

**Mendel University in Brno**

**Faculty of Regional Development and International Studies**

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**Analysis of Regional Security in the Persian Gulf and  
the Geopolitical Importance of the Strait of Hormuz**

Bachelor Thesis

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## **Abstract**

This Bachelor Thesis deals with a regional security in the Persian Gulf. The main objective is to analyse the transformation process of the regional security since British withdrawal in 1971 up to date 2016. This Thesis uses regional security complex method developed by Buzan and Wæver. The theory is applied to determine the primary framework and to provide a deeper insight in to the Persian Gulf region. Also, the Thesis incorporates the geopolitical importance of the Strait of Hormuz to describe its relation towards the Persian Gulf. The results show that the explanation of the theory relates to security changes in the Persian Gulf. The findings further reveal significant events that explain the current situation in the region.

**Keywords:** the Persian Gulf, Regional Security Complex Theory, the Strait of Hormuz, Balance of Power, Geopolitics, Sectarian conflict

## **Abstrakt**

Tato Bakalářská Práce pojednává o regionální bezpečnosti v Perském zálivu. Hlavním cílem je analyzovat procesní změny regionální bezpečnosti od Britského odchodu v roce 1971 až po současnost 2016. Tato práce aplikuje metodu regionálních bezpečnostních komplexů, kterou zpracovali teoretici Buzan a Wæver. Tato teorie je použita, aby určila základní rámec a poskytla hlubší náhled na region Perského zálivu. Práce také zahrnuje geopolitický význam Hormuzské úžiny, aby popsala její vztah k Perskému zálivu. Výsledky ukazují, že vysvětlení teorie se vztahuje na bezpečnostní změny v Perském zálivu. Výzkum dále odhaluje důležité události, které vysvětlují současnou situaci v regionu.

**Klíčová slova:** Perský záliv, Regionální bezpečnostní komplex teorie, Hormuzská úžina, Rovnováha moci, Geopolitika, Sektářský konflikt

## **Obsah**

|   |    |
|---|----|
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....  | 8  |
| INTRODUCTION .....  | 9  |
| AIM AND METHODOLOGY .....   | 11 |
| 1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....  | 12 |
| 1.1 Geopolitics .....   | 12 |
| 1.2 International security.....   | 13 |
| 1.3 Classical realism, security dilemma.....  | 13 |
| 1.4 Balance of Power .....  | 14 |
| 1.5 International security structure after the Cold War.....                                  | 15 |
| 1.5.1 Neorealism .....  | 15 |
| 1.5.2 Globalisation.....  | 16 |
| 1.5.3 Regionalism .....   | 16 |
| 1.6 Regional security complex theory.....   | 17 |
| 1.7 Marine legislation.....   | 20 |
| 1.7.1 Defining straits.....   | 20 |
| 1.7.2 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).....                           | 21 |
| 1.7.3 Transit Passage in the approaches of the Strait.....                                    | 22 |
| 2 THE PERSIAN GULF REGION .....   | 23 |
| 2.1 Importance of the Persian Gulf .....  | 23 |
| 2.2 Historical development of the Persian Gulf.....   | 24 |
| 2.3 Regional society .....  | 24 |
| 3 REGIONAL SECURITY PROCESSES SINCE 1971 UP TO DATE 2016 .....                                | 26 |
| 3.1 Origins of the Persian Gulf as a regional sub-complex and British withdrawal in 1971..... | 26 |
| 3.2 Oil Boom in the 1970s .....   | 28 |
| 3.3 Regional involvement in Kurdish and Omani uprising.....                                   | 29 |
| 3.4 Iran Revolution 1979 and Iran- Iraq War 1980 - 1988 .....                                 | 30 |
| 3.5 The Gulf War, 1990 – 1991 .....   | 32 |
| 3.6 Iraq War 2003 .....   | 34 |
| 3.7 Rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran .....   | 37 |
| 3.7.1 Origins of the competition .....  | 38 |
| 4 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ .....  | 40 |
| 4.1 Iran and the Strait of Hormuz.....  | 41 |

|     |   |    |
|-----|---|----|
| 4.2 | Iran capability.....                    | 41 |
| 4.3 | Possibility of closing the Strait ..... | 42 |
|     | DISCUSSION .....                        | 43 |
|     | CONCLUSION.....                         | 49 |
|     | RECOMMENDATION .....                    | 50 |
|     | REFERENCES .....                        | 51 |
|     | Book sources .....                      | 51 |
|     | Online Journal Article .....            | 55 |
|     | Web Page .....                          | 58 |
|     | LIST OF FIGURES .....                   | 59 |

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| AQI    | Al-Qaeda in Iraq                                |
| CPA    | Coalition Provisional Authority                 |
| EEZ    | Exclusive Economic Zone                         |
| GCC    | Gulf Cooperation Council                        |
| Gulf   | Persian Gulf                                    |
| IRGC   | Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps               |
| IRIN   | Islamic Republic of Iran Navy                   |
| ISI    | Islamic State in Iraq                           |
| ISIS   | Islamic State in Iraq and Syria                 |
| KDP    | Kurdish Democratic Party                        |
| LOS    | Law of the Sea                                  |
| NATO   | North Atlantic Treaty Organization              |
| OPEC   | Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries   |
| PFLO   | Popular Front for Liberation of Oman            |
| RSCT   | Regional Security Complex Theory                |
| UAE    | United Arab Emirates                            |
| UN     | United Nations                                  |
| US     | United States                                   |
| UNCLOS | United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea |
| WMD    | Weapons of Mass Destruction                     |



## INTRODUCTION

Since an early civilization the Persian Gulf region, the sub-complex of the Middle East has been one of the most pivotal venue of settlement, cultural exchange, religion, diverse identity and marine commerce. The Persian Gulf epitomizes the vicious circle that reflects the international politics and world economy. The abundance of oil and natural gas has geopolitically aroused the concern of external powers mainly the United States. The Strait of Hormuz that connects the Persian Gulf, is the strategic oil chokepoint and accounts for almost twenty percent of world traded petroleum (US Energy Information Administration, 2016).

Nowadays, the region has experienced serious turmoil and instability. The Persian Gulf has constituted a security threat not only inside the region but also beyond its boundaries. Primarily the ongoing sectarian conflict, bloodshed and severe violation have provoked the question of regional security. Also, the regional security situation of the Persian Gulf has influenced and remained to dictate the global security.

Therefore, the priority of this Thesis will be to discuss regional security in the Persian Gulf according to Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver 'theory of regional security complex. The Thesis research question will be to examine regional security changes and prospects of the Persian Gulf. The Thesis will analyse regional transformation since British withdrawal in 1971 up to date 2016.

The Thesis structure defines the theoretical framework and the analytical part followed by discussion. Firstly, this Thesis provides theoretical research of the key concepts defining geopolitics, international security, classical realism, security dilemma and balance of power. The next chapter is devoted to international security structure after the Cold War with the main focus on regionalism, especially the regional security complex theory. Last part of the theoretical research establishes a definition of marine legislation including the interpretation of the Straits and UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The analytical part demarcates the region of the Persian Gulf with its historical development. Furthermore, the Thesis will present core analysis of historical and contemporary events that shape the security constellation of the region including origins of the Persian Gulf region, British withdrawal in 1971, Oil boom in 1970, regional involvement in Kurdish and Omani uprising, Iran Revolution and Iran-Iraq War, Gulf War and Iraq War. In addition, the Thesis will describe rivalry the between Saudi

Arabia and Iran with the relation to prospects in the region. The last chapter of the analytical part will depict the importance of the Strait of Hormuz and link it with a hypothesis.

The final section of the Thesis will determine the results and discuss the major regional security changes, conclude and highlight recommendation for future research.

# AIM AND METHODOLOGY

## **Thesis statement**

Firstly, the theoretical approach will underline key concepts in order to frame the structure of this Thesis. Secondly, the analytical part will focus on a development of regional security and its challenges. Component of analysis is also the geopolitical importance of the Strait of Hormuz. Lastly, the Thesis discusses some possible viewpoints and makes some future recommendations.

## **Thesis aim**

The Thesis objective is to examine regional security changes in the Persian Gulf using regional security complex theory introduced by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver. In particular to analyse dynamic of regional actor' relations, causes of the balance of powers since British withdrawal up to date 2016 and outline future prospects. The Thesis also includes the geopolitical importance of the Strait of Hormuz and seeks to determine its connection to the region.

## **Methodology**

This Thesis applies a qualitative research approach gathering a collection of different literature research. Primarily, the Thesis uses academic books and scientific articles. Secondary sources include journals, the official website of organizations, reports and legal legislations, Scientific methods based on an operational research include both historical and comparative studies. Theory of regional security complex developed by Buzan and Wæver will formulate the core for comparative analysis.

## **Research question**

- *What are the regional security changes and future prospects of the Persian Gulf?*

Operational questions

- *To what extent is the Strait of Hormuz important to the Persian Gulf region?*

## **Hypothesis**

Iran's claim to control the Strait of Hormuz contributes its dominance in the Persian Gulf

# 1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## 1.1 Geopolitics

Current political issues have concerned different studies of the international relations. However, it is important to emphasize and bring back a study field of geopolitics which has been presently playing a significant task. With the end of the Soviet bloc, the interest in geopolitics has risen followed by the emergence of other actors and regions that have become a strategic point on the map (Grygiel, 2006).

Geopolitics begins at the early of the nineteenth century when the scholars searched to describe changes in the world (Dodds & Atkinson, 2000). Major scholars who contributed to and developed the study were American marine geo-strategist Alfred Mahan with a focus on naval ...”power”..., geographers Friedrich Ratzel from Germany and Halford Mackinder from United Kingdom who highlight an importance of ...”land power”... and finally Rudolf Kjellen - Swedish political scientist with an interest in group of regions who also introduced the concept of geopolitics (Kearns, 2009 p. 4). However, academics see geopolitics from different angles, ...”land or sea power”... their work deal with ...”territorial”... disputes including weakness and growth of realm by using the tools of armed conflict, commerce and security (ibid. p.5). Among three significant circumstances that helped to develop geopolitics are the policy of protectionism, European imperialism and the expansion of America’s commerce. Furthermore, discovery and settlement of colonies in Africa and others parts of the world. In addition, an introduction to geography as a scientific field enabled a deeper investigation and understanding of its study (Dodds, 2007).

