. These concerns are the most prominent aspects in a situation where groups` identities are being challenged, and these concerns are important for setting preconditions for behaviour. In this case the expression of emotional concerns sets certain frames on Saudi foreign policy vis-à-vis Iran.

The following section will evaluate the degree of autonomy and affiliation in the official Saudi discourse on Iran, based on eight subcategories that are derived from Shapiro`s observations in his experiments. The four subcategories constituting autonomy is perceived *independence*, *ability to act*, *room to be heard*, and perceived *respect* from the other group. The four subcategories constituting affiliation is *empathy*, perception of *similar core identity*, *creativity* and *inclusion*. The investigation of these categories follow Shapiro`s own descriptions, my own understanding of what they mean, and informed by the view of people living and working in Saudi Arabia that I got to know while I was in Riyadh. I have again tried to modify my own biases towards a Western, Norwegian understanding of the

categories, in order to be more sensitive towards the Saudi structure of social meaning that the discourse operates within.

Autonomy
Independence
As explained previously, autonomy refers to the sense of freedom an actor has to affect issues of importance to that actor, and the freedom from interference by other actors. This points to a degree of independence both between the two actors, and between the issue and the second actor. Put differently, if Saudi Arabia is to have complete autonomy in its relations to Iran, the Saudi decisions would have to be independent from Tehran`s influence, *and* the issue of concern would have to be free of influence from Tehran. The expression of this concern in the official Saudi discourse paints quite a different picture than such a kind of independence.

As explained in the elaboration of the official discourse on Iran, Riyadh highlights the destructive consequences of Iranian actions, and portrays Iran as a threat to regional and international security. The official Saudi discourse repeatedly acknowledges that Iran has a great influence on issues that matter a lot to Saudi decision-makers.[31] Iran has for example a "flagrant interference in the internal affairs of Arab countries" (Prince Saud, 120312) and Prince Saud has expressed concern for "Iran`s interference in GCC`s internal affairs" (Prince Saud, 121224). A spokesperson of the foreign ministry even said that when Iran wants access to a country but there are no Shi`a`s there, they simply invent their own group (MoFA, 2015). The Gulf Research Center (2015) also explained that Iran`s sectarian foreign policy facilitated the rise of ISIL. In addition to such general notions of Iran`s influence on Saudi foreign policy, two areas particularly stand out as being heavily affected by Iran. This concerns the nuclear profile of the region and the situation in Syria. Both these issues are portrayed as highly important to Saudi security and regional stability, and Iranian presence and effect on the issues are very apparent in the official discourse. According to the official discourse the Iranians are singlehandedly the ones that determine the nuclear threat in the region and the possibility of proliferation. Iran is the actor that needs to

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[31] This is confirmed by all the interviews. Diplomat A (2015) especially underlined that Saudi Arabia see the hand of Iran everywhere, and that Iran in fact is the most important factor for Saudi Arabia when considering the region.

change its course to ensure peace and security, and Iran is the actor that has failed to respond to progress in this issue in the past.

Likewise, the situation in Syria is highly influenced by Iran and their proxies according to the discourse. Diplomat A (2015) highlighted that Iran has much influence on this issue. The discourse clearly states that Iran is occupying Syria through the presence of their revolutionary guard and Hezbollah, and this amplifies the suffering and killing of the population. This notion is supported through interviews with Dr. Saeed Badeeb and a spokesperson from the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Dr. Saeed Badeeb (2015) estimates that there are around 5000 people from Hezbollah and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard in Syria now. An official spokesperson in the Saudi foreign ministry even said that Iran is the one with the final word in Syria, not the Syrian regime (MoFA, 2015). As such, the events in the region that matter most for Saudi decision-makers are tightly connected to Iranian foreign policy.[32] This implies that the official Saudi discourse displays a low degree of autonomy vis-à-vis Iran.

Ability to act
In addition to the independence of Saudi actions or the issue at hand, the ability of Saudi Arabia to act also matters for their perceived autonomy vis-à-vis Iran. This is unfortunately a category that cannot be fully investigated through the analysis of the official Saudi discourse, simply because this discourse does not highlight all the relevant elements of Riyadh`s ability to act. Considerations of the extent of Saudi involvement and frequency of donations, support or other actions will not be considered here. Such a fact-based evaluation would provide a more comprehensive view of this aspect, but it lies beyond the scope of the methodological framework of this thesis. The official Saudi discourse does however contain traces of this category, and the following paragraphs show what the discourse in fact do provide of insight into this, even though it is not completely comprehensive.

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[32] This is confirmed by all the 7 interviews. Diplomat C nevertheless moderates this by saying that Iran is part of Saudi Arabia`s considerations in Syria, but not the main factor.

Saudi Arabia has time after time confirmed their support of the principle of non-interference in internal affairs of other countries, and a respect for their territorial integrity.[33] In one way this restricts Riyadh`s possibility to take action to influence domestic developments in other countries. In relation to Iraq for example former foreign minister Saud al-Faisal has said that "there is a great responsibility on the Iraqis themselves" to establish a fair and secure environment (Prince Saud, 130130). This does not however restrict Riyadh completely from having a role in situations and conflicts contained in the borders of one country. Riyadh has sought to deal with the Syrian and Yemeni crisis by participating in and hosting international meetings and donor conferences.[34] Saudi money has also had a far reach in Iraq, where Saudi Arabia recently donated $500 million "to cover the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people" (Prince Saud, 140915). The foreign minister spoke about the aid to Iraq as an obligation for "providing the government and the new president with the help they need to move forward" (Prince Saud, 140915). In relation to Syria, the official Saudi discourse has heavily promoted support to the Syrian rebels, and the need for arming them to ensure their legitimate right to self-defence.[35] A spokesperson from the foreign ministry has also confirmed that Saudi Arabia is training the Syrian opposition, and expects that approximately 5000 people will be graduating from the training in May 2015 (MoFA, 2015).

This promotes an active role of Saudi Arabia as a supporting actor of the Syrian opposition, but Riyadh has often called on the "international community to shoulder its responsibilities" for diffusing and solving the conflict in Syria (Prince Saud, 130902).[36] The United Nations Security Council is especially highlighted as an institution that should be more active in its efforts to resolve the conflict (Prince Saud, 120124; Prince Saud, 120928; and Prince Saud, 121205a). By pointing to the responsibility of other actors in these situations, Riyadh at the same time limits its own room for actions by acknowledging the supreme authority of the Security

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[33] See for example Prince Saud, 110309; Prince Saud, 120401; Prince Saud, 130106; Prince Saud, 140123; Prince Saud 140911; and Prince Saud, 140914.
[34] This includes participation in the Friends of Syria Group, Friends of Yemen Group, and donor conferences for Syria and Yemen. For official speeches in the Friends of Syria meetings see for example Prince Saud, 121216, and Prince Saud, 130302.
[35] See for example Prince Saud, 130302; Prince Saud, 130304; Prince Saud, 130701.
[36] For more calls on the international community to take action, see Prince Saud, 120218; Prince Saud, 120224; Prince Saud, 130302; and Prince Saud, 130701.

Council to intervene, alleviating itself of the ultimate responsibility to "fix" the situation. In this way the official Saudi discourse does portray Saudi Arabia as able to act in matters of importance, but at the same time constricts the scope of actions by a stated principle of non-interference and by pointing to other parties` responsibility to act instead.[37]

The issue of the Iranian nuclear program is a bit different in this regard. In the Saudi discourse, it does not appear that Riyadh can actually take action even though this issue affects the regional security. Prince Saud repeatedly encourages efforts by Iran or commends the efforts of the P5+1 in finding a solution to the insecurity[38], but Riyadh does not seem to have any ability to influence this themselves. The discourse does not portray any other tracks to solving the nuclear issue than the current diplomatic negotiations. As such, this is an area where Saudi Arabia does not show any ability to act independently, and their perceived autonomy is thus reduced.

Room to be heard
Another aspect of evaluating the autonomy of Saudi Arabia in its relations to Iran is how much space there is for Saudi Arabia to be heard in issues of importance. Specifically, the perceived autonomy is related to how well Iran listens to the arguments of Saudi Arabia. This is unfortunately also an aspect that is not fully illuminated through the official Saudi discourse. An evaluation of how many actors are involved in the issues at stake, and how much attention each actor is given by the others would elaborate on this category further. An analysis of the official discourse can however contribute by showing the appearance of other actors and their relation to the issue as depicted in the discourse.

