

Theoretical chapter of PhD research:

**Iran-Saudi Arabia rivalry after the Islamic Revolution of Iran, domestic
policy or international obstacles?**

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Subject and the purpose of dissertation

There are a variety of fundamental factors and obstacles in the relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia such as: Religious, ideological and ethnical differences, Saudi's participation in weakening and isolating Iran, Iran-Saudi rivalry after the fall of Saddam Hussein, Political leadership of Islamic world, Arab Spring's aftermath, Iran's support for Hezbollah and Hamas and etc.

However, the focus of our research is based on both domestic and international factors combined together, which is more neglected in the past researches. The anarchic system of international system and its self-help structure influences the relations between these two countries regardless of the period of Persian monarchy under the secular regime of last Iranian Shah and after that, Islamic Republic based on the Sharia law under the Islamic principles. However, we cannot neglect the different levels of relationship between these two neighbors due to different presidential periods. Hence, in our belief, both domestic factors and international ones have influence on the relation between these two countries. Therefore, domestic factors such as religion, sects, identity and ideology are all influential in preventing a friendly relation between Iran and Saudi Arabia but again the most important subject is about power policy and security issue in an anarchical international system. If we observe the relation of these two powers before and after the Islamic revolution of Iran, we can see that during the monarchial period in Iran, these two powers had less disputes and tensed diplomatic relations although the geopolitical, economic and rivalry over oil production had continuously been an obstacle for a friendly relation. Even after the Islamic revolution of Iran and under four different presidential administrations, the relations had many ups and downs. For instance, during Rafsanjani and Khatami's presidency, the level of diplomatic

relation has significantly developed but during Ahmadinejad's presidency and his new direction in Iranian political realm, the relation between these two countries became cold again.

Hence, in our research, we attempted to indicate that the main factors, which are influencing the relation between these two great regional powers. These factors are divided into two main categories:

International obstacles include anarchic system of international system in which survival is the most important issue for every state, self-help structure and security issues. Based on the experiences of wars, riots and collapsing autocratic regimes in the Middle East, both leaders of these two great regional powers are aware that survival of their regimes is a primary and most important goal.

Domestic obstacles include religious, ideological, ethnical, cultural, and historical factors. Based on these backgrounds, which shape the mindset and perception of political leaders and elites, the process of decision-making is influenced.

The main changes after the Islamic revolution of Iran in 1979:

Iran and Saudi Arabia have always faced disagreements and rivalries for geopolitical reasons and oil issues, regardless of the form of government structure. However, with the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the element of ideology also fueled these differences and the confrontation between these two countries increased. *"The Saudi-Iranian rivalry is further complicated by a religious and ideological competition, with structural tensions representing two opposing aspirations for Islamic leadership that overlap with the strategic and geopolitical rivalry."*¹

¹ Grumet, Tali Rachel, "New Middle East Cold War: Saudi Arabia and Iran's Rivalry" (2015). Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Paper 1028

According to Muhmad Rizwan, there are fundamental changes in the structure of Iranian government after the Islamic revolution in 1979. These changes are as follow:

“1. Iran had changed its status; its revolutionary government declared itself as the Islamic Republic of Iran and Imperial State of Iran was changed.

2. Anti-western policies were demonstrated. The revolutionary government had rejected the Shah’s pro-western policies.

3. Anti-monarchy policy was adopted by the spiritual leader Khomeini. According to him, there is no concept of monarchy in Islam. In this sense, he challenged the legitimacy of the monarchy, which was ruled in most of the Arabs countries.

4. Shiite (Shia) beliefs were own by the revolution government. Iran is one of those countries of the region, which has Shia majority. In Pahlavi dynasty, Muhammad Raza Shah had adopted the secularism attitude and his focus was on the advancement and western moderations in Iran.”²

The geopolitical battle on one side and the changes in Iran's internal system from secular to theocratic Shiite on the other side, led to an intense rivalry between these two neighboring countries to further influence the region. Grumet notes: *“Saudi Arabia and Iran are gripped in as zero-sum game, contesting for land, resources, weapons and most specifically, influence. While Saudi Arabia and Iran were indeed rivals from the inception of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, tensions escalated to an unprecedented degree after Iran’s 1979 Islamic Revolution, where Shi’ite Muslims successfully overthrew the pro-Western Shah’s constituted political authority.”³*

² From Rivalry to Nowhere: A Story of Iran-Saudi Ties, Muhammad Rizwan, Muhammad Arshid, Muhammad Waqar, Saira Iram, IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) Volume 19, Issue 9, Ver. IV (Sep. 2014), PP 91-101

³ Grumet, Tali Rachel, "New Middle East Cold War: Saudi Arabia and Iran's Rivalry" (2015). Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Paper 1028

Iran-Iraq war

The war between Iran and Iraq, which lasted about eight years, is one of the main reasons for the hostility of the two countries. In 1980, and in the wake of the war, Saudi Arabia made a variety of financial, military and media sponsorship of Saddam Hussein in fear of forming a powerful country with Shiite sovereignty in its neighborhood. At that time, while Saudi ties were not warm with Iraq, she saw it necessary to help Iraq to defuse Iran's influence.

“Saudi Arabia gave US\$25 billion of aid to Iraq in Iran-Iraq war (1980-88). She also launched a Media War against the Iran to demoralize the Iran on regional and international levels. Not only this, she convinced the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf to put their strength on the side of Iraq against Iran. Syria was the only supporting country in the Middle East region. With such isolator situation, Iran never gave up in the longest conventional war in the 20th century. This war ended in 1988 after 7 years, 10 months, 4 weeks and 1 day with the effort of the UNO.”⁴

Iran and Saudi Arabia Foreign policy

Ideological or pragmatic?

