

The U.S. and Saudi Arabia Relations from the 1970s to 1990s: A Theoretical Debate

Abstract

There is an important view that the political events in the 1970s brought about a new political dimension in the debates on international political theories. From this period, the nature of the role of state in international politics, the importance of political economy practices and the impact of international institutions on international politics have been taken into consideration. The result of the discussions that began in the 1970s influenced a process that continued until the 1990s. In this period many scholars such as Alexander Wendt and Robert Cox, have focused on the decreasing importance of the social power and economic data and its impact on the governments. The question of how individuals affect the state and how the state affects the international politics have been questioned more frequently in the light of these discussions. The view that the individual as a subjectivity influenced the state behavior and international politics by cognitive means gained more attention during this period against the mainstream international political theory. The debate on international political theory in this period suggests that the role of the individual increases and the role of the state decreases in the international political arena. In contrast, Systemic International Political Theory (SIPT) states that the role of the state continues to be an important element in the international political arena after taking the succession of the individual. In the context of these discussions, this article focuses on the U.S.-Saudi Arabia relations. The main reason of this is the reflection of Saudi Arabia's use of oil as a weapon in the 1970s on global policies. The first sign of the changing of the political climate in the U.S. and Saudi Arabia relations is the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. Meanwhile, the oil crisis led by Saudi Arabia also affected the U.S. and Saudi Arabia relations in the 1970s. These events have been evaluated in the context of the discussion of policy theories.

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Key Words: International System, Subjectivity, Saudi Arabia, U.S., Oil Crisis, Systemic International Political Theory, Critical Theories.

1970'lerden 1990'lara ABD ve Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri: Bir Teorik Tartışma

Öz

1970'lerde yaşanan siyasi olayların uluslararası siyaset teorisi tartışmalarına yeni bir politik boyut getirdiğine dair önemli bir görüş mevcuttur. Bu dönemden itibaren devletin uluslararası politikadaki rolünün şekli, ekonomi-politik uygulamalarının önemi ve uluslararası kurumların uluslararası politika üzerindeki etkisi göz önünde bulundurulmuştur. Bu tartışmaların 1970'lerde başladığı süreç 1990'lara da tesir etmiştir. Bu dönemde Alexander Wendt ve Robert Cox gibi pek çok yazar, sosyal güçlerin ve ekonomik verilerin artan önemine ve bu durumun devletler üzerine olan etkisine yoğunlaşmıştır. Bireylerin devlet yapısını nasıl etkilediği ve devlet yapısının uluslararası politika ortamını nasıl etkilediği sorusu bu tartışmalar ışığında daha fazla sorulmuştur. Subjektivite olarak bireyin devleti ve uluslararası politikayı bilişsel araçlarla etkilediği görüşü, bu dönemde ana akım uluslararası politika teorisine karşı güç kazanmıştır. Bu dönemde uluslararası politika teorileri üzerine yapılan tartışmalar, bireyin rolünün arttığını ve devletin rolünün uluslararası siyasi ortamda azaldığını göstermektedir. Buna karşılık, Sistemik Uluslararası Politika Teorisi (SUPT), bireyin vekaletini aldıktan sonra devletin rolünün uluslararası politika ortamında devam ettiğini ifade etmektedir. Bu tartışmalar bağlamında, bu makale ABD-Suudi Arabistan ilişkilerine odaklanmaktadır. Bunun temel nedeni, Suudi Arabistan'ın petrolü bir silah olarak kullanmasının 1970'lerde küresel politikalara yansımalarıdır. ABD ile Suudi Arabistan ilişkilerinin değişmesinin ilk işareti 1973 Arap-İsrail Savaşıdır. Bununla birlikte, Suudi Arabistan'ın yol açtığı petrol krizi, 1970'lerde ABD ve Suudi Arabistan ilişkilerini de etkilemiştir. Bu olaylar uluslararası politika teorileri tartışması bağlamında değerlendirilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Uluslararası Sistem, Subjektivite, Suudi Arabistan, ABD, Petrol Krizi, Sistemik Uluslararası Politika Teorisi, Eleştirel Teoriler.