Geopolitics presents different forms of definitions which have been developing gradually (Cohen, 2014) and combines the pattern of global physical geography with human geography(Grygiel, 2006). Rudolf Kjellén established the term in 1899 and characterized geopolitics as ...”theory of the state with a geographical organism or phenomenon in space”...(Cohen, 2014, p. 24).

Grygiel (2006) describes geopolitics as the study of human and natural resources which relate to strategic realms. Geopolitics is characterized by technology and geography that change the ...”political and economic”... conditions of certain area (Grygiel, 2006 p.22). Application of new technology and planning of the projects innovate the resources of a location. Hence, geopolitics is not stable but depends on a geographical and an economic allocation of resource.(ibid).

## **1.2 International security**

The end of Second World War and its aftermath brought the interest of states to defend themselves against both internal and external factors. To delineate security there is no universal definition which could be preferred. However, it focuses mainly on military force, defence (Smith & Brooks, 2013) and state's ability to possess sufficient power to preserve itself (Smith, Baylis, & Owens, 2014). Scholars have increasingly worked on to widen the term of security which is constantly evolving (Buzan & Hansen, 2009). This implies different insights; in general terms security means a condition of being protected from any danger (Roach, Griffiths, & O'Callaghan, 2014). Theorist such as Barry Buzan examines both national and international security, whether these two can be in harmony and whether states can achieve cooperation on the global level.

Barry Buzan outlines both aspects of security; as ... "freedom from threat" ... and security within an international system where state and society are capable of maintaining... "their independent identity and their functional integrity" ... (Smith et al., 2014, p. 231)

Others 'statement touches upon the value of regional integration, which narrates modern view. For example present problems with borders demarcation, minorities and ideology have inflicted a growing vulnerability of regions mentioned in (Wæver et al. 1993), (Smith et al., 2014). Regional security pictures the core subject for this thesis.

## **1.3 Classical realism, security dilemma**

With regards to security, one of the most prominent and still influential schools of international security studies is a traditional school of realism.

However, characteristics of realism can be seen early in the thoughts of Hobbes, Machiavelli and Max Weber, the emergence of traditional realism is dated lately at the end of 1930 and beginning of 1940 (Griffiths et al., 2014).

As pioneers of classical realism are regarded E. H. Carr, Reinhold Niebuhr and Nicholas Spykman (Hough, Malik, Moran, & Pilbeam, 2015), critics of idealism who claim that international politics should be interpreted as it truly is rather as it should be. In addition, they also underlined the value of power in international relations (Vasquez, 1998). With the beginning of Cold War Hans Morgenthau published his book "Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power" that became an influential literature on realism at that time (Hough et al., 2015). Morgenthau perceives international politics as struggle for greater power that is part of human nature (Williams, 2012).

During the time of Cold of War, the 1970s (Hough et al., 2015), school of neorealism emerged with key work of K. Waltz, his Theory of International Politics disagree with the Morgenthau's view that wars happen because of human nature and proposes the anarchy as a structural factor of international politics (Diez, Bode, & Da Costa, 2011).

Realism postulates the survival of state in anarchic the international system. Anarchy describes a condition where no central authority can govern state action. States as agents have to defend themselves against the danger that origins mostly from international conflict, to achieve security and power they need to strengthen their military abilities (Hough et al., 2015).

The situation of an anarchical international system where states compete in order to protect themselves is referred as security dilemma (Roach et al., 2014). As states cannot be sure about others actors' behaviour they seek to increase their force. This evokes insecurity among others and consequently, promotes threat and prompts military actions. As a result there is a greater tendency to instability (Diez et al., 2011)

Security dilemma connotes two challenging positions for countries whether to stay in non-violent terms which may cause weakening of their state or whether to intensify their power which can be viewed as a provocative conduct, and support of a military contestation. This action can bring the outcome of armed combat as an example some theorist claimed that security dilemma was a drive for the First World War (Roach et al., 2014)

Furthermore, states cannot be sure if others use offensive or defensive strategy. Therefore, security dilemma can be considered as a duplex anarchy where state do not know how to explain others behaviour and how to react to an action of the states (Diez et al., 2011).

Present situation constitutes a complicated relationship chiefly between states that obtain and could use the nuclear weapon.

## **1.4 Balance of Power**

Apart from security dilemma, related theory of balance of power is one of the most discussed in discipline of the international relations as it formulates the core structure for political studies (Sheehan, 1996).

The anarchic international system of competing states prevails until one state gains the greater power, in other words, becomes dominant. Hence, it is necessary to

avert a hegemonic power (Viotti & Kauppi, 2013). As a reason Waltz calls for the theory of the balance of powers. The essence is that major powers pursue adequate military abilities to limit those who have greater influence (ibid).

Comprehension of the balance of power may differ from one theorist to another. Some scholars view the balance of power as a theory of international relations whereas others deny its interpretation. Some also claim that balance of power is needed to prevent war, others state that it leads to the outbreak of war and also those who do not support any of the aforementioned statements (Paul, Wirtz, & Fortmann, 2004). General explanation of balance of power is realist perception of an anarchic system where territorial states behave rationally and try to maximize their power or security against each other. States ultimate aim is to prevent any other state to seize hegemonic power and thus preserve multipolar system (Little, 2007).

Theorist also underlines different methods which can states follow in order to prevent hegemonic power; ...”internal and external balancing”...(Paul et al., 2004, p.35). In external balancing states form a partnership against an adversary, which may in some cases results in the intervention or even conflict. Internal balancing focuses on formation of military force. However, the coalition can be found in both internal and external balancing (ibid).

## **1.5 International security structure after the Cold War**

The breakdown of the Cold War along with the change of bipolar structure is undoubtedly an essential milestone in the international security system (Buzan & Hansen, 2009). Buzan, & Wæver, (2003) apply three major theories; neorealism, globalism and regionalism to describe ...”post- Cold War international security structure”.... (ibid).

### **1.5.1 Neorealism**

Neorealism emphasizes the importance of polarity and power distribution within the international structure. Also, it explains the difference of international arrangement; bipolarity, unipolarity, multi-polarity or combination of them. Its aim is to determine structural ...”change”... to indicate the security issue (ibid, p. 6).

### **1.5.2 Globalisation**

Globalist theory contrasts the approach of both realism and neorealism. Its origins are associated with social, cultural, economic and political science (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Globalisation embraces the growing interconnection of global structure, power of the international business, politics and global society which happen across the continents, regions and states (ibid.). One of the drivers of the globalisation is the concept of ...”deterritorialization”... condition when territory is losing its importance, economics, politics and society is not connected to territorial boundary any more but rather spread across the globe. In spite of the fact that state’s borders remain important, their power and advantage have become diminished and difficult to govern. The results are global political actions that concern and influence people’s living in distant areas (S. Smith et al., 2014).

Buzan & Wæver (2003) ask a question, how the world reacts towards globalisation rather than focus on its scientific study. Their principal interest is the ...”securitization”... They ask the question whether and how the agents of international structure can reduce the risk of globalization or its elements (ibid):

### **1.5.3 Regionalism**

Finally, Buzan & Wæver (2003) see regional level as the main determinant in the post-Cold War security order, also at the time of Cold War and until today irrespective the role of...”global powers”. Regions are defined by territoriality which is one of the outstanding elements in the sphere of security. Current global problems have diverse consequences on the regions thus, to handle the issue it is necessary to know the regional scope.

Aforementioned views look at the security structure after Cold War and also try to find out what are the potential threats that need to be discussed. All three approaches reflect the Thesis analysis.



## 1.6 Regional security complex theory

Regional security complex theory (RSCT) was firstly introduced by Barry Buzan and later developed by Ole Waever both belonging to Copenhagen school of security studies. B. Buzan and O. Waever describe RSCT as a new approach for defining an international security structure and connect it with a period of Cold War and also before in the international system. Theory of RSC is a tool that explains how regional security is gathered within regions. Also, it enables easier understanding of unipolarity and centre-periphery. The theory is associated with realist and liberalist-oriented approach but also emphasizes origins of constructivism, as it depends on actor's role and not only on distributions of power. A. Wendt indicates that his social theory could be associated with regional security complexes (Buzan & Wæver, 2003).

Buzan & Wæver (2003) argue that security regions are located within larger system where states rise tension with their neighbours and cooperate with other regional agents where borders between regions are geographically defined, which are areas with less interplay are or they are surrounded by insular.

Term insular describes a state which does not fit into larger security complexes and has difficulty to adjoin neighbouring states. Concept of insular cannot be put together with buffer state which is defined as being inside RSC than aside.

RSC theory features opposed statements to Huntington's idea of Clash of Civilisations. Huntington sees cultural relationship (civilisations) whereas RSC are dominated by the real structure of..." security practices"... In addition, Barry Buzan disagrees with Huntington's global view and argues for a regional level as significant in present time.

Regional level characterizes conditions where states are bound to each other and when it comes to security it is difficult to divide them. Some authors could argue that regions are determined by cultural, economic or historical aspects in order to understand security questions of regions. Nevertheless, B. Buzan outlines that this explanation lacks a specific concept of security. Buzan & Wæver (2003) argue that regions are separate from global level accordingly region has to be seen itself and with relation to others. They define regional security complexes as collectives of states or units where security matters cannot exist without each other thus they have to be considered and analysed mutually (ibid).

Definition of RSC: ...”a set of units whose major processes of securitisation, desecuritisation, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another..” (ibid., p. 44)

RSC are characterized by “...amity and enmity”... relationship determined by geographical security interconnection. Creation of RCS is assumed from the ...”anarchic system and its balance of power”... or closeness of geography. Neighbouring states are involved more in security interplay compared to those states that are a long distance from each other. Thus, the closer the regions are, the higher danger is likely to be. Accordingly, the security is geographically grouped in so called ...“regional clusters”... (ibid., p. 45).

The basic condition for RSC includes ...”rivalry, the balance of power and alliance among the main powers”... inside the region, also enter of external power.