Iran

Iranian foreign policy oscillated between two opposing views, leaning toward an ideological revolutionary state at one moment, then a pragmatic state pursuing a foreign policy based upon its ‘national interest’ the next.⁵

In general, the important decisions of foreign relations in Iran are carried out by the leader of the Islamic Republic and not by the president. Therefore, to understand whether Iran's foreign policy is pragmatic or ideological, we should consider the behavior of the leaders of the Islamic Republic. Definitely, the role of the president as the second person of the government and its great influence

⁴ From Rivalry to Nowhere: A Story of Iran-Saudi Ties, Muhammad Rizwan, Muhammad Arshid, Muhammad Waqar, Saira Iram, IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) Volume 19, Issue 9, Ver. IV (Sep. 2014), PP 91-101

⁵ The Development of Saudi-Iranian Relations since the 1990s Between conflict and accommodation, Fahad Mohammad Alsultan and Pedram Saeid, 2017 by Routledge

on the leader cannot be denied. Kamal Kharrazi, the Iranian foreign minister between 1997 until 2005, about the Iranian foreign decision-making notes: *'the government of Iran executes foreign policy decisions made by Iran's Supreme Leader'*. He stressed that trying to *'circumvent the Supreme Leader and talk to other people in the government'* is pointless (Newsweek, 8 November 2007). Ayatollah Khamenei, however, asserts his influence through *'negative power'*; he does not necessarily formulate policy, but blocks policies that he opposes."⁶

It may be argued that Iranian foreign policy, at least after the victory of the Islamic Republic, has been a combination of pragmatism and ideology. Meanwhile, the leader of the Islamic Republic has always played a greater role in emphasizing ideological issues and religious solidarity, while the president usually plays a more pragmatic role but runs along the lines of leadership. For this reason, countries often experience "contradictions" in Iranian foreign policy. Since the leader may behave or speak in a manner that is in contradiction with the behavior of the president. One of the Saudis official claims: *"We are extremely astonished at the contradiction there is in the way the Iranian leaders are talking to us. While Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, continues to send his letters and his messengers to us with a view to improving relations and bringing closer viewpoints between the two countries, the spiritual leader, Ali Khamene'i, surprises us with improper and irresponsible statements, followed by a frenzied media campaign. Which of the two teams should we rely on and which of the two men should we deal with?"*⁷

Alsultan in *The Development of Saudi-Iranian Relations* notes": *Pragmatism is explained by advocates of realism to analyse the foreign policies of Iran and other Middle Eastern countries (Bayman et al., 2001; Ehteshami, 2002; Ramazani, 2004). Ehteshami (2002), for example, asserts that revolutionary Iran has always been a 'rational actor' in the classic sense. He observes that*

⁶ *The Development of Saudi-Iranian Relations since the 1990s Between conflict and accommodation*, Fahad Mohammad Alsultan and Pedram Saeid, 2017 by Routledge

⁷ *The Development of Saudi-Iranian Relations since the 1990s Between conflict and accommodation*, Fahad Mohammad Alsultan and Pedram Saeid, 2017 by Routledge

Iran's rational behaviors fit its position in a changing regional and international environment. Yet, he failed to clarify whether there are criteria for rationalism or whether Iran's actions are 'rational'. To explain anomalies in Iran's foreign policy, some scholars argue that the country's gradual movements toward rationalism has shown maturation and reassertion of national interest and pragmatism (Bayman et al., 2001).⁸

Hence, it seems that revolutionary Iran is becoming more rational over time, and even when it comes to choosing between the ideology and the benefits of the regime, the regime has always preferred its own interest to the ideology. Saraiva notes: *"The mixture of religious nationalism and a revolutionary populist propaganda, together with a policy of opportunism, anti-Americanism and antiZionism, brought Iranian foreign policy to an aura of difficult understanding (Ehteshami, 2010, pp.128-29)."*

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia, which is a kingdom controlled by the Islamic principles of the Shari 'a, has always had good relations with the West in order to maintain its security and survival inside and outside of Saudi Arabia. It can be said that the kings of Saudi Arabia have always tried to prevent Iran from penetrating the region, especially in different places such as the occupation of Iraq by the United States, the Arab Spring, the Syrian civil wars, and the Yemeni conflict.

*Traditionally, Saudi policymakers have always applied caution in regional overtures, adopted pragmatism, and strengthened relations with allied states, specifically the United States, to maintain stability and security, both internally and externally.⁹ The military intervention in Yemen, which many scholars call the Cold War of Iran and Saudi Arabia, portrayed the peak of Saudis ambitions along with pragmatism .Umer Karim notes": *intervention in Yemen in 2015 is**

⁸ The Development of Saudi-Iranian Relations since the 1990s Between conflict and accommodation, Fahad Mohammad Alsultan and Pedram Saeid, 2017 by Routledge

⁹ Umer Karim, The Evolution of Saudi Foreign Policy and the Role of Decision-making Processes and Actors , University of Birmingham, 2017

the first largescale military campaign conducted by GCC states, with Jordan and Morocco contributing with their air forces. This endorses the view that Saudi foreign policy is gradually evolving from being cautious and calculated to more assertive and ambitious, and one that posits the Kingdom as the main power defending political interests in the Sunni Arab world.¹⁰

In the political system of Saudi Arabia, the king has absolute power and is considered the head of state. The king must also approve all decisions on foreign policy. However, the influence of the ring around the king, most of which belongs to the royal family, is significant in the king's important decisions. *“In this regard, it is the Saudi royalty that is central in foreign policy decision-making. At the top of the decision-making hierarchy sits the Saudi king himself, assisted by other princes in running the state. The nature of this hierarchy and power relationship between the members of the innermost core of Saudi royalty has differed for various Saudi monarchs, but this system of decision-making has prevailed over time. Nevertheless, institutional structures that have a predominantly bureaucratic setup like the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs do exist and play an important role in coordinating and communicating with international audiences.”¹¹*

Leader’s perceptions:

With the victory of the Islamic Revolution under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini, Iran was entering a new field of foreign policy. Khomeini with the slogan Neither East nor West, Islamic Republic, came to power. In his view, the West, and especially the United States (the Great Satan), were responsible for the oppression of Muslim countries, and he sought to correlate the

¹⁰ Umer Karim, *The Evolution of Saudi Foreign Policy and the Role of Decision-making Processes and Actors*, University of Birmingham, 2017

¹¹ Umer Karim, *The Evolution of Saudi Foreign Policy and the Role of Decision-making Processes and Actors*, University of Birmingham, 2017

Muslim world with the export of the Islamic Revolution beyond the borders of Iran. After the death of Khomeini in 1989, Ayatollah Khamenei, who was known by politicians and intellectuals of the time, came into power.” *Ayatollah Khamenei’s personality has been hard for outsiders to apprehend. Those who knew him before he became Supreme Leader believe that he is a ‘closet moderate’ (Rubin, 2009). They mention that he is comfortable mixing with Iranian intellectual circles and enjoys poetry, both of which are rarely practiced by typical Shia clerics. Others, who have known him since he took office, believe that he is a deeply religious, anti-American, and ideologically stringent cleric. This is consistent with Levy’s (1994) idea that the personality of the leader is changeable through the observation and interpretation of experience.”*