The Saudi official discourse on Iran in relation to Syria is for example built on a plethora of actors, and even though the discourse talk about the "Syrian people" as one group, it acknowledge that there are extremist fractions among the rebels (Prince

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[37] The Gulf Research Center (2015) highlights on the other hand that Riyadh is not capable of influencing matters of importance to them, because of the many interests at play and the structural failures in Iraq, Yemen and Syria that creates the foundation for the conflicts in those countries.
[38] See for example Prince Saud, 120625; Prince Saud, 120928; KSA official statement, 131125; and Prince Saud, 140310.

Saud, 130302) and that ISIL in particular has become a major factor in the Syrian crisis (Prince Saud, 140924). In addition to casting Iran and Hezbollah as central actors in the Syrian conflict, the international community through the UN is also included as an actor that is involved in the conflict. Regarding the issues in Iraq and Yemen, there is not the same degree of confusion in relation to the number of actors as in Syria. There are not as many voices to take into consideration as there might be in relation to Syria, and the room for Riyadh`s concerns to be heard is bigger. In the official Saudi discourse there is a clear focus on the Yemeni government and the Yemeni people[39], in addition to some mentions of "Yemeni sectarian forces" (Prince Saud, 141014a) and influence of "foreign parties in the region" (Prince Saud, 141015), alluding to Iran.[40] Similarly, in Iraq there is focus on the Iraqi people and the Iraqi government[41] in addition to some mentions of ISIL (Prince Saud, 141014b) and the alliance between former prime Minister Al-Maliki and Iran (Arab News, 140827). In total, this means that Saudi foreign policy makers do not see as much competition for voice-time in relation to Iraq and Yemen, as they do in relation to the Syrian crisis. The Syrian crisis is nevertheless portrayed as one of the most prominent dangers to regional security, more so than the conflicts in Yemen and Iraq. This implies that Saudi autonomy vis-à-vis Iran is relatively low concerning the conflict in Syria, because the importance of the "Saudi voice" is being challenged by so many other voices.

A second aspect that illustrates the perception Riyadh has of the room for their voice to be heard is the amount of repetitions they use when addressing Iran in the official discourse. Saudi Arabian top officials do not have a long record of direct talks with Iran, but they often come with direct recommendations to Iran in their public statements. As the outline of the official discourse shows, Prince Saud has many times called on Iran to make stronger efforts to promote peace and security, and shamed Iran`s failure to respond to progress and their continuation of destructive behaviour. All this shows that even though Riyadh makes it clear what type of behaviour they want from Iran in certain issues, Tehran continues to do as they like. In explicit, the

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[39] See for example Prince Saud (120625); Prince Saud (120928); and Prince Saud (121205).
[40] Diplomat D confirms that "foreign intervention" in the Saudi official discourse often alludes to Iran.
[41] See Prince Saud (130130), Prince Saud in Arab News (130526) and Prince Saud (140915)

official Saudi discourse shows that Riyadh does not see that there is any actual space for their opinion in Tehran`s behaviour. This means that when Iran decides on matters that also affect Saudi Arabia, such as their nuclear program or their policy towards Iraq and Yemen, Riyadh does not have a great ability to influence Iran`s decisions. As such, Saudi autonomy and disengagement from Iran is low.

Respect
This leads to the last aspect of the perception of Saudi autonomy vis-à-vis Iran, namely the respect that Riyadh gets from Tehran. As every other aspect, this is also based on the subjective perceptions of Riyadh as they are displayed in the discourse, and not on some objective facts. The perceived respect also has links to Iran being portrayed as an actor that continues its destructive policies and is not serious and not to be trusted. The reoccurrence of critique against Iranian interference in internal affairs in the Gulf shows that Riyadh does not feel respected. The Saudi appreciation of sovereignty and territorial integrity is not limited to only being valid for Saudi Arabia, but extends as a principle for every Arab country. When the official Saudi discourse time after time brings up instances where Iran has violated the principle by interfering in Saudi internal affairs, in other Gulf countries or even in Saudi Arabia`s relations to other countries, this implies that Tehran does not respect Riyadh`s opinion.

Summary
According to the official Saudi discourse on Iran, the autonomy that Saudi Arabia appears to have vis-à-vis Iranian actions does not seem to be very high. There is a low degree of independence between Saudi and Iranian foreign policy, and some of the issues that are most important for the security and stability of Saudi Arabia and the region are highly influenced by Iran. Saudi Arabia does have a certain ability to act in most of the regional issues where they and Iran play a role. Even though Riyadh strongly supports a principle of non-interference in internal affairs, they are engaged in supporting Syrian rebels, the Iraqi government and the Yemeni government. Riyadh does on the other not have any say in the on-going nuclear negotiations, even though the official Saudi discourse highlight that the outcome of the negotiations has big implications for regional security. In the Syrian case, Saudi Arabia does have to compete with many other actors in order to be heard and taken into consideration by

Iran, but with regards to Iraq and Yemen they do not have to cut through the same amount of "noise". Despite this, Tehran does not seem to listen effectively to what Riyadh has to say, and does not take into consideration the repeated calls from Riyadh for change in Iranian behaviour. This further implies that Iran does not respect Riyadh`s opinion sufficiently, and that Riyadh is not able to influence Tehran`s decisions on matters that affect the Kingdom. In total, this means that the official Saudi discourse portrays a very low degree of autonomy in Riyadh`s relations to Iran.

Affiliation

Affiliation is the second emotional concern that matters for conflict management and shapes the behavioural mode in confrontational relationships. This is the degree of closeness and connection one actor feels in relation to the other actor. The following section will explain how the official Saudi discourse portrays the Saudi affiliation to Iran, by focusing on empathy, similarities in their core identity, the elements of creativity in the discourse and degree of inclusion of Iran as a problem solver.

Empathy

A large part of feeling closeness to another group is the ability to feel empathy with them. This entails both to view the other group`s arguments and motives in a favourable way, and to include those arguments and concerns in your own considerations The Saudi view of Iranian motives and arguments demonstrates that this is not a discussion between equally respected positions. As mentioned, Riyadh does not view Iran as a serious or smart actor[42], and the discourse highlight that Iran`s motives are to promote conflict and instability. Prince Saud has for example said that he hopes that "Iran would end its policy of escalation and conduct serious negotiations" in relation to the nuclear issue (Prince Saud, 120312) and that Iran`s "blunt tone only complicates things" in the region (Prince Saud, 130525b). This underlines the small degree of confidence Riyadh places in Iranian arguments and motives. The Gulf Research Center (2015) supports this when explaining that Iran`s actions continues to be seen as trying to undermine the security and legitimacy of the Kingdom. The former foreign minister`s statements in October 2014 made it clear that

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[42] Diplomat A explained that it is an important strategy of Riyadh to display Iran as dumb and not trustworthy.

Iran was "part of the problem", and thus underlined that the official discourse does not view Iranian arguments and motives favourably. This view was confirmed in the interview with a spokesperson in the foreign ministry (MoFA, 2015), who said that Iran plays a destructive role in the region and aims at blackmailing other states. Dr. Saeed Badeeb (2015) also explained that Iran does not want a good relationship with Saudi Arabia, and that they are trying to surround the Kingdom. Rather, Iranian motives and arguments seem to be opposed to what is regarded as good.

The other aspect that signifies the empathy that Riyadh has for Tehran, is whether or not Riyadh includes Tehran`s concerns in their own concerns. First of all, given that the basis for Iranian concerns are not validated and recognised, the Iranian concerns in themselves are also not validated and recognised. This is also apparent in the way the official Saudi discourse view Iran as not to be trusted and as part of the problem. When the view of Iran is that they seek to mislead other states and create disunity and conflict, these aims are off course not included in Saudi Arabia`s own foreign policy aims. The Saudi foreign policy rather seeks to counter much of the portrayed Iranian policy by calling for change, leading the attention to the violations of international principles and supporting groups that want to restrict or deny Iranian influence. As such, there are no traces of empathy for the Iranian position in the official Saudi discourse.

Similar core identity
Another aspect that builds affiliation between groups is the similarities in their core identity. This can relate to similarities in values that the group promotes or the traits that characterises the group. As noted in the outline of the official discourse Iran is largely viewed as different from Saudi Arabia. In relation to values, the dominant belief is that Iran does not respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other states by interfering in internal affairs and even occupying foreign territories. This is opposed to Saudi Arabia`s firm support of sovereignty and a principle of non-interference. The discourse also shows that Iran violates international norms, while Saudi Arabia reaffirms the importance and their own compliance with international norms. In essence, there does not appear to be any common standing between the values of Iran and the values of Saudi Arabia, based on the official Saudi discourse. This is peculiar since the Saudi discourse does mention possibilities for coordination

and improvement of communication[43], but such references are always made under the precondition that Iran changes itself, which means that the current situation is not good enough. The countries` common religious foundation in Islam could have been a point of reference that modified the contradictions in their identities, but this common origin is not mentioned at all. This may relate back to the internal tensions in Saudi Arabia between the Wahhabi rejection of Shi`as as Muslim, and the regime`s welcome of Shi`a pilgrims to Mecca.