The influence of global power in regional dynamics of RSCs is referred as system of ...”penetration”...(ibid., p. 46 - 47). As a result, regional level is relevant for global powers it allows them to penetrate, influence and compete inside the international system. Those practices permit great powers to gain possible control inside the region. Nevertheless, regions like South Asia and the Middle East are examples where conflict roots from inside thus external powers cannot deeply engage in the situation despite their effort. In the case of an unipolar system, one power involved in the region can make opposed states to agree on appeasement such as Middle East case.

Another feature that B. Buzan and O. Waever take into account is whether RSC are independent of each other, they split the world in a ...”map”...that is framed by exclusive RSCs, insular states and global actors. RSCs are formulated by two factors; ...”power relations and patterns of amity and enmity”...Power relations are based on the regional balance of power including substructures of the unipolar, bi-polar or multipolar system, and patterns of amity and enmity feature the condition when one is afraid of the powerful one.

Regional security complexes can also be referred as ...”subcomplexes”...which emphasize basically the same meaning although subcomplex is attached to larger RSC. As an typical model is the Middle East which includes diverse subcomplexes: the Levant (Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria) and the Gulf (Iran, Iraq, GCC), both have effect on each other, thus cannot be disconnected.

Furthermore, RSC incorporates three feasible stages of development; firstly the preservation of status quo where the structure does not change, secondly stage of ...”internal transformation”...situation when there is a change in fundamental structure on the basis of external borderline. As such changes can be with towards anarchic structure, polarity or based on the kind and hostile relation. Finally development of ...”external transformation”... where external borderline either enlarges on contrary curtail. As a result, the fundamental structure changes its form. Additionally, it can also happen that two RSC will become separate from each other.

The use and purpose of RSCT is to determine the regional condition, the connection among units their relations between regions and to find out a regional coordination between the actions of global actors.

## **1.7 Marine legislation**

Expansion of trade and acceleration of sea routes between ports has led to an awareness of international straits regime. Also, growth of marine trade provided the straits to become ...”strategic, political”... and economic place in the world map (Rothwell, Elferink, Scott, & Stephens, 2015, p. 115). International Straits are characterized by limited maritime spaces with highly-frequent traffic which contributes to difficulties (Kraska, 2010).

Rights of ocean transportation are subject to the Geneva Convention on the Law of the Sea 1958 followed by United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1982 (LOSC) (Rothwell et al., 2015). The essential agreement was Corfu Channel case in 1949, in which International Court of Justice approved that during peacetime state’s warships are allowed to pass the international strait for navigation ...”between two parts of high seas provided that passage is innocent”...(Caron & Oral, 2014). Convention 1958 only demonstrated the rights in forth Corfu Channel and formed in a period of three nm territorial sea. Evolving 1982 Convention brought the expansion of territorial seas from three to twelve nm. Consequently, international passages that were accessible through high sea were assigned to international straits. After acceptance of 12 nm territorial sea other straits including the Strait of Hormuz became new straits subjected to the law (Kraska, 2010).

### **1.7.1 Defining straits**

Straits that allow the international navigation are composed of overlapping territorial seas with maximum width of 3 to 12 nautical miles that links ...“one area of the high seas or exclusive economic zone (EEZ) to another area of the high seas or EEZ”... (Kraska & Pedrozo, 2013, p. 219). According to UNCLOS straits are recognized as international and depend on characteristics of specific transport passes through, frequency of shipping and types of ships.

Convention distinguishes two legal regimes according to features of international straits used for navigation, rights of transit passage and right of innocent passage (ibid.).

Rights of transit passage refers to straits used for international navigation that links ...”one part of the of the high seas or EEZ to another part of the high seas or EEZ”...these are important straits, Gibraltar, Bab el Mandeb, Hormuz, Malacca and Singapore, Sunda, Lombok and the Windward Passage (ibid, p. 222). Transit passage

regime implies the concept of ...”normal mode”...a condition where submarines, aircraft and vessels have legal rights to passage (ibid., p. 222). Regime of transit passage applies to the whole straits and to its approaches which are ...”measured”... from coastline to coastline (Kraska, 2010, p. 125).

Right of non-suspendable innocent passage includes the straits which ...”connect a part of the high seas or EEZ with the territorial sea of a coastal State”...(Kraska & Pedrozo, 2013, p. 223). These waters are known as dead-end straits meaning that passage does not go to ...”open sea”... instead closes at one end (ibid., p. 223). The innocent passage is also used for the straits ...” that connect one part of the high seas or EEZ and another part of the high seas or EEZ”... and are formed by an island of a state that borders the strait and its mainland, in this case the right of overflight does not exist (ibid., p. 223).

Third UN discussion formulated regime of the transit of passage along with acknowledgement of waters as part of territorial seas and international strait (Kraska, 2010).

### **1.7.2 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**

UN Convention on the Law of the Sea belongs to one of the most significant regulations with respect of the world’s seas (Rothwell et al., 2015). The Third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea was held on the 10<sup>th</sup> December in 1982 at Montego Bay in Jamaica, and the outcome action brought 320 articles and nine annexes that framed ocean space (*1982 Law of the Sea Convention at 30 : Successes, Challenges and New Agendas*, 2013). The convention defines oceanic law, environment, economic and trade condition, scientific exploration, technology as well as maritime disputes (Marston, 1985).

Discussion of LOS Convention pursued to ensure interests of maritime strait States and adopt the rights for transport way of ships and airplanes as defined in;

Article 38(1) strait allows freedom of navigation and air flight merely for reason of uninterrupted and quick transit passage.

Article 38(2) ships and aircraft are legitimate to ...”enter, leave or return from the strait and the right to continuous and expeditious navigation or overflight”...(Oceans Management in the 21st Century : Institutional Frameworks and Responses, 2004, p. 22). Authorized vessels are trading vessels and ships with privilege for example warship and submarine, concerning air flights over States, are private and

commercial aircrafts (ibid.). LOS Convention defines that strait does not belong to territorial waters of the strait States and that coastal States have distinct authority in the strait in contrast to the territorial waters. Furthermore...”user States”... are free to navigation without any maximum limitation (ibid., p. 22).

### **1.7.3 Transit Passage in the approaches of the Strait**

Straits which consist of the territorial seas of neighbouring coastal States act in accordance ...”transit passage in the approaches of the Strait”...(Kraska & Pedrozo, 2013, p.229) meaning that regime includes areas that not only goes over territorial waters, but also through and near the straits. This embodies the Strait of Hormuz, in spite of the fact that areas of Iran and Oman that overlap territorial seas are ...”relatively small”..., the regime of transit passage is used throughout the strait, near the straits and within areas of the Omani and Iranian territorial seas not exceeded over each other (ibid., p.230).

## **2 THE PERSIAN GULF REGION**

This Thesis will use Gause analysis of the Persian Gulf as a “tripolar” regional subcomplex of Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia and oil monarchies of Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait and Oman (Gause III, 2010). Gulf Arab states include Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman, all have formed Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981 (Buzan & Wæver, 2003).

All members of GCC are ...”oil-producing”...monarchies and thanks to economics, politics and culture are regarded as the most homogenous nation in the world (Karns, Mingst, & Stiles, 2015, p. 232). All together states have experienced difficulties and rivalries that interfere into their cooperation and power (Guzansky, 2015, p. 118-119).

The Persian Gulf is partly enclosed, the little deep sea between Arabian Peninsula and Iran (Mirhosseini & Sandhu, 2010), the Strait of Hormuz connects it with the Sea of Oman (Bojarczyk, 2012, p. 81) The Persian Gulf is a pivotal intersection that links Africa, Europe and Asia. The area is around 865 km long with a width of 370 km and extends from the Gulf of Oman on the south to Shatt-al Arab River on the north (ibid, p. 81). The Persian Gulf forms border southward with Oman and the United Arab Emirates, westward with Qatar, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, northward with Iraq and Kuwait and with Iran entire eastern shoreline (Mirhosseini & Sandhu, 2010).

### **2.1 Importance of the Persian Gulf**

Kamrava (2011) suggests four main causes that make the Persian Gulf crucially strategic places in the world (ibid., p.3) .

Firstly, primary abundant resources of fossil fuels (oil and natural gas) (Kamrava, 2011). The present largest bulk of export to the global market (Sadeghinia, 2011). Largely, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iran and Iraq represent 80 percent of the Middle East oil deposit, constituting two-thirds of global stock. The Persian Gulf has been interest to great powers primarily due to favourable conditions including relative inexpensive oil extraction together with ...”easy”...access from the Persian Gulf to world market (Sadeghinia, 2011).

The second explanation is the Persian Gulf position including a global arrangement of regional actors who aim to be super-power inside the region and middle-power towards global level (Kamrava, 2011).

The third factor constitutes the characteristics of actor's internal relation with external states.

Lastly, the attention of the Persian Gulf presents expanding attribute of culture, international relations and aspect of Islam and politics in recent years.

## **2.2 Historical development of the Persian Gulf**

Potter (2009) identifies the Gulf as the centre of civilisation separated from the Middle East that shares the edge of cultures and empires. Through centuries region involves the continual crossing of people, trade and religion expansion (ibid) as well as marine culture dependent on fishing and pearl deposits until 1990 (Lawler, 2012) that changed into an oil production. The Persian Gulf provided passage to the Middle East, India, East Africa, Southeast Asia and China. Concerning past regional powers, states maintained a political dominance mostly in Iranian plateau, Arabian Peninsula or Mesopotamia and only partially over the Gulf Coast (ibid).

## **2.3 Regional society**

The Gulf's society forms Khalijis people in Arabic and Persian, which indicate "Gulfies" in English explanation. However, the difference between Arabic and Persian was not obvious to determine (Potter, 2014), description of Khaliji is used for people who lived on the Iranian or Arabian shore and also were settled inner land (Potter, 2009). Historically, the Middle East symbolizes a local identity which developed from tribe, ethnicity, religion and location. Consequently, in twentieth century state citizenship achieved a dominance of identity (Potter, 2014).