The kings of al-Saud have always tried to have a close relationship with the western countries, and especially with the United States. In the perception of the kings of Saudi Arabia, even if their tradition, religion and culture are in contradiction with Western countries, especially with the United States, they need their support to repatriate possible threats and risks from Iran. From the beginning of the formation to the present day, the kings of Saudi Arabia have been trying to establish a conservative sovereignty with proximity to the West. *Unlike King Abdullah who became moderate and pro-Western with the passage of years, Ayatollah Khamenei’s personality leant toward religious conservatism once he assumed power as Supreme Leader.*

Regime in Iran and Saudi Arabia

Iran

In the constitution of the Islamic Republic, it is possible to combine divine laws with the conventional laws. Of course, the role and influence of the founder of the Islamic Republic in determining of the Constitution can not be ignored. *“The constitution establishes a theocratic*

republic. On one side are the religious institutions and objectives, which embody the Islamic Republic's theocratic mission. On the other are republican institutions and procedures, based on the French constitution of 1958. The whole thing is, in theory, given credibility by the regular participation of the people in elections – under the watchful eye of the theocrats.”¹²

The Islamic Republic is a political system based on Islamic law, of course, with the separation of powers (legislature, executive and judiciary), in which the leader has absolute power. In general, in the nature of the political system of Iran, especially after the Islamic Revolution in 1979, there is a kind of contradiction. On the one hand, there are democratic symbols and elements, and on the other hand, the religious despotic government has its own peremptory norms. ”Iran's political system is neither fully authoritarian nor democratic, but a unique system with many overlapping authorities, which gives rise to conflict among actors, each of whom claims authority.”¹³

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is a totalitarian absolute monarchy based on Islamic principles in which the king is the head of state and has absolute authority. “*The Basic System of Government identifies the nature of the state, its goals and responsibilities, as well as the relationship between the ruler and citizens. It defines the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as an Arab and Islamic sovereign state; its religion is Islam and its constitution is the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah.*”¹⁴

Unlike Iran, whose constitution is a combination of conventional and theocratic laws, the constitution of Saudi Arabia are all based on direct Quran's commands. In this way, it can be said that Saudi Arabia, in fact, has no constitution, and it is the royal family that implements the Quranic laws “directly.”

¹² Dr. Peter Jones ,Iran's Political System and Its Implications for US Policy ,July 2011

¹³ The Development of Saudi-Iranian Relations since the 1990s Between conflict and accommodation, Fahad Mohammad Alsultan and Pedram Saeid, 2017 by Routledge

¹⁴ <https://www.saudiembassy.net/basic-system-government-0> 26.04.2019

The events of 2003 and the American-led Invasion in Iraq

The occupation of Iraq in 2003 changed the shape of the Middle East forever. Iraq, once considered hostile to both Iran and Saudi Arabia, has now become an opportunity. The Middle East turned from three-polar to bipolar, and competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia intensified. Iran is trying to leverage pressure on both the United States, Israel and Saudi Arabia by gaining more influence in Iraq and strengthening Shi'a groups. Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries are trying to repel Iran's influence by strengthening Sunni groups. *“The events of 2003 and the American-led Invasion in Iraq completely changed the power of balance between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The removal of Saddam Hussein and the civil war in Iraq have changed the regional security paradigm, engaging Saudi Arabia and Iran in a struggle for power. Iraq, once perceived as a hostile enemy to both Saudi Arabia and Iran, is now more than ever a central concern.”*¹⁵

Purposes of research:

The scientific goals of this study are to better understand and recognize the barriers and problems of normalizing relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. The classification and explanation of the relations between these two countries helps us firstly understand the roots and causes of the problems. Formerly, with a scrutiny in two areas of domestic politics and foreign barriers, we try to describe more detailed perspectives and viewpoints on this problem. There are two categories as follows:

- Domestic policy that includes cultural, religious, identity, etc.
- External barriers include an anarchical international environment and its self-help system, in which the main goal of governments is to stay in the game.

¹⁵ Grumet, Tali Rachel, "New Middle East Cold War: Saudi Arabia and Iran's Rivalry" (2015). Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Paper 1028

A more accurate knowledge of leading problems helps us with a more open view to remove obstacles. The two countries, in addition to the confrontation, have also worked together which means what we see today is the result of international anarchical system combined with perception of the leaders of the two countries from each other. Changes in either of these domains can lead to a change in relationships.

The importance of social part of the research is it's emphasize on the role of individuals in society, culture, history and their identity in shaping the political environment. Undoubtedly, leaders' decisions are not made outside of this environment. Therefore, the set of decisions of the leaders is based on the set of social issues of those countries. The extent to which we succeed in understanding the perceptions of leaders from each other depends on our understanding of individuals in society, society, history, culture, religion, and identity. In this research, we will try to refer to these structures as much as possible.

Neoclassical Realism:

Neoclassical realism is aimed at solving the theoretical shortcomings of realism in explaining the differences in unit behavior despite the lack of unchanging environmental conditions.

Neoclassical realism, like the neo-realism, considers its main issue as a system, but it seeks to provide a clearer and more accurate picture of the relations between states by identifying the internal structures. For this purpose, the neoclassical realists are trying to find better and more complete results in explaining the international relations by taking into account other variables and combining them together. Neoclassical realists, despite the failure of the realists to predict the end of the Cold War, continue to regard realism as the best theory for explaining international relations.

The main objective of neoclassical realism is to explain and clarify the points that are within the framework of realism, but it remains hidden from the viewpoint of this theory and not enough attention has been paid to it.

“For neoclassical realists, power is the chief determinant of foreign policy; it shapes the incentives and constraints imposed on states. A framework relying solely on structural factors is underspecified, however; it explains the international context in which a state operates but says

little about the content of its foreign policy.¹⁶ Systemic pressures are filtered through intervening domestic variables to produce foreign policy behaviors. More specifically, complex domestic political processes act as transmission belts that channel, mediate, and (re)direct policy outputs in response to external forces (primarily changes in relative power). Hence, states often react differently to similar systemic pressures and opportunities, and their responses may be less motivated by systemic-level factors than domestic ones.”¹⁷

To understand the issues of international relations, the only understanding of the role of the system in regulating relations between states is not enough, which is why the neoclassical realists are trying to scrutinize both the domestic and the foreign levels. *“Neoclassical realists bridge the gap between the second and the third images, arguing that, while the international system imposes certain generalizable pressures on all countries, foreign policy behavior can only be explained by layering in unit-specific variables.”¹⁸*