Most of the differences between Iran and Saudi Arabia that are highlighted in the official discourse relate to values that they have, and actions based on those values. Another way to view the similarities between the two is also to look at the more basic traits that appear in the discourse that characterise them. In this regard, there appears to be a bit more commonalities, although not an overwhelming amount. Iran is for example said to be a "neighbour"[44] that is part of the region. It is also a country that has international rights that should be respected by the international community and other states[45]. This forms a common ground between Saudi Arabia and Iran, where Riyadh acknowledges that they have some similar traits that also matter in the issues they are involved with in the region. The Gulf Research Center (2015) underlines Saudi Arabia's clear understanding that Iran has a role to play in regional matters. Prince Saud has for example said that "Iran is also a large and important country, and its position will have an impact" (Prince Saud, 121205b), and thus shows some degree of affiliation through being involved in common issues and being in the same region.

Elements of Similar Core Identity outside the discourse
It is also interesting to note some of the elements that are absent from the discourse, in order to get a perspective of how the affiliation could have been if other factors were included. This puts the current expression of identity traits into perspective, and relates the discourse to a broader context. As mentioned in the outline of the official discourse, two aspects that are frequently referred to in academic writings and on the streets in Saudi Arabia relates to the Sunni – Shi`a divide, and the division between

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[43] See for example Prince Saud, 130525b, and Prince Saud, 140514.
[44] See for example Prince Saud, 130525b; and Prince Saud, 140514.
[45] The statements about this refers to their right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. See for example Prince Saud, 120625; Prince Saud, 120928; Prince Saud 140416. .

Arabs and Persian. The sectarian division between the Sunni (Wahhabi) dominated Saudi Arabia and the Shi`a rule in Iran marks a sharp contrast and simmering rivalry between the two countries.[46] If this constituted a part of the official discourse the distance and lacking affiliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran would be even larger. The same goes for the issue of Arabs versus Persians. The official Saudi discourse does mention "the Arab world" or "Arab countries" at times[47], but it is not a prominent part of the discourse, and it is not contrasted with the Persian ethnicity of Iran. In this way, some of the most pressurized and sensitive divisions between Saudi Arabia and Iran are not officially highlighted, and the affiliation between the two could have been worse.

Creativity
One element that Shapiro discovered in his experiments of group negotiations was that the creativity of the groups affected the level of affiliation between them. In this regard, the creativity of Saudi Arabia to find new categories of commonality or transcend differences influences the affiliation Riyadh experiences towards Iran. Based on the previous outline of the official discourse, there are few signs of such creativity. The Saudi foreign minister has pointed out that Iran fails to respond to international and regional efforts of progression, but he fails to suggest alternatives for how both Iran and Saudi Arabia can find a common way to improve the security situation and move forward. In light of the official discourse, Iran is the one that has to make an effort to change the situation for the better, while Saudi Arabia and the international community stands ready with the answer when Iran decides to change. This is apparent of the multiple ways Riyadh has called on Iran to change, but without acknowledging how Iranian interests and concerns can fit into that change, or what Riyadh can do to ease the process. This rigid view of "the way forward" does not promote creativity, and thus indicate a low degree of affiliation in line with the differences between the countries.

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[46] Diplomat A (2015) confirms that sectarianism is one of the main concerns of officials in Riyadh.
[47] See for example Prince Saud, 121205; Prince Saud, 130330; Prince Saud, 130424; and Prince Saud, 140310.

Inclusion

The sense of inclusion between two groups also signals how the affiliation between them is. Inclusion in this sense means that the problems negotiated are shared problems for both the groups, and that they are working together to solve the problems. Most of the problems and issues in the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran are portrayed as issues where Iran is contributing to the problem rather than contributing to the solution. As noted in the outline of the discourse, Iran is largely seen as an actor that wants to create conflict, and actively seeks to instigate sedition. A spokesperson from the foreign ministry explained that "the region is almost boiling" because of Iranian interference (MoFA, 2015). The Gulf Research Center (2015) also said that Iran`s sectarian policies contributed to the divisions and conflict in Iraq. Even though Iran is said to have a large degree of responsibility for solving the problems and making the region a more secure place, the discourse does not praise or acknowledge any steps that Iran has already taken to promote peace. When Prince Saud (141014b) has been blunt enough to say that Iran is part of the problem in itself, there exists little room for seeing Iran as a viable partner to cooperate with over a solution. Dr. Saeed Badeeb (2015) supports the view of the official discourse by saying that Iran is responsible for much terrorism both in terms of finances and military means. In the Syrian case, Prince Saud even said that he does "not think that Iran has a solution" (Prince Saud, 121205b), and dr. Saeed Badeeb (2015) said that the problem is ultimately that Iran does not trust anybody. Diplomat C strongly confirms that there is a strong sense of mistrust in the relationship between the countries.

There are ways to imagine how issues in the region can pose a common problem for both Saudi Arabia and Iran, but the official discourse does not construct any such commonality. The nearest Riyadh has been to taking steps to improve the inclusion of Iran in their regional foreign policy, and thus increase the affiliation to Iran, was in August 2014, when Prince Saud declared that Saudi Arabia and Iran had "agreed to join forces in the fight against terrorist groups" (Prince Saud, 140827). Taken at face value, this statement seems to represent a new direction in Saudi relations to Iran, and open up for a new era of cooperation and coordination. Nevertheless, when this statement is put into context and seen in light of how the discourse as a total is constructed, then the proclaimed "joining of forces" does not seem to carry much

weight.[48] This is the only time in the period from 2011 until 2014 that Riyadh has talked about an agreement on security cooperation, and there is a multitude of other statements portraying Iran as an obstacle rather than an asset in the way towards a solution. Only one and a half month later, Prince Saud declared that "Iran is part of the problem" (Prince Saud, 141014b). In total, the official Saudi discourse does not view the problems that Saudi Arabia face in their foreign policy as shared problems with Iran, but rather as problems created by Iran.

The view of the road towards a solution to the problems is a bit more nuanced, where Riyadh does see a prominent role for Iran, through its responsibility to take action and promote peace. Nevertheless, in order to be part of the solution Iran has to change its behaviour to comply with a solution already envisioned by Saudi Arabia. It is therefore not a matter of opening up for including Iran in the process of finding a solution, but rather telling Iran how to behave in order to be part of an already established solution. The content of "the solution" off course depends on which issue or problem is at stake, but in the case of Syria, for example it involves a complete withdrawal of the Iranian support for the Assad regime, and the removal of Iranian forces from the Syrian territory (Prince Saud, 141014b). In the case of Iraq and Yemen, Iran also have to "pull out its forces" in order to be part of the solution (Prince Saud, 141014b), and in relation to the nuclear negotiations Iran has to comply with international resolutions and follow the efforts and suggestions of the P5+1 and IAEA.[49] In relation to Iran`s interference in countries in the region in general, the official Saudi discourse makes it clear that Iran has to withdraw and stop the meddling, be that to give up its occupation of the islands in the strait of Hormuz or withdraw its support for Shi`as in Bahrain. In this way, Iran is regarded as playing a role in the solution of regional problems, but the content of that role is already defined by Riyadh, and the inclusion in this case is not one that promotes affiliation. In contrast to being part of the solution, Iran is part of the problem and "has to be stopped" (MoFA, 2015). In total, the official Saudi discourse does not include Iran as

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[48] Diplomat B has also confirmed that there are no signs of cooperation or relaxation of tensions between the two countries because of ISIS. Diplomat D adds that it is merely wishful thinking to talk about a common strategy by Saudi Arabia and Iran against ISIS.
[49] See Prince Saud, 120625; Prince Abdulaziz, 120928, Prince Saud, 130106a; Prince Saud, 130213; and Prince Saud, 130525b.

an actor that contributed to solving shared regional problems, and Iran is not granted enough confidence to take part in developing solutions. This again indicates a low degree of affiliation.