Interestingly Oman represents the existing Najdi culture from eighteen century that gained political influence after the oil growth. Hence, today each country controls its political identity that has inflicted a sectarian conflict (ibid.). Additionally, tribalism has shaped the modern states in the Arabian Peninsula and until now, existing dynasties descend from tribes. Beside tribalism which has preserved a prominent significance, language disparity at times resulted in separation as well. In Iran official spoken language is Persian that attributes to Indo-European group while in the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq dominate Semitic and Arabic (Potter, 2009). Persian also exists on the south coast of Bahrain and Dubai due to emigrant society. Further, Arabic is spoken in the southern Iran coast of Bushehr as well as in Khuzistan province on the southwest (ibid).



Furthermore, the Persian Gulf has united a diverse religious history, Shiism in Iran, Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia and Ibadism in Oman. However, Arabian Peninsula represents mostly Sunni minority its community can be found in Iranian shore from Kangan to Mina. However, Iran is Shiite state its minority can be found in Bahrain, Kuwait, the UAE especially in Dubai and Oman. Globally, Oman follows Ibadi Islam. In the past the Gulf united mixture of people, Banyans from India, Zoroastrian, Jews and Europeans (Potter, 2009). Nowadays, the Gulf forms Arab, Kurdish, Muslim, Shi'i, Sunni and tribal identities. The Kurds expand along the boundary of Turkey, Iraq and Iran (Gause III, 2010).

### **3 REGIONAL SECURITY PROCESSES SINCE 1971 UP TO DATE 2016**

#### **3.1 Origins of the Persian Gulf as a regional sub-complex and British withdrawal in 1971**

Throughout history, the Persian Gulf experienced the reign of two empires: Portugal conquering the Gulf in the sixteenth century, and England in the nineteenth century searching for a trading opportunity. The Dutch and French also attempted to impose their influence on the region, though England maintained its dominance which increased even more in the later nineteenth century (Potter, 2009).

When Queen Victoria was acknowledged as Empress of India in 1876, India was said to be: ...“jewel in the crown of British Empire”...which was tied to English policy as well as the Persian Gulf (Potter, 2009, p. 277). Hence English engagements in the Gulf were directed in relation to the importance of India. Chiefly, England was interested in Gulf’s diplomacy, commerce and strategic territory (ibid.) with an aim to protect and assure marine and continental passage to India (Ulrichsen, 2015). British influence on Gulf has left its influence until today and dictates its regional roots (Sato, 2009).

Undoubtedly a turning point for an evolution of the Gulf regional system was a British agreement in 1968 to end its rule over the region, which happened in 1971 (Al-Rasheed, 2005). The explanation for British exit from the Gulf incorporated different viewpoints and has been a question mark for many academics owing to its economic benefits, control over oil reserves and strategic military base, of which Britain gave up (Sato, 2009). Clarification can be looked at the short-term condition such as the decline of the British economy, the devaluation of Sterling or long-standing perspective of the domestic political situation in Britain (Smith, 2016).

The Labour party of Harold Wilson was persuaded to maintain an international role in the Gulf despite large military spending. In addition, supporting evidence found that withdrawal would become even more costly. Following disparity in Labour Party, the British government decided to leave East of Suez and in 1967 Britain determined to withdraw from Aden, Malaysia and Singapore (Dockrill, 2002). Although Britain abandoned Aden it resolved to continue its presence in the Persian Gulf.

A significant change occurred with the designation of Roy Jenkins for Treasury who supported the withdrawal compared to Wilson who was against (Sato, 2009).

Jenkins launched cuts in military and social spending after the devaluation of sterling, coming to an agreement that Britain should leave the Gulf. However, the information about the expenses between years 1967 and 1968, asserted that military expenses were much smaller in contrast to the cuts in social spending. Despite the fact that Arab states were willing to financially support Britain's military costs in the Gulf (ibid).

Sato, 2009 emphasized British decision was driven more political than an economic action. In 1968 the Labour government proclaimed it would not stay in the Gulf any more, soon after the Conservative Party would come to power in 1970, having been fervently opposed to withdrawal (Sato, 2009, p.110).

Based on the circumstances scholars Shohei Sato, Tore Petersen, Catherine Schenk and Denis Judd argue that Britain's decision to leave the Gulf was made in order to advocate the cuts in domestic social spending (Smith, 2016, p. 329).

British retreat from the Persian Gulf has brought important changes and became momentous for the development of a new political era. Nevertheless, it was the calmest period in the history of the Gulf that lasted from 1971 to end of Iran monarchy in January 1979. Gulf states lost British security in authorities including governors ...”judges, administrators and protectors...” over territories (Potter, 2002, p. 23) which pushed them to consolidate and assert their power, in other words they developed regional interplay of amity and enmity relations (Gause III, 2010).

London gradually lost its influence in the Gulf: Saudi Arabia during World War II., Iran, 1953 after the overthrow of Muhammad Mossadegh, and in Iraq 1958 after removal of Hashemite monarchy by a military coup. At this moment Britain passed its mandate to the US thus America controlled some areas in region since the Second World War (Fawcett, 2016).

During the sharp rise in oil price 1970-1974: Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia were the main oil producers that control the military and economic situation in the region (Gause III, 2010). In particular Iran was concerned about the Strait of Hormuz as its chief transit of oil export whence Reza Shah asserted its right over Abu Musa the Greater and Lesser Tunb islands to secure the Persian Gulf. (ibid).The Shah knew ...”cooperation”... of Arab states especially Saudi Arabia and Kuwait would be necessary, thus he was determined to abandon its right over Bahrain (Marshall, 2003, p.8). UN Security Council confirmed the liberty of Bahrain state and Britain agreed on Iran supremacy over three islands (ibid.).

Political competition between Iran, Saudi Arabia and Iraq was visible. However, Iran's effort under Shah was not to govern Gulf countries, but establish cooperation and achieve recognition as a leading power in the region (Marschall, 2003).

Proving that Iran committed to settle the conflict over the continental shelf with Bahrain in 1971, Oman and the UAE in 1974 (Marschall, 2003). In July 1968 Ba'athist regime of Hassan al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein seized power in Iraq, the Shah backed up separatist coup that attempted to cede Iraqi regime in 1970. The Shah also attempted to prevent the external intervention of the United States and the Soviet Union in the Gulf (ibid.). Nevertheless, relations between Iran and America became closer after the Nixon doctrine that announced US interest of stabilization in the Gulf so called ..."twin pillar"... policy (Gause III, 2010, p.21). In 1972 Iraq established a fifteen-year agreement of cooperation with the Soviet Union. As a result, the Persian Gulf evolved into a competition of external superpowers, on one side the United States support of Iran and Saudi Arabia, and Soviet Union as an ally of Iraq (ibid.).

Despite the Shah's effort Arab states did not have credibility, especially Saudi Arabia who refused Iran claim over three islands. Nevertheless Saudi Arabia and Iran relations preserved stable as both monarchies welcoming cooperation with the United States and shared an opposed attitude towards Iraq regime (Gause III, 2010).

### **3.2 Oil Boom in the 1970s**

The next critical milestone that shaped the Gulf region was oil boom in 1970. The rapid increase in world demand for oil with unequal supply side stimulated greater role of producer countries to influence oil companies. Additionally, the emergence of small independent oil companies that joined the world market was preferable for governments producing oil to make an agreement as they operated internationally. To ensure better cooperation with oil companies, the producer countries including Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Venezuela in 1960 formed Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). As countries producing oil had stronger dominance in their ..."oil industries"... many oil companies became nationalized (Gause III, 2010, p.27).

The pivotal change of oil companies which no more controlled the price of oil, but instead it was governments aroused an interesting interplay of actors inside the Gulf. When the Arab-Israel war broke out, Saudi Arabia imposed the embargo on US imports,

as the US supported Israel and Saudi Arabia urged Israel to retreat from war territory (Gause III, 2010).

On the other hand, Saudi Arabia was concerned of Egypt and Syria's statement which portrayed Saudi Arabia as US ally which undermines Arab integrity. After the Geneva conference where Arab countries gathered with Israel, Saudi Arabia with other Arab states and annulled the embargo. Since that time the US geopolitical prior interest was cooperation with Saudi Arabia was assigned to the expansion of military industry (Gause III, 2010).

Despite the affluence that flourished from oil, the Gulf was not politically secured. Nevertheless oil boom strengthened Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia to have control over oil as well as military power (Gause III, 2010).

### **3.3 Regional involvement in Kurdish and Omani uprising**

The Gulf States were asserting their regional dominance by getting involved in domestic policies of others ... "neighbouring" ... states (Gause III, 2010, p. 34). Such an example is the Shah's support of Kurdish rebels against Bath regime in Iraq, and sultans against left-wing government in Oman. Iran, Israel and also the US supported main Kurdish party, Kurdish Democratic Party, (KDP) represented by Mustafa Barazani against the Ba'ath Party. The Kurdish demanded its rights with assault on government. In 1974 the Ba'ath Party published law of autonomous Kurdistan, although the KDP rejected it as Kirkuk autonomy was not included. The conflict became a revolt and at the same time Iran and Iraq border issue began again (ibid.).

Furthermore, the political situation in Oman became tumultuous after 1969 when Marxist party gained its power with Chinese and Soviet backup (Ashton, 2013). The Leftist government spread to Dhurfar province of Oman known as Popular Front for Liberation of Oman (PFLO). In reaction to PFLO, Britain removed Sultain Sa'id and named his son Qabus who suppressed PFLO and installed the government back in Dhurfu. Besides Britain and Iran, Jordan also supported Sultan on contrary less impact had Iraq who helped PFLO until 1975 (ibid.). After 1975 the Persian Gulf experienced a significant change of relations between Iraq and Iran which later broke out into detrimental war with destructive consequences of the sub-region (Ehteshami, 2013).

### **3.4 Iran Revolution 1979 and Iran- Iraq War 1980 - 1988**

Ashton & Gibson (2013) define two causes which unleashed the Iran and Iraq war in September 1980. Firstly, the important milestone was the establishment of closer relations between Iraq and Arab Gulf countries in 1975. Furthermore, Iran and Iraq signed the Algiers agreement which included Iraq's acknowledgment of joint border with Iran over Shatt al-Arab, and Iran's approval to stop assist Iraqi Kurdish rebels in the northern Iraq (Fawcett, 2016). Secondly, the Algiers agreement presented a danger of increasing pan-Islamism, which had grown in Iran and its impact on inner security and outside stability of the Gulf States. (Ashton & Gibson, 2013). At the end of 1977 Iran power started to decline with rising ...“anti-Shah movements“... including a protest of oil-workers in November 1978 (Mossavar-Rahmani 2013, p. 255). In October 1978 Iraq ousted disruptive Ayatollah Khomeini (Ehteshami, 2013) and took part in security cooperation with Shah's administration (Fawcett, 2016).