The important premise of this theory is that in a complex world, no meaningful theory can be true at all times, and no policy can be right for all situations. So the most important task of the experts is to determine in which conditions, which theories reveal relations between countries, to provide a basis for recommending policies that will be effective. Lobell notes:” *Neoclassical realism seeks to explain variation in the foreign policies of the same state over time or across different states facing similar external constraints. It makes no pretense about explaining broad patterns of systemic or recurring outcomes. Thus, a neoclassical realist hypothesis might explain the likely diplomatic, economic, and military responses of particular states to systemic imperatives, but it cannot explain the systemic consequences of those responses.”¹⁹*

Neoclassical realism suggests a causal chain with three steps as follow: *the independent variable (the state’s relative power), the intervening variable (the domestic-level “transmission belt,” through which systemic pressures are filtered,) and the dependent variable, or foreign policy.* Neoclassical realists have the main assumption that states are the most important actors, by which systemic forces are directly interpreted into actions. *“In the long term, behavior usually converges with predictions based on structural factors. In the short term, however, divergences are common and are accounted for by domestic-level factors. These intervening variables that*

¹⁶ Thomas Juneau, *Squandered Opportunity: Neoclassical Realism and Iranian Foreign Policy*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015

¹⁷ Randall L. Schweller, *Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Under balancing*, *International Security*, Volume 29, Number 2, Fall 2004, pp. 159-201

¹⁸ Gideon Rose, “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy,” *World Politics* 51, no. 1 (October 1998), pp.144–72.

¹⁹ Lobell et al., ed., *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 227-250.

*“channel, mediate and (re)direct” systemic pressures (Schweller, 2004, p. 164) represent one of the main innovations of neoclassical realism. The results, neoclassical realists claim, are more accurate—though more restricted in scope and less parsimonious—accounts of state behavior.”*²⁰

1 .Independent variable:

1.1 Political system:

Neoclassical realism, like neorealism describes the position of the global actor with its contribution to the distribution of international power, and on this basis, international constraints and opportunities are the starting point of the research. *“An international political system, once in existence, constrains and shapes the behavior of the units (or states) through the reinforcing mechanisms of socialization and competition. Over time, states “learn” because they see the misfortune of others who chose not to conform to the dictates of the system ”*²¹

Frankel notes: *“Like classical realism and structural realism, neoclassical realism views international politics as a never-ending struggle among states for power and influence in a world of finite resources and uncertainty about each other’s intentions and capabilities.”* ²²

1.2 Anarchy:

The main feature of the system is its anarchy. Anarchy means the absence of a universal government. Such a feature requires that members in a self-help system and limited resource seek to secure their own survival. Therefore, due to the inherent nature of the system, international politics is meant to imply the use of threat and force. However, international politics cannot be limited only to the use of force and threat, since civilian and non-military tools are also effective in securing the national interest.

Unoki notes: *“The international political realm is anarchic, that is, decentralized and horizontal with no overriding authority. This, according to Waltz, is in stark contrast to the realm of*

²⁰ Thomas Juneau, *Squandered Opportunity: Neoclassical Realism and Iranian Foreign Policy*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015

²¹ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 76, 128.

²² Benjamin Frankel, “Restating the Realist Case: An Introduction,” in *Realism: Restatements and Renewal*, ed. Benjamin Frankel (London: Frank Cass, 1996), pp. ix–xx.

national politics that, with a centralized governing authority and a framework of laws, has a structure which is hierarchical."²³

1.3 Self-help system

Neo-classical realism, like neo-realism, considers that the countries are seeking power because of their motivation and sense of need for security in the anarchy of international system and self-help structure. Hence, power is an instrument for ensuring security, not the goal itself. *"In a self-help system each of the units spends a portion of its effort, not in forwarding its own good, but in providing the means of protecting itself against others. In any self-help system, units worry about their survival, and the worry conditions their behavior."*²⁴

Wirtz on self-help system notes: *"The international political system is a self-help system, in which states can only rely on their own devices to guarantee their security and to make sure other states honor existing agreements. The individual efforts of states to ensure their own survival give rise to the so-called security dilemma: under anarchy, even if self-defense is the motive for building up its military forces, a state's upgrading of its capabilities may be regarded by others as a threat to their security."*²⁵

But the reason that most of the states are not acting according to the interest of international community is that it would be so costly. *"States operating in a self-help world almost always act according to their own self-interest and do not subordinate their interests to the interests of other states, or to the interests of the so-called international community. The reason is simple: it pays to be selfish in a self-help world"*

1.4 Capabilities and power

*In International Relations, realists are known as the theorists of power politics. For Thucydides, "what made war inevitable [between Athens and Sparta] was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta". The first half of this proposition that shifts in relative power lead to war has since been claimed by realists as a founding tenet of the paradigm. The three key elements of power, according to Thucydides, are military, economic, and territorial.*²⁶

²³ Ko Unoki, *International Relations and the Origins of the Pacific War*, 2016 by PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, pp 11-12

²⁴ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 76, 128.

²⁵ *Theory and Practice in the 21st Century* Edited by T. V. Paul, James J. Wirtz, and Michel Fortmann, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California 2004

²⁶ Thomas Juneau, *Squandered Opportunity: Neoclassical Realism and Iranian Foreign Policy*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015

Mearsheimer divides power into two categories; hidden and military power. He believes that these two categories are not synonyms, but they are closely related. In the *Tragedy of the Great Powers* he notes: “*States have two kinds of power: latent power and military power. These two forms of power are closely related but not synonymous, because they are derived from different kinds of assets. Latent power refers to the socio-economic ingredients that go into building military power; it is largely based on a state's wealth and the overall size of its population.*”²⁷ Great powers in order to fight, need money, advanced technology, and people. These will be a raw materials for a powerful army. He believes that ultimate power is a military power.