Summary

To summarise, the degree of affiliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran that appears in the official Saudi discourse is quite low, but there are still some elements that draw the countries closer together. There is virtually no empathy in Riyadh`s view of Iranian arguments or motives in the region, and the discourse does not show any signs of Iranian concerns being included in Saudi considerations. Most of the values that are assigned to Iran through comments on their actions are opposed to the values in the official Saudi self-image, and this severely restricts the space for affiliation between the two countries. On the other hand, some of the less value-laden characteristics of Iran indicate that Iran does have some commonalities with Saudi Arabia, by being part of the same region and playing a role as a big power in the Gulf. Despite of such a heavy focus on the differences between Iran and Saudi Arabia, there is space for transcending such differences by invoking creative new categories for creating common links. This nevertheless does not appear to be the case in the official Saudi discourse and most of the expressed proposals for common platforms for Saudi and Iranian coordination presupposes that Iran changes to be more in line with Saudi foreign policy and regional aspirations. This is both an expression of the result of low affiliation and a cause of the continued low affiliation. These calls for cooperation and closer relations are thus not based on creativity and do not transcend the differences that the discourse has established. Lastly, the inclusion of Iran in the Saudi view of the regional situation does not promote affiliation either. Iran is mostly portrayed as an active part of the problem, and the problem is thus not an external issue that can be approached by cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Iran on equal footing. The role of Iran in a possible solution is thus portrayed as purely a compliance with Saudi and international pre-established solutions, and not an inclusion in the formation of a new solution. In total, this means that the affiliation that Saudi Arabia has to Iran is quite low, even though there are examples of ways it could have been worse.

Step 3, Preconditions for behaviour

Now that the basic discourse on Iran is established and the extent of autonomy and affiliation that the official Saudi discourse portrays is detected, we can turn attentions to the implications this has for behaviour. As noted, this is where the focus on emotions gives an added value to the study of international relations, and the aim is to show how this fine-tuned analysis identifies the predispositions of Saudi foreign policy in the region. Instead of settling for a theory concluding that Saudi – Iranian relations are competitive, this section will show how the relational identity theory lay out more specific modes of behaviour. The theory does not aim to specify contemporary Saudi foreign policy in practice, but to draw a picture of the space that Saudi decision makers operate within when deciding on a certain policy. This section is purely aimed at showing how the relational identity theory use arguments about emotions to interpret the findings from step two of the analysis. This third step of the analysis will therefore first explain Shapiro`s arguments on how behaviour is linked to autonomy and affiliation, then discuss how the Saudi political elite`s official view of Iran sets frames for polarization, isolation, violence, cooperation, misinterpretation and view of mutual gains. Since Riyadh`s concern for Iran is not limited to their bilateral relations this will be placed in a regional setting, to view how the theory explains that these frames can influence Saudi regional policy.

Shapiro`s predictions

Shapiro`s main aim is to highlight how the core concerns autonomy and affiliation affect conflict management. He suggests three ways in which this influence works. First of all, the character of autonomy and affiliation shapes the norms in the relationship. The relational identity concerns curbs the normative expectations about what the actors should think and feel under the given circumstances (Shapiro, 2010:636 – 637). Secondly, a frustrated perception of autonomy and affiliation can create "negative emotions and subsequent adversarial behaviour" while a satisfied perception of autonomy and affiliation can create positive emotions resulting in cooperation and mutual gains (Shapiro, 2010:637). Based on this Saudi Arabia`s relationship to Iran is marked by enmity without cooperation. This is shown by the location of Saudi – Iranian relations in Figure 4.

Figure 4
The Relationship Between Autonomy and Affiliation, Emotional Reaction, and Action Tendency
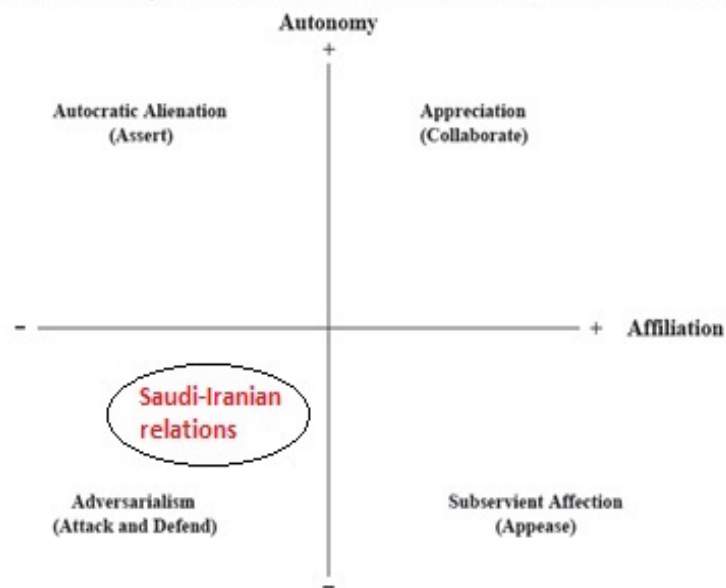
The low degree of autonomy and affiliation creates an environment encouraging an adversarial cognitive state, characterized by a behavioural mode aimed at attacking the other group and defending your own group. Such a prediction does not say much more than any realist or identity based theory would predict, but Shapiro dives into the mechanisms behind these general preconditions, and develops the concept of *tribal effect*.

Tribal effect

As explained in the section on emotional concerns and behaviour, the tribal effect refers to "the rigidification of a tribe`s relational identity vis-à-vis another group" (Shapiro, 2010:639). This happens when one group perceived their relationship with another group as low on autonomy and affiliation. The official Saudi discourse does not portray high levels of autonomy and affiliation, and the Saudi political elite is therefore exposed to the framing of such a tribal effect. This means that the Saudi political elite operates within an environment heavily influenced by the tribal effect. In such an environment norms of group loyalty develops, where the Saudi political elite is pulled towards a closer commitment to their own group and increasingly view Iran as a threat to the identity and existence of their own group. This is accompanied

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by a greater acceptance and encouragement of defending the Saudi political elite even at great costs. Such a loyalty carries with it several implications for behaviour.

Polarization, isolation and violence

One distinct direction in which the Saudi behaviour is likely to move is towards polarization. Since Iran is viewed as a problem and a direct threat to Saudi Arabia, the Saudi political elite is pulled towards taking a stand with even sharper distinction from Iran, creating as large a distance between them as possible. It becomes more acceptable to attack and criticize Iran in different ways, while at the same time defending Saudi Arabia against any mentions or critique that may come from Iran. This again encourage the Saudi political elite to close off from feedback that might be constructive or scrutinizing their own policy in order to improve it.

This leads to the second element, namely the pull towards isolation. The low affiliation and autonomy vis-à-vis Iran increase the valuation of their own group, and the Saudi political elite is therefore inclined to withdraw from contact and communication with Iran, in order to restore and protect the group`s pride. When Iran is portrayed in the dominating discourse as a threat the relational identity concerns encourage the Saudi political elite to seek closer together and focus on own arguments and its own hard-line in order to protect its identity. There will effectively be a pull towards closing off from outside influence in order to protect their identity, dignity and pride.

In such a tense situation the possibility of violent resistance towards the other group is not unthinkable. Even though Saudi Arabia and Iran do not interact directly with each other`s governments, they do come close in other situations in the region. The threat that Iran poses to Saudi Arabia in those regional situations instigates an emotional framing that accepts and even encourages violent responses.[50] In Syria, this means that Iranian presence and involvement increase the Saudi acceptance of violent clashes, if it protects Saudi emotional concerns and counters Iranian threats to the Saudi identity and disrespect of the Saudi autonomy and affiliation.

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[50] The current Saudi military involvement in Yemen against the Houthis can for example be seen in light of Riyadh`s relations to Iran, and the subsequent tollerance of violence in situations where Iran is seen to play a part.

Cooperation

Another aspect relates to the effect autonomy and affiliation has on cooperation. High autonomy and affiliation that is based on a feeling of respect from the other group "tend to elicit cooperative norms", in the same way as cooperation tends to promote a high degree of autonomy and affiliation (Shapiro, 2010:637). When a group perceives that another group disrespects their autonomy this leads to mistrust, rejection of the other`s ideas (whether useful or not), and a reluctance to implement agreements with the other. In this way, Saudi Arabia`s frustrated autonomy encourages the Saudi political elite not to listen to Iran, not to trust them, and ultimately not cooperate with them. These levels of autonomy and affiliation effectively reduce the motivation to listen, solve problems and learn, and creativity is strongly undermined. These elements are also factors that decrease the perception of autonomy and affiliation further, and a negative mechanism is therefore triggered, with a spiralling effect towards deteriorating confrontational relations.