العلاقات السعودية الأمريكية في المرحلة من السبعينات وحتى التسعينات: نقاش نظري

الملخص

هنالك وجهة نظر مهمة تقول بأن الأحداث السياسية التي وقعت في السبعينات قد أكسبت نقاشات نظرية السياسة الدولية بعداً سياسياً جديداً. وقد وضع في نظر الاعتبار في تلك المرحلة دور الدولة في السياسة الدولية، وأهمية التطبيقات الاقتصادية السياسية، وتأثير المؤسسات الدولية في السياسة الدولية. وإن المرحلة التي بدأت في السبعينات تحت تأثير هذه النقاشات قد أثرت حتى التسعينات. وقد كثف العديد من الكتاب ومنهم ألكسندر ويندت وروبرت كوكس وغيرهم جهودهم في هذه المرحلة حول تأثير القوى الاجتماعية والمعطيات الاقتصادية في الدول. وقد تم توجيه أسئلة حول مدى تأثير الأفراد في بنية الدولة و مدى تأثير الدولة بالوسط السياسي الدولي. وقد اكتسب الرأي الذي يقول بان الأفراد يؤثرون في الدولة وفي السياسات الدولية عبر الوسائل المعرفية، وأن هذا الرأي اكتسب قوة في مواجهة نظرية التيار السائد في السياسة الدولية. وإن النقاشات التي تمت في هذه المرحلة حول نظريات السياسة الدولية في تلك المرحلة تبين لنا بأن دور الأفراد قد ازداد وأن دور الدول قد ضعف في مواجهة الوسط السياسي الدولي. وفي المقابل تقول النظرية السياسية الدولية المنظمة SIPT بأن دور الدولة قد استعاد أهميته في السياسة الدولية بعد أخذها للوكالة عن الفرد. وفي سياق هذه النقاشات، تركز هذه الدراسة على العلاقات بين السعودية والولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. وإن السبب الرئيس في ذلك كون السعودية قد استخدمت البترول كسلاح في السبعينات وانعكاس ذلك على السياسة الدولية. وإن أولى المؤشرات على تغير العلاقات السعودية الأمريكية هي الحرب التي جرت عام 1973 بين العرب وإسرائيل. بالإضافة إلى أزمة البترول التي تسببت بها السعودية، والتي أثرت في العلاقات بين السعودية والولايات المتحدة الأمريكية في السبعينات، وقد تم تقييم هذه الأحداث في سياق نقاشات نظريات السياسة الدولية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النظام الدولي، الموضوعية، المملكة العربية السعودية، الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية، أزمة البترول، نظرية السياسة الدولية المنظمة، نظريات الانتقاد

Introduction

The effect of social power on the systemic structure in international political theory is a matter of general discussion. One of the fundamental propositions of the Systemic International Political Theory (SIPT) is that once the system has been formed, it has an equalizing and restrictive effect on the states. However, this fundamental proposition was criticized on the grounds that social forces were ignored. The views of the criticism in question suggest that the social forces are more important than the international political system of the SIPT. The basis of these conflicts is the international political events of the 1970s. On the one hand in the post-WWII period, the use of military power by the U.S. as a limitation of military implementations and efforts of OPEC countries to use oil as a political power among the reasons increasing the theoretical debates.

These developments led to changes in the realist tradition of the 1970s on the other hand the begging of the period in which new theoretical explanations were made. In this article, the questions of how oil is used as a political weapon and the transformation of the use of military force in the international political environment will be questioned. In addition, the problem of how the effects are of the concept of social power on society and formation of the state is another question. These questions have been sought in the framework of a theoretical discussion and have been exemplified by the US and Saudi Arabia relations since the crises of 1970s. The 1970-1990 era and the U.S.-Saudi Arabia relations were chosen in this study because of that the economic and military crises constitute a solid sample for the study of international political theories. Because both states have political approaches that are unlike each other, they are the two states that at the highest level of compliance in the international policy arena. Despite the theoretical discussions based on the interaction of social power and economy, such as the Critical Theory or Social Constructivism, the US and Saudi Arabia's state apparatus have been met on a common ground of solving international problems. Since the 1970-1990 period will be taken into consideration in this study, the previous studies that constitute the source of the SIPT will be considered. However, the main focus of the study will be the fundamental theoretical texts and debates put forward in 1970-1990 and beyond. The main purpose of this approach is to try to address the spirit of the period when the theoretical crisis occurred. In this respect, the US-Saudi Arabia relations constitute an efficient area for discussing the impact of social forces on international politics and at

the same time explaining how states maintain their relations despite crises. At this stage; it should be evaluated whether the economic activities lead to a revisionist policy, the social forces make use of the international political crisis and urge the governments to revisionist changes. On the other side, the influence of social forces and interior economy on the relations of states should be evaluated. Thus, it is possible to discuss whether inter-state relations or social forces are more effective in crisis periods. For the determination of all these questions, the events that took place in 1970s, which the Critical Theory and Social Constructivism considered as the starting point of the crisis, should be addressed. First of all, a theoretical approach will be evaluated. Although this is not a political history study, case studies that are the subject of theoretical discussion are discussed in chronological order. Selected case studies are the events by the theoretical debate as crisis, such as The Nixon Era, Pax-Americana, the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, the Oil Crisis, Containment of USSR by the U.S. and Saudi Arabia in Afghanistan. By the examines these case studies, the evaluations in the context of theoretical approaches will be tried to be checked.