The critique of this point of view is about its shortcomings in explaining the transformation of hidden power into real power. The process of translating hidden power into real power by all states is not the same, and not all the states have the ability to use and transform the hidden power into real power. “*Zakaria (1998), Schweller (2006), and Taliaferro (2006) argue that a country's state apparatus cannot be assumed to have automatic access to all the nation's capabilities. The power that can be brought to bear in the pursuit of foreign policy state power is thus a function of what the state can extract from society's total resources, or national power.*”²⁸

1.5 Elements of power

1.5.1. Geography, location and size

From past to now, the geography, area, and location of a country has always been effective in their political destiny. For example, if a country is surrounded by mountains or a vast desert, it will harder to be occupied than a country with lower natural barriers. “*The English Channel has historically played a central role in Britain's power by protecting it against invasion, a luxury that Continental European powers never enjoyed. Conversely, the absence of physical barriers can weaken a state by increasing its vulnerability, as the history of Poland illustrates.*”²⁹

1.5.2. Population and wealth

The population have a very important role in the formation of a military might. No large, wealthy country will become superpower without a large population. So the most important component of building a large and powerful army is to have a very large population. Wealth is also a very important component in shaping a powerful army. No country will be able to build a large and powerful army without a solid and forward-looking economy. However, having a large

²⁷ John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, published by W.W. Norton & Company in 2001, pp 55

²⁸ Thomas Juneau, *Squandered Opportunity: Neoclassical Realism and Iranian Foreign Policy*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015

²⁹ Thomas Juneau, *Squandered Opportunity: Neoclassical Realism and Iranian Foreign Policy*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015

population does not mean a lot of wealth. For example, at the time of the Cold War, both India and China enjoyed a large population than other countries, but they did not become superpower. In the meantime, having a great wealth without having a large population cannot be possible, so the wealth and population of one country are correlated.

However, one should bear in mind that having a large wealth does not mean building a large and powerful army. Instead, it should be seen how much do states spend on their defense.

Mearsheimer notes: *"Mobilizable wealth" refers to the economic resources a state has at its disposal to build military forces. It is more important than overall wealth because what matters is not simply how wealthy a state might be, but how much of that wealth is available to spend on defense.*"³⁰

1.5.3. Technology and industry

Technology and industry also have a huge impact on building a powerful military. Advent of technology, wartime tools, modern equipment and nuclear technologies had also significant influence on both wealth and population and ultimately on military might. *"A large army can be powerful simply by dint of its size, but equipment is also essential. Equipment is assessed on the basis of its quality, quantity, firepower, mobility and ability to project (the ability to transport troops and equipment away from centers of mobilization, especially strategic and tactical lift), preparedness, (p.39) communication and control, logistics, and infrastructure (bases, housing facilities, and training installations).*"³¹

1.6. Clarity

Clarity in this theory means the signs and information provided by the international system to the countries. *"Clarity has three components: (1) the degree to which threats and opportunities are readily discernable; (2) whether the system provides information on the time horizons of threats and opportunities; and (3) whether optimal policy options stand out or not"*.³² Countries facing such information and signs usually choose one of the following reactions: *(1) revisionism or expressed hostility to harm the state's territorial integrity or core interests; (2) the economic and military capability to inflict harm on the state, which in turn depends on geography and*

³⁰ The Tragedy of Great Power Politics JOHN J. MEARSHEIMER University of Chicago, 2001

³¹ Thomas Juneau, Squandered Opportunity: Neoclassical Realism and Iranian Foreign Policy, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015

³² Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, Oxford University Press 2016

technology; and (3) a sense of imminence (i.e., expectations that it will use its capability to inflict harm in short order).³³

1.6.1. Clear opportunities

Clear opportunity is usually when a country quickly moves on the path of economic, technological and military progress, in a way that is capable of changing the balance of power in the system. *“In general, clear opportunities involve three components: (1) evidence that relative capabilities favor the state in question; (2) evidence that other consequential parties lack the political resolve to resist the state’s moves in the theater in question; and (3) evidence that a favorable balance of capabilities and resolve will not persist indefinitely, making it important to act as soon as possible.”*³⁴

1.6.2. Time horizon

Time horizon is the second mechanism of clarity which is more complicated because of the need for a precise understanding of the enemy's abilities and intentions. It may be confusing for the country's leaders whether it is time for a quick reaction and a war, or tolerance and compromise *“For example, the repeated British attempts to accommodate German challenges to the status quo in 1935– 1936 (allowing German rearmament, negotiating an Anglo- German Naval Agreement in violation of the Versailles Treaty’s demilitarization clauses, and refraining from an aggressive response to the remilitarization of the Rhineland) indicated that, at the beginning of a slow British rearmament program, the British were unwilling to engage Germany militarily. This presented Hitler with a clear extended opportunity to challenge more of the post– World War I order”*³⁵.

1.6.3 Policy option

Policy option is about implementing policies and decisions of countries in response to the signs and information provided by the global system. In general, if threats and opportunities faced by countries are clear and the reaction time is clear, then one can expect a rational political decision

³³Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, Oxford University Press 2016

³⁴ Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, Oxford University Press 2016

³⁵ Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, Oxford University Press 2016

from the leaders. *“The less clarity there is, the greater room there is for particular leaders, parties, and states to pursue unique solutions based on their preferences, parochial interests, or strategic cultures.”*³⁶

1.7. Permissive/Restrictive strategic environment

In general, countries will have a certain strategic atmosphere due to their imminent threats. This strategic atmosphere, depending on the type of threat can be very intense and hard or easy. *“Whereas clarity and uncertainty pertain to the scope of information that the system provides, the strategic environment pertains to the content of that information. The distinction between permissive and restrictive strategic environments relates to the imminence and the magnitude of threats and opportunities that states face.”*³⁷

1.8. The Intervening Variable

*“Intervening variables act as filters or transmission belts between the international distribution of power and the foreign policy outcome, explaining the conversion from the possible—the range of feasible outcomes—to the actual, the foreign policy choice. They are domestic political processes determining how usable power is translated into foreign policy, or how the opportunities and constraints shaped by power are translated into actual choices.”*³⁸

Capabilities and distribution of power are the most influential phenomena but they are not enough to explain behavior”; *power provides the context but not the how, why, and when of choices. Relative power, in other words, is a permissive cause: it explains the opportunities and constraints states face. Domestic factors are then needed as proximate causes; they specify choices within this range of feasible choice.”*³⁹

³⁶ Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, Oxford University Press 2016

³⁷ Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, Oxford University Press 2016

³⁸ Thomas Juneau, Squandered Opportunity: Neoclassical Realism and Iranian Foreign Policy, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015

³⁹ Thomas Juneau, Squandered Opportunity: Neoclassical Realism and Iranian Foreign Policy, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015

Intervening variables into four categories:

1.8.1. Leader Images

Understanding and perception of the state's leaders and political elites about their country, the international environment and security has a huge impact on their political decision-making process. This understanding and perception depends on a set of psychological issues, political space, culture, language, history, and other issues. Jervis notes: "*The broadest justification for looking at how leaders perceive, judge, and choose is that international politics depends on national actions, even if the international results are not the simple sum of how each country behaves*".⁴⁰