This means that Saudi Arabia will not trust Iranian intentions in the region, and will not work together with Iran, as long as the perceived autonomy and affiliation is low. Because the relational identity concerns relate to the identity of the groups and not the issue at stake, this reluctance of cooperation will exist in all issues where Saudi Arabia and Iran are involved. It is easy to say that Iran and Saudi Arabia will not cooperate in order to reach a solution in Syria, but the frustrated relational identity concerns imply that they will not cooperate in other regional matters either. The resulting situation is one where Saudi Arabia is pulled towards choosing a policy with a minimal involvement of Iran, regardless of the usefulness of coordination or the overlapping interests of the two countries.

A case that illustrates this point is the threat that ISIL poses. ISIL threatens the stability and security in the entire Gulf region, and directly challenge the religious legitimacy of both Saudi Arabia and Iran. ISIL is currently based in Iraq and Syria, but groups in several other countries in the Middle East, like Egypt, Libya and Yemen, have pledge support to ISIL. Both Saudi Arabia and Iran have harshly opposed ISIL, and speculations have been made whether or not they would cooperate or coordinate efforts in a joint anti-ISIL campaign. Even though both have a joint

interest in containing and combating ISIL a coordination of strategies has not materialized, and there are no indications that such cooperation will evolve any time soon.

Mutual gains

In this way, the currently low level of autonomy and affiliation also implies that Saudi decision-makers are hostile towards prospects of mutual gains. In this frustrated situation, any form of compromise is associated with injury to Saudi pride (Shapiro, 2010:639). The gain that Saudi Arabia attains through a compromise does not matter in and off itself, because the injury to the Saudi self-image and emotional concerns puts an agreement in such a light that the consequences of the coordination seems less important. It is therefore not the outcome of a compromise that weighs most in these considerations, but the act of acknowledging Iran and their interests. By acknowledging Iran`s interests and place in the region, Saudi Arabia also recognizes that Iran`s arguments and motives have weight and should be considered. Even though a possible compromise could for example only concern efforts to stop ISIL, and is in itself a positive outcome for both Saudi Arabia and Iran, this positive effect will be strongly undermined by the damage it will inflict on the Saudi pride and self-image. Because of the contrasts that are put up between the Saudi identity and the Iranian identity in the official Saudi discourse, even the act of talking together seems to burden the pride and identity of the Saudi political elite. This is not explained because of differing interests or only differences in identity, but comes from the infringement of Saudi Arabia`s emotional concerns.

Misinterpretations

In addition to these elements, a situation of frustrated low autonomy and affiliation makes misunderstandings more likely. When a group experiences a frustrated level of autonomy and affiliation it closes off from external influence and learning, and instead relies on its own assumptions and observations to guide behaviour (Shapiro, 2010:639). In such an environment stereotypes, prejudices and misunderstandings can flourish without being effectively challenged by any outside accounts. The amount of information that Saudi decision-makers rely on is in this case limited to their own observations, and they run the risk of either missing important information or misunderstanding the relevance and implications of the information they have. Since

the Saudi autonomy is portrayed as heavily restricted in regional issues such as the civil war in Syria, the uprisings in Yemen and the security threat in Iraq, Saudi decision-makers are prone to acting upon limited or even misinformed data. Negative emotions arising from low autonomy and affiliation can also lead to tunnel vision, which slows down the ability to think clearly and creatively. This suggests that it is very difficult for Saudi Arabia to play a constructive role in the conflicts in the region, and that Saudi Arabia`s conflict management efforts are likely to bear heavy marks of their relationship to Iran.

Regional relevance

These implications do not paint a bright picture of Saudi Arabia`s contributions to diffusing tensions and ensuring peace in the region. The space for Saudi foreign policy is limited because considerations of Iran keep weighing in when Riyadh considers regional situations. The considerations that Riyadh makes in this regard are framed by the normative landscape set out by the perceived autonomy and affiliation vis-à-vis Iran. There is a strong potential for a tribal effect being present in Saudi foreign policy, and Riyadh`s emotional concerns in their relationship to Iran encourage polarization, isolation and violence. As a result of this, cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Iran is very unlikely, and a compromise that yields mutual benefits to both countries is still portrayed as injuring the Saudi political elite. In such an emotional, tense environment misinterpretations can grow, and the information that Riyadh bases its decisions on may be both limited and biased. These preconditions for Saudi behaviour are manifested in the situations where both Saudi Arabia and Iran are involved. The low degree of direct official interaction between Riyadh and Tehran means that their relationship is played out in issues that involve other actors as well. This may be through proxies in Syria, or through tactical support to and influence on opposing groups in Yemen. The main point is that the implications of Saudi emotional concerns vis-à-vis Iran have repercussions in regional conflicts where they both play a part. In this way, the preconditions for Saudi behaviour in Syria, Iraq and Yemen is strongly influenced by the relational identity concerns that are manifested in their relationship to Iran.

Step 4, Alternatives

The relationship between two groups is nevertheless not static. This last section of the analysis discusses how the relational identity theory opens up for debating how current emotional frames may change. This is a purely hypothetical discussion, showing what the relational identity theory says about change. The theory does not aim at predicting policy, but merely explaining how other ways of addressing the emotional concerns can facilitate change. This is done by relating the discussion to Saudi foreign policy, in order to illustrate how the theory can be used on a specific case. First, it will be explained how autonomy can be increased, then how affiliation can be increased. After this, the theory suggests some practical steps to facilitate such a change in the emotional concerns of the official Saudi discourse.

That the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran is characterised by a tribal effect does not mean the states have to remain enemies in the future. Relational identity concerns are socially constructed, and since the social environment can change so can the expression of autonomy and affiliation in the official discourse. In order to promote cooperation and effective conflict management, we should not focus on the enmity between the groups in itself. Instead Shapiro (2010) advises us to try to improve the relational identity concerns. "The foundation for integrative problem solving and long-term positive relations between conflicting tribes [read: groups] is to have them respect each other`s autonomy *and* build intertribal affiliation" (Shapiro, 2010:641). It is therefore the process of interaction that needs to change for a reduction of tension to occur in group relations, not a primary change in the content of the group identities. Given that the official Saudi discourse shows such low levels of autonomy and affiliation vis-à-vis Iran, there is a clear potential for improvement.[51] A member of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee in Iran even recommended the two countries to establish a balance, reduce offensive policies, and in essence increase the respect and affiliation in their relationship (Shafi`i, 2015).

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[51] Diplomat D acknowledge this potential, and points to the Rouhani`s presidential period as a clear opportunity to improve the ties between Riyadh and Tehran.

Respecting Autonomy

In order to respect the autonomy of a group it is important to involve key-decision makers of the group in decisions that affect them (Shapiro, 2010:641). In order for the autonomy to be portrayed as high in the official Saudi discourse it is important that the Saudi elite is portrayed to have influence on the situations that affect Saudi security and interests in the region. This means that Riyadh should be consulted on matters concerning Saudi security in Syria, Yemen and Iraq. At a very least Riyadh should be timely informed about decisions that affect them. Since the focus of this analysis is on the relationship with Iran, this means that Iran should inform and include Riyadh in their decisions, in order for the discourse to portray the Saudi political elite as respected. The Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Arab and African Affairs, Hoseyn Amir Abdollahian, said that Iran is working for a brighter future for the region by initiating "measures for consultations with Saudi Arabia" (Press TV Tehran, 2015). Even though this is a vague formulation that may entail very differing practical measures, it serves as an example of efforts that can promote a higher respect for Saudi autonomy and more positive relations.

Building Affiliation

In order to build affiliation you have to "turn adversaries into partners facing a shared problem" (Shapiro, 2010:642). A central task is to redefine the situation into a joint problem-solving task, while utilizing mutually legitimized, shared identity attributes. Diplomat D noted that Iran and Saudi Arabia will always remain rivals much because of the division between Sunnis and Shi`as, and their engagement in a natural zero-sum game over influence in the region. When affiliation is strengthened such divisions fade, and new categories of commonalities appear as more important. Iran will then not be seen as a main part of the problem in the region, but rather a partner in handling regional instability jointly. In this case, to view Iran`s policy as "unable to abandon terrorism as a weapon to achieve its [Iran`s] political and religious goals" (Badeeb, 2014:9) is counterproductive and only works to decrease affiliation.