Theoretical Aspect

In his book, *Man, the State and War*, Kenneth Waltz, underlines the importance of assessing subjectivity in terms of evaluation of balance of power while underlining that the subject can be guided by governments or political manipulations due to their irrational behavior and ambitions.¹⁰⁹ It can be seen in Waltz's early works that opinion leaders in society have the capacity to influence and direct social transformation.¹¹⁰ Moreover, it is foreseen that if this direction is realized in the form of education, it can prevent the war by meeting the parties on a common ground as in the case of the USSR.¹¹¹ On the basis of these considerations, the issue of world-wide order has been discussed in the scale of common religious partnership, conquering movements or a kind of federalism.¹¹² Approaches to the creation of a world-wide government can be defined as the intersection with SIPT of the Social Constructivism Approach. According to the SIPT, it is stated that each state takes its decisions due to its internal policy processes, but that the deci-

¹⁰⁹ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War A Theoretical Analysis*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), p.36.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.45.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.49.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

sion-making processes arise because of the existence of other states and their interaction with them.¹¹³ In terms of this definition, it can be seen that SIPT, which is generally considered to ignore domestic political behavior, has done so for systemic-level determinations. In other words, SPIT ignores the subject only for the study of the systemic international structure.¹¹⁴ Because the systemic level of results and structure can be revealed by the identification of in the systemic structure is possible, not by the identification of attributes and its effects.¹¹⁵ In fact, this point is precisely the issue where the Critical Theory and Social Constructivism approach and SPIT have a complete disagreement.

In general, both the Critical Theory and Social Constructivism approach consider the international political effect of the subjectivity, while SPIT suggests that this effect should be ignored. In order to reveal this distinction, the Social Constructivism approach and Critical Theory should be evaluated. The main reason for the study of Critical Theory and Social Constructivism against SPIT is that Critical Theory and Social Constructivism have a different methodological approach than SPIT. On the basis of this methodological conflict, there are different views of structuralist and functionalist sociological approaches in terms of subject and object. Functionalist under influence Auguste Comte tend to define social structure through a biological understanding of society whereas structuralists under influence like Claude Lévi-Strauss, Wilhelm Dilthey, tend to define social structure through culture, production and linguistic.¹¹⁶ The experience of culture and history created by the subjectivity also provides a basis for social science.¹¹⁷ For all that, apart from the subjectivity concept, there is a material world that emerged with impersonal results and reasons.¹¹⁸ The discussion of these material world elements in international politics is realized by defining the structure of states and the relation of interstates.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the making of an international political process was interpreted as the difference of a balance against the United States. In this process, the governmental changes triggered by social forces which were governed by former Soviet states increased the value of

¹¹³ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1979), p.65.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.71.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.61.

¹¹⁶ Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, (Cambridge: Polity, 1986), p.1.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.2.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

social forces in terms of the study of international politics. Hereof, the Social Constructivism approach identifies that international politics can be directed and built by social forces in terms of identities, individuals (subject), discourses and social norms. The revolution in the former Iron Curtain countries, which took place in 1989 by those who dealt with Social Constructivism, is presented as an important example. However, it is a fact that the possibility of transforming movements in old Iron Curtain countries into a revolution is unpredictable.¹¹⁹ The fact that social phenomena cannot be predicted, in fact, indicates that subjectivity is a random act rather than the systemic act that the change resulting from this cascade is only the subjectivity of international politics, or that remains a repressed attempt to rebel. In this case, it is necessary to ask under which conditions the subjectivity can be the topic of international politics. In this case, the social movements of subjectivity are only important if the state is effective in the conditions of management or can take it over. The situation that emerged after this point is the capture and management of the state by a social group. However, the concept of national interest of the state remains constant regardless of which group it is governed by. At this stage, the national interest is becoming the policy of the state governing group in the international systemic structure.¹²⁰ In other words, it can be explained as the transformation of the social group into the state. This situation causes the social group to be represented in the international policy-making process and in the international systemic structure through the state.

As a result of the formation of a state by a social force, the way in which states interact with each other becomes a systemic discussion. This interactive environment generates under anarchy.¹²¹ The structure includes the processes and institutions in which interaction and learning are opened for discussion against the distribution of anarchy and power.¹²² With this definition, the content of the structure and the way of formation are opened for discussion. In the context of SIPT, the structure is defined in an understanding that acts as a state actor by acting rationally. Critical theories opposing SIPT argue that the structure develops as a result of learning and communication and the human and society. SIPT argues that the institutional structure can be explained by the self-help approach of states. While self-help is not an institutional

¹¹⁹ Timur Kuran, "Now Out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European of 1989", *World Politics*, Vol.44, No.1, (October, 1991), p.10.

¹²⁰ Jutta Welde, "Constructing National Interests", *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol.2 No.3,(September, 1996), p.277.

¹²¹ Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics", *International Organization*, Vol 46, No.2, (Spring, 1992), p.396.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p.391.

structure, it is an important concept to explain the policies of states in terms of the formation of institutions and self-interest concepts.¹²³ Explaining the importance of intersubjective meanings in the structure, Alexander Wendt embraced his approach to the balance of threat rather than Waltz's balance of power.¹²⁴ At this point, the discussion now leads to how the system is formed, not the discussion of the existence of the system. Like Alexander Wendt, Robert Cox states that intersubjectivity has an important impact on international politics.