Following the year 1979 was historically crucial, the Camp David Accords was confirmed ensuring peaceful agreement between Israel, Egypt and Iraq endeavoured to maintain the status quo (Ehteshami, 2013).

In February 1979 significant change followed, the end of the Iranian monarchy and formation of the Islamic Republic of Iran under Ayatollah Khomeini (Marschall, 2003). Iraq expressed a certain sympathy to new regime until June 1979 when Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, a main Iraqi Shi'i leader was detained evening before his journey to Tehran (Fawcett, 2016). Severe protest aroused in Shi'a territory of Iraq and chief Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini denounced the Iraqi government, calling it ...”despotic”...(Fawcett, 2016, p. 307). Furthermore, border disputes occurred in Kurdish territory and the sons - Mas'ud and 'Idris Barazani of Iraq Kurdish leader Mustafa Barazani, went over the border to Iran and obtained the support of the Iranian government (ibid.).

Meanwhile, in Iraq Saddam Hussein became president on 16 July in 1970 and stated to be ...”the true leader”... in Iraqi history (Ehteshami, 2013, p. 115). Hussein's policy rested jointly on developing good terms with the West and Arab neighbours including cooperation of Arab monarchies, financial support to Jordan in 1979, the accusation of Soviet occupation in Afghanistan and removing some Iraqi renowned terrorists (ibid.).

Furthermore, the tension inside Iraqi Shia majority resumed and consequently, Iraqi Shi'i political group created the ...”Islamic Liberation Movement”...to fight against Baath regime (Fawcett, 2016, p. 308).

Also, the...”Organization of the Iraqi ‘Ulama”... agreed on action against the government in October 1979 and at the end of the year, main Iraqi Shia party – Al-Da’wa shaped ...” a military wing”...(ibid., p.308). With the increasing surge of the Iraqi Shiites, Iran expanded the Islamic revolution and appealed to Iraqi people to put down the Baath regime. A key incident, which made Saddam Hussein attack Iran was Shia opposition’s attempt to assassinate Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz (ibid.).

In addition, Iranian school in Baghdad allegedly bombed the funeral ceremony of those who died in that ...“attempt”...(ibid, p. 308). Thereafter, Iraqi Shiites of Iranian descent were deported to Iran and Ayatollah Muhammed Baqir al-Sadru was killed (ibid.).

Saddam’s violent action against Iran intensified with Islamic revolution and internal political turmoil, which Baghdad perceived was organized by Tehran. Iraq took a risk and started a war against Iran (Fawcett, 2016). At that time the Iraq relation with Arab became greater and Iraq took responsibility to fight not only for itself but whole Arab countries (Ehteshami, 2013).

However, Iraqi attempt to defeat Iranian regime failed and in 1982 Iran had responded by removing Iraqi troop from Iran. Despite a resolution to stop the war and announce win over Iraq, Ayatollah Khomeini proceeded to overtake Baath regime. The conflict lasted for six years, although Iran was at an advantage but was not able to bring down Iraqi troops. In 1988 Iraq gained the area in southern Iraq and attacked Tehran with a missile. The US reacted with deployment its navy and entered the war. Consequently, the US targeted Iranian passenger aircraft in July 1988 and Iran agreed on truce by acknowledging UN Security Council Resolution 598 (Fawcett, 2016). Occasions between 1986 and 1988 affirmed direct presence from the West in stability and security situation in the Persian Gulf (Ashton & Gibson, 2013).

During the onset of war, all of six Arab countries supported Iraq in different scale such as the United Arab Emirates that upheld a very tight commercial relation with Tehran. Iranian threat was felt and caused worries at the ...”trans-national, inter-cultural as well as inter-state levels”... (Ashton & Gibson, 2013, p. 115).

Therefore, the Gulf Cooperation Council was established in 1981, and both Iraq and Iran were expelled to be part of it (Ashton & Gibson, 2013). Iraq-Iran war brought

a new security constellation in which GCC balanced the triangle of Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran (ibid.). Apart from that conflict ended without any winner in spite that both countries claimed victory (Moller, 2001). The United Nation Security Council and the US did not place any punishment on Iraq for starting the war and using chemical weapons (ibid).

Iran and Iraq war also did not bring any significant change in position from where the states started (Ashton, N., & Gibson, B., 2013). Instead of promising growth, wealth and security, Iran and Iraq were weakened (Moller, 2001). In particular, the economic cost of war, Iraq debt and low price of oil, as well as territorial disputes between Iran and Kuwait were the major factors that triggered the Second Gulf War (Ashton & Gibson, 2013).

### **3.5 The Gulf War, 1990 – 1991**

The decision of Saddam Hussein to invade Kuwait entails various reasons. Hinnebusch & Ehteshami (2014) underline Iraq war expenditures, desire to control oil in which Kuwait prevented to get to the strategic entry to the Gulf. In addition, Saddam aspired to raise Arab ideology and distribute the wealth equally among oil monarchies (Hinnebusch & Ehteshami, 2014, p. 55)

Furthermore, Saddam Hussein perceived international allies including US and Britain to have a strong resistance against his regime since the end of Iran-Iraq conflict. Iraq was accused of human rights violation. Also, Israel played an important role. Saddam was convinced of Israel attack on Iraqi nuclear base in August 1990 (Fawcett, 2016).

Iraq asked GCC to pay the economic cost from Iran-Iraq war which Iraq had fought for eight years for the sake of Arab world. However, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait refused to pay (Marschall, 2003).

The situation in Iraq became worse in 1990. Saddam Hussein started aggressive action on US's troop deployment in the Gulf during the formation of Arab Cooperation Council meeting and also warned Israel if it attacks Iraq he will set a fire on Israeli. Saddam felt the loss of support from Arab countries together with outside intention to devastate Iraq (Fawcett, 2016). Legrenzi & Gause III, (2016) as cited by Fawcett (2016) argue that Saddam's threat of disruptive domestic situation caused him to invade Kuwait on 2 August 1990 (Fawcett, 2016).



The occupation of Kuwait was supposed to help Iraqi economic crisis and empower Arab nationalism (Hinnebusch & Ehteshami, 2014) Furthermore, if Saddam had succeeded to control Kuwait oil, he would have possessed 40 percent of world oil deposit, which left the US strongly concerned. Iraq aggression constituted danger not only for the US but also its allies and Israel (Hinnebusch & Ehteshami, 2014).

The US started the operation against Iraq, called Desert Storm. The breakup of Soviet Union allowed America to take up a powerful role in the Middle East. When President Bush won the war, he declared to create a “new world order” also new Middle East (The Economist: The Kuwait war plus 20, 2011).

Second Gulf War was mostly air-based. The US, France and Britain led the operation Southern Watch. Also US Navy was present with an aim to limit illegal trade both in and outside of Iraq as well as to prevent Saddam from receiving a foreign currency. The activity of naval troops lasted nearly 13 years (Macris, 2010). Saddam refused to abandon Kuwait in 1991 despite an imminent defeat. He was persuaded that the international oppression on the domestic situation would not stop destroying Iraq (Fawcett, 2016).

Saddam Hussein lost the war in Operation Desert Sabre. The US and Arab troops conquered Kuwait and broke Iraqi troops. On 28<sup>th</sup> February President George Bush announced to stop in fighting. Consequently, devastated Iraq set an uprising of Kurd in the north of Iraq and Shi'ites in the south though Saddam violently repressed it. Allies responded with declaring no-fly zone above these areas where Iraqi airplanes could not fly. Additionally, Britain and the US used their inspector to monitor illegal Iraqi weapons (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2016).

However, Iraq opposed having...”inspectors”... in Iraq and air clashes between Iraqi troops and Britain and US resumed. US asserted to restore control of Iraqi weapons asking UN to intervene. However, members of UN Security Council shared distinct view. Despite any UN approval, the US and Britain sent troops to Iraq border in 2003, and the American President George Bush requested Saddam to resign. Saddam did not want to back down, and in reaction, the US started the war in Iraq (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2016).

### **3.6 Iraq War 2003**

Before the Iraq war will be explained it is necessary to determine the war in Afghanistan as it preceded the US invasion of Iraq and constituted a mutual interconnection. In 1979 Soviet troops occupied Afghanistan in an attempt to spread communist regime. As a result, the Afghan jihad fought against the Soviet Union with back up of the US and Saudi Arabia. At that time Saudi Arabia supported Afghan jihad where overwhelming majority is Sunni to outweigh Shi'ite Iran and gained dominated position in regional politics. Jihad attracted Muhammad bin Laden who managed Arab volunteers and together established an organization, known as al – Qaeda (Gause III, 2010).

After Soviet left Afghanistan in February 1989, Jihad did not stop but rather grew and Bin Laden gained a greater stronghold recruiting fighters from all over the world. Saudi firstly celebrated Bin Laden's success until the time when his determination outgrew to defeat the US and the communist regime in South Yemen. Saudi Arabia stopped to support Bin Laden as the US was its ally and saw cooperation with Taliban which took control of Mazar e-Sharif, Afghan Shi'i minority centre in 1998. However, Bin Laden also created close tight with Taliban which secured his position. Al- Qaeda started to organize terroristic action in 1999 and on 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2001 (Gause III, 2010) carried out the attacks on New York and Washington (Fawcett, 2016).

During that time, Iraq forces were successfully removed from Kuwait in 1991, the US together with allies put economic sanctions on Iraq through UN Security Council. However, Saddam and the US did not reach any cooperation. Then in 1998 Bill Clinton started decisive air attacks known as ...”Operation Desert Fox”...though not direct military intervention partly due to operation expenses (Recchia, 2015).