In order to attain a higher degree of affiliation it is also important to increase communication and contact. Again, Nowzar Shafi`i from the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee in Iran promoted such efforts when he recommended to find "various opportunities for official and unofficial talks with [Saudi] Arabia

regarding regional issues and the issues of common interest to the two countries"
(Shafi`i, 2015). In a more concrete manner, Shapiro (2010) suggests some strategies
that groups can use to build affiliation. First of all, leaders can meet either in an
official or unofficial capacity. There can be common workshops and activities
between the two countries, or they can hold meetings for addressing and tackling
taboo issues in their relationship. They can also initiate a negotiation process where
they sort out their differences in an incremental way, gradually solving one issue at a
time, without making an effort at fixing everything at once. This approach is
supported by Stephen Hertog (2014), who explains ways to increase economic
integration and cooperation in the Gulf by focusing on more specialized
administrative and technological tasks, rather than the ambitious goals. In this way the
steps taken are less likely to be captured or cancelled by diplomatic conflicts.
Diplomat D also supports the idea of building meaningful cooperation and increasing
trust on the basis of technical matters. If direct violence between the two groups has
broken out, Shapiro also suggests inviting a peacekeeping force to strengthen the
common security of the groups. This is not an option that the theory portrays that is
especially helpful for improving Saudi relations to Iran, but the other strategies may
be helpful. In this way we see that the relational identity theory`s recommendations
are not all suitable to specific cases.

Examples:
Is it at all possible to increase autonomy and build affiliation between Saudi Arabia
and Iran in the circumstances that surround them today? In what areas and in what
ways is there potential for invoking new categories of commonalities and including
the countries in a coordinated regional approach? I will not try to answer these
questions exhaustively. For that a whole new study of the actual policy decisions of
Saudi Arabia and Iran is necessary. Instead I will suggest some areas where the
relational identity theory is suitable to point to the *potential* for a more positive
relationship to develop in the specific case of Saudi relations to Iran. This includes
more personal meetings between high officials, cooperation over security issues such
as the containment of ISIL, and their common religious base in Islam. This section
also shows how the relational identity theory gives more specific tools to understand a
rivalry than traditional structuralism or identity-based theories do, and the ultimate
aim is still to show how this theory can be applied in practice.

Direct meetings can in themselves work to promote autonomy by creating an arena for sharing information and opinions. It can also increase affiliation by showing each other respect and acknowledge the role each group plays in the issue at hand. In September 2014 there were rumours about improvement of Saudi ties to Iran, after former Saudi foreign minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal met with Iranian foreign minister Javad Zarif in New York.[52] The Iranian vice foreign minister was also visiting Jeddah in September, and diplomat C interprets this as an important signal for the willingness to improve ties. Diplomat B on the other hand did not see these meetings as a big deal in themselves, and points out that there has been no new substantial warmth in their relationship since those meetings. This was again moderated by diplomat D, which didn`t see any other impact of the meetings than a mere symbolic value. Diplomat D effectively separated between practical value and symbolic value, but when considering relational identity concerns symbolic gestures can affect perceptions, and thus affect practise through a change in affiliation or autonomy.

There were thus differing opinions among the interviewees about the impact of personal relations on the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Some said that the personal relations between Saudi officials and Iranian officials did matter a lot[53], while others thought that this played too small a part to influence the overall relations.[54] There is nevertheless clear indications that the previous Iranian presidents Rafsanjani and Khatami were more popular in Saudi Arabia than other presidents have been[55], and this had repercussions into the affiliation between the two countries. The period of Khatami and Rafsanjani`s rule in Iran is referred to as a period of relaxation between the two countries[56], with the signing of a mutual security agreement in 2001 as a highpoint. This observation is supported by the findings of Aronoff (2014), which concludes that personal connections and personality does matter in politics and the formation of grand national strategies. Symbolic gestures towards these presidents are also of importance, and even though they are relatively

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[52] See for example Al Arabiya News, 140922.
[53] Diplomat B, diplomat C, diplomat D.
[54] Dr Saeeb Badeeb (2015); Sadjadpour (2015).
[55] This was confirmed through talks with dr Saeed Badeeb (2015), diplomat A and diplomat D.
[56] See Cecilie Næss (2005) *Relasjonen mellom Iran og Saudi-Arabia: en studie av årsakene til den økte graden av samarbeid etter 1997* for a summary of the period.

popular, the degree of Saudi affiliation toward them is not unlimited. As late as in 2014 the Saudi ambassador to Tehran was sent home after meeting with Rafsanjani, allegedly because their greeting with kissing each other on the forehead showed an unacceptable large affiliation.[57] This is an example of the large personal risk Saudi officials that want to promote closer relations takes. Because of internal power struggles steps that encourage closer relations with Iran can be used as a point of criticism to limit the power of those inclined to increase cooperation with Iran.

Another example of the importance and potential of personal relations among the leaders involves the late King Abdullah. King Abdullah is said to have had a strong engagement in the Saudi policy towards Syria and a strong antipathy for the Syrian president Assad. Diplomat D said that King Abdullah felt betrayed after Assad completely disregarded his advice when the upheaval started in 2011, and Abdullah`s own perception of the Saudi relational identity concerns vis-à-vis Syria may have been damaged because of this. Even though this example relates to the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Syria, it shows that personal relations and experiences may influence the relational concerns and emotional framing of Saudi foreign policy. Opening up the official Saudi discourse for more meetings and personal encounters between Saudi and Iranian officials therefore has the potential of increasing the overall affiliation and autonomy.

Another potential area for strengthening the autonomy and affiliation vis-à-vis Iran is in relation to ISIL. This organisation poses a threat to both Saudi Arabia and Iran, and they have a common interest in limiting ISIL`s influence in the region. By focusing on this as a common problem, the affiliation between the Saudi political elite and Iran can increase and lay the foundation for coordination or cooperation in their regional security policy. Unfortunately, it is not as easy as this seems. Sadjadpour (2015) points out that even though Saudi Arabia and Iran may have a common enemy in ISIL, they do not diagnose the problem in the same way. In essence, "the Iranian government is willing to fight ISIL but it doesn`t want it to be totally eradicated, while the Saudi government would like to see ISIL eradicated, but it doesn`t want to fight it" (Sadjadpour, 2015). In the same way, diplomat A, diplomat B, diplomat D

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[57] See Karami (2015) for more on this.

and dr. Saeed Badeeb (2015) do not view it as likely that Riyadh will step up cooperation with Iran over ISIL. There are many reasons why coordination between Saudi Arabia and Iran is unlikely in this issue, but suffice it to say that there has not been any sign of such efforts to this date, ten months after ISIL suspended parts of the border between Syria and Iraq. As such, even though the fight against ISIL represents an issue for potential improvement of affiliation, there does not seem to be willingness to make use of this opportunity.

In relation to transcending differences in their identities, and creating new categories of commonality, there exists an untapped potential in the countries` common Muslim foundation and common practice of *Hajj/Umrah*.[58] Iran has its own Hajj and Pilgrimage Organisation, and Tehran and Riyadh do cooperate on practical matters regarding the pilgrimage. This cooperation can be expanded on, or highlighted as a valuable and functional part of their relationship. Hajj/Umrah is not an issue void of political relevance, and as late as in April 2015 the Iranian Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Ali Jannati, suspended Umrah in protest against sexual harassment against two Iranian nationals at Jeddah airport (Mehr News, 2015). Since there exists precedence for infusing Hajj/Umrah with political meaning, there should not be any structural constraints against using this area as a platform for creating new categories of commonality. Even though there are differences between the Sunni and Shi`a direction of Islam, they both have a common foundation and a common history. The official Saudi discourse has several times pointed to "Islamic principles and values" (Prince Saud, 110309), the rights of all Muslim people (Prince Saud, 121205), and the tolerant teachings of Islam (Prince Saud, 141203). If the differences between Wahhabism and Shiism is downplayed and defined as an internal matter, the common grounds of all Muslims can appear as a strong push towards building affiliation.