Cox explains the emergence of intersubjectivity with the relations of production and its reflection on ethical values.¹²⁵ The intersubjective meanings generated by the relations of production reveal an institutionalization.¹²⁶ Cox recognizes that military and economic power is undeniable, while other factors such as intersubjectivity are important for the study of international politics.¹²⁷ The Coxian approach also suggests that international institutions will be able to solve problems through institutional structure and these institutions are more likely to be institutions such as the World Bank, the OECD, and the IMF operating in the economic spheres.¹²⁸ It is stated that there is an international governance environment with the interaction of such institutions and the effect of this interaction on the states. However, this kind of interaction is formed by the persuasion of control and harmony without the emergence of any coercive power as a kind of government.¹²⁹ This governance results in the reflection of the production activity, which started in the national context, to the inter-state area and then the internationalization of these fields.¹³⁰ The effects of the economic and political changes that emerged in the 1970s in the opening up of this situation were also great.¹³¹ The most obvious examples of the economic and political changes are the collapsing of the Bretton Woods System in 1971, the oil crisis in 1973 and the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. All these developments have brought the impact of economic and social activities to a new dimension in international policy debates. Since

¹²³ Ibid., p.392.

¹²⁴ Ibid. p.396.

¹²⁵ Robert R. Cox, *Production, Power, And World Order Social Forces in the Making of History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), pp. 22-26.

¹²⁶ Ibid. pp. 26-34.

¹²⁷ Robert R. Cox, "Beyond Empire and Terror: Critical Reflections on the Political Economy of World Order", *New Political Economy*, Vol. 9, No.3, (September, 2004), p.308.

¹²⁸ Abdul Rahman Embong, "Globalization and Transnational Class Relations: Some Problems of Conceptualization", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No.6, (December, 2000), p.996.

¹²⁹ Robert Cox, "Civil Society at the Turn of the Millennium: Prospects for an Alternative World Order", *Review of International Studies*, Vol.25, No.1, (January, 1999), p.12.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p.9.

¹³¹ Ibid.

the beginning of the economic and military crisis in the 1970s, the role of the state and the influence of societies on the state structure, as well as on international politics, have been discussed in more depth. In this period, it is stated that both international institutions have an impact on the policy-making process by using the power of the economy and social powers have started to be guiding for the structure of the state. Thus, the emergence of a political environment with the emergence of a new world order in which the role of the state decreased and the role of social forces and international institutions increased. This argument is raised by the proponents of the critical theory, which is particularly anti-realist. The relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia in the 1970s need to be evaluated to ensure that the claims of SIPT, which has a realist perspective, as well as the claims of anti-realist critical theories can be dealt with properly.

The Nixon Era and After

The debates of the theories of the international politics on the impact of social forces and the economy have begun to emerge in the 1970s.¹³² The period of change and transformation of international institutions has also affected inter-state relations. This period has gained importance in terms of the struggle between the U.S. and Saudi Arabian relations. The U.S. and Saudi Arabia relations' military and economic infrastructure were planned before the 1970s. Saudi Arabia's main institutions were founded and affected by the U.S. As a consequence of the security relations, the U.S. policymakers have prepared a new doctrine for Middle East's security. The doctrine was based on Soviet containment. Moreover, the US' second aim was against the assets of the Soviet Union in the Middle East. After a failed attempt of establishment of a Middle East Defense Organization (MEDO) and a Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) in the 1950s, the US' has tried to establish relations with countries instead of the organization. With this concept, the US' most important allies were Iran and Saudi Arabia which begun in the 1950s by Eisenhower era.¹³³ Iran and Saudi Arabia emerged as two new security partners of the U.S against the USSR. And this policy was revised by Nixon that was named the "twin pillars policy." According to twin pillars policy, Iran and Saudi Arabia are the main security actors of Middle East defense. The main purposes of Nixon's doctrine were;

¹³² Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.1.

¹³³ See US economic military aid to Saudi Arabia in 1950s: Michael G. Nehme, "Saudi Arabia 1950-1980: Between Nationalism and Religion", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 30, No.4, (October,1994), pp. 930-943.

The U.S government tries to keep Middle East's wide natural sources accessible for itself.

a) The U.S. government tries to keep the USSR away from the Middle East's wide natural sources with Iran and Saudi Arabia.¹³⁴

b) All those strategies are based on George Kennan's *The Long Telegram*¹³⁵ which against the expansion of the USSR's Europe. All these mentioned above aims to avoid the USSR reach the natural sources of the Middle East Countries. For this reason, the Middle East became the conflict area for both the U.S. and the USSR. This conflict consisted of military and economic dimensions between the U.S. and the USSR. With this conflict, the U.S. and the USSR focused on the Middle East where major oil resources lay. With this effect, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia continued military and economic relations. This relation supported more oil for the U.S. and this resulted in global and regional hegemony of the U.S. Saudi Arabia and Iran were meant to be the two major countries in the strategy of the U.S.¹³⁶ In the framework of the Nixon Doctrine, between the years 1970-1979, 22 billions \$ of arms were sold to Iran and 3.5 billion \$ of arms was sold to Saudi Arabia in order to contain the Soviet Union in the Middle East.¹³⁷

During this period the occupation of Vietnam caused economic and social problems for the U.S. itself. Therefore, the Nixon era is known to be the period of solution for interior social and economic problems. These problems led to rhetoric that the USSR was involved in interior politics of the U.S. In this period the fundamentals of Nixon doctrine were based on the speech which Nixon made in Guam Island. Basically, the Nixon doctrine included the protection of global benefits of the U.S. against the USSR. According to Nixon;

The U.S. promises to keep all its international agreements

a) The U.S. is to protect any country which has the utmost nuclear threat.

b) Two priorities of the U.S. about on the security of Middle East countries are supplying military and economic aids to them in order to be sufficient for their own military and economic activities.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Randy B. Bell, "Expansion Of American Persian Gulf Policy by Three President", <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1990/BRB.htm>, (13.01.2015).