Political psychology analyzes the behavior of politicians in finding an answer to their reactions to the constraints and opportunities of the international system. Ripsman notes: "*Psychological models identify a wide range of cognitive constraints on how decision makers process information in crisis situations when information tends to be incomplete, overwhelming, and/or contradictory. These models emphasize cognitive explanations such as operational codes, the fundamental attribution error, lessons from history, the role of personality, group dynamics and group think, and the beliefs and images of leaders.*"⁴¹

In general, it can be said that all the opportunities and constraints of the international system pass through the filter of perception of the elites and political leaders, and their image of threats, risks or opportunities will play an important role in their future political behavior. "*All incoming information about the outside world passes through these cognitive filters, which personalize and bias the leader's perception of the external stimuli.*"⁴²

1.8.2. Strategic Culture

Generally, a set of beliefs and values build the thinking of elites and political leaders that play a significant role in their political decision-making. The researchers divide the category of

⁴⁰ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Princeton University Press 1976

⁴¹ *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics* Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, Oxford University Press 2016

⁴² *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics* Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, Oxford University Press 2016

strategic culture into two parts of organizational bureaucratic culture such as military and its more social meaning in the sense of beliefs, values, and worldview.

*“Scholars such as Jeffrey Legro and Elizabeth Kier, who treat the military as a bureaucratic organization, study the effect of military culture on the formation of national security policy. According to Legro, the military’s organizational culture and the attitudes of military professionals explain why the restriction on the use of chemical weapons was not breached on the battlefield during World War II.”*⁴³

The strategic culture, which includes the norms, beliefs and rules of society, is institutionalized and consolidated, which restricts the freedom of political actors and greatly affects their ideas and thoughts. Robert Keohane notes: *“Ideas can be categorized as world views, principled beliefs, and causal beliefs. They can have impacts on policy by acting as road maps, helping to cope with the absence of unique equilibrium solutions, and becoming embedded in durable institutions. Policy changes can be influenced by ideas both because new ideas emerge and as a result of changes in underlying conditions affecting the impact of existing ideas. Ideas matter, as a result of a system of interacting multiple causes of which they are a part.”*⁴⁴

1.8.3. State-Society Relations

In a society, the more coordination between state institutions and society, the more power the government has in mobilizing national power and more ability to translate it into their foreign policy. If the government, in the mobilization of the people, the public opinion and disputes between the state and the society acts in a way that directs the society towards their own policies, will then have more support from the community in its foreign policy.” *Key questions relate to the degree of harmony between the state and society, the degree to which society defers to state leaders on foreign policy matters in the event of disagreements, distributional competition among societal coalitions to capture the state and its associated spoils, the level of political and social cohesion within the state, and public support for general foreign policy and national security objectives. These factors can affect whether state leaders have the power to extract, mobilize, and harness the nation’s power.”*⁴⁵ In this case, if the state and society are in a regular harmony, then the open-handed government will have to deal with international opportunities and constraints. But it should be kept in mind that most states within parties and coalitions are

⁴³ Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, Oxford University Press 2016

⁴⁴ Ideas and Foreign Policy Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change Edited by Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, 1993 by Cornell University

⁴⁵ Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, Oxford University Press 2016

faced with many challenges and disagreements. Moreover, the public opinion is not always in the direction of government policy.

“If good relations between the FPE⁴⁶ and key societal interests or the public at large are indicative of high levels of societal respect for and trust of the state, then that should serve to reinforce policy making consistently with the structural realist model, since the state will have a relatively free hand to enact policy as it sees fit. In contrast, if harmony implies extensive consultation during the policy-making process and the participation of societal actors in policy formulation, it could result in policy that satisfies domestic interests, rather than exclusively international ones (or even at the expense of international ones).”⁴⁷ Solingen highlights the role of coalitions and interest group and divide them into two categories of inward-oriented and outward-oriented. He notes: “To the extent that a particular socio-economic interest group, economic sector, or coalition of interests captures the state, it may be unable to enact policies that diverge from the preferences of that underlying coalition. This can occur either because the leaders are drawn from that political coalition and therefore view international affairs through the prism of their parochial interests, or because they recognize that they can maintain their power positions only by satisfying their support base’s demands. In this regard, scholars who take a political economy approach to the state assume that states captured by inward-oriented nationalist coalitions will pursue policies of protectionism and military competition, whereas those whose dominant coalition is comprised of outward-oriented internationalists will pursue grand strategies of freer trade and international cooperation.”⁴⁸

Here are Shweller and Lobell’s comments on state-society interaction: *“For Schweller, states characterized by high levels of fragmentation and divisions among elites and societal actors are prone to underbalancing behavior, thereby departing from the systemic imperatives of balance of power theory.”⁴⁹ For Steven Lobell, state-society relations, and particularly societal*

⁴⁶ Foreign policy environment

⁴⁷ Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, Oxford University Press 2016

⁴⁸ Etel Solingen, *Scientists and the State: Domestic Structures and the International Context* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994); Jeffrey A. Frieden, *Debt, Development, and Democracy: Modern Political Economy and Latin America, 1965–1985* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991); Peter Trubowitz, *Defining the National Interest: Conflict and Change in American Foreign Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Benjamin O. Fordham, *Building the Cold War Consensus: The Political Economy of U.S. National Security Policy, 1949–51* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); Steven E. Lobell, *The Challenge of Hegemony: Grand Strategy, Trade, and Domestic Politics*

⁴⁹ Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, Oxford University Press 2016

competition between broad inward and outward oriented coalitions (e.g., economic nationalist and free trade blocs) will affect a declining hegemon's grand strategic policies".⁵⁰

1.8.4. Domestic Institutions

The form and type of internal institutions, given their function and mechanism, their democratic and non-democratic character, the form and type of government, the distribution of the power between institutions, the rules and regulations of the ruling of the country have a great influence on the political decision-making process of the elites and political leaders.