Such an approach is off course risky, because the active involvement of Muslim identity in the discourse can easily provoke a counter reaction. More conservative forces may seek to promote the division between Sunnis and Shi`as instead. Each move towards closer relations can be countered by conservative forces that wish to maintain distance. This may be out of fear of losing the group`s identity or out of fear

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[58] *Hajj/Umrah* is the pilgrimage to Mecca, and constitutes one of the five pillages in Islam.

for losing influence and power. Either way the sectarian division in the Gulf has deep-rooted implications, and the invoking of Islam into the foreign policy discourse carries with it a great potential for further distance and enmity between Riyadh and Tehran, in addition to the potential of bringing them closer together. In other words, Saudi Arabia is dealing with competing Muslim identities and competing boundaries for the *Ummah*.[59] This pits the exclusionary Wahhabi tradition against the inclusive pilgrimage tradition. Another risk posed by counter reactions to constructing common Muslim grounds, is the alienation of Shi`as living in Saudi Arabia. If conservative groups in the Kingdom openly work against a common standing between Sunnis and Shi`as, they can push the Shi`as living in the Kingdom closer towards Iran and further away from the Wahhabi majority. During the protests in Saudi Arabia in 2011 there seemed to be a rapprochement between Sunnis and Shi`ites in rallying behind the same demands. Later on, the sectarian divisions within the Kingdom as well as in the region was more strongly emphasised, and much of the unrest and demonstrations in Saudi Arabia was blamed on Shi`ites (Lacroix, 2014:13). This created a gap between Saudi Sunnis and Saudi Shi`as, and because of a stronger sectarian focus on the war in Syria, Shi`ites were again associated with Iran (Lacroix, 2014:5). Most Shi`as living in Saudi Arabia do not initially support Ayatollah Khomeini and the clerical rule in Iran. Rather they support the Iraqi Shi`a leader Al-Sistani, which explicitly rejects Iran`s religious rule. This is not only the case for Shi`as in Saudi Arabia, but for most Shi`as in general.[60] An active attempt to exclude Saudi Shi`as from the national self-image creates a greater risk of domestic demonstrations, riots and attacks from a Shi`a minority, which is alienated and pushed away. In order to employ the right kind of responses for building affiliation there is a need for carefully planned cautious moves with a great deal of sensitivity to the context and historical preconditions. If this approach is to be successful it cannot expect results over night, but must respect that Saudi foreign policy is not impulsive, and involves decisions that are made in a slow manner including careful considerations.

If some of these efforts of improving Saudi autonomy and affiliation vis-à-vis Iran are successful, their relationship and the subsequent preconditions for Saudi foreign

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[59] *Ummah* is an Arabic word referring to Islamic community and the unity of all Muslims.
[60] An exception to this is the Shi`as in Lebanon that support Iran through Hezbollah.

policy will change. The relational identity theory shows that a less competitive and emotionally constrained relationship can make space for more cooperation and reduce the risk of misinterpretations and tunnel vision. In the case of Saudi relations to Iran, this will in no way automatically create peace in Syria, Yemen and Iraq, but it will reduce the transmission of regional tensions into the domestic conflicts. Tensions arising from Saudi regional interests and Iranian regional aspirations are still present, but the relational identity theory suggests that improvement of autonomy and affiliation will change the discursive landscape that decisions are made within. A change in relational identity concerns implies a change in the official Saudi discourse, and this in turn changes the framing that Saudi decision makers operate within. Such a change will nevertheless not happen overnight. Both discourses and groups` common emotional perceptions are shaped by long-term patterns of interactions and reactions. In the case of Saudi policy, it is also founded on values of continuity and stability, and any change that has hopes of lasting will have to be embedded into the social environment incrementally. Only then are the risks of conservative backlash minimized. It is therefore evident that the relational identity theory has to take the unique circumstances of each case into consideration if it is to provide substantial insight into the preconditions for political actions. This does not make the theory relativistic in the sense that its advantage over more traditional structuralism or identity-based theories is lost. The additional value of a more fine-tuned and specific view of the mechanisms within a competitive relationship is still there, but the application of the theory to the case of Saudi relations to Iran shows that the context and circumstances of the case still has an impact on how the theory can be utilized.

Conclusion

Summary

This thesis has applied the relational identity theory to Saudi Arabia`s relations to Iran. The research question has been: *How can the study of emotions in international relations help understand Saudi relations to Iran between 2011 and 2014? What preconditions and possible changes for Saudi behaviour do this entail?* The research is based on a curiosity about how the study of emotions helps understand international relations, and has used Saudi relations to Iran between 2011 and 2014 as a specific case to illustrate the application of such a theory. The relational identity theory has shown its additional value over other traditional structuralism or identity-based theories by explaining which preconditions for Saudi behaviour the emotional concerns sets vis-à-vis Iran. This provides a more fine-tuned view of the mechanisms that are at play within a tense relationship. The case also shows that the preconditions for actions that are derived by the theory have important influence on the regional environment and on conflicts in other countries in the Middle East. The application of the theory has shown both a great value in detecting specific emotional mechanisms at play in the case, but has also shown that the theory has to take into consideration the circumstances and context of the case. This means that the utility of the theory may vary according to the context it is applied to. In the case of Saudi relations to Iran the theory has painted a thorough picture of how the relational identity concerns shape the space for actions that Riyadh operates within. At the same time, the theory is vaguer and less comprehensive in its recommendations on how to improve autonomy and affiliation in this case. The theory can thus not be said to be fully comprehensive and cover every aspect of Saudi Arabia`s relations to Iran, but still offers useful insights that expand our understanding of the relationship in a way that has not been explored by other theories.

The Saudi state was built through military conquests and tribal and religious alliances. A fundamental element of the legitimacy of the state is the connection between religious and national identity. An alliance between Ibn Saud and the Wahhabi elite in the 1930`s ensured this linkage between religious and national loyalty. This alliance represents a central aspect of the considerations that Saudi rulers have to make today as well. The Saudi regime must balance an exclusionary Wahhabi interpretation of

Islam with the role of an inclusionary Muslim leader at the international stage. This also has implications for how the Saudi regime relates to Shi`a Muslims.

Saudi Arabia is one of the most influential powers in the Gulf region, but in 1979 the Iranian revolution was accompanied by a direct threat to Saudi legitimacy and power in the region. The revolution was based on a Shi`a revival, and Iran sought to export their ideology to other countries with Shi`a minorities in. This ideological competition with Saudi Arabia was paired with a geopolitical competition over regional political influence. The relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran have varied through better and worse periods since 1979. A highpoint was reached around the turn of the millennium, but since 2005 their relations have grown increasingly antagonistic.

There are some studies on this relationship, and most of them focus on trying to explain why the two compete. The realist approach emphasise power balancing and security dilemmas as main factors, while identity-based studies emphasise self-perception and diverging identities as main factors. There are however no studies to date that explore the room for action that Saudi Arabia operates within, and what specific types of actions the rivalry encourages. A focus on relational emotional concerns dives into these mechanism in a more comprehensive and specific way, and help us see which action tendencies Riyadh is pulled against in their relations to Iran. This approach goes beyond a conclusion of the existence of rivalry, and explores the mechanisms at play *within* that rivalry.

The theoretical framework of this thesis is built on a social psychology constructivist worldview. This means that beliefs, identities and perceptions shape our understanding of the reality, and therefore also our behaviour. Material factors do not entail any implications for behaviour in and of themselves, but material factors are given meaning through our interpretation of them, informed by our assumptions and beliefs. Emotions are instrumental in shaping our assumptions and beliefs, in the same way rational thinking is. The study of international relations have long neglected the role of emotions, and regarded them as insignificant or inaccessible. Recent scholarly contributions argue on the other hand that emotions play a central role on the international stage, by constructing dominant trends within groups. By identifying with a group you also subscribe to the dominating emotional trends in that group. Emotions are in this way part of the group identity.

The Relational Identity Theory builds on this by showing the role of two core emotional concerns in conflict management. These two concerns are the perceived *autonomy* and *affiliation* that one group experience in relation to another group. This is derived from multiple real life experiments, where people engage in group negotiations with an imminent (hypothetical) danger of being extinct. Autonomy signifies the freedom a group has to influence issue of importance without anyone else interfering, while affiliation is the sense of connectedness a group feels towards the other group. A low level of perceived autonomy and affiliation is accompanied by an adversarial behavioural mode, and encourages a rigidification of loyalty to your own group. This in turn encourages polarization, isolation, violence and misinterpretation. The preconditions for actions that this creates discourage cooperation and remove the experienced value of attaining mutual gains.

In order to apply the relational identity theory to the Saudi relationship to Iran I have used discourse analysis. This approach highlights the dominant perceptions through language and texts, and adheres to the social psychology constructivist assumption that perceptions shape the social world we live in. Collective perceptions are in this sense expressed through public texts and language. These expressions have an independent impact on behaviour, and shape interaction and re-actions. The analysis in itself is based on 38 speeches, statements and interviews from the Saudi political elite. This constitutes the basic Saudi official discourse on Iran. Seven interviews have been conducted in Saudi Arabia, with researchers, foreign diplomats and a spokesperson from the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These are used to elaborate, support or challenge the findings from the data material. The analysis was divided into four separate steps, where I firstly defined the elements in the official discourse, secondly defined the level of autonomy and affiliation in that discourse, thirdly explained the preconditions for Saudi behaviour this entailed, and fourthly explored some potential for change in the perception of autonomy and affiliation.