¹³⁵ George Kennan (X), "The sources of Soviet conduct", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.25, No.4, (July, 1947), pp. 566-582.

¹³⁶ Robert Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), p.140.

¹³⁷ Toby C. Jones, "America, Oil, and War in the Middle East", *Journal of American History*, Vol. 99, No.1, (June, 2012), p. 212.

¹³⁸ Richard Nixon, "Addresses to the Nation on the War on the Vietnam", Nixon Library, 3 October 1969, http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/forkids/speechesforkids/silentmajority/silentmajority_transcript.pdf (30.08.2015)

c) These priorities are valid both globally and in the Middle East. These priorities were especially applied to Iran and Saudi Arabia to be the most important countries of the region during the Nixon period. At this point, Iran was considered to be much stronger in terms of military and economy when compared to Saudi Arabia. The reasons for this were *listed* as; the instability of Arabic military forces, the conflict between Israel and the other Arabic Countries, the last but not the least political instability of Arabic States. Shah Pahlavi's military support for the U.S. and the reformed navy for the security of Persian Gulf made Iran's superior among all the other Arabic Countries for the benefit of the U.S.¹³⁹ But this condition mentioned above changed right after the religious revolution of Khomeini in Iran.¹⁴⁰ While the U.S. lost its strongest ally with the Khomeini Revolution, Saudi Arabia remained to be the only ally in the Persian Gulf for the U.S. related to the Nixon doctrine. The chaotic situation of the Middle East kept the U.S. away from enforcing the Nixon Doctrine in this region. The first and the most important reason why the Nixon Doctrine died out was expansionist politics of Israel. In addition to this, the support of the U.S. toward Israel led to the response of Arabic Countries against the U.S. Meanwhile the Arab-Israel War in 1973 also had a negative effect on the relation between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia.

After the Pax-Americana Era in the U.S. and Saudi Arabia Relations

In the international study of politics, the *Pax-Americana Era* is used to express the times between the beginning of the Cold War and the Vietnam War when the U.S. was considered to lose hegemonic power.¹⁴¹ There are two explanations made for this era. The first explanation is based on the theory that the U.S. had lost power.¹⁴² The second explanation claims that the power of the U.S. had changed by international institutions such as EU, NAFTA, GCC, etc.¹⁴³ As a result of this; these two different approaches imply that the U.S. is no longer as powerful as it was before the *Pax-Americana Era*. As a consequence, the relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia changed in

¹³⁹ Majid Behestani and Mehdi Hedayati Shahidani, "Twin Pillars Policy: Engagement of US-Iran Foreign Affairs During the Last Two Decades of Pahlavi Dynasty", *Asian Social Science*, Vol. 11, No.2, (December, 2014), p.27.

¹⁴⁰ Enayatollah Yazdani and Rizwan Hussain, "United States' Policy towards Iran after the Islamic Revolution: An Iranian Perspective". *International Studies*, Vol. 43, No.3, (April, 2006), p.270.

¹⁴¹ Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, p.182.

¹⁴² Charles Kupchan, "Charles Kupchan, "After Pax Americana Benign Power, Regional Integration, and the Sources of a Stable Multipolarity", *International Security*, Vol.23, No.2, (Fall, 1998)", *International Security*, Vol.23, No.2, (Fall, 1998), p.42.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* pp.40-79.

this era as hard power strategies of the classic realist era were left and replaced with seeking political ways with institutional relations.¹⁴⁴ These developments occurred during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War and Oil Crises and as a result of these Saudi Arabia tried to manipulate the U.S. politically by using its advantage of being one of the leading oil producer countries of the world. For Saudi Arabia, the first step of gaining this power was the Arab-Israel War in 1973 and the global oil crisis which emerged simultaneously right after the war. These simultaneous changes triggered the emerge of the critical and the neorealist approaches while military and economic benefits remained unchanged. An international political arena emerged in which economic affairs and transformation of international institutions were effective in inter-state relations and led to a military conflict such as the Suez Crisis in the post-World War II Period. However, the Arab Israeli War of 1973 and the subsequent oil crisis include more detailed examples of how US-Saudi Arabia relations are driven by social forces and economic interests.