"Formal institutions, organizational routines and processes, and bureaucratic oversight, often established by constitutional provisions with clearly specified rules and regulations set the broad parameters within which domestic competition over policy occurs. Consequently, they determine who can contribute to policy formation, at what stage of the policy process, and who can act as veto players, using their power to block policy initiatives in order to reshape governmental policies. In this regard, the differing institutional structures of states can have an important impact on their ability to respond to systemic pressures."⁵¹

In addition, the form of government, including the presidency or the parliamentary, determines the legislative, implementing mechanism and the limits of the independence of the institutions. *"Analysis of presidentialism and parliamentarism points out that the most important difference between these regimes is the interaction between legislative and executive in parliamentary systems and their independence in presidential ones. There are differences between presidential and parliamentary systems in terms of who controls the agenda governments in parliamentary systems, parliaments in presidential ones."⁵²*

Institutions, according to their form and structure, facilitate or impede the decision-making process for their leaders. According to Ripsman, *"division of powers, checks and balances, and public support serve to constrain democratic leaders and make it difficult for them to go to war. Nonetheless, democracies vary in the degree to which their institutions provide checks and balances on their FPEs; therefore, it is useful to examine their institutional difference."⁵³*

⁵⁰ Steven E. Lobell, "Second Image Reversed Politics: Britain's Choice of Freer Trade or Imperial Preferences, 1903–1906, 1917–1923, 1930–1932," *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 43, no. 4 (1999), pp. 671–694; and idem., *The Challenge of Hegemony: Grand Strategy, Trade, and Domestic Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), pp. 19–41

⁵¹ *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics* Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, Oxford University Press 2016

⁵² George Tsebelis, *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002)

⁵³ *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics* Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, Oxford University Press 2016

Therefore, the formation and functioning of parties, organizations, legislative and executive bodies, power distribution, legislation and law enforcement will have a significant impact on the mobilization of the country's internal forces. *“Important institutional variables affecting the foreign policy of democracies include the degree to which power is concentrated in the executive’s hands, executive- legislative relations, party systems and whether it is a two- party or multiparty system, voting rules and whether the electoral system is based on plurality voting or proportional representation, and the quality of the government and its administrative competence. These variables will affect whether state leaders can harness the nation’s power, as discussed above, and whether democratic states can adjust and adapt readily to external shocks or shifts in the international distribution of power.”*⁵⁴

1.9. The Dependent variable:

Neoclassical realism, according to theorists, is a theory of foreign policy, not international policy. But if one divide this theory into a short, short to medium and long term, then there is more to be said about this theory’s contribution in understanding the international system.

1.9.1. Short-term

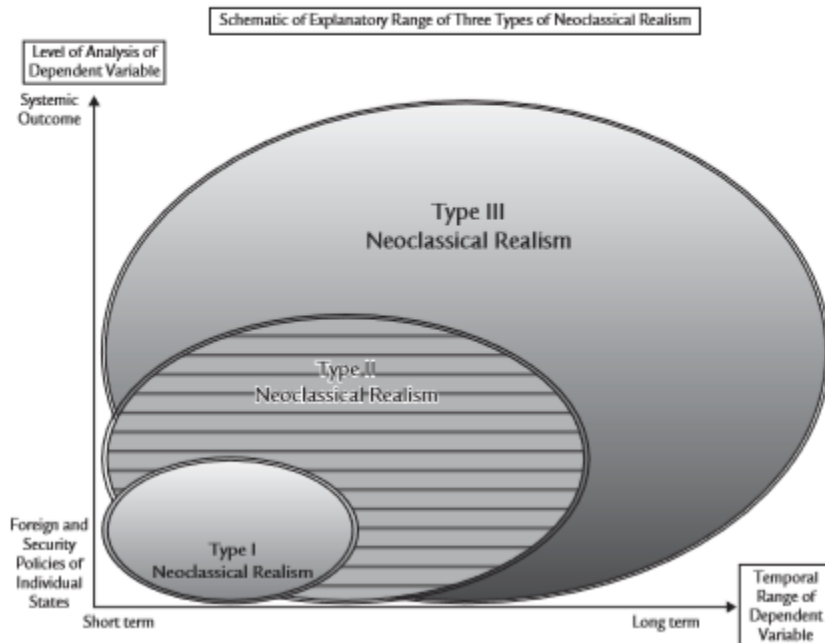
In the short term, this theory explains the policies and decisions of governments in relation to the opportunities and constraints of the international arena; therefore, in this period, it becomes more of a theory of foreign policy than the theory of international politics. However, in the short to medium term, this theory explains the grand strategies of governments toward international space and the distributions of power. In the long term, this theory paves the way for a better understanding of the impact and interplay between the state's internal politics, their external strategy and its combination with the role of international structures.

“In the shorter term, neoclassical realism can help explain the short- term policy choices that states make to respond to the particular challenges and opportunities that the international system and other states present to them. Over the short- to- medium term, neoclassical realist theories can shed light on the processes of policy planning and grand strategic adjustment with which states attempt to navigate not only immediate crises but also expected shifts in power and future threats and opportunities. This is the scope of Type I and Type II neoclassical realism,

⁵⁴ Ripsman, *Peacemaking by Democracies*. See also Peter Gourevitch, “Domestic Politics and International Relations,” in *Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A. Simmons (London: Sage, 2002), pp. 309– 328, at p. 312.

including our own earlier efforts. But it would be a mistake to say that neoclassical realism can explain only individual states' foreign policies and grand strategic adjustment."⁵⁵

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Hence, dependent variables are different depending on the time intervals and considering these periods, the systemic changes of the international structure can also be explained. In the long run, the internal policies of governments are translated into their foreign policies, and ultimately, the interaction of these policies with the international outcomes and relative power will influence and/or reshape the structure of international system.

When we say that the short period, that is, within a few days, a few weeks or several months, governments are more likely to seek political navigating , attempting to consolidate their position in the international system with correct political orientation. But when it comes to the short to medium term, it means months and years, not decades. In this period of time, governments

⁵⁵ Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, Oxford University Press 2016

⁵⁶ Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, Oxford University Press 2016

sought to build their infrastructure with a view to future grand strategy and considering the balance of power in the international system. "Grand strategy refers to "the organizing principle or conceptual blueprint that animates all of a state's relations with the outside world... It is a future-oriented enterprise involving considerations of external threats and opportunities, as well as the specific material, political, and ideological objectives of the state."⁵⁷

1.9.2. Long-term

In the long run, governments are seeking to increase their power and gain a greater share of power in the international system. They are trying to make the most of their military power by researching technology. Meanwhile, the role of economic growth of countries and their industrial progress is highlighted

*"The longer time frame means they can not only draw upon existing resources available to the state but also make plans to expand upon them over time by promoting economic growth, providing more extensive training to the armed forces, or engaging in research and development of new weapons systems. In addition, they have time to enter into more extensive arrangements with foreign powers, such as full-scale alliances with joint planning and efforts to promote interoperability of the different armed forces."*⁵⁸

The set of grand strategies of superpowers and their effects and interactions to each other will ultimately and in the long term lead to a changes in the balance of power. "Extending the time frame further to the medium- to- longer term, defined in termed of years and decades, allows the strategic choices of the different great powers to interact and to have an impact on international systemic outcomes. By "systemic outcomes" we mean observable political phenomena resulting from the coaction and interactions of the strategies pursued by two or more actors in the international arena. Thus, whether there will be great power war or peace will depend not merely upon the distribution of power in the international system, but also upon the strategic choices that several states pursue."⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Steven E. Lobell, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Norrin M. Ripsman, "Introduction: Grand Strategy between the World Wars," in *The Challenge of Grand Strategy: The Great Powers and the Broken Balance between the World Wars*, ed. Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Steven E. Lobell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 1– 36, at p. 15. See also John Lewis Gaddis, "What is Grand Strategy?" in *Conference on American Grand Strategy after War* (Durham, NC: Triangle Institute for Security Studies and Duke University Program in American Grand Strategy, Duke University, 2009), pp. 1– 17, <http://tiss-nc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/KEYNOTE.Gaddis50thAniv2009.pdf>, accessed December 5, 2015.