The official Saudi discourse described Iran in sharp contrast to the Saudi self-image. Iran was portrayed as unstable, an intruder and occupier with disregard of international norms, and a problem to the region. Riyadh still acknowledged that Iran is a neighbour in the region and has certain international rights on equal footing with

the rest of the Gulf countries. Iran was also portrayed as not being serious, not to be trusted and aspiring regional chaos. Iran is said to continue its destructive actions and fail to respond to progress. Riyadh also views Iran as responsible for many negative effects in the region, and says that Iran must make stronger efforts to promote peace in the future.

The degree of autonomy and affiliation in this discourse is very low. The official Saudi discourse highlights a strong dependence between issues of importance to Riyadh and Iranian actions. Even though the discourse cannot fully explain the Saudi elite`s ability to act and room to be heard in these issues, the discourse still point out some relevant elements. According to the discourse, Riyadh does have a certain ability to act in regional issues of importance, but there are many other voices to compete with to win support on the ground. At the same time Iran is not seen to respect and consider Saudi efforts and interests in these regional issues, and the overall level of autonomy is therefore low. When considering the perceived affiliation, the degree of empathy that Riyadh shows in relation to Iran is very low. There are very few common identity traits highlighted in the discourse, and the discourse does not show any significant degree of creativity to transcend these differences. Riyadh does want Iran to contribute to a solution to regional problems, but does not include Iran in the process of developing such solutions. In total, the degree of affiliation detected in the official Saudi discourse is also low.

This means that Saudi Arabia is engaged in an adversarial relationship with Iran. The Relational Identity Theory explains that the Saudi decision-makers' space for actions is very constricted. The preconditions for behaviour laid out by the emotional concerns encourage polarization, isolation, misinterpretations and violence. This creates a difficult environment for Riyadh to initiate cooperation, and mutual gains can easily be viewed as a burden and infringement on the Saudi elite`s identity. This has repercussions into other conflicts in the region, where Saudi Arabia and Iran both play a part. The application of the relational identity theory shows that the frames of Saudi foreign policy in Syria, Yemen or Iraq is therefore influenced by their relationship with Iran, and restricted by the same trends as outlined above.

This does not mean that Riyadh is doomed to an aggressive rivalry with Iran, only that the emotional costs of acknowledging Iran`s legitimacy and their aspirations are high. The theory explains that change is possible in order to build greater autonomy and affiliation to reduce the pull towards isolation and antagonism. The theory suggests that in the case of Saudi relations to Iran, there is potential for improving the emotional concerns by arranging personal meetings between Saudi and Iranian officials, finding specific technical issues to cooperate on or cultivating more of the commonalities in their Muslim national identities. This is nevertheless not easily initiated or attained, and the theory`s recommendations have to be modified by the context and circumstances of the case in question. Parts of the relational identity theory`s limitations are thus reviled through applying the theory to the Saudi case.

Robustness

This analysis has been based on the methodology of discourse analysis. This has elaborated on the emotional concerns as they appear in the official discourse, but there are other ways of evaluating emotional concerns as well. Other types of consideration of more subjective elements can for example give other insights into how the relational identity theory can be applied. In-depth interviews with the political elite would also have given valuable insight into their experience of affiliation and autonomy. These types of studies would nevertheless yield different types of conclusions, because they in essence investigate different material. This thesis has shown what the official Saudi discourse entails, and the conclusions relate to the preconditions for action that the discourse sets. Individual evaluations by members of the Saudi political elite or subjective fact not apparent in the official discourse can also be bases for applying the relational identity theory. This does, however, not devaluate the use of official discourses as material for detecting relational identity concerns.

The investigation and interpretation of the data material is also to a certain extent shaped by my own predispositions as part of a Western academic tradition and part of a Norwegian social structure. This frames the way I view factors such as empathy, changeability or respect. In an effort to moderate this bias I have spent time to get to know the Saudi society and tapping into the insight of people living and working in Saudi Arabia. I do not claim that my view of the categories in this thesis is objectively

true, but I have strived to explain my understanding of the categories in such a way that my foundation for making inferences is clear and understandable to all, no matter how much the reader agrees or disagrees. I have thus places my own research in the social world instead of striving to be above the influences of the structures I take part in.

Conclusion

In total, this thesis shows that the study of emotions in international relations highlights other mechanisms than what is considered in a traditional realist approach or an identity-based approach. The study of relational identity concerns point to other mechanisms in the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran between 2011 and 2014, than has previously been emphasised in other scholarly works. The low degree of autonomy and affiliation detected in the official Saudi discourse means that the preconditions for Saudi behaviour are marked by a pull towards polarization, isolation, misinterpretation, violence and a decreased valuation of cooperation and mutual gains. The investigation of the relational identity theory`s recommendations for change has also highlighted parts of Riyadh`s relationship to Tehran that has not been considered in structuralism or identity-based theories. The thesis has thus shown how the relational identity theory can be applied on a specific case to give more thorough insights than more traditional theories of international relations.

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Appendix

Appendix 1
Shapiro`s observations from the experiments, pointing to autonomy and affiliation as the relevant core concerns in relational identity theory. [61]

	Shapiro`s observations	**Relation to Autonomy**	**Relation to Affiliation**	**Other Comments**
1, Mitigating Tribal Effect	*A, Leader takes charge of intertribal negotiations*			Unclear. Spokespersons know and accept their role (leader vs not-leader). Respected role promote autonomy and affiliation (Shapiro, 2010:637)
	B, Dominant consistent norm of compassions and empathy between tribes		High	
	C, Groups trained in leadership skills			Unclear. Role in place and respected?
	D, Structural affiliation between the spokespersons of the tribes		High	They relate to one another by common structural experience
	E, Clear hierarchy of authority	High		
	F, Ca 15 or less people in the exercise	High		Improves each participant`s airtime. Not constrained by each other
	G, Ca 4 or fewer tribes	High		Not constrained by each other
	H, No cross-tribal differences relating to		High	They are much alike

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[61] Three of Shapiro`s 18 observations was difficult to determine how affected autonomy or affiliation, and are therefore not part of my subcategories. These observations related to the quality of leadership, and the physical facilities of the negotiations. The observations were number 1a, 1c and 2h.

	identity-divisive questions			
	I, Creative, socially inclusive responses to identity-divisive questions	High	High	They can be much alike if they imagine it. They are creative and not constrained by taboos?
2, Promoting Tribal Effect	*A, Tribes do not listen effectively to each other*	Low		Low respect, low influence on the decisions because overlooked. They are constrained by the Other not listening
	B, At least one member of a tribe is viewed as aggressive and egoistic by other tribes		Low	They are different and bad.
	C, Spokespeople advocate their own tribe over other tribes	Low	Low	The lower tribe is not able to affect decision as it wants. We are different and hence deserve more.
	D, A tribe feels insulted by not getting proper respect and attention regarding voice time or core attributes	Low		
	E, No consideration of the process of reaching a consensus between the tribes		Low	Don`t know role? Inclusion in reaching an agreement is random or not known.
	F, Strong feelings of disrespect	Low	Low?	Frustrated status
	G, 40 or more people in the exercise	Low		Little speaking time
	H, Feeling of being crammed into a small room			Unclear. Physical constraint?
	I, Intertribal		Low	Spokespersons are

	differences on core beliefs that become central to the negotiation			put on the spot, having to defend their tribe or being seen as a traitor. We are different.

Appendix 2
Interview Guide, Saudi relations to Iran:

1. How are foreign policy decisions made in Saudi Arabia?
a. What role did King Abdullah play? What role did the former Crown Prince Salman, Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal or Prince Turki Al-Faisal play?

2. What do you see as the most important development for Saudi Arabia in the region today? Why?

3. How could a deal on Iran`s nuclear program affect relations to Riyadh?

4. What was the aim of the security agreement between Riyadh and Tehran in 2001?
a. Why didn`t this cooperation work?
b. Is a similar agreement likely again in the near future?

5. Why is Syria important to decision-makers in Riyadh?

6. What role do Iraq play in Saudi Arabia`s security politics?
a. What can Tehran do in Iraq to improve relations to Riyadh?

7. How has Rouhani`s leadership in Iran affected the relationship to Saudi Arabia?
a. Has there been any difference in the Saudi approach to Iran between Rouhani`s leadership and Ahmadinejad`s leadership?

8. To what extent do Wahhabism play a role in Saudi foreign policy?
a. To what extent do Riyadh put focus on sectarian divisions when talking about Iran?

9. How do you think Riyadh`s relations to Tehran affect Saudi Arabia`s policy in the region?