1973 Arab-Israeli War and Its Effects on the U.S. and Saudi Arabia Relations

Since the 1973 Arab-Israeli War resulted in different consequences among all the other Arab-Israel Wars, this war has more importance when compared to the other Arab-Israeli wars. Since the Arab members of OPEC declared the oil embargo during the 1973 Arab-Israel War, the international political economic situation changed. The time when the *Pax-Americana* had trouble there was also a tension between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia relations. The Arab countries coalition which was led by Egypt and Syria declared war on Israel in order to retake the Sinai Peninsula and Golan Heights. The raid of the Egypt Air Force ended up with failure and this failure caused a big loss for the Egypt Air Force.¹⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the attack of Syria with the assistance of Jordan to Golan Heights resulted in a failure. The unsuccessful attempts of Syria and Egypt under the name of The Federation of United Arab Republics made it impossible for Arab Countries to unite.¹⁴⁶

Another political consequence of the 1973 Arab-Israel War was the U.S. and the USSR had a high-tension conflict by supporting both sides of the

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. p.44.

¹⁴⁵ Simon Dunstan, *The Yom Kippur War the Arab Israeli War of 1973*, (New York: Osprey Publishing, 2007), p.5.

¹⁴⁶ Peter Bechtold, "New Attempts at Arab Cooperation: The Federation of Arab Republics, 1971-?", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 27, No.2, (Spring, 1973), pp.157-172.

war.¹⁴⁷ During the war period, the USSR supported the United Arab States by sending military aid to Syria's navy port in Latakia. In return for this attempt of the USSR, the U.S. alarmed their navy located in the Mediterranean Sea. Even though these attempts by both sides escalated the tension in the region no conflict occurred between the parties.¹⁴⁸ When Golda Meir declared that Israel was about to be completely destroyed by the United Arab States, the U.S. decided to support Israel by sending military aid on 4th October 1973.¹⁴⁹ When the 1973 Arab-Israel War changed the balance of power in that region, the relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia began to change. Since the military and economic support of the U.S. to Israel and also Israel's becoming an important power in the region was considered to be a big threat by Saudi Arabia the relations of the U.S. and Saudi Arabia were affected in a negative way. Saudi Arabia sent 3.000 soldiers for the 1973 Arab-Israeli War.¹⁵⁰ Saudi Arabia's sending 3.000 soldiers for the 1973 Arab-Israel War on the behalf of the United Arab States and the U.S. supporting Israel by means of military forces almost ended the relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. Although the soldiers sent by Saudi Arabia didn't have an important effect on the war the oil power of Saudi Arabia was very effective during the period.¹⁵¹ As a matter of fact, Saudi Arabia tried to block Israel's politics by using oil power although the soldiers sent for the war were not as effective as expected. These attempts together with the oil embargo period had a negative effect on the U.S. and Saudi Arabia relations.

The U.S. political and military support toward Israel, resulted in Syria and Egypt to have closer relations with the USSR. After being influenced by these political changes, Saudi Arabia got closer to the USSR for a short time. When Saudi Arabia had better relations with the USSR, it became impossible for the U.S. to make a construct of allies, which included Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries in the Middle East region. The close relations of the Arab countries including Syria and Egypt with the USSR and the 1973 Arab-Israel War risked the U.S. plans for containment of the USSR. While the close relations of Syria and Egypt with the USSR had a regional effect, the oil embargo

¹⁴⁷ Karen Dawisha, "The U.S.S.R. in the Middle East: Superpower in Eclipse?", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.61, No.2, (Winter, 1982), pp.440-441.

¹⁴⁸ USS Little Rock Association, (07 April 2011), <http://www.uslittlerock.org/Historic%20Events/LittleRockYomKippur.html> (25 November 2014).

¹⁴⁹ Daniel Yergin, *Petrol Para ve Güç Çatışmasının Epik Öyküsü*, (İstanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2003), p. 568-569.

¹⁵⁰ Abraham Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War: The Epic Encounter That Transformed the Middle East*, (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), p.498.

¹⁵¹ Peter Allen, *The Yom Kippur War*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982), p.32.

of OPEC led by Saudi Arabia had a global impact. The importance of Saudi Arabia became more evident when the oil crisis began in 1973.

The Oil Crisis and the U.S.-Saudi Arabia Relations

Oil has retained its power and importance since the 19th century. But for the first time in history, the oil producer countries used this power to direct international politics. Serious problems occurred between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia during this oil crisis period. As a result of limitations of oil-producing economic and political practices had to be changed.¹⁵² The Bretton Woods System led by the U.S. after WWII collapsed due to the great debts of the U.S. and other factors.¹⁵³ These two important incidents happened in close periods both led the international policy power of the U.S. to be questioned and also had a negative effect on the relations between Saudi Arabia and the U.S. In this period, the President of Egypt Anwar Sadat and King of Saudi Arabia Faisal had a meeting in August 1973 which concluded in the decision of using oil power as a threat against the countries which supported Israel.¹⁵⁴ As a conclusion, the oil crisis began after this meeting.

As soon as the decision of using oil as a threat was taken by Saudi Arabia and Egypt the 1973 Arab-Israel War began when Egypt attacked the Sinai Peninsula and Syria to Golan Highs. OPEC had an important role during the oil crisis. For this reason, the attempts of the international institutes were put forward during the process of international politics. During the 1973 Arab-Israel War, OPEC made a decision to increase the oil prices by ignoring the agreement which was signed in Tehran in 1971.¹⁵⁵ With this attempt, OPEC tried to manipulate the U.S. and its important ally Israel in the region. During this mentioned period the U.S.' military support to Israel triggered the Arab member countries of OPEC to act against the U.S. At this time the U.S. Congress approved 2.2 billion dollars military sales for Israel¹⁵⁶ and soon after this, first Libya and then Saudi Arabia decided to take the oil embargo into action. As well as the oil embargo the Arab Countries led by Saudi Arabia declared that they would increase the oil prices up to 3.5 dollars per barrel.