A significant change occurred in 2001 with new elected America's president George Bush and his administration that insisted on Saddam's leave. George Bush office tried to persuade government without any achievement until the 9/11 attacks. Following that President Bush 's target was to put down al-Qaeda with Bin Laden and Taliban regime. President Bush promptly responded with an invasion of Afghanistan on 7<sup>th</sup> October in 2001. The US together with NATO seized Kabul and base of Mullah Omar, head of Taliban and elected a new government in Kabul. While America's task was a fall of Taliban, Washington was preparing its mission in Iraq (Gause III, 2010).

According to Recchia (2015), 9/11 was the most crucial event which also prompted US action to invade Iraq (ibid).

The US was concerned about Iraqi proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear weapons and its relation with al- Qaeda. America saw Iraq as dangerous thus waiting for UN endorsement was not preference to secure domestic policy. However, British prime minister, Tony Blair supported the argument to wait for UN resolution before the attack itself. Also, France was opposed in general French Muslim and Europe together with Russia and Germany did not favour US military intervention. Bush administration had the consent from US public, and Congress but it did not obtain UN competence which authorized the Gulf War.

Despite that, President Bush On 20<sup>th</sup> March sent air bombs on Baghdad. In April US with Kurds overcame Kirkuk and Mosul. Eventually bewilder remains Saddam possession of WMD, which was confirmed to be untruth (Fawcett, 2016). Saddam's attempt was to make others think that keeps WMD as a threatening means to discourage Iran (Gause III, 2010).

The outcome of Iraq war achieved to bring down Saddam Hussein 's government but it failed to ensure the security of the country. Especially stealing increased, lack of stability, the absence of police and infrastructure was in turmoil. The US sent General Garner in Iraq to deal with Iraq post-war reconstruction. Earlier than a month he was substituted by Ambassador L. Paul Bremer who led the ...”Coalition Provisional Authority”... (CPA) aim to rebuild the Iraqi government in May 2003. The US cooperated with Iraqi officials; Paul L. Bremer aimed to change institutions and promote a market economy. However, he encountered disagreement from Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Shi'i protagonist who declared that constitution should be accepted by ...”elected assembly”... Also, US involvement aroused an outrage of Sunni rebels who disagreed with new regime in 2003. Meantime Shi'i leader Muqtada al-Sadr became another important leader who questioned the administration of Ayatollah al-Sistani and created his troops named as the Mahdi Army (Gause III, 2010).

In 2005 Iraq hold first election (Kfir, 2015) which Sunni opposed, the outrage of Sunni rebels that formed into ...revolutionary ”Iraqi groups”... including al-Qaida combatants in charge of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (Gause III, 2010). Election involved different political parties with winning a Shi'i majority. As a result of dispute of the constitution process a new Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki was appointed in to coordinate relation between Shi'a and Sunni parties (Kfir, 2015). Despite al-Makiki 's

effort to separate Sunni from al-Qaeda, support them and take control over Mahdi army security conditions became progressively worse (ibid).

Although, the election in 2006 was accomplished and Iraq's future for government looked promising, clashes between Sunni and Shia aroused.

Additionally, destructive assaults of Sunni rebels followed against America occupation and al-Qaeda was on the rise (Gause III, 2010). At that time al-Qaeda's leader was Abu Musab al-Zarqawi who stood at the birth of the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI). He promoted sectarian conflict both against American and Shi'i communities, which alarmed Muqtada al Sadr's army to retaliate against Sunni Arabs. Meanwhile Al-Qaeda took on Sunni territory declaring it as Islamic State in Iraq (ibid).

President Bush reacted with an enhancement of US troop in January 2007. American provided Sunni with finances and arms against al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Iraq experienced not only severe sectarian clash between Sunni and Shi but also "intra-sectarian conflict"... between Shi'i ..."militia"... of Muqtada al-Sadr 's Mahdi Army and the Badr Brigade of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (Gause III., 2010 p. 167).

Iraq security situation improved in 2008. Therefore Prime Minister Maliki signed the agreement about leaving the US troops in 2011 (Gause III, 2010). The aftermath of US intervention led to the disruption of security and formation of different political parties. What came after America withdrawal had worsened not only political situation of Iraq but also reached other countries.

The US occupation has caused a vacuum in which Shi'i majority increased dominance and Sunni Arab declined. This also attracted the remaining supporters of Bin Laden regime and the recruiting fighters of al-Qaeda. The Islamic State of Iraq which developed into Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) (Aoudé, 2016) emerged from joined groups of AQI, the Mujahedeen Shura Council in Iraq and Jund al-Sahhaba (Soldiers of the Prophets Companions) (Kfir, 2015, p. 240) in 2006. It has produced a detrimental impact on Iraq after the US leave in 2011 and Syria and Lebanon after the seizure of Mosul in the North of Iraq in 2014. Consequently, ISIS attacked Erbil, a Kurdish region in Iraq. US and Iran provided support to secure Kurdish region. Furthermore, ISIS had captured western province of al-Anbar, on the border with Syria and before Russian military engagement it dominated about 60 percent of Syrian area. Iraq might be separated into three areas, in the north there are Kurdish in the west Sunni, and the south Shi'a (Aoudé, 2016).

Current situation of Iraq presents a failed state which includes damage to society, corruption and sectarian conflict (Aoudé, 2016).

### **3.7 Rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran**

Although the US militarily abandoned Iraq in 2011 it continued to have military equipment in all small Gulf countries and its navy in the Gulf. Nevertheless withdrawal from Iraq influenced America's superior role in the region and contributed to a rise of other regional actors such as the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia which are undoubtedly two major actors (Amirsadeghi, 2012) who change the Geopolitics of the Persian Gulf (ibid).

Both Iran and Saudi Arabia have competed for a hegemonic position mediating the sectarian conflict between Sunni and Shia in the Middle East. Beside the rival interplay of regional actors Tehran has provoked a threat with its nuclear programme. However, Iran disproved the claim of development its nuclear weapons president B. Obama, and the European Union responded with an imposition of economic sanctions against Iran. Also, Israel intimated with attacks if Iran obtains the nuclear weapons. In July 2015 Iran and UN five permanent countries plus Germany signed an agreement the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Iran committed to cut its nuclear enlargement, and consequently, the economic sanctions were removed (Fawcett, 2016).

After Britain abandoned the Persian Gulf, rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran grew due to their differences. Despite that, both share some of the same attributes including oil, gas reliance and authoritarian regime. Future behaviour of both states might be predicted according to past events (Amirsadeghi, 2012).

Saudi Arabia owns far greater oil reserves as well as takes advantage of much larger production of oil than Iran. Despite Iran's larger gas deposits, Saudi Arabia has the power to politically influence as well as cut oil supply without a significant economic loss (Amirsadeghi, 2012).

Given that military power, the supply of armaments and development of military is related to self-defence inside region against external influence rather than army competition between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Regional security of the Persian Gulf became deeply uncertain after the British withdrawal. The region was concerned about the Soviet invasion (Amirsadeghi, 2012).

In spite the fact that Iran endeavoured to strengthen its importance in Oman by supporting Sultan against Dhofar uprising and seizing its control over three small

islands, Iran relation with Saudi Arabia remained relatively balanced. Both states were interested in regional stability, perceived the Soviet Union as a threat and strived to ensure the security of oil and sea routes (Amirsadeghi, 2012).

### **3.7.1 Origins of the competition**

The crucial moment between Saudi Arabia and Iran occurred with Iran revolution in 1979 which has brought sectarian and religious conflict and shifted the balance of power (Amirsadeghi, 2012). Iran appeared to be a regional danger. Inevitably, distrust between Saudis and Iran has intensified, and security has been until now worse to control (ibid).

Scholars agree on two main areas in which Iran and Saudi Arabia compete, geopolitics and ideology. Characteristic of ideology stems from the 7<sup>th</sup> century when Arab troops captured Persia in Mesopotamia and expanded Islam into Persia. Importantly Iran was Sunni denomination until the 17<sup>th</sup> century when Safavid Dynasty established Shiite Islam (Tzemprin, 2016).

Saudi Arabia emerged from four geographical territories which united under the ideological movement of Wahhabism. Islam was embodied in government and foreign policy of Saudi Arabia. Simultaneously Iran condemned Saudi Arabia policy saying that it does not obey religious norms. Therefore, antagonist view of Iran and Saudi Arabia has not aroused with staggering Iran revolution but was rather sealed during history. However, after the Revolution religion obtained its dominance in Iran. Consequently, Saudi Arabia and Iran have started a rival war by sponsoring their Sunni and Shiite representatives to enhance the power of influence (Tzemprin, 2016).

One of the competing states of influence is the Kingdom of Bahrain which constitutes a Shiite majority that accounts for 70 per cent though is governed by a Sunni minority. Chiefly Bahrain royal family Al-Khalifa has strong relation with Saudi Arabia on the other hand Iran patronize Shiite majority. As a significant milestone became the Arab Spring, Shia majority expressed their feelings of oppression in Manama in 2011. However, Iran provided financial support to Shia terrorist organization Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, Saudi Arabia responded with an immediate intervention and suppressed the unrest. Moreover, Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia which has the abundance of oil is the largest of Shia denomination. Subsequently, the Shia minority is faithful not only to Saudi Arabia but also Iran (Tzemprin, 2016).

Saudi Arabia is notably concerned of Iran patronage of Shia proliferated movements which could unleash conflicts and destruct the neighbouring countries. The proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia presents an ongoing bloodshed in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen. Undoubtedly ongoing violence in Syria has been Iran geopolitical focus owing to its Shia population in the region. Notwithstanding, Sunni majority represent 74 per cent, Alawite minority of Shia group is dominant (13 per cent) and governs Syria. Syrian conflict enabled Saudi Arabia to decrease Assad's influence and at the same time separate Iran. As a result, Sunni Muslims who formed Free Syrian Army were supported by Saudi Arabia, the other Gulf States and the US. Furthermore, development of different Islamists groups has split the opponents in Syria. Such an example is Qatar that sponsored the extremist insurgents to attain a new regional position (Tzemprin, 2016).

On the whole, the situation has been changed with a newly elected president Hassan Rouhani. President Rouhani announced in August 2013 before its presidency to enhance better relations with the US. In January 2016 the United Nation and EU removed sanctions on Iran and also partly the US. This agreement is an achievement for closer cooperation between the US and Iran and might improve political and economic development of Iran (Tzemprin, 2016).