⁵⁸ *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics* Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, Oxford University Press 2016

⁵⁹ *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics* Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, Oxford University Press 2016

However, one should keep in mind that the relationship between government strategies and the changes in the structure of the international system is not completely direct and depends on a number of factors. *“Structural change has its roots in the individual investment decisions of the great powers, their decisions to pursue a grand strategy of restraint or one of overextension, and the particular domestic constraints and opportunities of particular great powers.”*⁶⁰

Neoclassical realists, however, have done little to conceptualize influence. Similarly, the concepts of consequences and national interest are widely used, but have not been systematically conceptualized. There is, in sum, scope for solidifying neoclassical realism’s framework for the dependent variable, which will be done in the next chapter. *Neoclassical realists agree with structural realists that states construct their foreign security policies primarily with an eye to the threats and opportunities that arise in the international system, which shape each state’s range of policy options. Since their very survival is at stake if they fail to secure themselves properly from without in an anarchic international system, where the slightest misstep could lead to defeat in war, the incentives are extremely high for states to focus on external stimuli and craft foreign policies to respond to them appropriately.* Nonetheless, they reject the implication that states necessarily respond as fluidly and mechanically to changing international circumstances as structural realist balance-of-power theories imply⁶¹ particular, they note four important limitations to the structural realist model: the ability of leaders to perceive systemic stimuli correctly, the lack of clarity in the international system, the problem of rationality, and the difficulty of mobilizing domestic resources.

1.10. Weakness of this theory:

Although neoclassical realism had a significant contribution to realism theory, it has been criticized for two main reasons. *First, there have been few efforts to develop its internal logic, as the literature is dominated by case studies. Second, despite its professed emphasis on richness, neoclassical realism has focused on sweeping historical cases, often covering decades, leading it to neglect important day-to-day aspects of state behavior.* ⁶²Another critique to this theory is its inattention to non-great powers and other powers around the globe. *“Neoclassical realism has focused on broad historical cases studying the behavior of Western and great powers. It has not*

⁶⁰ Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, Oxford University Press 2016

⁶¹ Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, Oxford University Press 2016

⁶² Thomas Juneau, Squandered Opportunity: Neoclassical Realism and Iranian Foreign Policy, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015

*sought to explain what “state X did last Tuesday,” has not focused on non-Western, non–great powers, and has mostly emphasized broad aspects of foreign policy, especially war.”*⁶³

Brian Rathbun argues that neoclassical realism is a theory of mistakes. He notes: *”focus on mistakes and maladaptive behavior, seen in such neoclassical realist concepts as over- or under-balancing, is necessary to avoid falling into the trap of merely using domestic politics and ideas to make neorealism more determinate and explain residual variance in foreign policy choice unaccounted for by structure.”*

He argues: *“how structural realism must use domestic politics and ideas to be coherent but find that it already meets these demands. The exercise, however, is still needed because the true logic of neoclassical realism, how it serves neorealism, and what is necessary for it to do to make itself distinctive has not been systematically laid out. Even some of the self-understandings of neoclassical realists about what unites them are faulty.”*⁶⁴

Expected result of research and contribution

Iran and Saudi Arabia’s rivalries over oil issues, hajj and interference in each other’s affairs, have entered a new field. This field has been transformed into a battlefield between the two neighboring countries since the invasion of Iraq by US troops. Meanwhile, Iran tried to support the Shiite groups as much as possible, and Saudi Arabia tried to block the way for more Iranian influence in the region, by supporting Sunni groups. After the uprising in the Arab countries, in the famous Arab Spring, which spread across the Middle East in 2010, the battleground between Iran and Saudi Arabia entered a different shape, where both countries went into the proxy wars in Syria and Yemen to confront each other. These rivalries have been a waste of the abundant economic resources of the two countries and destroyed the countries involved in the war since late 2010. The consequences of these competitions can be described as follows:

⁶³ Thomas Juneau, *Squandered Opportunity: Neoclassical Realism and Iranian Foreign Policy*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015

⁶⁴ Brian Rathbun, *A Rose by Any Other Name: Neoclassical Realism as the Logical and Necessary Extension of Structural Realism*, 14 Jun 2008.

“Distort the peace of the region, Damage the Integrity of the Region, Encouraged USA involvement, Sectarianism, Damage the Economy of the Region and complicating Palestine Israel Conflict⁶⁵”

Taking into account the different dimensions of domestic politics and foreign barriers, the road to better understanding of the problems opens up. As we have already mentioned, the barriers to bilateral relations are based on the anarchical system and the perception of the leaders and people of the two countries from each other. Therefore, the change at each level may result in a recovery or worsening of relationships. The elite form an important part of the mindset of leaders in decision-making so they are also responsible for rethinking relationships between two countries.

Given the special position of the Middle East in today’s world, studying the strategic indices of bringing relative peace and security in this region is of much importance. The rivalry and hostility between these two neighboring countries have made many negative influences on the regional and transregional arena. Changing of the policy from rivalry to cooperation would help both countries, as well as gulf countries. In addition, finding a systematic solution for the problem could prevent the wars in the region, which caused numerous humanitarian disasters.

⁶⁵ From Rivalry to Nowhere: A Story of Iran-Saudi Ties, Muhammad Rizwan, Muhammad Arshid, Muhammad Waqar, Saira Iram, IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) Volume 19, Issue 9, Ver. IV (Sep. 2014), PP 91-101

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John Lewis Gaddis, "What is Grand Strategy?" in Conference on American Grand Strategy after War (Durham, NC: Triangle Institute for Security Studies and Duke University Program in American Grand Strategy, Duke University, 2009), pp. 1– 17, <http://tiss-nc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/KEYNOTE.Gaddis50thAniv2009.pdf>, accessed December 5, 2015.

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