¹⁵² David Painter, "Oil and Geopolitics: The Oil Crises of the 1970s and the Cold War", *Historical Social Research*, Vol. 39, No.4, (2014) p.190.

¹⁵³ Harold James, *International Monetary Cooperation Since Bretton Woods*, (Washington: International Monetary Fund, 1996), p.205-209.

¹⁵⁴ Yergin, *Petrol Para ve Güç Çatışmasının Epik Öyküsü*, p. 560.

¹⁵⁵ Morris A. Adelman, *The First Oil Price Explosion 1971-1974*, (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1990), p.19-20.

¹⁵⁶ George Lenczowski, *American Presidents and the Middle East*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), p.130.

The policies led by the U.S. made more space for the USSR to improve their military and political attempt in that region. In this political environment, the USSR had a chance to have better relations with Egypt and Syria.¹⁵⁷ It was the same time when the USSR and Saudi Arabia had better and closer relations. Yet the perspective of anti-religious and especially anti-Islamist points of view of the Communism and besides this the important military and economic relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia limited the relations with the USSR. This political environment remained the same during the oil crisis after the 1973 Arab-Israel War. In the oil crisis period, oil producer countries such as Saudi Arabia decreased oil production 25% in order to manipulate the economic structure of the U.S. The oil crisis ended when Israel withdrew from the Sinai Peninsula in 1974.

During the oil crisis the U.S. economy, mostly the automotive industry, was damaged seriously. In order to solve this problem, the U.S. began to import Japanese cars which were smaller and more economical.¹⁵⁸ During the economic crisis which occurred with the oil embargo, the U.S. economy was negatively affected by the increase of oil prices about four times higher. This high increase in oil prices triggered high inflation in the U.S. economy. Although the U.S. was ill-affected during this period, the U.S. economy stabilized when the economic decisions taken during the Nixon era became successful in the Ford era.¹⁵⁹ The U.S. not only revised their usage of hard power toward Saudi Arabia which began in 1930 and crystallized during WWII but also noticed that their relations with the Persian Gulf States could be problematic.

This period of changes led the classical realist approach to evolve in terms of the usage of the international intuitions. This economic and military progress caused a bridge from classical realism to neo-realism. With this mentioned transition, the military and security-based relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia began to recover again. At this point, occupation of Afghanistan by the USSR played an important role in the recovery of relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. When considered from this point of view, the social forces and economic affairs impact has been largely influenced in the international political environment. Nevertheless, the international political structure has imposed restrictions and equalizations on the states.

¹⁵⁷ Ilana Dimant-Kass, "The Soviet Military and Soviet Policy in the Middle East 1970-73", *Soviet Studies*, Vol.26, No.4, (October,1974), p. 503, 515.

¹⁵⁸ David Frum, *How We Got Here: The '70s*, (New York: Basic Book, 2000), p.321.

¹⁵⁹ US Department of State Office of the Historian. Oil Embargo, October 31, 2013, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/oil-embargo> (20 January 2015).

As it is seen in the cases, the conflict is inevitable. Despite the conflicts, states can succeed in overcoming crises by maintaining interaction with each other. Furthermore, states have been able to keep the conflict within the means and geographical constraints. This shows that states acting at the systemic and regional levels are trying to avoid the destructive effects of war. Based on the given cases, it is possible to state that, regardless of the impact of social power and economic affairs, states have been acted within the framework of SIPT in their relations with each other. This situation has been becoming more pronounced for the states that have strong military and economic relations. Therefore, the US-Saudi relations became a close ally relationship despite the 1973 Arab Israeli War and the Oil Crisis.

Reconstruction Era on the Basis of Containment of the USSR

The security-based problems caused by the USSR threat resulted in better relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. The attempt of the USSR to access natural sources of the Middle East just like the U.S. was another factor of recovering relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. When the USSR occupied Afghanistan in 1979 the U.S. and Saudi Arabia produced security-based politics together for the region.¹⁶⁰ The occupation of Afghanistan by the USSR threatened the containment policy of the USSR by the U.S. The bettered relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia led Saudi Arabia to take place with the U.S. in terms of the economy and military. In the meantime, the U.S. began to give military support to Mujahedeen against the occupation by the USSR. Saudi Arabia was one of the most important allies of the U.S. in order to apply the U.S. strategy in the region.¹⁶¹ Saudi Arabia had the same point of view with the U.S. regarding the expansionism of the USSR. Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi religious authority didn't have the conflict with the U.S. toward the risk of communist based Soviet expansionism. The support strategy given to Mujahedeen by the U.S. and Saudi Arabia was the result of a pragmatist approach during the occupation of Afghanistan by the USSR. At this point;

The support of the U.S. given to an unofficial organization such as Mujahedeen,

a) The easy uniting of the U.S. and Saudi Arabia towards a common threat even though they were on opposite sides during the oil embargo and 1973 Arab-Israel War

¹⁶⁰ Andrew Hartman, "'The Red Template': US Policy in Soviet-occupied Afghanistan", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No.3, (June, 2002), p.475.