Saudi Arabia objected the agreement as Iran nuclear ability has not been removed. Also Saudi Arabia is concerned about Iran takeover of regional dominance and economic growth as well as the increase of Shite movements (Tzemprin, 2016).

## 4 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ

The Strait of Hormuz is the most important petroleum chokepoint in the world (Pham, 2010) as one-fifth of the global oil passes through it (The Economist: Oil on troubled waters, 2015). Simultaneously around ninety ships transit it every day (Pham, 2010). The Strait of Hormuz embraces Iran and Oman territorial waters with widths of 22 nautical miles at its narrowest point (Katzman, 2012) and has two miles wide corridors for inward and outward tanker routes and also two miles wide buffer zone (Pham, 2010). The Strait of Hormuz constitutes the passage of ...”world petroleum supply”... which ships the oil to Japan, Europe, the United States and other Asian countries (Modarress, 2012, p. 178). The Strait of Hormuz is controlled by Iran in the north and the south belongs to Oman and United Arab Emirates.

**Fig. 1 The Strait of Hormuz**



**Source:** The Strait of Hormuz: Google Maps, 2016: own processing



## **4.1 Iran and the Strait of Hormuz**

However, Iran warned to close the Strait of Hormuz earlier the most recent threat was in 2012 due to sanctions imposed by the West (The Economist: Oil on troubled waters 2015). Furthermore, scholars argue that Iran's trade significantly relies on the Strait and Iran tactic is to have influence and a dominant power more than to close the passage. The importance of Hormuz presents not only Iran exports of oil which are relevant for Iran economy but also the transport of other goods including food and medicines (Katzman, 2012).

Nevertheless, Iran may use other transport routes outside of the Strait such as Jask port or import products through Pakistan and Iraq (Katzman, 2012). Therefore, a potential danger of Iran to shut the Strait increases with an embargo on Iran oil. Moreover, closing the Strait could cause the US military attack on Iran and equally devastate Iran ... "military and nuclear infrastructure" ... (ibid., p. 4).

One of the other factors is Iran relations with its neighbours as well as trade partners. In particular majority of Persian Gulf oil flows to Asia. Not only that China is the biggest partner of Iran but also Iran accounts for the China's third largest imports of oil. On the whole, if the Strait was closed it would negatively influence world economy leading to a rapid increase in oil price, trade imbalance, the growth of oil exporters, as well as causing a difficult situation of energy resource and unstable repercussions not only for the US but others countries (ibid).

## **4.2 Iran capability**

Iran has the biggest military power in the Gulf region though its equipment is rather old from the period before Iran revolution in 1979. Given that Tehran air force is larger compared to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates is not technically efficient (Mina, 2014). Nevertheless, Iran controls the eastern coast and has its navy present in the Gulf. Naval power includes approximately fifty-eight vessels with weaponry. However, the danger may present Iran small ships, more than 300 can be stationed to attack and intimate the larger military of commercial vessels. Mina J. & Serwer D. (2014) highlight that Iran has conducted the violent action on the sea including ... "tanker" ... assault, capture of foreign vessels and ostensibly ... "cyber attacks" ... (ibid., p.123 – 124).

Iran military is composed of large specific forces that may present threat and lead to attacking its neighbours to reduce their power in the region. Apart from the

Islamic Republic of Iran Navy (IRIN) Iran has the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGC) with a focus on the internal security and promotion Iran movements in the Middle East. Furthermore IRGC Navy controls waters of Hormuz with its ...”lighter fleet”...whereas IRIN is more conventional having larger ships that control the open sea of the Gulf of Oman (Katzman, 2012). In Addition Ministry of Intelligence and Security also plays an important role in controlling intelligence operations (Cordesman, 2007).

Iran other powers are mines, allegedly Iran has around 5000 mines of various form which can be thrown from the aircraft or ...”other type”. (Katzman, 2012, p.5) Furthermore, Iran navy possess small boats using the method of ...”swarming”...(ibid., p. 5) hundreds of armed small ships are stationed. This alerts many US observers mainly in the area close to the Hormuz. Furthermore Iran submarines could destroy warships as well as ...”coastal cruise missile which can be easily stationed along the Iran coast (ibid. p. 6).

### **4.3 Possibility of closing the Strait**

Despite Iran military force, closure of the Hormuz is rather unlikely due to the US refusal and Navy which may immediately respond together with its allies. Moreover, if Iran limited transit through the Strait, it would break the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (Mina & Serwer, 2014). However, Iran signed the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention (LOSC) but has not ratified yet it is obliged to international customary law, defining that coastal state of the straits used for international navigation, (Iran) has no right to restrict the innocent passage in these waters (Salinaitè, 2013).

According to Article 38, littoral states whose territorial waters are part of the straits have to comply with the innocent passage as well as transit passage. Iran can in its territorial waters control sea routes, but it does have no authority to close and prevent sea navigation in its territorial waters fully. Hence, any such action would be considered as illegal (Salinaitè, 2013).

It can be deduced that Iran may use the Strait of Hormuz to intimidate sea navigation and cause insecurity towards foreign vessel (Katzman, 2012).

## **DISCUSSION**

This Thesis discusses region of the Persian Gulf as the sub-complex of the Middle East based upon the regional security complex theory of Barry Buzan and Ole Waever. Meanwhile, it follows Gause (2009) interpretation of the Persian Gulf including countries of Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait and Oman.

The Thesis finds that geopolitics is a paramount factor which shapes global affairs and relations of external actors towards the region. This fact correlates with an ancient sea history and the existence of the early civilizations. In addition, the affluence of oil and natural gas certainly arouses common interest as well as concern and conflict among the states inside and outside of the region. It can be argued that world economy of oil is notably dependent on this region.

Historical formation of the Persian Gulf highlights its marine wealth of the pearls which currently substitute and dominate crude oil. As another influential element of the Gulf thesis demonstrates the identity, I agree that tribe, ethnicity and religion are mutual and from history until now contribute to a present turmoil. Therefore, it is difficult to delineate which factor outbalances. Tribalism is still present and directs dynasties rule. However, due to continuous violence, religion might be identified to play the most decisive role. Consequently, distinct identity of the Persian Gulf divides the region and increases the tension among the states.

On the whole current instability of the Gulf relates to different religious denomination, Shiism in Iran, Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia and Ibadism in Oman which root from history.

The Thesis aims to answer research question what are the regional security changes and future prospects of the Persian Gulf. Before talking about sub-complex of the Persian Gulf as a pattern of regional security complex theory, two empires captured the region, firstly Portuguese in sixteen and English in the nineteenth century. The thesis claims that English rule constituted the Persian Gulf 's regional position in the contemporary global politics owing to the creation of commerce and protection of sea navigation.

Furthermore, British withdrawal in 1971 pivots the regional security formation of the Persian Gulf sub-complex. At this time formation of regional security exists.

After Britain leaves the Gulf, anarchic system and balance of power evolve with elements of amity and enmity relations (Buzan, & Wæver, 2003).

The Thesis also describes the anarchic order after 1971 where Iran under Shah's rule attempts to increase dominance through cooperation with Arab countries in particular with Saudi Arabia. This reflects the constructivist approach which is partly incorporated in RSCT. At the same time balance of power is outlined between Iran and Saudi Arabia who seek to maximize its power and security against Iraq Ba'athist regime of Hassan al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein.

Security constellation occurs between Iran, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Also, the Persian Gulf experiences the change of the influence, so called penetration of global power in this case, on the one hand, diminishing British dominance and the other growing power of the United States especially after an introduction of the Nixon doctrine. In addition, the external influence of Soviet Union, ally of Iraq intervenes into the regional security of the Gulf. Thus, the Persian Gulf makes up a tri-polar structure with the external penetration of the Soviet Union and the United States along with decreasing British control.

Another phase of regional security, thesis depicts is oil boom in the 1970. The growth of world demand and shift of control over the oil price notably change both regional and global situation. The Persian Gulf economically flourishes and becomes geopolitically important for the US. Also, Saudi Arabia increases the cooperation with the US. As study underlines during the oil growth countries Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia equip their military power.

Furthermore, an important implication of the findings is regional support of Reza Shah in Kurdish and Omani uprising. Iran pursues the greater regional power and supports Kurds who fight against Bath government. Two main security issues appear. Firstly, conflict inside Iraq as well as the regional power balances between Iraq and Iran with the border dispute. Secondly, Omani uprising after 1969 in which Iran and Iraq separate and support different governments.

Despite the tension between Iran and Iraq both countries settle their border issue and Iran stop support of Kurdish in Iraq. The thesis agrees with second Ashton & Gibson, (2013) argument that the main explanation for Iran-Iraq war is the increase of pan-Islamism. Beside that fall of Shah Pahlavi monarchy signifies the end of the twin-pillar policy of the US and Iran. The supporting evidence proves that Ayatollah Khomeini foundation of the Islamic Republic of Iran significantly shifts the regional

security constellation and distribution of power. Not only does Iran revolution change the relation with Iraq but also with Saudi Arabia. The increasing Islamist movements causes security dilemma for Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

Meanwhile, Iraq and Saudi Arabia develops closer cooperation. In addition, the shift of external power occurs in Iraq. The new leader of Iraq, Saddam Hussein moves away from the Soviet Union and allies with the US, Saudi Arabia and Arab Gulf countries. Therefore, a new distribution of power on one side Iran with the expansion of Shia power and on the other side Saudi Arabia and Iraq that protect Gulf Arab countries with the support of the US. This study advocates that Iran revolution contributes the Shia political unrest in Iraq. As a result, Saddam Hussein attacks Iran.

The thesis depicts that the US interferes in the regional dynamic and ends the Iran-Iraq war. This case correlates with RSCT in which the US represents global power and influences the international system. Also, in 1981 a new regional actor, Gulf Cooperation Council enters into the triangle of Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq as a reaction to Iran-Iraq war.