¹⁶¹ Shah M. Tarzi, "Politics of the Afghan Resistance Movement: Cleavages, Disunity, and Fragmentation", *Asian Survey*, Vol.31, No.6, (June, 1991), p.489, 492.

b) Despite all the opposite political acceptance of the U.S. and Saudi Arabia the ability of uniting for the regional and global common benefits shows the pragmatic structure of these two countries.

c) With this approach, Saudi Arabia officially funded 4 million dollars to Mujahedeen during the Soviet occupation between the years 1979-1989.¹⁶² Meanwhile, Operation Cyclone was started by the U.S. to support Mujahedeen. The estimated budget for the operation, which was coordinated by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and directed by the Member of House Charlie Wilson, was 20 or 30 million dollars in 1980 but however, the annual expense in 1987 happened to be 630 million dollars.¹⁶³ All these developments showed that the U.S. and Saudi Arabia could unite eagerly against a common threat although they had strong conflicts during the oil crisis and 1973 Arab-Israel War. After the withdrawal of the USSR army, the new government founded by Taliban regime was officially recognized by Saudi Arabia.¹⁶⁴

The recognition of the Taliban regime by Saudi Arabia started a new conflict period between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. The formation of al Qaeda among the Taliban militias which once was supported by the U.S. and Saudi Arabia was the beginning point of the new conflict between these two countries. Even though the U.S and Saudi Arabia united towards a common threat, their different ways of approach to solve the same problem caused other serious problems in their relations. However, despite all the conflicts they had, the relation between two countries reformed in a positive way with the occupation of Afghanistan by the USSR. The common economic and military benefits of the two countries forced them to keep good relations. Both the importance of oil on economics and the security need for economic activities helped these two countries to have strategic relations even in the oil embargo period and 1973 Arab-Israel War. The pragmatist approach of these two countries also takes an important role at this point.

Conclusion

In the 1970-1990 period when the U.S. and Saudi Arabia relations were strained, the analysis of international politics had also faced some paradigmatic changes. While SIPT replaced the classical realism on the one side, the critical approach has also been used in the analysis of international politics.

¹⁶² Greg Bruno, "Saudi Arabia and Future of Afghanistan", Council on Foreign Relations, 11 September 2008, <http://www.cfr.org/afghanistan/saudi-arabia-future-afghanistan/p17964>, (20 January 2015).

¹⁶³ Peter Bergen, *Holy War Inc.: Inside the Secret World bin Laden* (New York: Free Press, 2002), p.68.

¹⁶⁴ Gilles Dorronsoro, "Pakistan and the Taliban: State Policy, Religious Networks and Political Connections", Christophe Jaffrelot, "Pakistan: Nationalism Without A Nation?", (New York: Zed Books, 2004), p.172.

The findings gained by examination in a historicist point of view show that this period witnessed major paradigm changes. Before these changes, the relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia had been based upon the oil supply to the world as it benefited the U.S. economically, and the military security actions in order to maintain oil supply. This fact had not caused any severe strategic conflict if any minor disagreements occurred during this period.

However, with the global philosophical and diplomatic changes in the 1970s, there has been a time frame when the U.S. and Saudi Arabian interests conflicted. This global transformation was triggered by regional and global factors. The transformation of the economic structure of the countries in the Western Hemisphere, which were led by the U.S. after WWII, is the global scale factor. This event started with the collapse of the Bretton-Woods System besides the lack of control of the new system provided by the U.S. The military failure in Vietnam War and its reflections of internal policy of the U.S. caused this lack of control of the new economic system. In this way, these developments made the question of the effect of the international institutions and the concept of subjectivity in international politics. However, the U.S.-Saudi Arabia relations were not affected at the state level despite political tensions. In addition, the fact that the two states, which both have different subjective foundations, cooperated with each other in the context of their international political interests, shows that subjective-based approaches have a certain level of clarity. Because the period was considered to be an example shows that although the two states have different subjective-based structures, in general, international politics is based on interests and conflict. The only agents capable of doing so have been the states. Although sociological events based on subjectivism change the administrative structures of the states, the international political environment in which states are involved does not change the fact that they interact with each other at the state level.

During this period Saudi Arabia used a political strategy without completely eliminating the U.S. centric political system and keeping the USSR as an alternative option. In this period, it is seen that in spite of using military force, Saudi Arabia chose a way to have power by using oil riches. With this approach, Saudi Arabia remained an economic partner of the Western Hemisphere. For this reason, the relations between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia have always been possible to reorganize. The reasons for this have been economic concerns and regional security. For this reason, it can be argued that the conditions for a liberal economy are accepted by the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. These examples show that both the subjectivity and the effect of international institutions on international politics are important in the context of the interests and conflicts of states in the systemic structure.

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