Another part of the Thesis examines the Gulf War from 1990 to 1991. Research demonstrates that Iraq invasion of Kuwait impulses the costs from Iran-Iraq war and control of oil. I envisage and support the evidence that Saddam Hussein strives to increase its regional power and promotes Arabism. The Thesis finds the transformation of regional structure in which Iraq loses support. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia, GCC and the US diverts from Iraq. In addition Israel, regional agent of other complex plays a significant role against Iraq. The Thesis notices patterns of amity and enmity, the interesting act of Saudi Arabia who does not perceive Iran as a regional threat any more but instead of Iraq who attempts to defend Arab ideology. From the security point of view, the interplay of other actors including the US and Israel dictates the decisions and regional priorities of other actors. Data obtained indicated that Iraq views an attack on Kuwait as the only solution to survive and maintains status quo. The Thesis proposes that Iraq sees control over Kuwait oil as a tool to seize a greater position in the international system. The gathered evidence also emphasizes that other external countries involve in the Gulf war and in particular the US increases its presence and control in the Persian Gulf.

Furthermore, the Iraq war in 2003 implies the regional security transformation with a contemporary unstable future. The research proposes other important events although they occur outside the Gulf sub-complex they interconnect and lead to the

outbreak of Iraq war. Two global powers the Soviet Union and the United States intervene in Afghanistan and with their action influence the regional system of the Gulf. Saudi Arabia and the US join and support Jihad in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union, win-win deal.

The Thesis asserts that Saudi Arabia gain is Sunni Jihad that fights against Iran Shiite growth to increase its regional dominance and the US gain is the removal of the Soviet Union and becomes the only global major power. The Soviet Union leaves Afghanistan, jihad and Bin Laden's terrorist organization of al-Qaeda with Taliban presents threat to the US. Thesis finding outlines paradox of the US and Saudi Arabia who firstly furnish al-Qaida that after secures itself organize terroristic attacks on the US.

The United States reacts with an invasion of Afghanistan to defeat Bin Laden's al-Qaida and Taliban. In this case penetration of the US increases influence outside of Gulf sub-complex but at the same it interflows indirectly in the Gulf as new American President George Bush calls for Saddam leave from Iraq owing to its link with al-Qaida and possession of nuclear weapons. Despite limited evidence thesis results that America intervenes in Baghdad, without UN consensus to remove Saddam and prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The Thesis also asserts America's concern to prevent Iraq control over oil. The study highlights that regional security tri-polar system constitutes Iran, Saudi Arabia and the US who governs Iraq. According to RSCT regional security structure of the Persian Gulf and its interplay greatly relies on the action of the US. The thesis underlines that the US contributes to insecurity which develops into turmoil where Shia majority overbalances Sunni. Despite the US effort to administrate Iraq, Sunni rebels ally with remaining al-Qaida forces and sectarian conflict emerges. Al-Qaida forms into the Islamic State of Iraq and after America leave in 2011 becomes Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The Thesis concludes that current situation in Iraq presents a failed state with a continuing sectarian conflict and an uncertain security future.

Finally, the thesis describes the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The end of Iraq war and the US withdrawal from Iraq change significantly the regional security interplay in the Gulf especially the tri-polar structure to the bi-polar system in which Saudi Arabia and Iran compete.

According to an investigation, Iran and Saudi Arabia dictate the geopolitics of the Gulf. I disagree with this argument and state that America due to its naval army

partly affects the geopolitical dynamic of the Persian Gulf. The findings of the Thesis are quite convincing that sectarian conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia arises from the Islamic revolution in 1979. At that time Iran inflicts Shia protests against Ba'athist regime in Iraq and Saudi Arabia supports Saddam Husain during the Iran-Iraq war. Saudi Arabia also mediates conflict in Afghanistan as it supports Sunni and Bin Laden. The sectarian conflict escalates with America invasion in Iraq and with the creation of the Islamic State in Iraq which later takes up Syria. One question still unanswered is whether Saudi Arabia funds the jihadist ISIS movement. Some evidence supposes that Saudi provides aid to other sources which may reach the ISIS (Tzemprin, 2016).

The Thesis agrees that relation between Iran and Saudi Arabia remains stable after British retreat both countries maintain regional stability and oppose the Soviet Union. The thesis states that from history Iran and Saudi Arabia share a different religion. Nevertheless, I agree that Iran revolution evokes the sectarian conflict as religion dictates government of Iran. Nowadays, regional security of the Persian Gulf depends on each Gulf state's denomination either Sunni or Shia which Saudi Arabia and Iran support. Saudi Arabia and Iran provides aid its religious branch, which leads to turmoil and conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen.

The thesis results proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia such example is Syria where Saudi Arabia and Iran supports separate side. I state that although Syria is not part of the Persian sub-complex it presents a significant role in the region and in the context of proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia based on which side offsets the other. The thesis agrees with the recent statement of Boris Johnson: - British politician says that the Persian Gulf lacks ... "strong ... "leadership (BBC, 2016).

I envisage that contemporary competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran typifies bipolar international system of Kenneth Waltz. However, both states do not rival only for survival and to have relative military power. Saudi Arabia and Iran play proxy war through religion and cultural identity which are unimportant according to K. Waltz. On one hand religion might be used as the only pretext to assert regional dominance. I believe that neither Iran nor Saudi Arabia may undertake a hegemonic power due to mutual interplay of other actors within the region, security constellation and intricacy of the Persian Gulf sub-complex which is significantly interconnected to the Middle East complex. I propose that the only possible solution depends not on the penetration of external power but rather close cooperation of both internal and external agents. The immense question mark remains with a newly-elected America president

Donald Trump and his policies towards the Persian Gulf mainly his response to Iran nuclear deal. Especially, current news announced that Iran would build the ...”nuclear powered ship”...if America prolongs sanctions against Iran. John Mearsheimer political American scientist suggests that stability of the region is possible provided that Iran develops nuclear weapon. J. Mearsheimer explains that if Iran acquired the nuclear weapons then the US and Israel would not intimidate to attack Iran (Foreign Affairs, 2012). The thesis highlights that a new president of Iran, Hassan Rouhani attempts to enhance cooperation with the US, which may improve security as well as relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Furthermore, the thesis proposes an operational question to what extent is the Strait of Hormuz important to the Persian Gulf region. The thesis finds that the Strait of Hormuz constitutes the most important oil chokepoint in the world as the global supply of oil is notably dependent on the passage. Historically international trade increases both an economic and a geopolitical role of the Persian Gulf. The Thesis main findings relate to Iran control of the Strait of Hormuz. Despite Iran economic dependence on the Strait, the Thesis outlines another transportation way which may Iran use in case of closure of Hormuz. However, the Thesis argues that closing the Strait would escalate the US military forces and would have a negative impact on Iran’s economy. Furthermore, it could affect the regional security, Iran relations with neighbouring countries and trade partners such as China.

Also, the Thesis proposes the hypothesis that Iran’s claim (right) to control the Strait of Hormuz contributes its dominance in the Persian Gulf. Study finds that Iran military power is the largest in the Persian Gulf. The Thesis suggests that Iran’s military forces may contribute violation of marine navigation as well as influence security of regional states. Nevertheless, based on the findings Iran closure of the Hormuz is inconsistent with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

From the outcome of the investigation, I concern that Iran naval forces are unlikely to close the Strait of Hormuz owing to its obsolete technology and rather blackmail the United States.

From the research that has been carried out, it is possible to conclude that Iran’s territorial waters which embrace the Strait of Hormuz empower Iran strategic control of marine transportation through which Iran may influence the regional position. Hence, the findings of research agree with the hypothesis.



## CONCLUSION

To conclude this Thesis firstly presented the theoretical framework to feature the most important concepts for the analytical research. The thesis determined regional security complex theory (RSCT) as a primary method of the analysis. The findings confirmed that regional security changes in the Persian Gulf from 1971 to 2016 apply the explanation of RSCT. Secondly, this Thesis described the analytical part, examined the security constellation and explained the major security changes since British withdrawal in 1971 up to present 2016. Thirdly, the Thesis underlined the importance of the Strait of Hormuz and its connection to Iran control. Lastly, the Thesis involved the discussion and considered the main results which affect the security situation and continue to indicate current security.

The Thesis research question aimed to answer what are the regional security and future prospects of the Persian Gulf. The Thesis found the main events that shifted regional security, balance of power, patterns of amity and enmity as well as penetration of external power. Especially, the Thesis emphasized British withdrawal in 1971, which led to the formation of the Persian Gulf sub-complex with distribution of power between Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the oil boom in 1970 triggered the geopolitical importance of the Persian Gulf. Moreover, Iran revolution in 1979 significantly transformed Iran relation between Iraq and Saudi Arabia. The Thesis proposed the foundation of the Islamic Republic of Iran as the most influential case that alarmed the outbreak of Iran- Iraq War, 1980-1988 and formed contemporary situation. This Thesis also described the Gulf War, 1990-1991 which altered the balance of power. Saudi Arabia, GCC and the US averted from Iraq and Iraq lost support. In addition, the Thesis discussed the Iraq War in 2003 and determined the dominant power of the US and the new balance of power between Iran, Saudi Arabia and the US. Also, the Thesis outlined current situation of Iraq and the emergence of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Lastly, the Thesis explained the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran and outlined the sectarian conflict with the future likelihood of the region.

Furthermore, the Thesis provided the operational question to what extent is the Strait of important to the Persian Gulf. The Thesis showed that from history the Strait of the Hormuz constituted the intersection of international trade and nowadays, is the most important chokepoint of global oil supply.

Finally, the Thesis considered the hypothesis of Iran's claim to control of the Strait of Hormuz and concluded, Iran's territorial waters lie in the Strait of Hormuz. Thus, Iran may influence the regional security position.

Hence, Persian Gulf features the complexity of internal and external factors. On the one hand, it is regional interplay with different identity and religion and on the other hand geopolitics of oil.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Thesis highlighted that Saudi Arabia and Iran play proxy war, which significantly affects countries within and outside of the Persian Gulf sub-complex. Thesis calls for the future research especially between bipolar system of Saudi Arabia and Iran, future regional security in the context of responsibility to protect. In particular responsibility to protect should be addressed by the United Nations in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen. These countries have experienced continuing bloodshed, humanitarian crisis and human rights violation due to regional states relations and weak mutual cooperation, leadership and action from International Organization.

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## **LIST OF FIGURES**

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Fig. 1 The Strait of Hormuz .....</b> | <b>40</b> |
|--|-----------|